



ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

HUNT GUIDELINES FOR THE 2023-2024 THROUGH 2027-2028 HUNTING SEASONS

**As approved by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission
April 1, 2022 and amended January 19, 2024**

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SCHEDULE FOR REVIEWING HUNT GUIDELINES AND FORMULATING HUNT RECOMMENDATIONS

APPROXIMATE TIMELINE	HUNT GUIDELINES SCHEDULE	RESPONSIBILITY
Nov 2026	Obtain AD approval of Team Charter and members	Big Game Supervisor
Jan-Mar 2027	Solicit both internal and external comment on existing Hunt Guidelines; Notice Executive Staff and Commission that the public comment period on existing Hunt Guidelines was open	TW Branch
Feb	Commission briefing on Hunt Guidelines and Hunt Recommendation processes and on public comments received on current Hunt Guidelines (1 st Read)	TW Branch
Late Feb	Team meeting to initiate review of Hunt Guidelines and initial public comments	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Mar	Individual discussions with Commissioners on Hunt Guidelines	TW Branch
Apr	Commission briefing on public comments received on current Hunt Guidelines (2 nd Read)	TW Branch
Mid-May	Draft Hunt Guidelines to Executive Staff and Commission	TW Branch
Late May	Draft Hunt Guidelines posted on website for public; targeted email to a random sample of hunters soliciting comment	TW Branch
Late May–Jun	Public comment period; Host webinar and public meetings	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Jun	Commission briefing on draft Hunt Guidelines and public comment received; identify alternatives for the Hunt Guidelines (3 rd Read)	TW Branch
Late Jun	Second draft of Hunt Guidelines distributed to Executive Staff and Commission	TW Branch
Jul 1–31	Public comment period	TW Branch
Aug 1–15	Finalize proposed Hunt Guidelines	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Aug 15	Final Proposed Hunt Guidelines to Executive Staff and Commission	TW Branch
Late Aug	Commission memos and proposed Hunt Guidelines distributed to e-staff, Commission, and Regions. Available to public at Regional offices and on website (one week later)	TW Branch-Director's Office
Sept 2027	Proposed Hunt Guidelines for fall 2033 through spring 2037 seasons presented to Commission for approval	TW Branch

<u>APPROXIMATE TIMELINE</u>	<u>HUNT RECOMMENDATION SCHEDULE</u>	<u>RESPONSIBILITY</u>
Oct 10	Pronghorn, elk, limited entry, and population management hunt and permit recommendations submitted in writing to TW Branch	Regional Supervisors
Oct 21–25	Hold meetings with individual Regions to finalize recommendations and analyze public input	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Nov 15	Commission memos and draft hunt recommendations distributed to e-staff, Commission, and Regions. Available to public on website and during Regional open houses (one week later)	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Dec 7	Present hunt recommendations to Commission to set seasons and bag limits for pronghorn, elk, limited entry, and population management seasons	TW Branch
Jan or upon appointment	Briefing of new Commissioner on the Hunt Recommendations and Hunt Guidelines processes	TW Branch
Mar 1	Deer, fall and spring javelina, bighorn sheep, fall and spring bear, mountain lion, small game (2-year), trapping (2-year), predator-furbearer (2-year), and other birds and mammals (2-year) hunt and permit recommendations submitted in writing to TW Branch	Regional Supervisors
Mar 5–16	Hold meetings with individual Regions to finalize recommendations and analyze public input	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Mar 20	Commission memos and draft hunt recommendations distributed to e-staff, Commission, and Regions. Available to public on website and during Regional open houses (one week later)	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Apr 14	Present hunt recommendations to Commission to set seasons and bag limits for deer, fall and spring javelina, bighorn sheep, fall and spring bear, mountain lion, webbed and webless migratory birds, small game (2-year), trapping (2-year), predator-furbearer (2-year), and other birds and mammals (2-year) seasons	TW Branch
Jul 1	Fall and spring turkey and fall and spring bison hunt and permit recommendations submitted in writing to TW Branch.	Regional Supervisors
Jul 7-11	Hold meeting with individual Regions to finalize recommendations and analyze public input	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Jul 17	Commission memos and draft hunt recommendations distributed to e-staff, Commission, and Regions. Available to public on website and during Regional open houses (one week later)	TW Branch and Regional Personnel
Aug 11	Present hunt recommendations to Commission to set seasons and bag limits for fall and spring turkey and fall and spring bison	TW Branch

OBJECTIVE

The hunt guidelines are designed to be used by Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) wildlife biologists when formulating hunt recommendations. The hunt guidelines are intended to provide general guidance on the parameters for which hunted or trapped species are managed. Like hunt recommendations, the hunt guidelines are shared with the Arizona Game and Fish Commission (Commission) and approved in public session following a regular review cycle described in the preceding pages.

The hunt guidelines themselves are one piece of an overall planning approach used by the Commission and Department in managing wildlife. While hunt guidelines describe what the Department manages toward, species management guidelines are protocols that describe how that data is collected. Management plans (e.g., species management plans, and management focus area plans) describe landscape level objectives, opportunities for habitat enhancement, specific herd management objectives (e.g., increase population), and management challenges (e.g., persistent low fawn recruitment for pronghorn, habitat fragmentation, disease concerns).

The Department also operates under a Commission-approved strategic plan that provides agency vision, an operational plan that is shared with the Commission and developed by the Department that identifies specific objectives that the agency plans to complete within the time period covered by the operational plan, and an annual implementation plan that ties together budgets, specific tasks, and work units for the upcoming year.

The Department responsibly manages Arizona's wildlife within the biological limits of each species. Management strategies are developed to meet social acceptability, which is routinely more conservative than the limits at which wildlife may be biologically managed.

Ultimately, the Department manages wildlife in the public trust for all of Arizona. All game animals, from predators to small game to big game, are managed as part of an important ecosystem to be sustained for future generations of Arizonans to enjoy. These hunt guidelines have been developed to meet a variety of hunting desires and strive to provide adequate opportunity for all. The guidelines are based on the best available biological and social science. Arizona has a diverse wildlife resource, yet many of these resources are limited in supply. The following guidelines attempt to provide the diversity of experiences desired by the hunters of Arizona, while providing the necessary management so that all Arizonans will benefit from diverse wildlife populations in the future.

HUNT GUIDELINE APPROACHES

The Department and Commission will revisit the guideline package with the public every 5 years in the summer. The Commission retains the authority to amend hunt guidelines at any time. The 5-year hunt guideline framework aligns with the following approaches:

- Obtain input from the Commission on hunt guideline concerns that were brought to their attention; use this input to guide public survey questions.
- Use all necessary public outreach and information gathering avenues to ensure inclusion of all affected and interested customers in guideline and recommendation development. A public outreach effort relative to hunt recommendations will be conducted once annually.
- Maintain consistent wildlife survey protocol and interpretation to develop hunt recommendations across the state in accordance with the Species Management Guidelines and other pertinent plans (e.g., species management plans and management focus area plans). Population management objectives for specific units may be described within these pertinent species management plans.
- Allow for off-cycle wildlife surveys in locations with intense environmental stress. Stressors may include but are not limited to prolonged drought, severe winters, catastrophic wildfire, disease outbreak, die-off, etc. to inform permit allocations. Surveys may be conducted outside the typical survey time period. If drought conditions in an area of the state are classified as “exceptional drought” for 4 consecutive months

starting in December (late gestation) or April (parturition and just after), aerial or structured ground population surveys should be conducted. If drought conditions are classified as “extreme or exceptional drought” for more than 6 months of the year, aerial or structured ground population surveys should be conducted.

