

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

2020-2024

Big Game Season Structure

SUMMARY REPORT OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT • MAY 2019



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I. Executive Summary

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) uses a five-year Big Game Season Structure (BGSS) as a framework to guide annual big game hunting regulations, primarily through setting the timing, length, and number of seasons for hunting big game in the state. The current BGSS planning horizon will expire at the end of 2019, and the agency has prioritized a publicly-driven process to generate an updated BGSS framework for the time period of 2020-2024. This document describes the public involvement activities that have taken place to ensure that interested citizens, stakeholders, decision-makers and the general public are informed about the BGSS review process and have had an opportunity to provide their input.

Input on the 2020-2024 BGSS was collected from the public in several different ways. The primary way was through an online public comment form which was available on the CPW webpage from late December 2018 through early February 2019. A hard copy of the comment form was also available at CPW offices, online as well as at BGSS public meetings. Fifteen BGSS public meetings were held throughout the state during the public comment period. Additionally, there were two telephone town halls (one for residents and one for nonresidents) and two focus group meetings (one on the eastern slope and one on the western slope) where CPW staff engaged with sportsmen and women about season structure topics. Through these avenues the agency interacted with 458 in-person public meeting attendees, 6,800 social media public meeting viewers, 4,749 people over teleconference, received public comment feedback from over 3,000 respondents, and spoke intimately with 18 focus group participants.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (Commission) approved 8 main topics for discussion during this process. Within that framework, highlights from the public input process included:

- General satisfaction with season length and timing for all big game species except moose.
- Concern with crowding during the early seasons and concern with the overlap of the archery and muzzleloader seasons. Less than 30% supported making no changes to the deer and elk archery season.
- Desire to expand breaks between seasons. Overall, herd health is a concern, particularly for elk.
- Suggestion from residents to limit or cap the number of over-the-counter licenses sold to nonresidents.
- General satisfaction with youth hunting opportunity.

An internal BGSS team will be utilizing all of the public's feedback to help develop alternatives for the next five-year BGSS that will be presented to the Commission in June of 2019. The final 2020-2024 BGSS is scheduled for Commission approval in July 2019.

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II. Background

The BGSS is intended to guide CPW's management activities in order to keep big game populations in balance with habitat and help CPW provide a broad range of hunting experiences to fit the varied preferences of different hunters. CPW aims to continue to improve upon the existing structure, and public input is an essential part of that goal.

The CPW 2020-2024 BGSS process was initiated by the Commission in the early summer of 2018. CPW established an internal Big Game Season Structure Team that included representatives from every region and many sections within the agency to help guide this process. Through the fall of 2018, CPW staff and the Commission undertook a scoping period to identify BGSS issues and discussion topics that would frame the public outreach process for the 2020-2024 season structure. These discussion topics as well as the public outreach strategy were finalized and approved by the Commission in September of 2018. In December of 2018 CPW officially launched public outreach efforts to inform the public and stakeholders about BGSS and to collect input from the public on these discussion topics and how the current hunting season structure could be improved.

CPW used multiple tools to share information on the BGSS process with the public and to collect public input. The largest component of our public outreach efforts was an online public comment form which was open from December 22, 2018 – February 11, 2019. We promoted and asked hunters to fill out the comment form at all of our BGSS public meetings, telephone town halls, on our website, through social media, news releases and radio programs.

Following the review of outcomes from the public input process, CPW staff will develop alternative proposals for the 2020-2024 BGSS. These will be presented to the Parks and Wildlife Commission in June of 2019. In order to inform regulation setting for the 2020 seasons, the Commission will need to approve the 2020-2024 BGSS by September of 2019 at the latest.

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III. Process Summary

To inform recommendations for the 2020-2024 BGSS, CPW utilized both a scoping period and a public outreach period. The following summarizes each of these processes.

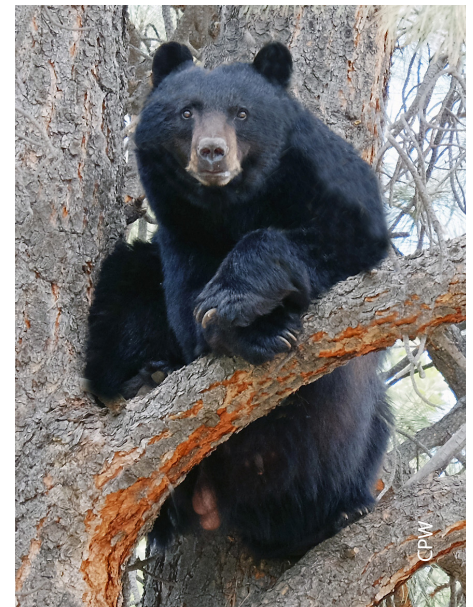
Scoping

In 2014, CPW conducted an intensive public involvement process to inform the 2015-19 BGSS, which also included implementing a big game attitude survey. In general, CPW heard from the survey results that hunters were satisfied with season lengths and timing, similar to outcomes heard in the previous season structure. For this 2020-2024 season structure process, CPW proposed forgoing another big game attitude survey, utilizing instead, a public comment form and a narrowly focused list of discussion topics. This narrow list of discussion topics was developed by looking at issues that had arose since the last season structure amongst staff, members of the public and the Commission. Discussion topics were presented and discussed publically at both the May and September 2018 Commission Meetings.

From the scoping process, the primary discussion topics that were approved by the Commission included:

- **A Strong Focus on Early Seasons-** Exploring options to address increasing participation during the archery season. This included the consideration of limiting some or all archery elk licenses, setting caps on over-the-counter archery elk licenses, or changing the timing/configuration of the archery season. Citizen petition requests to eliminate the overlap between the archery and muzzleloader seasons and create over-the-counter muzzleloader license opportunities for elk and pronghorn were also included.
- **Pronghorn-** Increasing hunting opportunity through mechanisms such as extending the pronghorn rifle season to include a second weekend or creating an optional second rifle season. Also exploring options to extend dates for the late pronghorn season hunts to address game damage concerns.
- **Moose-** Adding an optional second rifle season for moose to increase harvest in targeted areas. A citizen petition that requests allowing licensed moose hunters to hunt any available moose season for their unit(s) with an unfilled license and appropriate method of take was also included.
- **Bear-** Exploring ways to increase bear harvest without affecting hunter crowding, such as creating multiple September rifle seasons or bear/deer or elk combination licenses.
- **Elk-** Creating an early rifle bull season in select units.
- **Whitetail Deer-** Implementing a set date for the eastern plains rifle season to avoid hunting deer during the rut.
- **Youth-** Increasing youth opportunity and participation.
- **General-** Altering day of the week season start dates and increasing breaks between seasons.

