



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

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To: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission

From: Jeff Ver Steeg, Assistant Director of Research, Policy and Planning; Lauren Truitt, Assistant Director of Information and Education; Reid DeWalt, Assistant Director of Aquatic, Terrestrial and Natural Resources

Date: December 21, 2020

Re: Allocation Discussion and Planning Proposals

At its November 2020 meeting, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission passed a motion to maintain the current regulations related to the method used to determine the resident/non resident allocation of big game licenses (maintained status quo). Although no change was made, there was general agreement that allocation issues need to be addressed and a long-term solution should be found that eliminates the need to regularly revisit this topic. Some Commissioners advocated for a small, “surgical” update of the years used in the calculation. Other Commissioners expressed the need to first identify the full scope of this issue, and then to take a holistic approach and solicit public feedback on potential changes of the current allocation regulations that might be considered for the 2022 big game seasons.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) recognizes the Commission’s interest in undertaking a new process to solicit public feedback in 2021. While the specifics on what will be addressed remains unclear, staff anticipates a holistic process that may include multiple public meetings and town halls, focus groups, and the completion of a survey instrument to properly inform the Commission’s discussions and decisions. In addition, staff anticipates several presentations to the Commission at their regular meetings to share information and proposed alternatives for how CPW allocates licenses. At this time, staff estimates such a process to take 15-18 months.

The Commission and CPW have multiple competing priorities that demand substantial time investment and public processes within this time period. Reintroduction of gray wolves, access to State Wildlife Areas, Regional Partnerships, potential creation of new state parks, a state park visitor satisfaction study, development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Colorado Sportspersons Access Working Group, and a survey instrument on landowner perspectives of chronic wasting disease, among others, all include public processes. Due to the breadth of major commitments already planned for 2021 and 2022, and an assessment of existing workloads among the agency staff that would lead a process for license allocation, CPW does not have the bandwidth to complete a comprehensive process for allocation at this time.



CPW last took a holistic approach and sought public feedback on license issues (allocation, preference points, hybrid draw, etc.) in 2014 and 2015 during the Big Game Season Structure (BGSS) process and an independent process for license allocation. Historically, allocation topics have heavily distracted from other season structure topics, so the Commission intentionally staggered these processes. In support of both processes, the objectives of the 2014 Big Game Hunter Attitude Survey (BGAS) were to determine satisfaction with and knowledge of the current process used to allocate big game hunting licenses in Colorado, and to determine potential effects of changes to big game license allocation processes on hunter satisfaction and participation. Hunter perspectives were assessed from over 3,000 survey respondents (resident and non-resident). Results showed that 77% of non-resident elk hunters and 60% of non-resident deer hunters were satisfied with their ability to draw an elk or deer license in Colorado; 69% of resident elk hunters and 51% of resident deer hunters were satisfied. In other words, the majority of elk hunters and most deer hunters were satisfied with license allocation. In addition, a Commission-established subcommittee evaluated additional analyses and potential changes to license allocation. Ultimately, the subcommittee recommended a freeze on the list of hunts included in the 80/20 allocation and to further explore how to account for preference point creep for future adjustments to this list of hunts.

Although the 2014 BGAS results may still be valid, a new hunter survey could inform the 2025-2029 BGSS process starting in 2023 and help the Commission make an informed decision on what changes are desired on various license related issues in addition to allocation. A new survey could include questions on allocation, preference points, the hybrid draw, and other topics. Therefore, should the Commission want to move forward with identifying the scope of license allocation and other issues, staff recommends launching a new BGAS in early 2022 in lieu of a holistic public process specific to license allocation in 2021.

Summary of CPW Recommendations:

- Defer a holistic public process on big game license allocation issues until staff have the capacity to complete the work.
- Initiate a hunter survey in winter (January) 2022 designed to define the scope of license related changes that are needed, as well as inform upcoming Big Game Seasons Structure considerations. Presentation of results in summer/fall 2022, *before the next BGSS process begins in 2023.*
- Define clear objectives regarding all license-related changes that are needed and a timeline appropriate to meet them.
- Alternatively, just update the years or make a similar “small” change for implementation in 2022 hunting seasons and not pursue allocation further. However, even small changes generate considerable public input.