



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Policy and Planning
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To: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission

From: Katie Lanter, Policy and Planning Supervisor

Date: August 29, 2019

Subject: Plains Deer Rifle Season Public Comment Form Results

The Commission is considering final changes to the plains deer rifle season as part of the 2020-2024 Big Game Season Structure at the September meeting in Rifle. Currently the plains deer rifle season starts on the Saturday of the last full weekend of October and lasts 11 days (e.g., October 26 - November 5 in 2019).

As part of the 2020-2024 Big Game Season Structure, CPW made a public comment form available from late December 2018 through early February 2019. During that public comment opportunity, 47% of respondents generally supported keeping the plains deer rifle season as it currently is (status quo). Only 12% of respondents favored moving the plains deer rifle season earlier (see attachment 1).

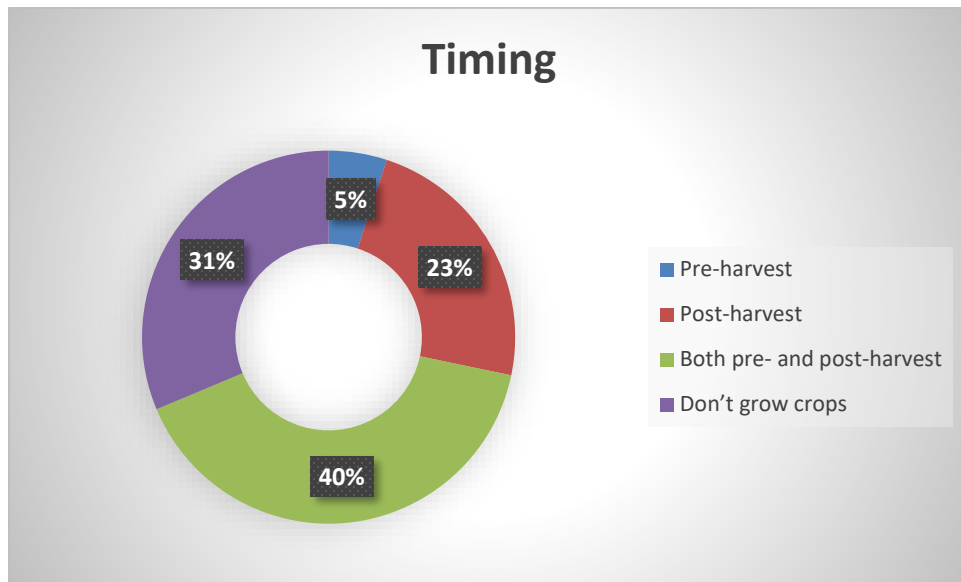
At the Commission's last meeting, a motion was approved on July 18 to set the plains deer rifle season to start on October 20 and run through October 31 annually. On July 19, the Commission stayed the plains deer vote and requested CPW seek out additional public feedback on the plains deer rifle season.

CPW staff made a second public comment form available from August 16-26, 2019 and the form was accessible through CPW's website and Facebook. To get input from landowners on the eastern plains in particular, the form was also sent via email to landowners on the eastern plains who participate in CPW's Landowner Preference Program (LPP). To be a LPP landowner, a person must own at least 160 acres.

In total, 863 individuals responded to the public comment form, 61% of whom hunted during the 2015-2018 plains deer seasons. The majority of those hunters (62%) hunted plains deer with a rifle, 19% used a bow and 19% used both a rifle and a bow. Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents are landowners with at least 160 acres of land east of I-25 in Colorado and of those landowners, 80% said hunting occurred on their property during the first plains deer rifle season between 2015 and 2018. About a third (31%) of the landowners are not growing crops on their land but for those who are, the largest percentage (40%) had hunting occur both pre- and post-crop harvest (see Figure 1).