Other topics important to Colorado hunters, including license allocation, preference points, and lion hunting were not included in this BGSS process, as the level of public involvement necessary to adequately address each of these topics was outside the scope of this process.



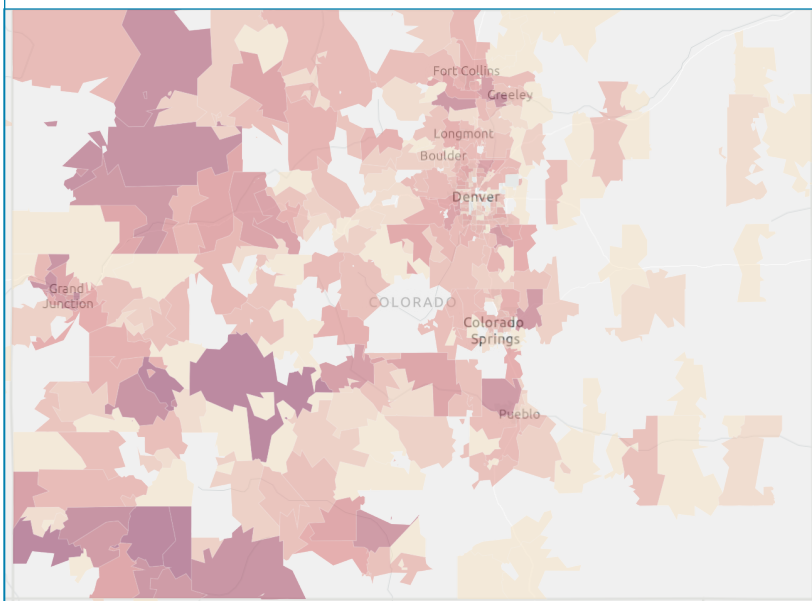
Public Outreach

Public education about the 2020-2024 BGSS process began in May of 2018 and direct consultation with the public took place from December 22, 2018 through the beginning of April 2019. This consultation period focused on raising awareness of the BGSS process and creating opportunities for interested individuals and organizations to share their thoughts, preferences and suggestions. Through public meetings, the webpage, direct communications, media, telephone town halls and other outreach activities, the public was encouraged to share their ideas and opinions with us.

Materials: To help inform the public and solicit their input, CPW staff developed a variety of handouts, fliers and other informational materials for distribution at public meetings, on the website and through CPW offices. During the public comment period (December 22, 2018- February 11, 2019), the CPW website featured a prominent link to the BGSS webpage. The webpage provides access to general information, in-depth resource materials on the BGSS and details for how the public can be involved and provide input.

Public Comments: Based on the approved discussion topics developed during the scoping process, CPW staff developed a standard public comment form (*Appendix A*). This form was made easily accessible electronically on our website, in hard copy form at our public meetings, and was well advertised through every BGSS outreach opportunity. Comment forms were designed to facilitate organization of comments by the issue categories while also allowing individuals to add issues and to provide detailed open-ended comments. During the public comment period, we received comment forms from 3,034 respondents (2,523 residents, 511 nonresidents). This map of Colorado broken out by zip code, shows where the highest number of resident respondents claimed to reside.

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All the public comments were compiled into a database, summarized and coded by staff.

Announcements: A CPW press release informing sportsmen/women that the public comment period was open was sent to media outlets around the state in early January 2019. Since then, over a dozen media outlets have printed stories about the 2020-2024 BGSS and it has also been referenced on a variety of hunting-related message boards.

CPW Facebook posts were made throughout the public comment period with a link to the online public comment form.

Several formal presentations on the BGSS were made to the Sportsmen's Roundtable throughout the process. The CPW BGSS team notified other sportsmen's organizations of the process as well and offered to attend their statewide meetings to present on BGSS. Both the Colorado Bowhunters Association and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers asked CPW staff to attend a meeting of their members to discuss BGSS. Both of those meetings took place in January 2019. Area Wildlife Managers also shared BGSS materials through regional offices and events around the state.

Public Meetings: CPW organized and hosted 15 BGSS public meetings that covered every region across the state. Meetings were designed to give the public an opportunity to learn about the specific issues addressed by the BGSS process, to speak with experienced staff and to have their questions asked and opinions heard. In addition, public meetings were an opportunity for staff to share the public comment form and encourage people to offer their input. Meetings were well-advertised and well-attended. In total, 458 people attended BGSS public meetings in person. The Denver public

meeting also had a Facebook Live stream, which 6,800 people viewed. Comment forms received at these meetings were captured in a database and carefully reviewed by the CPW BGSS team. Polling data was also captured at many of these meetings.

Telephone Town Halls: In late January and early February 2019, CPW and an independent contractor held two telephone town hall meetings, one for resident licensed hunters and one for nonresident licensed hunters. Between the two calls, 50,000 big game hunters who hunted in Colorado between 2014-2018 (25,000 residents and 25,000 nonresidents) for either elk, deer, pronghorn, moose, or bear were contacted. The town hall phone number was promoted and posted on the CPW website, so anyone interested could call-in to participate. In total 4,749 hunters participated in the calls, with over 2,000 participants on each call. CPW expert panelists, including one Regional Manager, one Senior Biologist and one Area Wildlife Manager participated on each call, giving an overview of the BGSS process, answering questions and encouraging participants to provide comments through the CPW website. Additionally, six polling questions were asked to the live audience which participants could answer using the keypad on their phones.

Telephone town hall meetings offered a unique method for allowing direct participation of large numbers of licensed hunters who might not hear about BGSS through other channels. Furthermore, the telephone town hall format provided an important method for reaching nonresident hunters who are unlikely to travel to a public meeting in Colorado.

Focus Groups: In response to the public’s interest in addressing the increasing trend in over-the-counter archery participation and crowding during the early seasons, the BGSS team held two focus groups to collect more detailed information on hunters’ interests in regards to changes to the early seasons. One focus group meeting was held in Denver and the other was held in Grand Junction, both in mid-March 2019. To ensure ad-equate representation from different hunting groups, CPW invited a variety of early season hunters to participate including those whose most preferred method of take was archery, muzzleloader, early season rifle, as well as hunters who used multiple methods of take (muzzleloader, early rifle, and archery). Based on selection criteria, thirteen individuals were invited to each meeting from names provided by Area offices. Eighteen people in total participated on the day of the events; 8 in Denver and 10 in Grand Junction.

The intent was to hear from early season hunters directly to better understand the breadth and depth of concerns that they have been experiencing.