- Consider increase monitoring or restriction of small game seasons if populations appear to be affected by intense environmental stress. Stressors may include but are not limited to prolonged drought (such as 4 or more consecutive months of exceptional or extreme drought in critical breeding or nesting seasons), severe winters, catastrophic wildfire, disease outbreak, die-off, etc..
- Establish hunting seasons, permit levels, and bag limits annually for big game and maybe established for a 2-year period for small game and predatory and fur-bearing mammals, when appropriate. The Commission retains the authority to amend hunting seasons, permit levels, and bag limits once approved to adapt to current biological or social conditions influencing a species. Conditions described in the previous bullet would be a trigger for setting hunting seasons, permit levels, and bag limits annually.
- Provide standardized and consistent hunt structures across the state; minimize and simplify hunt regulations and restrictions related to the hunt structure. Standardized and simplified hunt structures should not obstruct diversity of opportunity.
- Provide for a diversity of hunter opportunity while maintaining wildlife population health, structure, and integrity. Guidelines for this approach are:
 - Minimize hunt opportunity when the legal animals are most vulnerable (e.g., breeding period, parturition) in standard management areas.
 - Allocate hunt opportunity with respect to weapon type demand.
 - Maximize big game opportunity where practicable through the use of over-the-counter nonpermit-tags.
 - Use population management hunts to address specific management objectives that are not being achieved through standard hunt structures.
 - Use stratified hunt structure to reduce user conflicts and hunter densities.
 - Provide dispersed and limited alternative management (i.e., objectives are higher hunt success and harvest of older age class animals) across the state.
 - Use targeted and liberalized big game harvest by hunters to address human-wildlife conflicts.
 - As allowable under Arizona Revised Statute and Commission rule, a very limited amount of hunt opportunity may be provided through the Commissioner’s Special Tag Program and Limited-entry Hunt Program; these programs are designed to generate revenue that directly benefits wildlife management.
- Strive to distribute limited big game harvest opportunity commensurate with demand by method of take and success rates where practical. Emphasize youth and new big game hunter opportunities. In doing so, provide diverse and dispersed hunt opportunities to allow equitable availability and minimal conflict with other users.
- Emphasize small game, predator-furbearer, and other wildlife hunt opportunities. Guidelines for this approach are:
 - Liberalize bag and possession limits as well as season lengths within sustainable biological means to encourage hunter participation.
 - Maintain consistent season opener and structure to reduce hunter confusion from year to year.
 - Waterfowl season openers will be influenced by Federal Frameworks and may not be consistent from year to year.
- Allocate permits equitably with the Hopi tribe in proportion to the area and populations of big game that occupy Hopi sovereign lands when a reciprocal access agreement exists.

Table 1. Friday of each week of the year, 2023-2028.

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Week 1		1/5/2024	1/3/2025	1/2/2026	1/1/2027	12/31/2028
Week 2		1/12/2024	1/10/2025	1/9/2026	1/8/2027	1/7/2028
Week 3		1/19/2024	1/17/2025	1/16/2026	1/15/2027	1/14/2028
Week 4		1/26/2024	1/24/2025	1/23/2026	1/22/2027	1/21/2028
Week 5		2/2/2024	1/31/2025	1/30/2026	1/29/2027	1/28/2028
Week 6		2/9/2024	2/7/2025	2/6/2026	2/5/2027	2/4/2028
Week 7		2/16/2024	2/14/2025	2/13/2026	2/12/2027	2/11/2028
Week 8		2/23/2024	2/21/2025	2/20/2026	2/19/2027	2/18/2028
Week 9		3/1/2024	2/28/2025	2/27/2026	2/26/2027	2/25/2028
Week 10		3/8/2024	3/7/2025	3/6/2026	3/5/2027	3/3/2028
Week 11		3/15/2024	3/14/2025	3/13/2026	3/12/2027	3/10/2028
Week 12		3/22/2024	3/21/2025	3/20/2026	3/19/2027	3/17/2028
Week 13		3/29/2024	3/28/2025	3/27/2026	3/26/2027	3/24/2028
Week 14		4/5/2024	4/4/2025	4/3/2026	4/2/2027	3/31/2028
Week 15		4/12/2024	4/11/2025	4/10/2026	4/9/2027	4/7/2028
Week 16		4/19/2024	4/18/2025	4/17/2026	4/16/2027	4/14/2028
Week 17		4/26/2024	4/25/2025	4/24/2026	4/23/2027	4/21/2028
Week 18		5/3/2024	5/2/2025	5/1/2026	4/30/2027	4/28/2028
Week 19		5/10/2024	5/9/2025	5/8/2026	5/7/2027	5/5/2028
Week 20		5/17/2024	5/16/2025	5/15/2026	5/14/2027	5/12/2028
Week 21		5/24/2024	5/23/2025	5/22/2026	5/21/2027	5/19/2028
Week 22		5/31/2024	5/30/2025	5/29/2026	5/28/2027	5/26/2028
Week 23		6/7/2024	6/6/2025	6/5/2026	6/4/2027	6/2/2028
Week 24		6/14/2024	6/13/2025	6/12/2026	6/11/2027	6/9/2028
Week 25		6/21/2024	6/20/2025	6/19/2026	6/18/2027	6/16/2028
Week 26		6/28/2024	6/27/2025	6/26/2026	6/25/2027	6/23/2028
Week 27	7/7/2023	7/5/2024	7/4/2025	7/3/2026	7/2/2027	
Week 28	7/14/2023	7/12/2024	7/11/2025	7/10/2026	7/9/2027	
Week 29	7/21/2023	7/19/2024	7/18/2025	7/17/2026	7/16/2027	
Week 30	7/28/2023	7/26/2024	7/25/2025	7/24/2026	7/23/2027	
Week 31	8/4/2023	8/2/2024	8/1/2025	7/31/2026	7/30/2027	
Week 32	8/11/2023	8/9/2024	8/8/2025	8/7/2026	8/6/2027	
Week 33	8/18/2023	8/16/2024	8/15/2025	8/14/2026	8/13/2027	
Week 34	8/25/2023	8/23/2024	8/22/2025	8/21/2026	8/20/2027	
Week 35	9/1/2023	8/30/2024	8/29/2025	8/28/2026	8/27/2027	
Week 36	9/8/2023	9/6/2024	9/5/2025	9/4/2026	9/3/2027	
Week 37	9/15/2023	9/13/2024	9/12/2025	9/11/2026	9/10/2027	
Week 38	9/22/2023	9/20/2024	9/19/2025	9/18/2026	9/17/2027	

Table 1. Friday of each week of the year, 2023-2028.

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Week 39	9/29/2023	9/27/2024	9/26/2025	9/25/2026	9/24/2027	
Week 40	10/6/2023	10/4/2024	10/3/2025	10/2/2026	10/1/2027	
Week 41	10/13/2023	10/11/2024	10/10/2025	10/9/2026	10/8/2027	
Week 42	10/20/2023	10/18/2024	10/17/2025	10/16/2026	10/15/2027	
Week 43	10/27/2023	10/25/2024	10/24/2025	10/23/2026	10/22/2027	
Week 44	11/3/2023	11/1/2024	10/31/2025	10/30/2026	10/29/2027	
Week 45	11/10/2023	11/8/2024	11/7/2025	11/6/2026	11/5/2027	
Week 46	11/17/2023	11/15/2024	11/14/2025	11/13/2026	11/12/2027	
Week 47	11/24/2023	11/22/2024	11/21/2025	11/20/2026	11/19/2027	
Week 48	12/1/2023	11/29/2024	11/28/2025	11/27/2026	11/26/2027	
Week 49	12/8/2023	12/6/2024	12/5/2025	12/4/2026	12/3/2027	
Week 50	12/15/2023	12/13/2024	12/12/2025	12/11/2026	12/10/2027	
Week 51	12/22/2023	12/20/2024	12/19/2025	12/18/2026	12/17/2027	
Week 52	12/29/2023	12/27/2024	12/26/2025	12/25/2026	12/24/2027	

COMMISSION ORDER 2: DEER

The Department's Deer Management Goal is to maintain and, where possible, enhance deer populations at levels that provide maximum and diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the species and its habitat. Guidelines for both species are grouped into "Standard" or "Alternative" hunt management.

Season prescriptions (reference Table 1 on pages 7 and 8 for specific dates for each week):

1. Hunts will be for "antlered mule deer," "antlered white-tailed deer," or "any antlered deer." "Antlerless deer" or "any deer" permits may be recommended for units where the deer population requires reduction or stabilization, or when conflicts with other land management uses exist.
2. Separate hunts for mule deer and white-tailed deer will occur in units having adequate populations of both species of deer.
3. General and muzzleloader deer hunts will occur on standard opening dates. When stratified, a series of 7-day hunts may occur throughout October and November with all hunts opening on a specific Friday. The following seasons will be available:

White-tailed or Mule Deer on Friday of week 43
White-tailed or Mule Deer on Friday of week 44
White-tailed or Mule Deer on Friday of week 45
Mule Deer on Friday of week 46
White-tailed deer on Friday of week 48

If only a single early deer season is selected in October or November, the season should run for 10 days, unless data indicates harvest should be reduced then either permits will be reduced or the season will decrease to 7 days. Rotation of units and season timing of muzzleloader hunts should be considered. If a white-tailed deer season is offered during week 48, the season will run for 10 days. Antlerless elk seasons in standard elk management zones will not overlap with a general or muzzleloader deer season in units with hunts for both species. Season dates will be selected to avoid such overlaps. If the unit is managed under Alternative Hunt Management, 10-day seasons may also be used.

