



# COLORADO

## Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Policy and Planning Unit  
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To: The Parks and Wildlife Commission  
From: Danielle Isenhart, Big Game Season Structure Team Lead  
Date: May 24, 2019

### Re: 2020-2024 Big Game Season Structure Staff Recommendations/Alternatives

When drafting recommendations and alternatives for the 2020-2024 Big Game Season Structure (BGSS), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) used feedback from the public outreach process to formulate four primary objectives. Keeping these objectives in mind will be useful to ensure the end product is consistent with the original intent, particularly if alternatives are revised over the upcoming months.

#### Primary Objectives for the 2020-2024 BGSS:

1. Increase the length and effectiveness of breaks to improve redistribution of wildlife to public lands.
2. Maintain length and timing of existing season structure whenever feasible.
3. Reduce hunter crowding during the early seasons.
4. Increase hunting opportunity and remove unnecessary barriers to hunting participation when consistent with species management plans.

### Species-specific Alternatives or Recommendations

#### Deer and Elk Early Seasons West of I-25 and GMU 140

**Alternative 1:** Archery elk season would run from September 2-30. Either-sex over-the-counter (OTC) archery elk licenses could be specified as bull-only with limited cow licenses offered geographically where necessary to meet specific herd management objectives.

**Alternative 2:** Archery elk season would run from September 2-30. Archery elk licenses would be completely limited (meaning available only through the limited license drawing). Potential hunt codes could cover entire Data Analysis Units (DAUs) or be specified by sex (bull or cow).

**Alternative 3:** Create two archery seasons for elk, by splitting the current single season in half. The first elk archery season would run Sept 2-14 and would be OTC, bulls only. The second archery season would run Sept 15-30 and would be limited and either-sex. Licenses would be List A for both seasons. This means that hunters could only hunt in one of



the two archery seasons annually and that any other elk licenses they purchase for that licensing year, would be required to meet List B qualifications (i.e., antlerless or private land only licenses). The current limited archery elk units and season would remain unchanged.

**Alternative 4: Status Quo.** The current deer and elk archery season (west of I-25 and unit 140) is a 30-day season, that opens the last Saturday in August.

In Alternatives 1-3, archery deer would start August 25th and would run through the end of September. In Alternative 4, archery deer would continue to overlap with the archery elk season (no change).

**Muzzleloader Recommendations**

Status quo for muzzleloader, same dates and continue overlap with a portion of the archery season. *9-day season that starts the second Saturday in September.*

No OTC muzzleloader licenses for elk or pronghorn would be available under any alternative.

**Deer and Elk Rifle Seasons West of I-25 and GMU 140**

**Alternative 1: Status quo, no change.** Deer hunting available in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th seasons. OTC for bull elk available in the 2nd and 3rd seasons. Dates for this alternative would be as follows:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
High Country Deer	Sept 12-20	Sept 11-19	Sept 10-18	Sept 9-17	Sept 7-15
1st Rifle Elk	Oct 10-14	Oct 9-13	Oct 15-19	Oct 14-18	Oct 12-16
2nd Rifle Combo	Oct 17-25	Oct 16-24	Oct 22-30	Oct 21-29	Oct 19-27
3rd Rifle Combo	Oct 31-8	Oct 30-7	Nov 5-13	Nov 4-12	Nov 2-10
4th Rifle Combo	Nov 11-15	Nov 10-14	Nov 16-20	Nov 15-19	Nov 13-17

**Alternative 2: "Early Bull Rifle 5-day":** Create an early rifle bull season in addition to four regular rifle seasons. The four regular rifle seasons would each be 5 days, with a 9-day break in between each season. OTC for bull elk available in the 2nd and 3rd seasons only. Dates for this alternative would be as follows:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
*High Country Deer	Sept 12-20	Sept 11-19	Sept 10-18	Sept 9-17	Sept 7-15
Early Rifle Bull	Oct 3-7	Oct 2-6	Oct 1-5	Oct 7-11	Oct 5-9
1st Rifle Combo	Oct 10-14	Oct 9-13	Oct 15-19	Oct 14-18	Oct 12-16
2nd Rifle Combo	Oct 24-28	Oct 23-27	Oct 29-2	Oct 28-1	Oct 26-30
3rd Rifle Combo	Nov 7-11	Nov 6-10	Nov 12-16	Nov 11-15	Nov 9-13

\*4th Rifle Combo      Nov 21-25      Nov 20-24      Nov 26-30      Nov 25-29      Nov 23-27

*\*High Country Deer Optional; 4th rifle deer optional*

**Alternative 3: “Longer Breaks, Shorter 3rd season”:** Keep four regular rifle seasons, but make the 1st, 3rd and 4th seasons each 5 days long, with the 2nd being a longer 9-day season. Increase breaks between seasons (*6-day break between 1st and 2nd, 8-day break between 2nd and 3rd, 6-day break between 3rd and 4th*). Seasons start alternating on Saturdays and Wednesdays, but each season contains one full weekend. No early bull season under this alternative.