Specific objectives included:

1. Explore hunters’ concerns with the early seasons including those related to crowding and hunters impacts on animal distribution and exploring the root causes of these concerns.
2. Determine to what extent early season hunters feel crowded and how these feelings relate to season timing, geographic location, and different methods of take.
3. Identify whether early season hunters felt crowded, determining whether they supported modifying the season structure to reduce crowding even if it meant reducing their hunting opportunities.
4. Explore what hunters consider to be the most important aspects of the current archery and early season hunt and potential trade-offs if modifications were made.
5. Identify support for different management actions or alternatives.

Focus groups provide a valuable source of qualitative data to accompany general public comments. Public comment forms are limited to a specific set of questions and both stakeholder meetings and public comment forms tend to attract motivated individuals and organized interest groups. Focus groups however, provide more detailed qualitative information. The BGSS team will be using this detailed information to craft a suite of proposed alternatives related to the early season discussion topics for the Commission’s final consideration and approval.

Public Meeting Location	Number of Participants
Meeker	45
Steamboat Springs	55
Kremmling	42
Eagle	30
Grand Junction	52
Carbondale	0
Montrose	23
Durango	61
Gunnison	38
Monte Vista	26
Salida	10
Pueblo	9
Colorado Springs	17
Fort Collins	50
Denver	14
Total	458

IV. Public Input Summary

Online Public Comment Form

During the public comment period, CPW received 2,927 online comment forms and 107 paper copy forms. Fifty percent of the comment form respondents self-identified as archery hunters, 41 percent as rifle hunters and 9 percent muzzleloader hunters. These participation numbers for method of take differ from the general hunting population. From Division license sales, CPW estimates that over 70 percent of hunters primarily hunt during the rifle seasons. Given the attention on early season hunting topics during this process, archery hunters may have been more actively involved.

The comment form focused on a few general themes, which were general hunter satisfaction, early seasons, youth opportunities and the regular rifle big game seasons.

Satisfaction:

Based on the comments received, over 50 percent of respondents were satisfied with hunting season length for all big game species (elk, deer, pronghorn, bear) except for moose (See Figure 1). Similarly, the majority of respondents were also satisfied with season timing for all species except moose (see Figure 2). Looking at season length and timing for elk and mule deer specifically, satisfaction was 50 percent or greater for all hunters regardless of their preferred method of take.

Early Seasons:

The majority of respondents to the online form were concerned about crowding during archery season and the overlap of the archery and muzzleloader seasons (See Figure 3). When asked

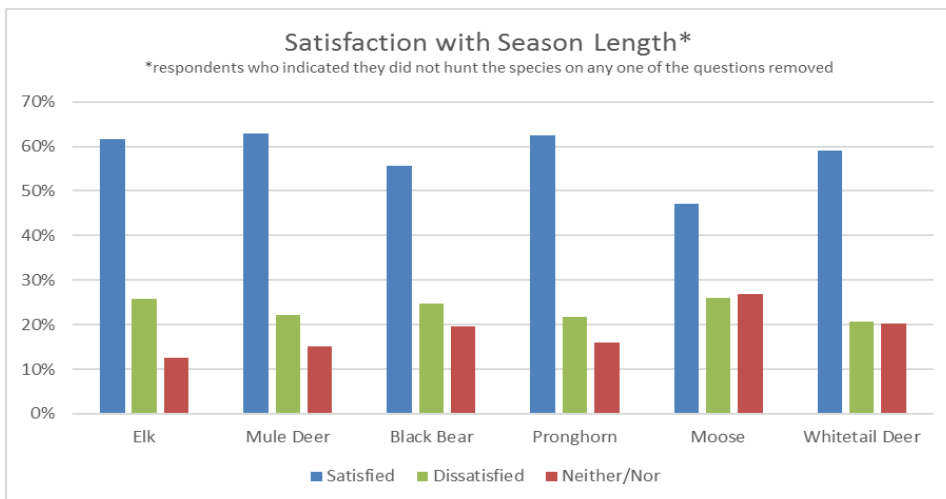
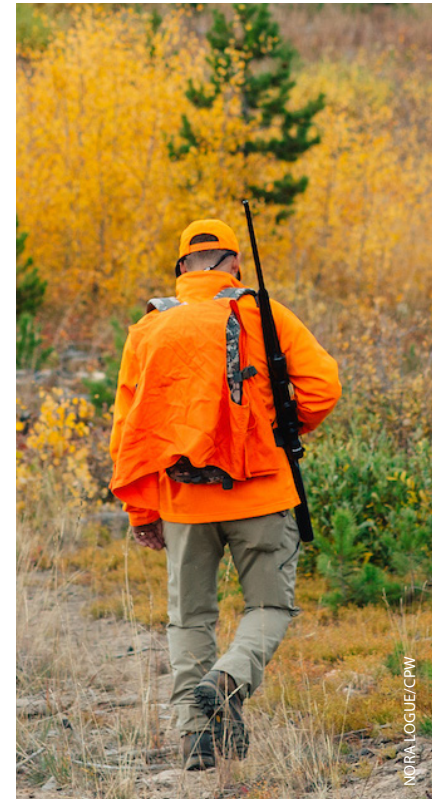


Figure 1: Online public comments on satisfaction with season length. Percentages based on the number of people who hunted that species.

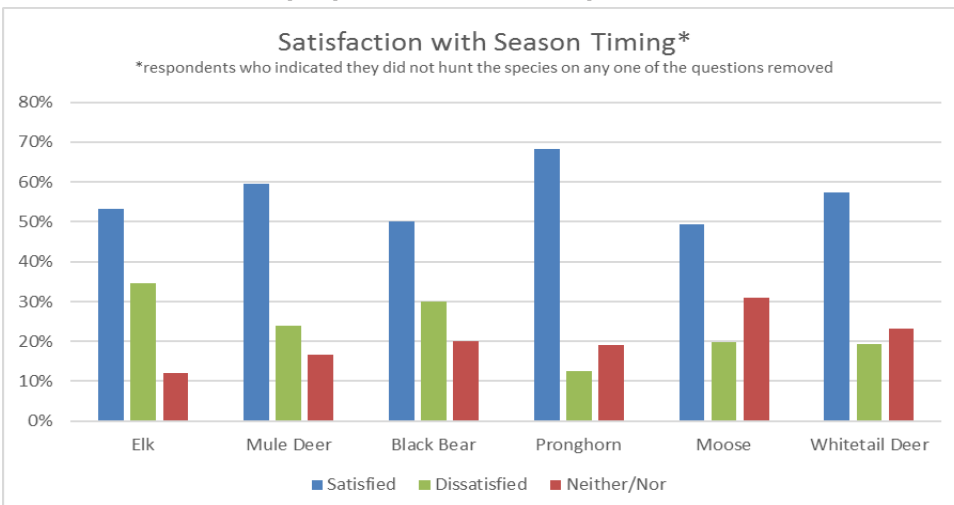


Figure 2: Online public comments on satisfaction with season timing. Percentages based on the number of people who hunted that species.