4. A limited amount of December mule deer harvest opportunity may be offered in no more than 10 mule deer units that have adequate populations with at least one offered in each Region; no more than 40 permits will be offered per unit except in units that have had an established December season structure. This December hunt opportunity should be rotated between units annually. A limited amount of December white-tailed deer harvest opportunity will be offered in standard management white-tailed deer units; about 5% of all white-tailed deer permits in a standard management white-tailed deer unit will be offered in December.

White-tailed or Mule Deer on Friday of week 50

5. At least 8% of all general deer permits will be allocated to youth-only hunts. There will be at least 1 general youth-only deer hunt offered in each Region and should be structured to provide a 7 or 10-day season encompassing a school holiday, such as fall break, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, or Thanksgiving and should avoid youth-only elk seasons in the same unit when possible. Youth-only seasons for antlered mule deer will not be held within alternative mule deer management units or during December to February. Youth-only deer seasons may begin on:

Youth-only on Friday of week 40 or 41 (provide a mix of opportunity based on school holidays)
Youth-only on Friday of week 45
Youth-only on Friday of week 47

6. Archery deer seasons may begin on:
 - Friday of week 34 and run for up to 21 days
 - Friday of week 50 and may run through end of December
 - January 1 and may run through January 31
 - Other time periods may be considered in order to meet specific unit management objectives
7. "Alternative Hunt Management" will provide opportunities to harvest older age class animals, for higher hunt success, and where appropriate for lower hunter densities. Alternative hunt management for mule deer will occur in Units 3A/3C, 12A, 12B, 13A, 13B, 17A, 45A, 45B, 45C, 46A, and 46B; hunts will be managed in accordance with the parameters below. Alternative hunt management for white-tailed deer will occur in Units 6A, 23, 30B, 31, and 36C; hunts will be managed in accordance with the parameters below. A limited amount of December white-tailed deer harvest opportunity will be offered in most white-tailed deer units, but up to 30% of the harvest will be allocated with December permits in those units managed under Alternative Hunt Management.
8. Population management hunts may be established in accordance with A.R.S. 17-239 and R12-4-115 to meet management objectives with goals, recommendations, or guidelines that were not met during regular seasons.
9. CHAMP deer hunts may be offered in units that provide suitable access, at times when deer are accessible, and the hunts may be rotated among units. CHAMP seasons will not be offered in alternative management units or during high demand rut time periods.

Opportunity prescriptions for Mule Deer:

- A. Wildlife Managers will manage mule deer for the center of guideline ranges, while keeping confidence intervals in mind. If population surveys are conducted annually, emphasis should be placed on the current year's fawn:doe ratio, considering its effect on next year's buck:doe ratio. If population surveys are conducted every other year, emphasis should be placed on hunt success considering the previous survey's buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios; current year survey data from an adjacent or similar unit may also be considered. For all parameters, emphasize the last survey's data when a clear trend exists or emphasize the mean of the most recent 3 surveys when no clear trend exists. Hunting opportunities should be maximized, where possible, providing an equitable allocation of harvest among weapon types.

Standard Mule Deer Hunt Objectives

Parameters	Decrease	No change	Increase
Fawns:100 Does	<40	40 to 50	>50
Bucks:100 Does	<20	20 to 30	>30
Hunt Success	<20%	20to 30%	>30%
Population Trend	Decreasing	Stable	Increasing

Alternative Mule Deer Hunt Objectives

Alternative mule deer hunt objectives are designed to be considered in specific units to provide more abundant, older-age class deer. These guidelines result in a more conservative harvest and provide greater opportunity to harvest an older age class buck. Emphasis will be placed on the age class parameters. Harvest will be reduced when the 3-year mean is below guidelines or when a downward trend exists and the current year's data falls below guidelines. The Department will collect age data from incisors taken from harvested deer across all hunts in alternative management units and monitor age class structure of these populations.

Parameters	12A, 12B (late general hunts)	13A, 13B (general hunts)	3A/3C (general hunts)	17A, 45A, 45B, 45C, 46A, 46B (general hunts)
Fawns:100 Does	>60 (12A)	—	—	—
Bucks:100 Does	>35	>35	>30	>30
Hunt Success	50–70%	50–70%	50-70%	30-50%
% of Buck harvest ≥3 yrs	65-80%	65–80%	45-65%	45–65%
% of Buck harvest ≥5 yrs	25-35%	45–55%	—	—
Hunter Density	<0.5/mi ²	<0.5/mi ²	<0.5/mi ²	<0.5/mi ²

Season dates for the alternative management hunts in Units 3A/3C and 17A may occur as early as the Friday of week 41.

Unit 12A Management Objectives

Unit 12A will be managed for an optimum but sustainable population level without negatively impacting deer condition or habitat condition. Chronic low fawn:doe ratios may indicate poor maternal nutritional status or fawn survival, which will be considered for increasing antlerless harvests if habitat measures, deer health indices, or yearling buck weights suggest poor nutritional availability. Mean yearling buck weights ≤90 lbs may suggest a decline in range quality. Hunt success and age structure of harvest during late season hunts will be used to adjust permits for alternative structure hunts. Permits during early season hunts in Units 12A and 12B will be adjusted to meet desired buck:doe ratios. Hunter density guidelines are provided to maintain low hunter density during alternative management hunts.

Early season dates in Units 12A and 12B will begin on Friday of week 43. Youth-only hunts in these units should encompass a school holiday. Should permit numbers for a single youth-only season in Unit 12A West exceed 400, a stratified season structure will be recommended; the second season should also encompass a school holiday.

Vegetation in Unit 12A West will be monitored annually to determine range quality and deer use trends on the winter range. Yearling buck weights will be measured during the fall in Unit 12A from hunter-killed animals. Deer body condition from live deer will also be monitored every three years during spring pending funding availability. If deer health is deemed to be poor during one of these efforts, an additional health assessment will be recommended for the next calendar year.

If necessary, population management measures through antlerless harvest in Unit 12A will be implemented according to the following matrix. This matrix is intended to guide management decisions and not be used as a hard and fast rule. Each parameter will be considered in relation to the other parameters with no parameter being considered independently; yearling buck weights will receive the greatest emphasis. For all parameters, emphasize last year's data when a clear trend exists or emphasize the most recent 3-year mean data when no clear trend exists.

Parameters	Winter Range Condition/ Vegetation Monitoring Trend	Yearling Buck Weights	Body Condition	Response
Population Increase	Good to Excellent Condition and Increasing Vegetation Trend		Excellent	Limited Youth Antlerless Permits
Population Stabilization	Fair to Stable Condition and Stable Vegetation Trend or Good Condition and Declining Vegetation Trend	< 90 Pounds	Acceptable	Youth Antlerless Permits
Population Reduction	Poor to Fair Condition and Declining Vegetation Trend	< 90 Pounds	Poor	Antlerless Permits

Opportunity prescriptions for White-tailed Deer:

- B. Wildlife Managers will manage white-tailed deer for the center of guideline ranges, while keeping confidence intervals in mind. If population surveys are conducted annually, emphasis will be placed on the current year's fawn:doe ratio, considering its effect on next year's buck:doe ratio. If population surveys are conducted every other year, emphasis should be placed on hunt success considering the previous survey's buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios; current year survey data from an adjacent or similar unit may also be considered. For all other parameters, emphasize the last survey's data when a clear trend exists or emphasize the mean of the most recent 3 surveys when no clear trend exists. Hunting opportunities should be maximized, where possible, providing an equitable allocation of harvest among weapon types.

Standard White-tailed Deer Hunt Objectives

Parameters	Decrease	No change	Increase
Fawns:100 Does	<30	30 to 40	>40
Bucks:100 Does	<20	20 to 30	>30
Hunt Success	<20%	20 to 30%	>30%
Population Trend	Decreasing	Stable	Increasing

Alternative White-tailed Deer Hunt Objectives

Parameters	Guidelines (general hunts)
Fawns:100 Does	35 to 45
Bucks:100 Does	>30
Hunt Success	30 to 40%
% of Buck harvest ≥3 yrs	45 to 65%
Population Trend	Stable

Alternative white-tailed deer hunt objectives are designed to be considered in specific units to provide more abundant, older-age class deer. These guidelines result in a more conservative harvest and provide for a population that will provide greater opportunity to harvest an older age class buck. The Department will collect age data from incisors taken from deer harvested across all hunts in alternative management units (a subsample maybe used depending on the total number of permits issued but focus should be placed on the late hunt) and monitor age class structure of these populations.