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
*High Country Deer	Sept 12-20	Sept 11-19	Sept 10-18	Sept 9-17	Sept 7-15
1st Rifle Elk	Oct 10-14	Oct 9-13	Oct 15-19	Oct 14-18	Oct 12-16
2nd Rifle Combo	Oct 21-29	Oct 20-28	Oct 26-3	Oct 28-2	Oct 23-31
3rd Rifle Combo	Nov 7-11	Nov 6-10	Nov 12-16	Nov 11-15	Nov 9-13
*4th Rifle Combo	Nov 18-22	Nov 17-21	Nov 23-27	Nov 22-26	Nov 20-24

*\*Optional High Country Deer and 4th Rifle Deer*

**First Plains Rifle Deer**

- Preferred Alternative/Status Quo - 11-day season starting the last full weekend in October. Dates under this alternative would be:

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2024</u>
Oct 24-Nov 3	Oct 30- Nov 9	Oct 29-Nov 8	Oct 26- Nov 5

- Secondary Alternative- Establish a consistent set of slightly earlier (week or two) dates for the first plains rifle deer season.

**Bear**

- Preferred Alternative - Split the existing September rifle season into two seasons, roughly equal in length. All September rifle bear season licenses would be limited (drawing only), including private-land-only licenses (PLOs).
- Secondary Alternative - Status Quo for September rifle bear, with a 28 day season that would run September 2-30.
- Staff Recommendation - For the remainder of bear hunting seasons (archery, muzzleloader, concurrent rifle, concurrent rifle PLO and Plains), create two management strategies based on DAU management plan criteria. *The concurrent rifle season for bears overlaps the season dates for the four regular rifle deer and elk seasons.*

- For those DAUs where the bear population management strategy is to reduce/suppress the bear population:
    - **Archery Season-** Allow individuals to purchase an over-the-counter (unlimited in quota) archery bear license with their deer or elk archery license, if successful in the drawing or if a deer or elk archery license is purchased as a leftover. **Season participation rules** would apply (meaning the bear license must overlap at least one unit with the deer or elk license, one season date, and by the same method of take (archery, muzzleloader, or rifle)) as the deer or elk license. *Limited\** bear archery licenses would also be available in the draw (or potentially as leftovers) for those individuals who only want to hunt bears. *\*This recommendation assumes that archery elk licenses also become limited; otherwise, these archery bear licenses could also be sold OTC.*
    - **Muzzleloader Season** - Allow individuals to purchase an OTC (unlimited in quota) muzzleloader bear license with their deer or elk muzzleloader license, if successful in the drawing or if a deer or elk muzzleloader license is purchased as a leftover. **Season participation rules** would apply (meaning the bear license must overlap at least one unit, one season date, and by the same method of take as the deer or elk license. Limited bear muzzleloader licenses would also be available in the draw (or potentially as leftovers) for those individuals who only want to hunt bears.
    - **Concurrent Rifle Season** - Have OTC bear licenses available for the concurrent rifle season (no hunting during breaks between seasons). No season participation rules apply.
    - **Concurrent Rifle PLO and Plains Seasons** - OTC bear licenses available with no season participation rules.
    - *In deer and elk units managed for a more limited, higher-quality hunt, bear licenses may only be available to those hunters who also hold a deer or elk license for that unit(s) and season.*
  - For those DAUs where the bear population management strategy is to maintain a stable population:
    - **Archery, Muzzleloader, Concurrent Rifle Seasons** - all bear licenses would be limited and available through the draw or potentially as leftovers.
    - **Concurrent PLO and Plains Seasons** - OTC bear licenses available with no season participation rules.
- Create a **reduced-price youth bear license** (\$14 for residents/\$50 for nonresidents).
  - Create a **reduced-price resident bear license** priced at \$38. Nonresidents would continue to pay \$100. *Bear licenses would be priced the same, regardless of whether or not the customer held a deer or elk license.*

## Moose

- As far as season dates/timing, keep the archery and muzzleloader moose seasons status quo with no change. The current moose archery season starts the first Saturday after Labor Day in September and runs through the close of the archery deer and elk season. The muzzleloader moose season is a 9-day season overlapping the deer and elk muzzleloader season (opening the second Saturday in September). The rifle season would be modified as follows:
  - Bull moose rifle season- October 1-14 annually. *Status Quo*
  - Cow moose season- Overlap with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th rifle seasons, with no hunting during the breaks between seasons. *Currently the rifle season for both cow and bull moose is October 1-14.*
- Allow season choice for bull moose hunting. Season choice means that license holders can hunt in all available seasons for that species (with the appropriate method of take), as long as their license is unfilled and they are hunting in the same unit(s) that their license is valid for.
  - **Alternative 1/Preferred Alternative:** Season choice for bulls only. Status quo (floating quota) for cow moose. *A floating quota for moose is a single quota by unit(s) that "floats" between all the seasons (archery, muzzleloader, and rifle).*
  - **Alternative 2:** No season choice.

## Pronghorn

- Add one additional weekend to the end of the existing pronghorn rifle season, making it a 9-day season (second full week of October).
- Create an extended youth season for pronghorn that is available statewide in any existing late (December or January) doe season. *No longer restricted to the SE Region.*
- Extend the latest possible closing date for the late doe pronghorn rifle season to January 31 (instead of end of December) to address game damage concerns. *This is an optional extended season for game damage purposes and not a mandatory requirement statewide.*

## Youth

- Create an extended youth season for pronghorn that is available statewide in any existing late (December or January) doe season. *No longer restricted to the SE Region.*
- Create a reduced-price youth bear license (\$14 for residents/\$50 for nonresidents).

These recommendations and alternatives will be discussed with the Commission in June, with proposed final approval of the 2020-2024 BGSS in July. A second online comment form will also be available for 30-days (starting May 28th) to allow the public to share feedback on these alternatives and recommendations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.