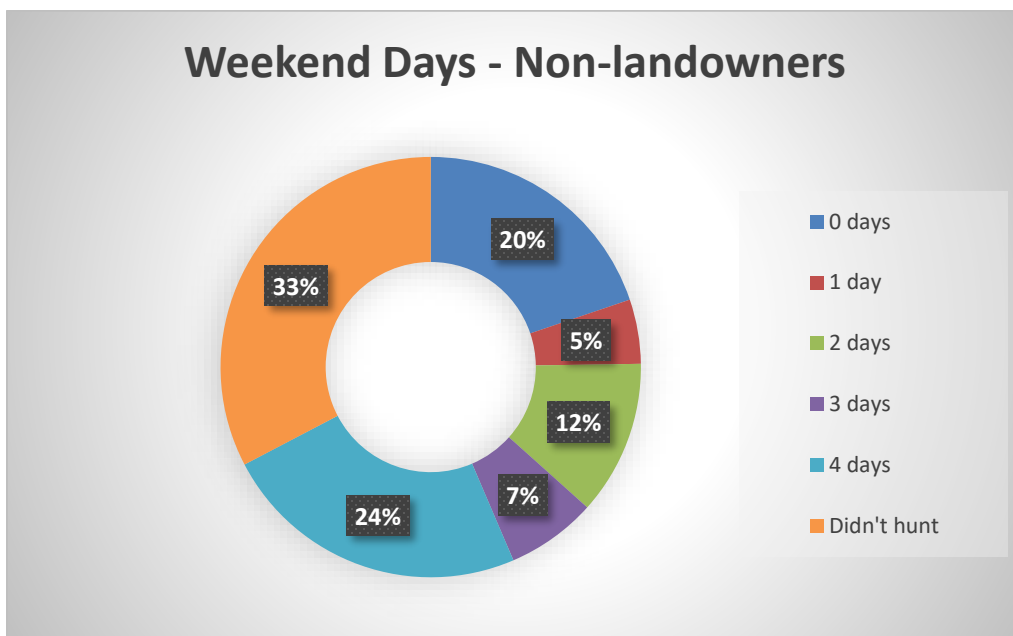


Figure 1: Timing of first plains deer rifle hunting



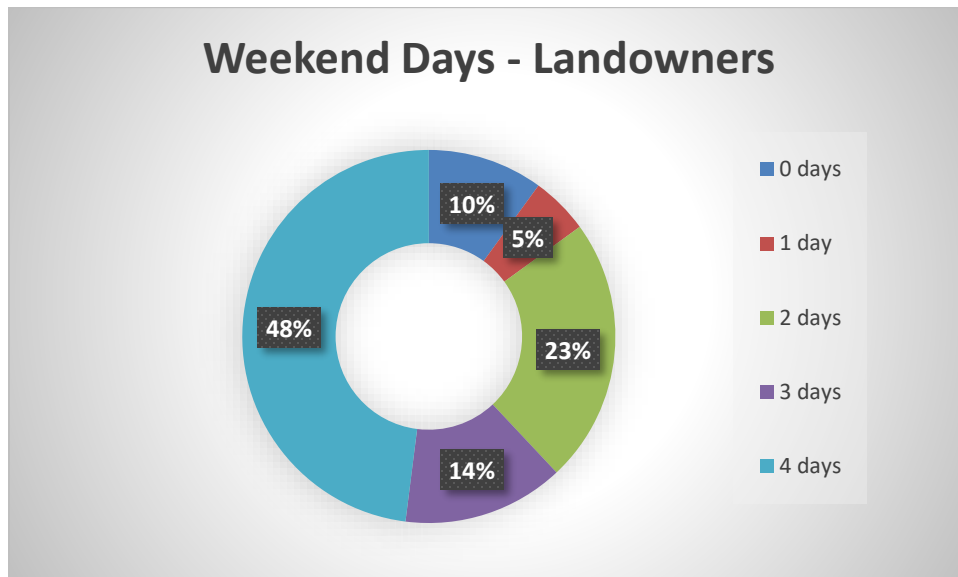
It appears that having weekend days to hunt is something that hunters take advantage of. Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents who hunt (but are not landowners with at least 160 acres) said that they hunted 4 weekend days during the 11 day plains deer rifle season (see Figure 2). Of the respondents who hunted (327), 70% (230) hunted at least 1 weekend day.

Figure 2: Weekend days hunted during the 11 day plains deer rifle season (non-landowners)



Landowners were asked how many weekend days they themselves, or anyone who hunts on their property, hunt. Again a high percentage (90%) said hunting is occurring on weekend days. Forty-eight percent (48%) of landowners said 4 weekend days were hunted during the 11-day season while only 10% said no weekend days were hunted (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Weekend days as reported by landowners with 160+ acres



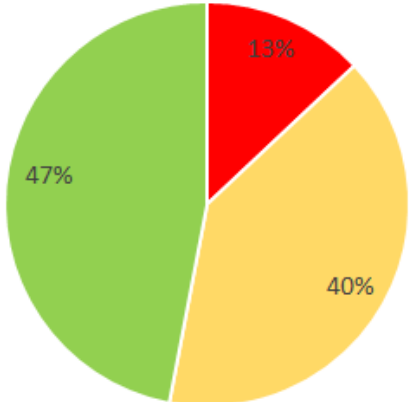
All respondents were asked about their level of support for or opposition to various plains deer rifle season options. Half (50%) of respondents supported a status quo hunting season and 49% supported a season extending later than is currently allowed. About 49% support a longer hunting season. Less than one-quarter (23%) support a season starting earlier than the last full weekend of October and only 21% support a shorter season.