Opportunity prescriptions for Archery Deer:

- C. Archery Draw Units (permit-tag units):
- For the following mule deer units (Units 3A/3C, 11M, 12A, 12B, 13A, 13B, and 17A), archery deer opportunity will be offered through the draw as archery-only hunt permit-tags between late August and December.
 - Archery deer hunt permit-tags will be set to achieve an archery deer harvest that represents a minimum of 20% of the overall harvest in each of these units or harvest will be allocated to meet demand of first-choice applicants among firearms and archery seasons, whichever is greater.

Archery Over-the-Counter Units (nonpermit-tag units):

- Archery hunt opportunity for all mule deer units not listed above as archery draw units and all white-tailed deer units may be offered in August-September, December, and/or January and each unit or grouping of units will have a harvest limit (harvest threshold) established, provided the appropriate Commission Rules and technology infrastructure are in place to allow for and manage a harvest limit approach.
- The harvest limit will be set to achieve an archery deer harvest that represents 20% of the overall harvest in each unit(s). When the harvest limit in an open area is reached the over-the-counter archery deer

season in that unit(s) will close for the remainder of the season dates listed in the hunt regulations for that unit(s); harvest limit will be based on the August through January time period.

- The harvest limit will be calculated for an open area using the following equation.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Firearms Permits Recommended} * 3\text{-year Average Hunt Success} &= \text{Predicted Firearm Harvest} \\ \text{Predicted Firearm Harvest} / 80\% &= \text{Predicted Total Harvest} \\ \text{Predicted Total Harvest} &= 80\% \text{ Predicted Firearms Harvest} + 20\% \text{ Predicted Archery Harvest} \\ \text{Predicted Total Harvest} - \text{Predicted Firearm Harvest} &= \text{Predicted Archery Harvest (20\%)}\end{aligned}$$

- Predicted total harvest will account for all firearms permits recommended for an open area. For seasons that allow harvest of either species, permits will be assigned to each species based on 3-year average harvest.
- In cases where 3-year average buck:doe and/or fawn:doe ratios are below guidelines, the Department will adjust both firearms and archery opportunity to achieve reduced harvest objectives, regardless of average hunt success.
- If the Commission Rules and technology infrastructure are not yet in place then archery deer hunt opportunity will either be offered as over-the-counter hunts managed not to exceed 20% of the overall harvest or as archery draw hunts.

Archery deer harvest will generally be managed not to exceed 20% of the overall harvest in a unit (with the exception of alternative management units). When the 3-year mean archery deer harvest by species exceeds 20% of the harvest of that species or the established harvest limit is exceeded for 2 of 3 years, the Wildlife Manager may recommend restrictions in archery hunt opportunity by closing open time periods, offering seasons at other times during the fall, or moving the unit to the draw. These restrictions may result in archery seasons of varying lengths for any antlered deer, antlered mule deer, or antlered white-tailed deer.

COMMISSION ORDER 3: PRONGHORN

The Department's Pronghorn Management Goal is to maintain and, where possible, enhance pronghorn populations at levels that provide diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the species and its habitat.

Season prescriptions (reference Table 1 on pages 7 and 8 for specific dates for each week):

1. All pronghorn permits will be for "buck only."
2. All pronghorn hunts will occur on standard opening dates and may be stratified. General and muzzleloader hunts will run for 10 days, unless stratified, then hunts will run for 7 days each. Archery hunts will run for 14 days; when stratified, the first 14 day hunt will begin on Friday of week 32. Regions may select the units in which archery-only seasons may be provided annually.

Archery on Friday of week 32 and run for 14 days
Archery on Friday of week 34 and run for 14 days
General or Muzzleloader on Friday of week 36 and run for 7 or 10 days
General or Muzzleloader on Friday of week 37 and run for 7 days

3. To the extent possible, harvest will be allocated to meet first-choice applicant demand among weapon types (5-year means).

Opportunity prescriptions:

- A. Wildlife Managers will manage pronghorn for the center of guideline ranges, while keeping confidence intervals in mind. If population surveys are conducted annually, emphasis should be placed on the current year's fawn:doe ratio, considering its effect on next year's buck:doe ratio. If population surveys are conducted

every other year, emphasis should be placed on hunt success considering the previous survey's buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios; current year survey data from an adjacent or similar unit may also be considered. For all parameters, emphasize the last survey's data when a clear trend exists or emphasize the mean of the most recent 3 surveys when no clear trend exists. Hunting opportunities should be maximized, where possible, providing an equitable allocation of harvest among weapon types.

- B. If the population is within guidelines, permit numbers should reflect a desired harvest of 15 to 25% of the estimated number of available bucks in the population. If the buck to doe ratio is below guidelines, permit numbers should reflect <25% of the estimated number of available bucks in the population,

Guideline	Decrease	Stay the Same	Increase
Fawns:100 Does	<30	30 to 40	>40
Bucks:100 Does	<20	20 to 30	>30
% of Buck harvest ≥ 3 yrs		50 to 70%	
Population Trend	Decreasing	Stable	Increasing

- C. The Department will collect age data from incisors taken from harvested pronghorn in all units and monitor age class structure by unit. Full horn growth in pronghorn is typically achieved between 3 and 5 years of age.

COMMISSION ORDER 4: ELK

The Department's Elk Management Goal is to maintain and, where possible, enhance elk populations at levels that provide maximum and diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the species and its habitat and minimizing land use conflicts. Guidelines are grouped into "Standard" or "Alternative" hunt management.

Management Zones:

- I. Standard Elk Management Zone
- Units 3BS, 3C, 6A, 6B, 7E, 7W, 8, 9, 10, 15A, 15B, 18A, 22, and 23 and portions of Units 1, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 21, and 27.
 - Zone Description: Areas of summer and winter range where the presence of elk is desired for the long-term at levels that provide for diverse recreational opportunities.
 - Management Objective: Maintain elk population at levels that provide diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the species, its habitat, or the habitat of other wildlife, and with minimal substantiated depredation complaints.
 - Harvest Guidelines: Population surveys will be conducted and the survey data used to determine appropriate annual harvest of elk in standard management zones. Population surveys will be conducted and harvest recommendations made in accordance with species management guidelines, hunt guidelines, the Statewide Elk Management Plan and/or the Comprehensive Game Management Plan, if it exists.
 - Harvest Alternatives:
 - Standard season structures for limited permit-tag bull, antlerless, or any elk fall hunts.
 - Limited Opportunity season structures may be established to address population management concerns during times that best meet management objectives.
- II. Winter-Range Elk Management Zone
- Portions of Units 1, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3BN, 4A, 4B, 5A, and 5B
 - Zone Description: Areas where the presence of spring through fall elk populations results in unacceptable levels of conflict with other public or private resources. Winter-range elk management zones will be managed for winter elk use only.

- C. Management Objective: Manage to substantially reduce or eliminate spring through fall (generally April through October) elk populations to enhance habitat quality for wintering elk, and to reduce or eliminate conflicts with other public or private resources during spring through fall months.
- D. Harvest Guidelines: Population surveys may not apply in determining appropriate annual harvest of resident elk within winter-range management zones. The Statewide Elk Management Plan may include alternative methods that may be used for indexing populations within winter-range management zones. Harvest recommendations will be made in accordance with hunt guidelines, the Statewide Elk Management Plan and/or the Comprehensive Game Management Plan.
- E. Harvest Alternatives:
 - 1. Standard season structures for limited permit-tag bull, antlerless, or any elk fall hunts.
 - 2. Limited Opportunity season structures may be established to address population management concerns during times that best meet management objectives.
 - 3. Liberal season structures may use unlimited nonpermit-tag antlerless elk hunts occurring during any portion of the spring through fall (generally April-October).
 - a. Maximum removal of resident elk from winter-range areas.
 - b. Facilitates hunting by local area residents who will likely be more effective at locating and taking elk desired for harvest.
 - 4. Population management hunts: restricted nonpermit-tag for bull, antlerless or any elk.

