Multi-Year Season Setting







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What Is Multi-Year Season Setting?



Multi-Year Season Setting (MYSS) is the process of establishing hunting regulations that span multiple years instead of annually

Current Annual Season Setting Process

Season setting and public input gathering is a year-round process!

Current Formal Process

- **December** – adjustments to Hunt Planner & ELS, initial regulation filing
- **January / February** – more aerial surveys, analyze harvest surveys, compile herd data, population modeling, begin public outreach
- **March** – season proposals, herd objective reviews, internal review, public meetings
- **April** – evaluate public comment, revise proposals if needed, Commission meeting
- **By May 1** – update Hunt Planner & ELS, notify applicants of significant changes

Why Improve Setting Process?

- Long standing internal interest in adoption of MYSS
- Most annual adjustments to big game, game bird, and small game are minor
- Interest in improving efficiencies and reprioritizing work
  - Adopted in many western states
  - Fish and trophy game
- Conducted two internal surveys to gauge support
- Formed internal committee to make recommendations

What Did We Consider?

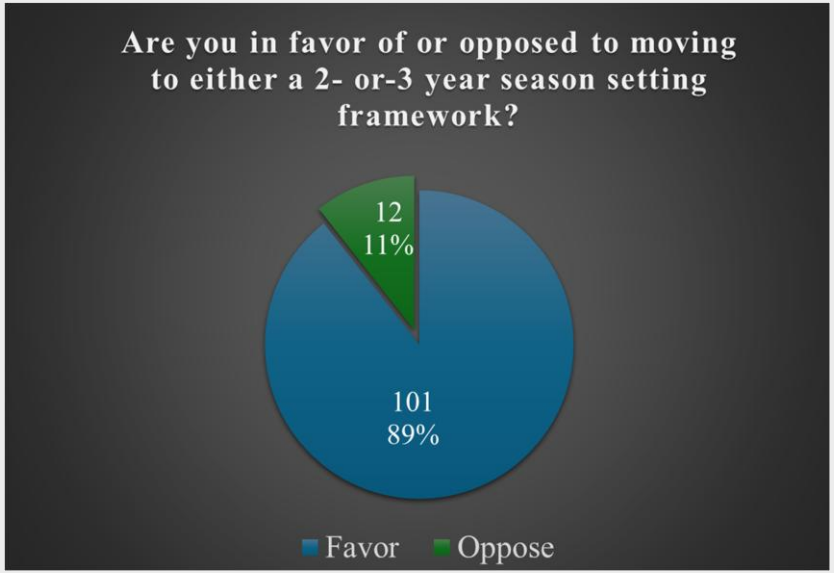
- Whether to pursue MYSS and why – benefits and drawbacks
  - If yes, 2- or 3-year MYSS?
- Which regulations should be opened annually vs. MYSS?
- Stagger regulation cycles within or across years?
- Can adjustments be made when needed in off-cycle years?
- What will WGFD be able to do in the off-cycle years?
- What will public engagement look like?