about possible management solutions, less than 30 percent supported making no changes to the archery season. The greatest support was for changing over-the-counter (OTC) either sex archery elk licenses to specifically cow or bull when populations are below objective. Forty-five percent of respondents supported limiting archery licenses for cow elk or putting a cap on the number of OTC licenses for all elk. Slightly more respondents were in favor of limiting all archery elk licenses versus those opposed to this choice (See Figure 4). The majority of archery hunters however (56 percent), oppose making all archery elk licenses limited.

When offered the opportunity to provide general comments, one of the most common comments received was a concern with crowding during archery season and the need to separate archery from other seasons. While there was consensus that overcrowding is an issue among respondents, potential solutions varied. Some comments suggested limiting all licenses for all species and seasons, while others recommended capping either all OTC units, or an increased number of units. The most common suggestion came from residents who felt the licenses sold to nonresidents should be limited, or capped in some way. Many of the respondents who suggested limiting nonresidents believe that residents should always be given priority in the draw.

Rifle Seasons:

When asked to select their most preferred management actions for rifle seasons, the majority of respondents favored keeping existing season length and keeping the number of weekend days per season.

Youth Hunting Opportunity:

When asked about youth hunting opportunity, over half of the respondents felt neutral on the topic (were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) while 28 percent were satisfied and 16 percent were dissatisfied. In the open-ended comment box on youth hunting opportunities, many people praised CPW’s current youth outreach efforts, low priced youth licenses, youth preference, and extended season opportunities. Others asked for better odds for youth to draw a license as well as giving youth their own big game season or weekend to hunt.

Other Comments:

When provided opportunity to make general comments, respondents raised concerns with the allocation of licenses between residents and nonresidents. Another common response was related to concern for herd health generally, with many respondents voicing concern for elk populations specifically. Several respondents asked for longer breaks between seasons to give animals an opportunity to rest as well as redistribute back to public lands. See Appendices B-E for more details on the open-ended comment responses.

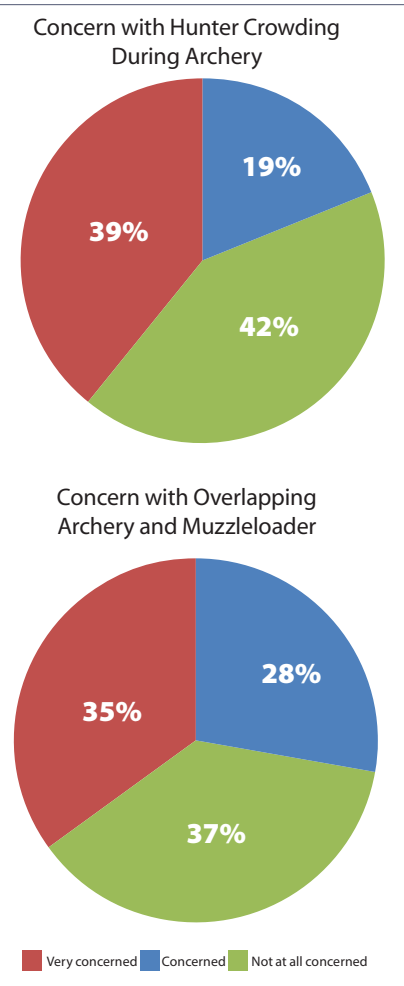


Figure 3: Online public comments: concern with hunter crowding during archery season and the overlap of archery and muzzleloader seasons.

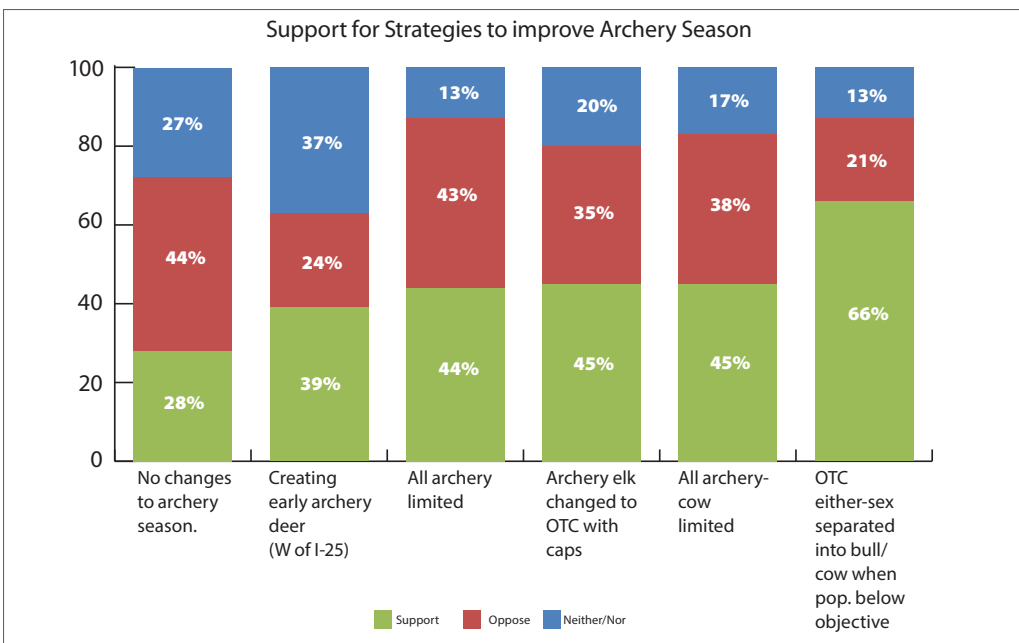


Figure 4: Online comments regarding possible management strategies to address hunter crowding.

Public Meetings

At the BGSS public meetings, CPW staff shared a PowerPoint presentation which highlighted the discussion topics as well as the different alternatives that had been identified. If clickers or polling technology was available, staff also asked members of the audience to answer a few questions from the comment form throughout the presentation. *Those questions and results are included for reference in Appendix F.*

Feedback from the public meetings was similar to what was heard on the public comment form. This is not surprising, given that most of the public meeting attendees also likely filled out the public comment form.