III. Flexible Elk Management Zone

- A. Units 16A, 17A, 17B, 18B, 19A, 19B, 20A, 20C, and 24A and portions of Units 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B North, 21 North, and 27.
- B. Zone Description: Areas where the presence of elk is recently established or self-maintained at low densities, but the management of other wildlife species may be a higher priority. Flexible elk management zone would allow management of elk populations in areas where habitat conditions were not conducive to high density populations but where it was socially and biologically suitable for maintaining elk populations.
- C. Management Objective: Manage elk populations to reduce or eliminate conflicts with other public, private or wildlife resources by maintaining population densities as deemed appropriate.
- D. Harvest Guidelines: Population surveys may not apply in determining appropriate annual harvest of elk within flexible elk management zones. The Statewide Elk Management Plan may include alternative methods that may be used for indexing populations within flexible elk management zones. Harvest recommendations will be made in accordance with hunt guidelines, the Statewide Elk Management Plan and/or the Comprehensive Game Management Plan.
- E. Harvest Alternatives:
 - 1. Standard season structures for limited permit-tag bull, antlerless, or any elk fall hunts.
 - 2. Limited Opportunity season structures may be established to address population management concerns during times that best meet management objectives.
 - 3. Unlimited nonpermit-tag bull, antlerless or any elk hunts occurring during any portion of the year.
 - 4. Population management hunts: nonpermit-tag for bull, antlerless or any elk.
 - 5. Population management hunts: restricted nonpermit-tag elk hunts occurring concurrent with other permitted big game hunts in specified units authorized by Commission Order. These elk nonpermit-tags would be available for hunters possessing permit-tags for other big game species and would be valid concurrently with the other big game species hunt.

IV. Minimal Occurrence Elk Management Zone

- A. Specific areas within Units 2A, 3A, (4A, 4B), (6A, 19A, 21), (12A, 12B), (13A, 13B), (16A, 44A), 21 South, (28, 31, 32), and 29.
- B. Zone Description: Areas where the presence of elk is minimal and not essential to the long-term maintenance of elk populations and the management of other wildlife species is a higher priority. Minimal occurrence elk management zones will be managed for extremely low densities.

- C. Management Objective: Manage elk populations to reduce or eliminate conflicts with other public, private or wildlife resources by maintaining extremely low population densities, or eliminating populations, as deemed appropriate.
- D. Harvest Guidelines: Population surveys may not apply in determining appropriate annual harvest of elk within minimal occurrence elk management zones. The Statewide Elk Management Plan may include alternative methods that may be used for indexing populations within minimal occurrence elk management zones. Harvest recommendations will be made in accordance with hunt guidelines and the Statewide Elk Management Plan and/or the Comprehensive Game Management Plan.
- E. Harvest Alternatives:
 - 1. Limited Opportunity season structures may be established to address population management concerns during times that best meet management objectives.
 - 2. Liberal season structures may use unlimited nonpermit-tag bull, antlerless, or any elk hunts occurring during any portion of the year.
 - 3. Population management hunts: nonpermit-tag for bull, antlerless or any elk.
 - 4. Population management hunts: restricted nonpermit-tag elk hunts occurring concurrent with other permitted big game hunts in specified units authorized by Commission Order. These elk nonpermit-tags would be available for hunters possessing permit-tags for other big game species and would be valid concurrently with the other big game species hunt.

Season prescriptions (reference Table 1 on pages 7 and 8 for specific dates for each week):

- 1. Antlerless elk hunts are used to influence population trajectory whereas bull hunts are used to influence bull to cow ratios. Antlerless permits should decrease to allow population growth to meet management objectives. Conversely, antlerless permits should increase to reduce a population or limit growth.
- 2. Hunts will be for “bull elk,” “antlerless elk,” or “any elk.” “Antlerless elk” and “any elk” permits may be recommended for units where the elk population requires reduction or stabilization, or when conflicts with other land management uses exist. The number of permits may be adjusted annually to reduce, stabilize, or increase elk populations according to those objectives or annual forage monitoring results.
- 3. *Standard season structure.* General elk hunts will occur on standard opening dates and run for 7 or 10 days. At least 6 general early bull elk hunts will be offered annually; 2 each in Regions 1 and 2 and 1 each in Regions 3 and 6. Additional general elk seasons may be established as needed to address elk management objectives.

Early general bull on Friday of week 39, or week 40 as long as this does not create overlap with any other big game hunt. If the early general bull hunt rotates in front of the early archery bull hunt, the early archery bull hunt would start on week 38 or week 40 and the early general bull hunt would start on Friday of week 37 or week 38

Early general antlerless elk on Friday of week 42
Late general bull on Friday of week 48
Late general antlerless elk on Friday of week 49

Muzzleloader elk hunts will occur on standard opening dates and run for 7 or 10 days. At least 6 muzzleloader bull elk seasons will be offered annually; 2 each in Regions 1 and 2 and 1 each in Regions 3 and 6. Additional muzzleloader elk seasons may be established as needed to address population objectives. Rotation of units should be considered.

Early muzzleloader bull on Friday of week 39, or week 40 as long as this does not create overlap with any other big game hunt. If the early muzzleloader bull hunt rotates in front of the early archery

bull hunt, the early archery bull hunt would start on week 38 or week 40 and the early general bull hunt would start on Friday of week 37 or week 38

Late muzzleloader bull on Friday of week 46

At least 8% of the standard hunt (general, muzzleloader, and archery) elk permits will be allocated to youth-only antlerless seasons. Youth-only elk seasons should be structured to encompass a school holiday, such as Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, or Christmas, and should avoid youth-only deer seasons in the same unit whenever possible. Youth-only elk seasons should run for 7 or 10 days.

Youth-only antlerless elk on Friday of week 40 or 41 (provide a mix of opportunity based on school holidays)

Youth-only antlerless elk on Friday of week 45

Youth-only antlerless elk on Friday of week 51

Early archery hunts will occur on standard opening dates and run for 14 days. All units contained within standard elk management zones (not including winter-range, flexible, and minimal occurrence management zones) will have an early hunt structure and may have a late archery hunt structure. Late archery elk hunts should occur on standard opening dates and run for 7 or 14 days. Late archery elk hunts may be used where they do not create conflicts with other hunts and to help address population objectives or distribute hunt pressure. Additional archery elk seasons may be established as needed to address population objectives.

Early archery on Friday of week 37 or week 38 if an early general bull hunt starts on Friday of week 37 (The early archery hunts may shift to open Friday of week 38 or week 39 if an early general or muzzleloader bull hunt starts on Friday of week 38, if this does not create overlap with any other big game hunt)

Late archery elk on Friday of week 45 or week 46

4. *Limited opportunity season structure.* Limited opportunity elk hunts may be recommended to address population management concerns during times that best meet management objectives.
5. CHAMP elk hunts may be offered in units that provide suitable access at times when elk are accessible, and the hunts should provide some rotation among units. CHAMP seasons will not be offered in alternative management units or during high demand rut time periods.
6. *Liberal season structure.* Liberal season structures may be offered as unlimited over-the-counter nonpermit-tags during times that best meet management objectives.
7. *Population management hunts.* Population management hunts may be established in accordance with A.R.S. 17-239 and R12-4-115 to meet management objectives when goals, recommendations, or guidelines were not met during regular seasons.
8. Habitat-based management guidance will be included in Elk Management Plan or Management Focus Area plan objectives, using forage monitoring results per Department protocol, for individual elk herd units where this data is available. This information may include opportunities for herd growth.
9. Field ages from harvested elk may be used in the determination of elk population objectives and trends.
10. Harvest will be allocated to meet demand of first-choice applicants among general, muzzleloader, and archery seasons (including late archery bull) by sex of elk (5-year means), excluding limited opportunity, CHAMP, military, and Hopi hunts. The allocation is accomplished by first dividing the applicant percentage by the hunt success percentage. The result is divided by a proportioning factor for weapon type.

Opportunity prescriptions:

- A. Wildlife Managers will manage elk for the center of guideline ranges, while keeping confidence intervals in mind. If population surveys are conducted annually, emphasis will be placed on the current year's calf:cow ratio, considering its effect on next year's bull:cow ratio. If population surveys are conducted every other year, emphasis should be placed on hunt success considering the previous survey's bull:cow and calf:cow ratios; current year survey data from an adjacent or similar unit may also be considered. The most recent 3-year mean and trend for all population indices should be used along with current forage monitoring data or Elk Management Plan objectives when determining permit adjustments. When a clear trend exists, emphasize last year's data. When no clear trend exists, emphasize 3-year mean data.
- B. The following table will be used when determining bull permits for units in standard management zones. Emphasis should be placed on 3-year bull:cow and cow:calf ratios over 3-year mean hunt success. Hunt opportunity should be maximized where possible.

