

## **STATEMENT OF REASONS**

### **CHAPTER 20**

#### **WILD TURKEY 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 20, Wild Turkey Hunting Seasons to establish annual wild turkey hunting seasons, limitations and bag limits for the 2026 fall and 2027 spring wild turkey hunting seasons. The Department sets wild turkey hunting seasons annually based on public input, annual harvest data, population monitoring data and ongoing habitat evaluations. The entire Chapter 20, Wild Turkey Hunting Seasons regulation is open for public comment and may be modified through this rule making process.

Wildlife managers are proposing a license limitation during the spring 2027 wild turkey season that will prohibit the use of rifles to take wild turkeys on public land. Many spring turkey hunters wear camouflage clothing and use turkey decoys to attract breeding males close enough for a shot. Recent public survey data indicates that many hunters are supportive of limiting spring turkey hunting to shotguns, handguns and archery equipment to improve hunter safety. This proposal allows for rifle hunting opportunities on private lands, where landowners the hunters with private land access generally know if there are other hunters in the area.

At the time of this filing, the previous year wild turkey harvest information is not yet available to the Department. Individual hunt area regular hunting season dates, archery hunting season dates, hunt area limitations and license quotas may be modified after harvest data has been evaluated. Individual license types may be added, removed or modified for existing hunt areas.

Any additional proposed changes to regular hunting season dates, archery hunting season dates, hunt area limitations, numbers of limited quota licenses, hunt area boundaries or modifications to other hunting provisions shall be made available for public comment on the Department website. An updated draft of the 2026 Chapter 20, Wild Turkey Hunting Seasons regulation proposal shall be available at all in-person public meetings and through online Department presentations. All proposed changes to this regulation shall be posted on the Department website in March for additional public comment.