The vast majority of attendees to the public meetings were hunters. As far as preferred method of take, both archery and rifle hunters had strong representation. Over 60% of the participants were concerned or very concerned with crowding during the archery seasons, (Appendix F, Figure 2). Participants also verbally shared that they felt much of the crowding was attributed from nonresident hunters. As far as strategies to modify the archery season, there was not a strong preference for one alternative over the others. Limiting all archery elk licenses did receive the highest amount of support, followed by making archery elk licenses over-the-counter with caps (Appendix F, Figure 3).

Similar to the archery season, participants were fairly split on satisfaction with the current deer and elk rifle season structure. As far as priorities for improving the rifle seasons, the top two priorities were keeping or expanding the breaks between seasons and keeping existing season length. Keeping the existing number of weekend days was the third highest priority (Appendix F, Figure 5).

Telephone Town Halls

CPW held two telephone town halls and contacted 25,000 nonresident licensed big game hunters and 25,000 resident licensed big game hunters directly. The town hall phone number was also posted on our website, so anyone interested could call-in to participate. A total of 4,749 individuals participated in the town hall meetings. The results were very similar for each call. Just over 2,000 people participated in each call for an average of 27 minutes. CPW staff responded to between 25 and 32 questions asked by participants during each call. Priority was given to questions related to season structure topics, but questions unrelated to BGSS were also addressed. Six audience polling questions were also asked during each call. Below are the polling questions with results (nonresidents/residents):

1. Which method of take do you most prefer to use to hunt big game in Colorado?
 1. Rifle (63%/54%)
 2. Archery (27%/34%)
 3. Muzzleloader (10%/13%)

2. Overall, how satisfied were you with your hunting experience for big game in Colorado between 2014 and 2018? Please select one from the following options.
 1. Very satisfied (26%/19%)
 2. Somewhat satisfied (37%/33%)
 3. Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied (12%/17%)
 4. Somewhat unsatisfied (16%/19%)
 5. Very unsatisfied (7%/11%)
 6. I did not hunt in Colorado (1%/1%)

Over 60% of the participants were concerned or very concerned with crowding during the archery seasons. Participants also verbally shared that they felt much of the crowding was attributed from nonresident hunters.

3. We have been hearing that crowding is a concern to some hunters hunting during the deer and elk archery season. If the archery deer and elk season were to be modified in Colorado, please select which single option would be the most acceptable to you.

1. Limiting all archery elk licenses (12%/17%)
2. Limiting some archery elk licenses (12%/9%)
3. Adjusting the season timing (7%/15%)
4. Adjusting the season length (11%/12%)
5. Creating multiple archery seasons (22%/23%)
6. No change (35%/26%)

4. How important is it to you to start you hunting season on a weekend?

1. Very Important (25%/27%)
2. Moderately Important (15%/14%)
3. Somewhat Important (12%/15%)
4. Not at all important (48%/44%)

5. Which of the following is a barrier to you participating in bear hunting in Colorado?

1. Price of a bear license (38%/6%)
2. Lack of season overlap with other big game species (20%/29%)
3. Lack of interest or knowledge in bear hunting (20%/29%)
4. Lack of time (8%/10%)
5. No barriers- I already hunt bears in Colorado (15%/25%)

6. How valuable and informative did you find tonight's telephone town hall?

1. Very valuable/informative (72%/48%)
2. Somewhat valuable/informative (25%/46%)
3. Not valuable/informative (3%/6%)

In addition to the teleconference participants, other individuals who were not available to participate in the live event, were able to call a voicemail box to leave their comments or suggestions as well.

One major theme was that the early seasons feel too crowded. Specifically, that there are more and more people in the backcountry during archery season, including more hunters and other non-hunting recreational users, including hikers, mountain bikers and trail runners.

Focus groups

From the two focus group discussions with hunters who hunt by varying methods of take during the early seasons, the BGSS team heard several consistent themes. One major theme was that the early seasons feel too crowded. Specifically, that there are more and more people in the backcountry during archery season, including more hunters and other non-hunting recreational users, including hikers, mountain bikers and trail runners. At both focus groups, participants also discussed increasing use of off-road vehicles. At the Denver meeting, participants emphasized the feeling of being more concentrated or “funneled” into smaller areas by road, campground, and parking pull-off closures on public lands. In Grand Junction, participants discussed significant changes they are seeing with animal movement in response to increased human activity.

While participants in both locations discussed the increased pressure from non-hunters, there was general agreement that there are too many hunters in the field during archery season and that this is degrading the hunting experience and causing alterations in animal behavior and movement.

Main Issues:

- Hunter crowding
- More non-hunters
- Human impacts to wildlife movement
- Overlap between archery and muzzleloader seasons
- Need for more youth opportunity

Possible Changes:

Both focus groups supported changing the start date of the archery season to September 1 and maintaining a 30-day season. In Grand Junction, participants strongly supported creating a youth-only mentored archery hunt five days before the start of the main archery season. Both groups discussed separating archery and muzzleloader. There was some support for this change; however, after discussion, participants generally agreed that archers should be able to self-select to avoid hunting during the muzzleloader season or to wear fluorescent orange/pink if they have safety concerns. This would also allow mixed hunting groups (those with both muzzleloader and archery hunters) to continue hunting together.

When asked about management options, two proposals were popular with both groups. Those were:

- 1) Limiting all archery elk licenses statewide.
- 2) Splitting archery into two separate seasons. There were several variations of this proposal that garnered support. Those were:
 - a. Make a first archery season for deer and elk with a second season just for elk.
 - b. Make a first archery elk season that is over-the-counter for bulls only and a second archery elk season that is limited/either-sex.
 - c. Make a first archery elk season that is over-the-counter and a second archery elk season that is over-the-counter with caps.



NORA LOGUE/CPW

V. Conclusion

In support of the 2020-2024 BGSS, CPW held an extensive public outreach effort that used a multitude of tools to get a broad understanding of stakeholder and other public opinions. Public information is critical to the formulation of the draft alternatives and to demonstrate the agency's transparency and commitment to an open public process with the desire to provide hunting opportunity to the citizens and visitors of Colorado.

The methods used to collect input and the multiple types of information collected through this process, including public comments, in-person meetings, telephone town halls, online live events, and focus groups offer complementary techniques for better understanding the opinions of big game hunters in Colorado. The BGSS team is utilizing this information to help develop alternatives for the next five-year BGSS that will be presented to the Parks and Wildlife Commission in June 2019 and finalized in July or September.