Standard Elk Hunt Objectives

Bull Permits should	Decrease	Stay the Same	Increase
Calves:100 Cows	<30	30 to 40	>40
Bulls:100 Cows	<25	25 to 35	>35
Late Bull Hunt Success	<25%	25 to 35%	>35%
Population Trend	Decreasing	Stable	Increasing

Alternative Elk Hunt Objectives

Units 1, 9, 10, and 23 will be managed under Alternative Elk Hunt Objectives. Each unit will have an early archery bull hunt, with an early general or early muzzleloader bull hunt which may be offered during alternate years. The Department will collect age data from incisors taken from harvested bull elk across all bull hunts in alternative management units and monitor age class structure for these populations. Full antler growth in elk is typically achieved by about 8 years of age.

Bull Permits should	Decrease	Stay the Same	Increase
Calves:100 Cows	<30	30 to 40	>40
Bulls:100 Cows (Units 1, 9, 10, and 23)		≤50	>50
% of Bull harvest ≥6 yrs		50 to 70%	
Population Trend	Decreasing	Stable	Increasing

COMMISSION ORDER 5: TURKEY

The Department's Turkey Management Goal is to maintain and, where possible, enhance turkey populations at levels that provide maximum and diverse recreational opportunities. Habitat quality, population status, hunter density, and hunt success will be used to determine hunting opportunities for both spring and fall seasons.

Season prescriptions (reference Table 1 on pages 7 and 8 for specific dates for each week):

1. Spring limited weapon shotgun shooting shot seasons will be stratified. Stratified seasons will result in the overlap of the last 14 days of the first and second seasons. The start date for the first stratified hunt is based on the average nest initiation date for Merriam's and Gould's turkey; Gould's turkeys initiate nesting later than Merriam's turkey.

Merriam's turkey

The first season will open on Friday of week 17 for 7 days, close for 7 days, and reopen for 14 days.

The second season will open on the Friday of week 18 and run for 21 consecutive days.

Youth-only spring season will open on Friday of week 16 for 7 days, close for 14 days, and then reopen for 14 days.

Gould's turkey

The first season will open on Friday of week 18 for 7 days, close for 7 days, and reopen for 14 days.

The second season will open on Friday of week 19 and run for 21 consecutive days.

If a third season is recommended, it will open on the Friday of week 16 for 7 days, close for 14 days, and reopen for 14 days.

2. Archery-only turkey spring seasons will open on Friday of week 19 and run for 14 consecutive days. The entire archery season will overlap the last 14 days of the limited weapon shotgun shooting shot and youth-only seasons.

3. Fall limited weapon shotgun shooting shot season will start on Friday of week 40, or week 46 if an elk hunt occurs in week 40, and run for 7 days.
4. Archery-only turkey fall seasons will open and close to coincide with early fall archery deer season; the season will start on Friday of week 34 and run for 21 days.
5. Youth-only shotgun shooting shot fall seasons will be recommended with season dates concurrent with limited weapon shotgun shooting shot fall seasons; the season will start on Friday of week 40 or week 46 and run for 7 days.

Opportunity prescriptions for Merriam's turkey:

Hunting opportunity will be determined through a Turkey Management Worksheet (located in the Species Management Guidelines), which involves a 4-step process of:

- A. Determining spring and fall hunt structures by unit.
- B. Determining permit changes by unit.
- C. Determining maximum spring hunter density by unit.
- D. If harvest by archery-only hunters on a spring nonpermit-tag hunt exceeds 5% of the total spring harvest in that unit, the archery-only hunt should be closed, or revert to a permitted archery hunt, with permit numbers set to manage for about 5% of the spring harvest.
- E. If the 3-year average harvest by youth-only hunters on a spring nonpermit-tag hunt exceeds 35% of the total spring harvest in that unit, the youth-only hunt should change to a permitted youth hunt, with permit numbers set to manage for about 30–35% of the spring harvest. A permitted youth hunt may revert back to a nonpermit-tag hunt if the habitat quality score is an A or increases to an A and the turkey population is robust enough to support additional harvest.

Management guidelines are:

- F. Hunt structure will fall into one of the following categories as determined by a score generated from the Habitat Quality Scorecard (located in the Species Management Guidelines) and a decision of status within the unit. The Habitat Quality Scorecard for a particular unit should be reviewed at least once every 3 years and/or after any major landscape-level changes such as wildfires, prescribed burns, habitat treatments, or similar event.

- i. If the score is A, the unit will have a permitted fall hunt and permitted spring hunts for non-youth seasons. Archery-only nonpermit-tags will be offered for spring and fall hunts, except as specified in Opportunity Prescriptions (D). Youth-only seasons will be offered as over-the-counter nonpermit-tags for spring and fall hunts in these units, except as specified in Opportunity Prescriptions (E).
 - ii. If the score is B, the unit will have a permitted fall hunt and permitted spring hunts for non-youth seasons. Archery-only seasons will be offered for fall hunts. Youth-only seasons will be offered as over-the-counter nonpermit-tags for spring hunts in these units, except as specified in Opportunity Prescriptions (E).
 - iii. If the score is C, the unit may have a permitted fall hunt and permitted spring hunts for non-youth seasons. Permits should be set to remove about 10% of the female segment (fall seasons) or 30% of the male segment (spring seasons). Archery-only seasons will be offered for fall hunts. Youth-only hunts, if offered in these units, should be permitted.
 - iv. If the score is D, the unit may have a permitted fall hunt and/or permitted spring hunt for non-youth seasons. Permits should be set to remove less than 10% of the female segment (fall seasons) or 30% of the male segment (spring seasons). Archery-only seasons may be offered for fall hunts in these units. Youth-only hunts should not be offered in these units.
 - v. If the score is A, the unit will offer archery companion tags for fall turkey seasons that correspond with and are available to archery elk hunters in that unit.
 - vi. If the fall hunt success is less than 5% for at least two of the last 3 years, the unit's permitted fall hunt may be closed for up to 3 years. The Habitat Quality Scorecard, spring turkey hunt success, number of observations, poult:hen ratios, and archery elk hunter turkey observations will be reviewed to determine when a permitted fall hunt may be recommended.
- G. Permit changes for each hunt and unit will be determined using hunt success. When a significant ($P < 0.2$) 3-year trend exists, emphasize the last year's data. If no trend exists, use the most recent 3-year mean in hunt success. Permit options are as follows.
- i. Permit numbers will increase when:
 - a. Mean hunt success is 15–20% and hunt success trend is increasing, or
 - b. Mean hunt success is greater than 20% and hunt success is stable or increasing.
 - ii. Permit numbers will remain unchanged when:
 - a. Mean hunt success is less than 15% and hunt success trend is increasing, or
 - b. Mean hunt success is 15–20% and hunt success trend is stable, or
 - c. Mean hunt success is greater than 20% and hunt success is declining.
 - iii. Permit numbers will decrease when:
 - a. Mean hunt success is less than 15% and hunt success is stable or declining, or
 - b. Mean hunt success is 15–20% and hunt success trend is declining.
 - iv. In units where 30 or fewer permits are issued during spring seasons, permit numbers may be set or adjusted based on factors other than hunt success, such as minimum number of gobblers, poult:hen ratios, and incidental observations.

Opportunity prescriptions for Gould's turkey:

- A. Hunting opportunity will be determined by evaluating survey data and considering hunting access and hunter density issues on a unit-by-unit basis.

- B. Permit numbers for each unit will initially be set at 30% of the surveyed male segment of the population. This percentage may then be increased or decreased based on the unique characteristics of each unit.
- i. Permit numbers may increase when:
 - a. It is known that a significant portion of the total population was not surveyed, or
 - b. The number of surveyed males and hunter success rates are greater than or equal to the means from the previous 3 consecutive years.
 - ii. Permit numbers may remain unchanged when:
 - a. Surveys are not adequately conducted in a given year, or
 - b. The number of surveyed males and hunter success rates are approximately equal to the means from the previous 3 consecutive years.
 - iii. Permit numbers may decrease when:
 - a. The surveyed number of males is small and the population is thought to be well-surveyed,
 - b. A significant portion of surveyed turkeys are not accessible to hunters due to private property restrictions and other access issues,
 - c. Hunter density becomes a concern and safety hazard due to concentrated turkey populations, or
 - d. Hunter success declines for 3 consecutive years.

COMMISSION ORDER 6: JAVELINA

The Department's Javelina Management Goal is to maintain javelina populations at levels that provide diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the habitat, and minimizing substantiated depredation and nuisance complaints.

