

STATEMENT OF REASONS

CHAPTER 7

ELK HUNTING SEASONS

W. S. § 23-1-302 directs and empowers the Commission to fix seasons and bag limits, open, shorten or close seasons on any species or sex of wildlife except predatory animals, predacious birds, protected animals and protected birds.

The Department proposes to amend Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Regulation Chapter 7, Elk Hunting Seasons to establish annual hunting seasons, limitations and bag limits for the 2024 hunting season. The Department sets hunting seasons annually based on public input, annual harvest data, population monitoring data, individual herd unit objectives and ongoing habitat evaluations.

At the time of this filing, the 2023 elk harvest information is not yet available to the Department. Individual hunt area regular hunting season dates, special archery hunting season dates, hunt area limitations, license types and license quotas may be modified after harvest data has been evaluated. Any additional proposed changes to regular hunting season dates, special archery hunting season dates, hunt area limitations, numbers of limited quota licenses, license types, hunt area boundaries or modifications to other hunting provisions shall be made available for public comment on the Department website. An updated draft of 2024, Chapter 7 Elk Hunting Seasons proposals will be discussed at all in-person public meetings and will be posted on the Department website in March for additional public comment.

In Section 2, the Department proposes to modify available license types for elk hunt areas 113 and 123 for the 2024 hunting season. These actions are intended to meet the management objectives of those specific elk hunt areas. A new Hunt Area 65 has been created to address management objectives for a non-migratory elk herd in the Heart Mountain area. Hunt area 54 has been modified to address the creation of the new hunt area 65.

In Section 5, Youth Elk Hunters, language is being modified to provide additional clarity to the existing regulation.

New Section 6, Nonresident Region General Elk License Quotas, is being added into this regulation. This entire regulation section is already in effect and included in Chapter 44 which governs Department licensing. The Commission included the regulation for nonresident general elk licenses into Ch 44 so it would be in effect in time for the beginning of the 2024 license application period. This regulation will now be moved into Ch 7 and will be addressed annually with development of elk hunting season proposals. The creation of nonresident general elk regions will allow for more targeted elk harvest across the state.

In new Section 9, Hunt Area Descriptions, modifications have been made to Hunt Areas 51, 53 and 54 to address the creation of new Hunt Area 65.

Some section numbers have been edited to accommodate the addition of new Section 6, Nonresident Region General Elk License Quotas.

Minor grammatical and formatting edits have also been incorporated in the above regulation that do not change the intent of the regulations.