TONY GURZICK/CPW

4. If you were **dissatisfied with the current season length and/or timing**, please tell us what adjustments you would make using the space below.

5. Overall, how dissatisfied/satisfied were you with **youth hunting opportunity** for big game species between 2015 and 2018? *(Please check one.)*

Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied, nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. If you have any general comments about **youth hunting opportunity** for big game species, or how it can be improved, please provide them in the space below.

7. How concerned are you with having **overlapping archery and muzzleloader deer and elk** seasons? *(Please check one.)*

Not at all Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	I do not hunt during these seasons
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. To what extent do you disagree or agree with each of the following **strategies to address potential safety concerns** during the overlapping seasons? *(Please check one response per statement.)*

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree, nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Archery and muzzleloader seasons should be separated entirely with no overlap in dates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No changes should be made to the existing archery-muzzleloader seasons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. How concerned are you with **hunter crowding** during the archery season? *(Please check one.)*

Not at all Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	I do not hunt during these seasons
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. To what extent do you support or oppose the following **strategies to improve the archery-hunting season?** *(Please check one response per statement.)*

	Strongly Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Neither Oppose, nor Support	Somewhat Support	Strongly Support
All archery-elk licenses should be limited statewide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All archery-cow licenses should be limited.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All OTC either-sex elk licenses should be specified as separate bull and cow licenses when populations are below population objective.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Archery licenses for elk should be changed to OTC with caps.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creating an early archery deer season (W of I-25) in addition to the existing archery deer season. Dates for the early archery deer season could match the archery pronghorn dates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No changes made to the archery-hunting season.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. If you have ideas for other strategies to improve the archery-hunting seasons, please provide them using the space below.

12. Please check the box next to the method of take that you most prefer to hunt big game in Colorado. *(Please check one.)*

- Rifle
- Archery
- Muzzleloader

13. Do you belong to any of the following big game-related organizations? *(Please check all that apply.)*

Colorado Bowhunters Association

Safari Club International

Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Society

Mule Deer Foundation

Colorado Mule Deer Association

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Muzzleloader Association

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Other (Please

indicate.)_____

14. Were you an outfitter for big game hunting in Colorado between 2015 and 2018? *(Please check one.)*

Yes No

15. Are you male or female? *(Please check one.)*

16. In what year were you born? *(Please indicate the 4-digit year.)* _____

17. What is the zip code for your primary residence? *(Please indicate the 5-digit code.)* _____

Please use the space below to provide any general comments about **Big Game Season Structure** for 2020-2024.

Please return this form by **February 4th 2019** to
Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Policy and Planning, 1313 Sherman St, Denver CO 80203
This form is also available online. Go to cpw.state.co.us and search BGSS

Appendix B

Big Game Season Structure 2020-2024 Public Comment Survey

Question #4 - If you were dissatisfied with the current season length and/or timing, please tell us what adjustments you would make using the space below.

Total Responses = 2,095

Top Responses

Separate Archery from other Seasons	345
Remove Overlap between Archery and Muzzleloader	300
Move Archery Seasons Later	276
Shorten the Seasons	208
Provide More Bear Hunting Opportunity/ Spring Bear Hunt	190
Have Fewer, Longer Seasons	159
Make Muzzleloader Season Later	142
Concerns about Herd Health	140
Limit OTC Licenses	122
Concerns about Crowding	114

Key Points:

- Many of the respondents expressed interest in longer seasons. This included suggestions of both fewer and longer seasons as well as adding extra seasons. This was equally expressed for both archery and rifle.
- Many responses suggested shortening both archery and rifle seasons. Rifle suggestions included removing seasons, and for archery, suggestions included splitting the season.
- Several respondents expressed interest in more bear hunting opportunities including bringing back the spring bear hunt and having better overlap between the bear seasons and other big game hunting seasons.
- Many respondents asked that the muzzleloader season be moved back, many as a way to separate archery and muzzleloader.
- Many respondents expressed concerns about herd health and dwindling populations. This included primarily concerns about stress on animals during the breeding season and that hunting during the rut should be limited or reduced whenever possible.
- Many suggested limiting OTC tags/licenses, particularly for elk due to concerns about crowding and herd health.

Appendix C

Big Game Season Structure 2020-2024 Public Comment Survey

Question #7 - If you have any general comments about youth hunting opportunity for big game species, or how it can be improved, please provide them in the space below.

Total Responses = 1,140

Top Responses

Every youth should be able to get a tag	68
Create youth only seasons/weekends	65
More hunting opportunities for youth	64
Improve access to private lands or quality GMUs	60
Praise for the current system	59
Different preference point system for youth, share or accumulate points earlier	57
Youth get too many opportunities already	52
More youth education or mentoring	48

Key Points:

- Improving the ability for youth to draw/receive big game licenses was a major theme throughout the comments. Many respondents mentioned that they felt every youth who applied should receive a tag. There was also an interest in having more antlerless tags available for youth.
- Another common theme was giving youth their own season or weekend where they could hunt without competing with adults. Along these same lines, trying to get more access for youth to private lands or higher quality GMUs was also expressed to improve their success.
- Reversely, a number of people felt that youth are already getting too much preference under our current system. These individuals supported not adding any new opportunities or making it an equal playing field for both youth and adults.
- Lowering the hunting age was also mentioned by many respondents.
- Concern over preference point creep was also mentioned by a large number of individuals, asking that the agency consider changing the preference point system for youth so that youth could start applying for points earlier or be gifted points from others.
- Many others simply praised our current youth outreach efforts, low priced youth licenses, youth preference, and extended season opportunities.

Appendix D
Big Game Season Structure 2020-2024 Public Comment Survey

Question #12 - If you have ideas for other strategies to improve the deer and elk archery hunting seasons, please provide them using the space below.

Total Responses = 1,605

Separate Archery From Other Seasons	250
Make Archery Season Later	214
Make All Archery Licenses Limited	196
Make Non-Resident Licenses Limited, OTC w/Caps, or Reduce N/R Allocation	192
Reduce Crowding	98
Cap OTC Licenses or Decrease Amount of OTC Units	97
Shorten Archery Season	90
Split-up Archery Season	60
Status Quo/ Keep Season Length/Weekends	54
Split Deer Archery From Elk Archery	52
Make Archery Season Longer	51
Make Season Earlier	46

Key Points:

- The overlap of the archery, muzzleloader, and bear seasons was the most frequently mentioned issue, with 250 respondents stating that they would prefer separate seasons. A much smaller group of respondents support the overlapping seasons, with some respondents indicating that the overlap allows for groups of archers and muzzleloader hunters to hunt together.
- Many respondents are in support of moving the archery season back, either because of changing weather patterns, or because they'd like to hunt during the peak of the rut. Many of these respondents specifically favor an archery season from September 1-30.
- Several respondents mentioned that CPW should reduce archery licenses, either by limiting archery licenses entirely, limiting or capping non-resident licenses, or by capping OTC licenses statewide or in more units.
- Many responses included detailed suggestions for splitting the archery season into multiple seasons. Some respondents suggested different season timing for elk archery versus deer archery, while others suggested having a muzzleloader season in the middle of two archery seasons to avoid archery/muzzleloader overlap.