Season prescriptions (reference Table 1 on pages 7 and 8 for specific dates for each week):

1. Spring general, handgun, archery, and muzzleloader (HAM) and youth-only javelina hunts will occur on standard opening dates. General and HAM hunts may run for 7 or 10 days (or 11 days to encompass a Monday holiday should it occur on the 11th day). Youth-only hunts will run for 10 days. Archery hunts will begin on January 1 and run through Thursday of week 4.
 - General on Friday of week 8
 - HAM on Friday of week 6
 - Archery on January 1 and extend through Thursday of week 4
 - Youth-only on Friday of week 4
2. Most javelina hunt areas will offer general, HAM, and archery hunting opportunities.
3. CHAMP hunts may be offered on Friday of week 4, coinciding with the youth-only hunts. Hunter density and access will be considered before overlapping these hunts.
4. To the extent possible, permits will be allocated to meet first-choice application demand among weapon types (5-year means).
5. Fall permits will be allocated to youth-only firearm hunts and will run concurrently with youth-only deer hunt seasons. Youth-only javelina permits may be offered exclusively to youth-only deer permit holders during fall hunts.
6. Minimal Occurrence Javelina Management Zone

- A. Units 1–5, 6A North, 7, and 9, and portions of Region 4 units.
 - B. Zone Description: Areas where the presence of javelina is minimal and not essential to the long-term maintenance of javelina populations and the management of other wildlife species is a higher priority. Minimal occurrence javelina management zones will be managed for extremely low densities.
 - C. Management Objective: Manage javelina populations to reduce or eliminate conflicts with other public, private, or wildlife resources by maintaining extremely low population densities, or eliminating populations, as deemed appropriate.
 - D. Harvest Alternatives:
 - a. Liberal season structures may use unlimited nonpermit-tag hunts occurring during any portion of the year.
 - b. Population management hunts: nonpermit-tag for any javelina.
7. Population management hunts may be established in accordance with A.R.S. 17-239 and R12-4-115 to meet management objectives with goals, recommendations, or guidelines that were not met during regular seasons.

Opportunity prescriptions:

- A. Manage for a mean herd size of 6–9 adults per herd or 7–10 total javelina per herd. A decrease in permits is indicated when the mean herd size is below 6 adults or 7 total javelina. An increase in permits is indicated when the mean herd size exceeds 9 adults or 10 total javelina.
- B. Permit recommendations should consider current recruitment. A juvenile javelina will be considered to be any javelina that is less than one-half grown. A decrease in permits is indicated when recruitment is less than 20 juveniles:100 adults. An increase in permits is indicated when recruitment exceeds 30 juveniles:100 adults.

Permits should	Decrease	Stay the Same	Increase
Herd size	<6 adult or 7 total	6 to 9 adult or 7 to 10 total	>9 adult or 10 total
Juv:100 adults	<20	20 to 30	>30
Hunt Success	<20%	20 to 25%	>25%
Population Trend	Declining	Stable	Increasing

- C. Survey data, hunt success, mean hunter days/kill, and total harvest should be evaluated on at least a 3-year trend basis. A decrease in permits is indicated when the above data demonstrate a declining trend in the javelina population. An increase in permits is indicated when the above data demonstrate an increasing trend.
- D. If a javelina hunt has unissued permits after the hunt has ended 2 out of 3 years, then those permits, based on expected harvest, for that unit and hunt structure should be reallocated into another hunt structure or may move into an over-the-counter nonpermit-tag hunt structure the following year.

COMMISSION ORDER 7: BIGHORN SHEEP

The Department's Bighorn Sheep Management Goals are to maintain and, where possible, increase bighorn sheep populations at levels that provide diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the habitat.

Season prescriptions:

- 1. Units may be subdivided into smaller hunt units to prevent hunters concentrating in specific areas within mountain ranges or to encourage hunting within areas with available rams that may be avoided because of access difficulty.
- 2. All hunts will be general seasons.
- 3. Most seasons will run for the month of December except when an extended time period or stratification of a hunt is warranted. Hunt areas may also be opened earlier depending on hunter access and historical success.

4. Hunts may be stratified when hunter densities warrant. Stratified hunts will run for at least 3 weeks each, according to the schedule below. When appropriate, other season stratification options may be considered.

1 st hunt	2 nd hunt
Nov 17 – Dec 7, 2023	Dec 8 – Dec 31, 2023
Nov 15 – Dec 5, 2024	Dec 6 – Dec 31, 2024
Nov 14 – Dec 4, 2025	Dec 5 – Dec 31, 2025
Nov 20 – Dec 10, 2026	Dec 11 – Dec 31, 2026
Nov 19 – Dec 9, 2027	Dec 10 – Dec 31, 2027

Opportunity prescriptions:

- A. Hunt recommendations should be developed using estimated populations based on survey protocols and sighting rates described in species management guidelines, or developed from simultaneous double count surveys, or other empirical research projects (such as Hervert et al. 1998, Sighting rates of bighorn sheep during helicopter surveys on the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona, Desert Bighorn Council Transaction 42:11–26). Emphasize the most recent year’s survey data unless additional information, such as camera trap data, indicates the need or opportunity to adjust permit numbers.
- B. Harvest will be managed to allow for the take of 15 to 25% of the estimated Class III and Class IV rams, or 5-10% of the ram component of the population. Wildlife Managers will manage bighorn sheep within the guideline range (rounding up if the number has a decimal of .7 or greater), while keeping confidence intervals in mind. Wildlife Managers should evaluate whether the recommended permit number can be supported for 3 years; if there are concerns, a thorough justification should be provided in the hunt recommendation.

COMMISSION ORDER 8: BISON

The Department's Bison Management Goals are to:

1. Maintain bison populations at levels which provide maximum and diverse recreational opportunities while avoiding adverse impacts to the habitat;
2. Manage the House Rock bison herd to be concentrated on House Rock Wildlife Area in support of long term bison conservation; and
3. Manage the Raymond bison herd in support of long-term bison conservation of the genetically diverse WICA lineage of bison.

The Department will manage to meet objectives within the statewide bison management plan. The bison management plan will be updated as necessary. The Department will encourage hunters to remain flexible in scheduling their hunt to enhance the effectiveness of this wildlife management effort.

Season prescriptions:

1. Season dates and hunt structures will be designed to meet specific herd management objectives for the Raymond herd and the House Rock herd, which includes the House Rock Wildlife Area and Kaibab Plateau subherds.
2. The number and age class of bison to be harvested will be determined from annual herd survey data, population modeling, and annual habitat monitoring.

Opportunity prescriptions:

- A. All hunts will be limited by permits to meet herd management objectives. Permits may be for “designated bison,” “adult bull only,” “any bull,” “adult cow only,” “any cow,” “yearling only,” “cow or yearling only,” or “any bison.”
- B. Cow harvest should occur in late summer or fall hunts to avoid harvest of pregnant cows or cows with dependent calves.
- C. Population management hunts may be established in accordance with A.R.S. 17-239 and R12-4-115 to meet management objectives with goals, recommendations, or guidelines that were not met, or not expected to be met, during regular seasons.

COMMISSION ORDER 9: BEAR

The Department's Black Bear Management Goal is to manage black bear population numbers and distribution as an important part of Arizona's fauna, while providing hunting and other related recreational opportunities. The hunt recommendation goal is to allow for bear hunting opportunity, while minimizing the harvest of adult females and avoiding adverse impacts to the population.

Season prescriptions (reference Table 1 on pages 7 and 8 for specific dates for each week):

- 1. Stratified seasons may be used during bear seasons to distribute female harvest throughout the fall. If 3 hunts are recommended for a given unit during the fall, at least 1 season will be archery. In units with female harvest limits that total less than 4, a single season may be offered. Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 will each have at least 1 archery bear season. Regions will manage hunt structure to ensure that a release site is available for nuisance bears. Any combination of the following hunts may be used during the fall.

Early fall general hunt beginning on Friday of week 32 and end on Thursday of week 34.

Fall general or archery season beginning on Friday of week 34 and run for up to 38 days.

Late fall general bear season will open on Friday of week 40 and run through the end of the year. A delayed or stratified late fall general bear season may be established as needed to address population objectives.

- 2. Restricted seasons, where dogs may not be used for pursuit of bears, may be used during the fall. Female harvest limits will apply.
- 3. Spring bear seasons may be permitted or offered as over-the-counter nonpermit-tags. All hunts will be coupled with a female harvest limit.

Spring bear season beginning on Friday of week 12 and may run 35 days.

- 4. The legal bear will be any bear except cubs and sows with cubs.