The status quo hunting season always starts on a Saturday and is a 11 day season, meaning every year there are four weekend days during the season. If the season is 14 days or longer, then no matter which day of the week the season begins there would be four or more weekend days during the season. If the season is less than 14 days and begins on a fixed date, then the number of weekend days is variable and could be less than 4 days.

The full comment form results follow this memo in attachment 2.

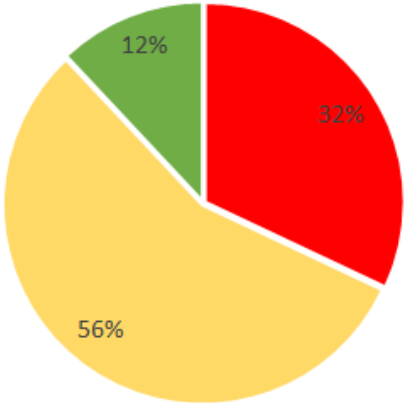
Attachment 1:
Support for First Plains Rifle Deer Season Options
Information gathered via public comment form, late December 2018 through early February 2019, as part of the 2020-2024 Big Game Season Structure

Support for Keeping the First Plains Rifle Deer Season Status Quo



■ Generally Oppose (1-4) ■ Neutral (5-6) ■ Generally Support (7-10)

Support for Moving the First Plains Rifle Deer Season Earlier



■ Generally Oppose (1-4) ■ Neutral (5-6) ■ Generally Support (7-10)

Attachment 2:
Plains Deer Rifle Comment Form Results
8.27.2019

1. Did you hunt during the plains deer seasons between 2015 and 2018? (n = 863)
 - Yes = 61% (527)
 - No = 39% (336)
2. Which method(s) of take did you use? (n = 551)
 - Rifle = 62% (329)
 - Bow = 19% (99)
 - Both = 19% (103)
3. Do you own at least 160 acres of land east of I-25 in Colorado? (n = 849)
 - Yes = 42% (333)
 - No = 58% (516)
4. Did anyone (including you/your family, etc.) hunt on your land in Colorado during the first plains deer rifle season between 2015 and 2018? (n = 334)
 - Yes = 80% (266)
 - No = 20% (68)

*** (Question 4 only pertains to respondents who own 160+ acres of land)*

5. Did the hunting on your land occur pre- or post-crop harvest? (n = 265)
 - Pre-harvest = 5% (13)
 - Post-harvest = 23% (62)
 - Both pre- and post-harvest = 40% (107)
 - I do not grow crops = 31% (83)
6. During the 11 day plains deer rifle season, approximately how many weekend days did you hunt?
(n = 488)
 - 0 days = 20% (97)
 - 1 days = 5% (22)
 - 2 days = 12% (57)
 - 3 days = 7% (36)
 - 4 days = 24% (115)
 - I didn't hunt = 33% (161)

*** (Question 6 only pertained to those who do not own 160+ acres of land)*

7. During the 11 day plains deer rifle season, approximately how many weekend days do you, or anyone else who hunts on your property, hunt? (n = 329)

- 0 days = 10% (32)
- 1 day = 5% (16)
- 2 days = 23% (77)
- 3 days = 14% (47)
- 4 days = 48% (157)

8. Please indicate your level of support or opposition for each the following plains deer rifle season options (n = 767)

A longer season (12 or more days):

- 49% support - 13% Neither support nor oppose - 38% oppose

A season extending later into the calendar year than is currently the case

- 49% support - 22% Neither support nor oppose - 30 % oppose

Status quo: Season starts on the Saturday of the last full weekend of October and lasts 11 days

- 50% support - 27% Neither support nor oppose - 22% oppose

The season starting earlier than the last full weekend of October

- 23% support - 25% Neither support nor oppose - 52% oppose

A shorter season (10 or less days)

- 21% support - 15% Neither support nor oppose - 63% oppose