Appendix E

Big Game Season Structure 2020-2024 Public Comment Survey

Question #19 - Please use the space below to provide any general comments about Big Game Season Structure for 2020-2024.

Total Responses = 2,002

Top 5 Responses	
Limit Non-Resident Licenses/ Prioritize Residents	207
Separate Archery from Other Seasons	160
Reduce Crowding	145
Status Quo Seasons	111
Concern for Herd Health (General)	85

More Detail on Major Themes

Overcrowding and Reducing Licenses		Herd Health (Additional Specified)		Season Length and Longer Breaks		Later Seasons	
Make all Archery Limited/Cap OTC	60	Concern Re: Elk Population	75	Longer Breaks Between Seasons	48	Make Archery Later	80
Limit All Elk Licenses	60	Decrease Cow Elk Licenses	41	Shorten Archery Season	40	Later Muzzle Season	59
Decrease OTC Units/ Limit More Units	43	Concern re: Deer Population	35	Lengthen Seasons	25	Move All Seasons Back	35
Make all Seasons and Species Limited	41	Decrease Elk Hunting During Rut	25	Lengthen Archery Season	18	Later Rifle Seasons	25
Reduce Licenses	37	Decrease Deer Hunting During Rut	14	Shorten All Seasons	17	/	/

Key Points:

- One of the major concerns mentioned in question #19 related to overcrowding, and the need to reduce the amount of licenses in some areas. Respondents commented that overcrowding has had an impact on both hunting quality, and herd health.
- While there was consensus that overcrowding is an issue, potential solutions varied. Some comments suggested limiting all licenses for all species and seasons, while others recommended capping either all OTC units, or an increased number of units.

The most common suggestion came from residents who felt the licenses sold to non-residents should be limited, or capped in some way. Many of the respondents who suggested limiting non-residents believe that residents should always be given priority in the draw.

- There were several comments related to concern for herd health generally, with many respondents commenting about their concern for the elk population specifically. Beyond reducing licenses, suggestions included eliminating hunting during the rut, decreasing cow and doe licenses, and increasing predator hunting opportunities.
- Several comments advocated for longer breaks between seasons, mainly to offer the animals a “break” from hunting. There was less consensus on the length of the current seasons. There were comments suggesting shortened seasons, as well as comments suggesting longer seasons. A considerable amount of respondents commented that the archery season should be shorter, but these comments were typically made by other hunters upset that archers have a longer season. Archers who asked for a longer season were typically interested in a later season in order to hunt more during the elk rut—the overall number of days in the archery season did not seem to concern many. There were relatively few comments concerning the length of rifle seasons, but some comments did suggest making all rifle seasons the same length.
- Many respondents are in favor of later seasons. Several responses mentioned the changing climate, and how the weather is warmer during the earlier seasons. However, many respondents advocated eliminating late rifle seasons to improve herd health. There were relatively few respondents who suggested having more late season opportunity.

Additional Themes Unrelated to Approved BGSS Discussion Topics:

- Several respondents mentioned expanding allowable methods of take to include air guns and crossbows.
- Respondents made several comments related to a perceived overpopulation of predators, and suggested expanding predator hunting opportunities.
- Many comments were critical of recent changes to the application process, such as the qualifying license requirement, preference point fee for sheep, goat, and moose as well as pay-after-you-draw.
- Numerous respondents identified preference point creep as a major concern, with some comments suggesting the complete abandonment of a point system.
- In addition to suggesting that non-resident licenses become limited or capped, there were also several comments that suggested decreasing the overall non-resident allocation.

Appendix F
Live Audience Polling Results from BGSS Public Meetings

Polling Questions Asked:

1. Which of the following best describes how you interact with elk or deer in Colorado (please select one)?
 - a. As a landowner
 - b. As a hunter
 - c. As a livestock producer
 - d. As a guide or outfitter
 - e. Other

2. Which method of take is your preference to hunt big game in Colorado?
 - a. Rifle
 - b. Archery
 - c. Muzzleloader
 - d. I do not hunt in Colorado

3. How satisfied are you with the current deer and elk archery season structure (i.e. season length and timing)?
 - a. Very dissatisfied
 - b. Somewhat dissatisfied
 - c. Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
 - d. Somewhat satisfied
 - e. Very satisfied

4. How concerned are you with hunter crowding during the deer and elk archery season?
 - a. Not at all concerned
 - b. Somewhat concerned
 - c. Moderately concerned
 - d. Very concerned
 - e. I do not hunt during the archery season

5. If the archery season were modified to address hunter crowding, please rank your top three preferences for how it could be improved with your first selection being your most preferred option.
 - a. Limit all archery elk licenses
 - b. Limit all archery cow elk licenses
 - c. Modify over-the-counter either sex archery elk licenses to be bull or cow when populations are below objective
 - d. Make archery elk licenses over-the-counter with caps (first come, first serve)
 - e. Create an earlier archery deer season
 - f. Make no changes

6. How satisfied are you with the current deer and elk rifle season structure (primarily season length and timing)?
 - a. Very dissatisfied
 - b. Somewhat dissatisfied
 - c. Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
 - d. Somewhat satisfied
 - e. Very satisfied

7. If the deer and elk rifle seasons were modified, please rank your top three preferences from the following options, with your first selection being your most preferred option.
 - a. Keep existing season length
 - b. Keep the existing number of weekend days per season
 - c. Keep or expand the number of rifle seasons
 - d. Keep or expand the breaks between seasons
 - e. Keep the seasons out of the winter months

Results:

Not all of the BGSS public meetings had clickers or polling technology available to answer questions. From the nine meetings that did use the polling technology, about 340 people participated, averaging 38 participants per meeting. Unless notes, the following figures are polling results averaged across these nine meetings.

Figure 1: Live Audience Polling- self representation and preferred method of take
This question was asked at eight public meetings.