Opportunity prescriptions:

- A. Each unit will have an annual female harvest limit that coincides with the calendar year. The annual female harvest limit should approximate 10% of the female segment of the estimated population. Individual hunts in each unit will also have a female harvest limit for each hunt to distribute opportunity and will close specific hunts when achieved. Female harvests will be cumulative and include any female bears killed by the Department. Once the annual female harvest limit for a unit is achieved, all subsequent bear hunts in that unit will be closed for the remainder of the year. Annual female harvest limits may be increased in units where human-bear conflict issues are a concern and do not constitute any adverse impacts to the black bear population.

- B. Implement hunt structures (season dates, season length) which direct harvest toward the male segment of the bear population.
- C. Evaluate data on a unit basis to determine population status and effect of harvest. Age and sex data from previous harvests should help evaluate the status of a unit's bear population and establish an appropriate female harvest limit. Median age of harvested females should be >5 years of age. Should the 3-year mean total female harvest comprise >40% for the unit(s), the female harvest limit should be reduced or the length of the season shall be shortened for that unit(s).
- D. In units where median age of harvested female is <5 years and female harvest limits are exceeded in 3 of 5 years, seasons should be modified to open on or after November 1. Seasons may be reduced in number or shortened to 3 days in length if only a single season exists to address consistently exceeding female harvest limits. If the female harvest limit cannot be met in any other fashion, seasons in specific units may be closed for a period of 1–2 years to affect median age of harvested female.
- E. Population management hunts may be established to meet management objectives with goals, recommendations, or guidelines that were not met during regular seasons.
- F. Restricted seasons may be offered in a single fall hunt within units that offer more than a single fall bear season to reduce disturbance during other big game hunting seasons that overlap with the bear season.
- G. Extended seasons may be used in the spring or summer to help address human-bear conflict issues or other resource concerns. Extended seasons may also be used to address specific needs within predation management plans. Extended seasons will be offered within defined geographic boundaries within game management units to address specific conflict issues or resource concerns.
- H. An evaluation of habitat quality for a particular unit should be reviewed at least once every 3 years and/or after any major landscape-level changes such as wildfires, prescribed burns, habitat treatments, or similar event.

COMMISSION ORDER 10: MOUNTAIN LION

The Department's Mountain Lion Management Goal is to manage the mountain lion population, its numbers and distribution, as an important part of Arizona's fauna while providing mountain lion hunting and other recreational opportunities. The hunt recommendation goal is to allow for mountain lion hunting opportunity, while minimizing harvest of adult females and avoiding adverse impacts to the population.

Mountain Lion Management Zone

- A. Units: Statewide.
- B. Management Zone Description: Arizona is divided into Mountain Lion Management Zones to better manage regional mountain lion populations. A management zone may consist of a single unit or grouping of biologically similar units. Management zones may be redefined if data suggests adjusting boundaries would be more biologically appropriate.
- C. Management Objective: Maintain mountain lion population at levels that provide diverse recreational opportunities, while minimizing negative impacts to the mountain lion population due to hunting or to big game prey species due to predation. If negative impacts to prey populations are documented, area-specific predation management plans, that may include increased bag limits or harvest thresholds, may be developed to address these impacts.
- D. Harvest Guidelines:
 - a. Management zone harvest trends will be managed to keep adult female harvest $\leq 25\%$ of the total take.

- b. Adult female mountain lion is defined as a female ≥ 3 years of age plus any female under the age of 3 that shows evidence of past nursing.
- c. Bag limit of 1 mountain lion per person per calendar year.

Season prescriptions:

1. Hunt recommendations will be made on a unit or management zone basis.
2. A unit or management zone may be recommended for closure if necessary to maintain a mountain lion population.
3. Harvest thresholds (harvest limits), the total number of mountain lions that may be harvested or the number of female mountain lions that may be harvested, will be established by management zone. The proportion of adult females in the harvest will be used as one parameter to monitor harvest and establish harvest thresholds. Should the 3-year mean adult female harvest comprise $>25\%$ for the management zone, the harvest threshold shall be reduced or the length of the season shall be shortened for that management zone. Should the 3-year mean total female (all ages) harvest comprise $\geq 50\%$ of the total mountain lion harvest for the management zone, a female (all ages) harvest threshold shall be established in conjunction with the total harvest threshold for that management zone.
4. *Season structure.* Seasons shall open with the August archery deer season each year (Friday of week 34) and run through May 31 of the following year (harvest thresholds will be counted starting with the August season opener). Statewide harvest trends will be managed to keep adult female harvest $\leq 25\%$ of the total take and total female (all ages) harvest $< 50\%$ of the total take within each management zone.
5. *Restricted season structure.* Restricted seasons may be used to meet management objectives in units where mountain lion populations may be decreasing, inconsistent with management objectives. Restricted seasons may also be used to address specific needs within predation management plans.
6. *Pursuit-only season structure.* Pursuit-only seasons may be established, if determined appropriate.

COMMISSION ORDERS 11–12, 15–22, AND 24: SMALL GAME AND MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Department's Small Game Management intent is to provide as much small game hunting opportunity as possible. Seasons will be designed to allow standardization and simplification of hunt regulations, better distribution of hunters, and the opportunity to hunt more than 1 species at the same time.

Season prescriptions (reference Table 1 on pages 7 and 8 for specific dates for each week):

1. Small game seasons, excluding migratory game birds, will be set for a 2-year time period.
2. Small game seasons will be open statewide.

Gambel's, scaled, and California quail season will open on Friday of week 42 and close on Sunday of week 7 the following year.

Falconry-only quail season will open September 1 and close the Thursday of week 10 the following year. Falconry-only quail seasons should be statewide except for metro units and national wildlife refuges. For Units 25M, 26M, and 38M seasons may begin as early as July 1 and close as late as March 31.

Montezuma (Mearns') quail season will open Friday of week 49 and close on Sunday of week 7 the following year.

Pheasant seasons not requiring a permit may be open for several weeks. If permitted hunts are recommended, seasons will run a minimum of 3 days and a maximum of 7 days; the seasons may begin as early as September and close in December. Since pheasant hunting conditions are dependent on local agricultural practices, the dates should remain flexible to take advantage of these conditions.

Dusky grouse season will open on September 1 and close on Sunday of week 46.

Chukar season will open on September 1 and close on Sunday of week 7 the following year.

Tree Squirrel will open on Friday of week 40 and close January 31 the following year with the following exceptions: in Unit 31, tassel-eared squirrel season will be yearlong and in Unit 33, tassel-eared squirrel season will run from September 1 through May 31 the following year. Archery-only tree squirrel will coincide with the early archery-only deer and archery turkey hunts in Units 12A, 12B, 13A, and 13B, beginning on Friday of week 34 and run for 21 days. Archery-only tree squirrel season for the rest of the state (excluding national wildlife refuges) will begin Friday of week 34 and end Thursday of week 40 just prior to the general deer season opener. Falconry-only tree squirrel may open on Friday of week 34 and end January 31.

Cottontail rabbit season will be open yearlong.

3. Migratory game bird seasons and bag limits will be set by the Commission annually, consistent with established Federal Frameworks, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Pacific Flyway guidelines for individual species.
4. Possession limits for small game and migratory game birds, excluding Sandhill cranes, will be three times the daily bag limit.

COMMISSION ORDERS 13 AND 23: PREDATORY AND FUR-BEARING MAMMALS AND TRAPPING

The Department's predatory and fur-bearing mammals management intentions are to maintain present range, distribution, and population levels in Arizona; and to allow for maximum recreational, economic, and aesthetic uses commensurate with existing populations statewide. Predatory and fur-bearing mammal seasons will be set for a 2-year time period. Seasons and season dates will be reviewed with the Commission.

1. Bobcat trapping season will open November 1 and close on the last day of February the following year.
2. Bag limits or season closures may be established for bobcat hunting or trapping seasons if population parameters reflect a declining trend. The Department will collect age data from teeth taken from harvested bobcats and monitor age class structure by unit.
3. Coyote daylong seasons may be opened for a unit where a prey species is below management goals and coyote predation is believed to be a major contributing factor, or when coyote predation is identified as a limiting factor in a management focus area plan or other management plan. Daylong seasons will be in place for no less than three years and will be removed when the prey populations reach management objectives.

COMMISSION ORDER 14: OTHER BIRDS AND MAMMALS

The taking of nongame birds and mammals will be consistent with the Department's desire to allow recreational opportunities, commensurate with existing populations statewide. Other birds and mammal seasons will be set for a 2-year time period. Units with black-tailed prairie dogs will not be open to prairie dog hunting. Seasons and season dates will be reviewed with the Commission.