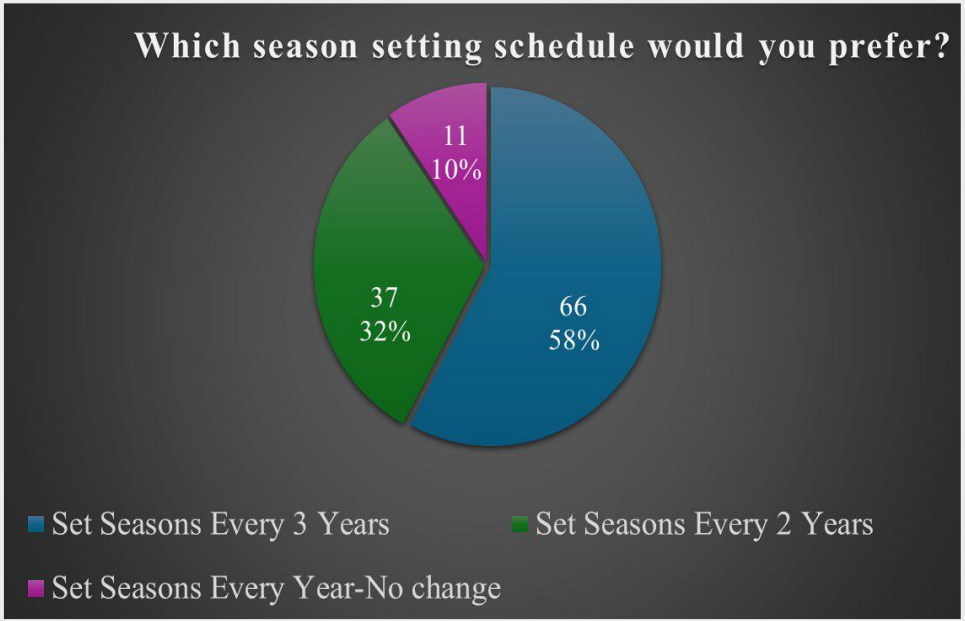


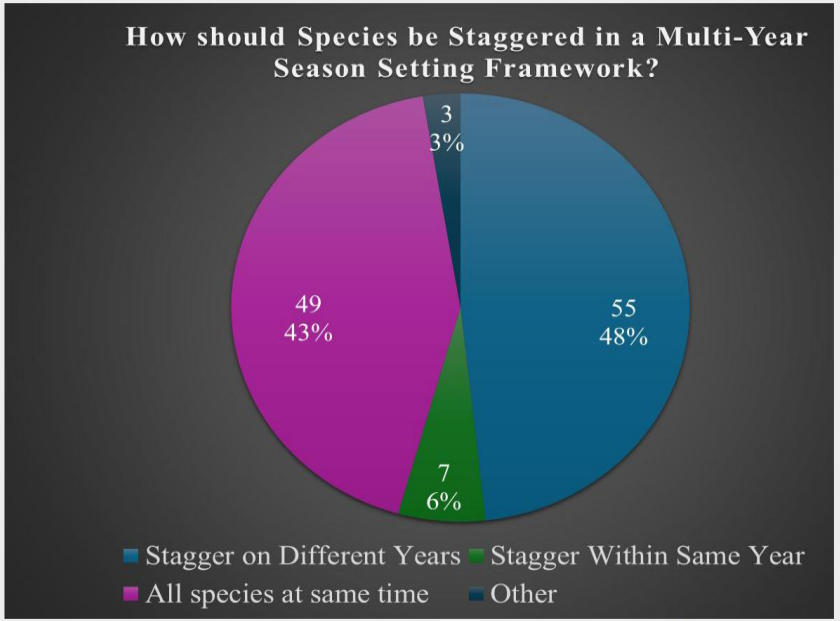
Internal Survey 2025

- Biologists, wardens, and wildlife supervisors – also license section, communications, and office managers
- 114 respondents
- Widespread internal support



Internal Survey 2025





Our Recommendation

- 3-Year cycle beginning in 2027
  - Season setting in 2030, 2033, etc.
- No staggering across years or species
- Affected species / regulations include…
  - All big game, small/upland game, migratory game birds, and turkeys
  - General hunting regulation (Chapter 2)
- Decision to pursue after careful consideration of potential benefits and challenges



Benefits of MYSS

Regulation consistency with needed flexibility

Improved public engagement

Reprioritization of work for Department staff

- Regulation consistency across years – certainty for hunters and outfitters when planning hunts
- Allows more time to measure the effects of season changes – on wildlife and hunting quality
- Will streamline regulation brochure development
- Can still alter seasons when biologically necessary (severe winter losses or disease outbreaks)
- Chapter 34 and 56 authorizations can address damage/conflict without changing regulations

Benefits of MYSS

Regulation consistency with needed flexibility

Improved public engagement

Reprioritization of work for Department staff

- March public meeting attendance has long been declining
  - Changing preferences for consuming information and commenting
  - Perception that commenting at public meetings does not effect change
  - Significant changes first proposed by public in March meetings can be too late in process
- Informal public meetings in off-cycle years can lead to better information exchange and public input ***before season proposals are developed*** – not just taking comment on a formal proposal
  - Mule Deer Community Conversations and December postseason public meetings
  - Can be more informational and in-depth (present data, discuss habitat, research, etc.)
  - More time for landowner meetings
  - Can already do this (*and we do*), but…"we meeting people to death!"

Benefits of MYSS

Regulation consistency with needed flexibility

Improved public engagement

Reprioritization of work for Department staff

- About reprioritization of staff resources and efforts, not reducing work
- Better focus on tasks that move the needle more for wildlife conservation and management
  - Perception that setting hunting seasons is most important thing we do for wildlife (consider effects of mule deer harvest vs. habitat or highway crossing project work)
- Improved data collection – winter / spring wildlife observations, expanded time for aerial surveys, etc.
  - Will still compile data and estimate populations annually
- Enhanced data analyses – GPS collar data, migration analyses, seasonal range updates, etc.
- Participate in more field research
- Conduct human dimensions work to address specific management challenges

Potential Challenges of MYSS

- Reduced flexibility for annual adjustments – can be concern for managers and public
- Reduced internal familiarity with season setting process
- Public perception – less formal involvement, delay in addressing concerns, expectations of annual process



Potential Challenges of MYSS

- Less frequent formal decision making from Commission
    - Engagement with the Commission on wildlife management will continue
    - Enhanced public engagement opportunities for Commissioners
- Season proposals being too conservative – managers erring on side of caution
- Unfavorable seasons will remain in place (from manager or public perspective)



Additional Considerations

- Can open regulations in off-cycle years or use Emergency Reg process as needed – high bar for off-cycle changes
- Need to address variable season opening dates (e.g., 3rd Saturday in Sept., youth season dates)
- Address annual GTNP coordination requirement for the Elk Reduction Program, continue to coordinate with USFWS for National Elk Refuge hunt





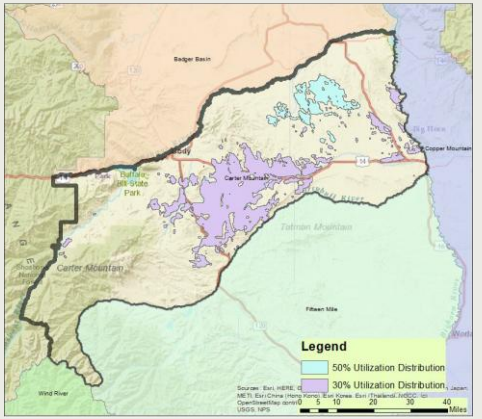


Timeline for Implementation

Ask for Commission support → Set seasons in spring 2026 and begin messaging → Address unresolved issues → Develop internal guidance for off-cycle year work → Set seasons in spring 2027 for next 3 years → Evaluate benefits and challenges, improve where needed

Take Home Message

- Other western states have found success with MYSS
- Reprioritizing time and resources
- If we adopt MYSS, need to commit – change can be scary
- We are not fixing a problem – current process is effective – <u>This proposal focuses on ways to improve it!</u>











We Ask For Your Support



Questions?