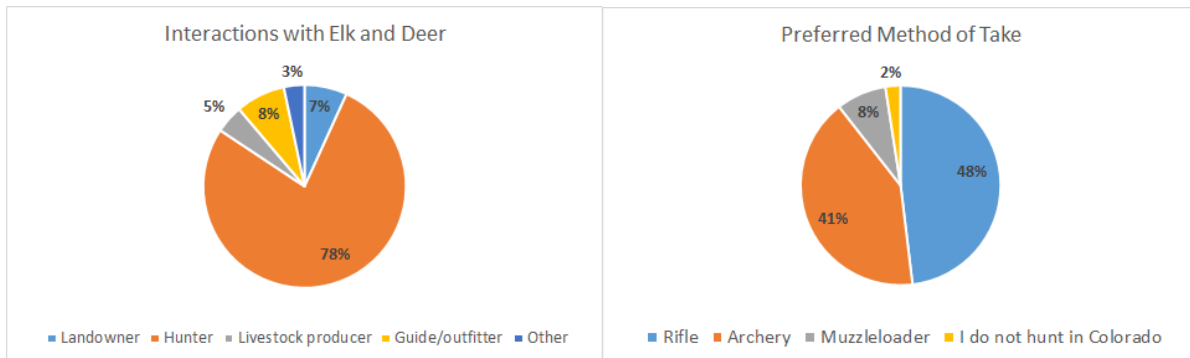


Figure 2: Live Audience Polling- concern with hunter crowding during archery season and satisfaction with current archery season structure

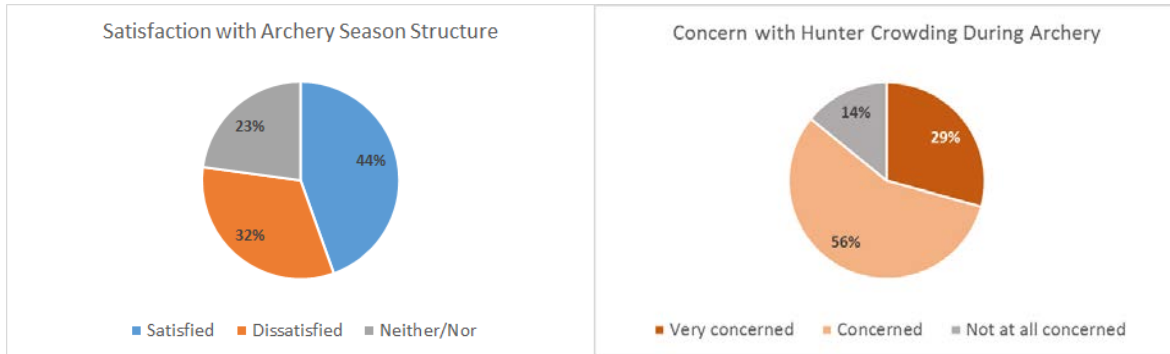


Figure 3: Live Audience Polling- preferences for modifications to the deer and elk archery season

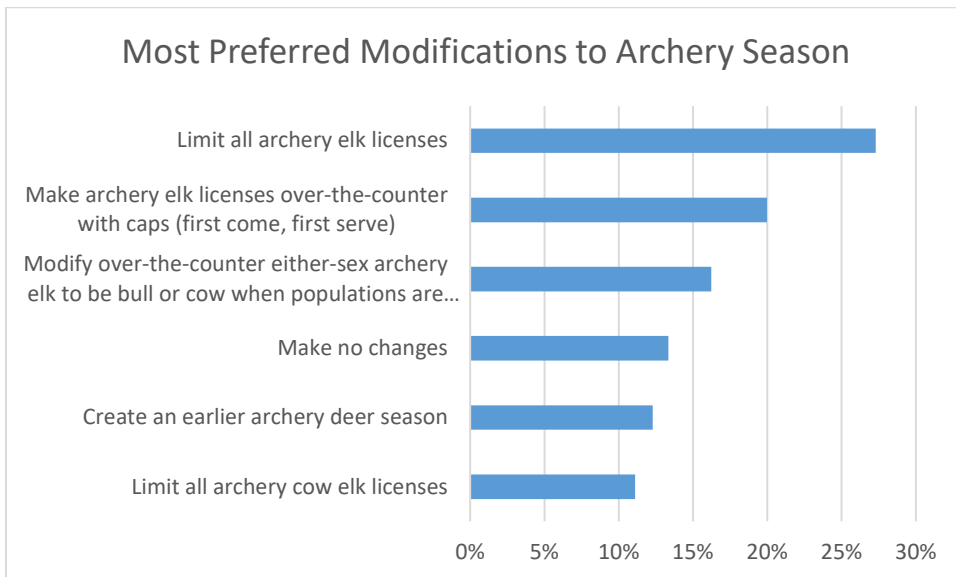


Figure 4: Live Audience Polling- satisfaction with deer and elk rifle season structure

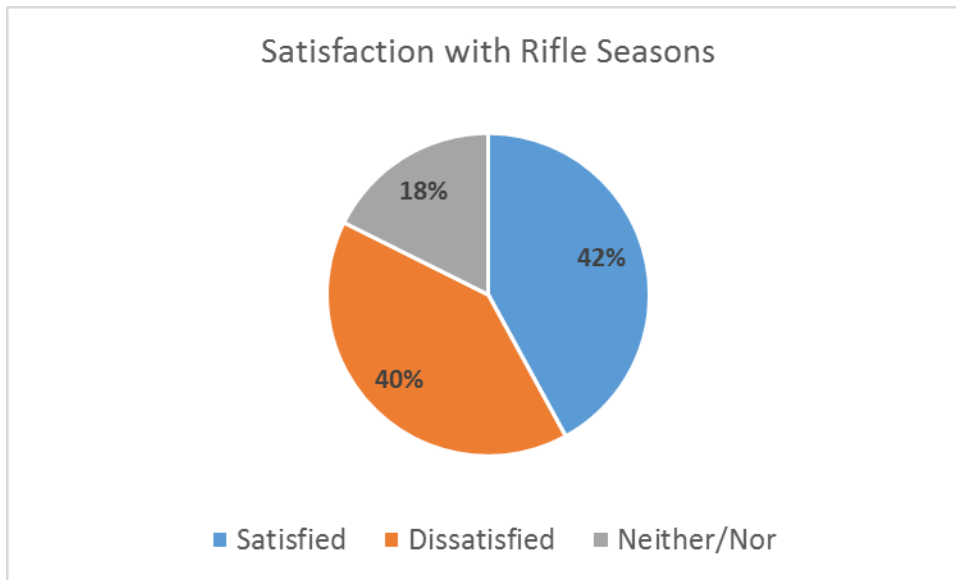
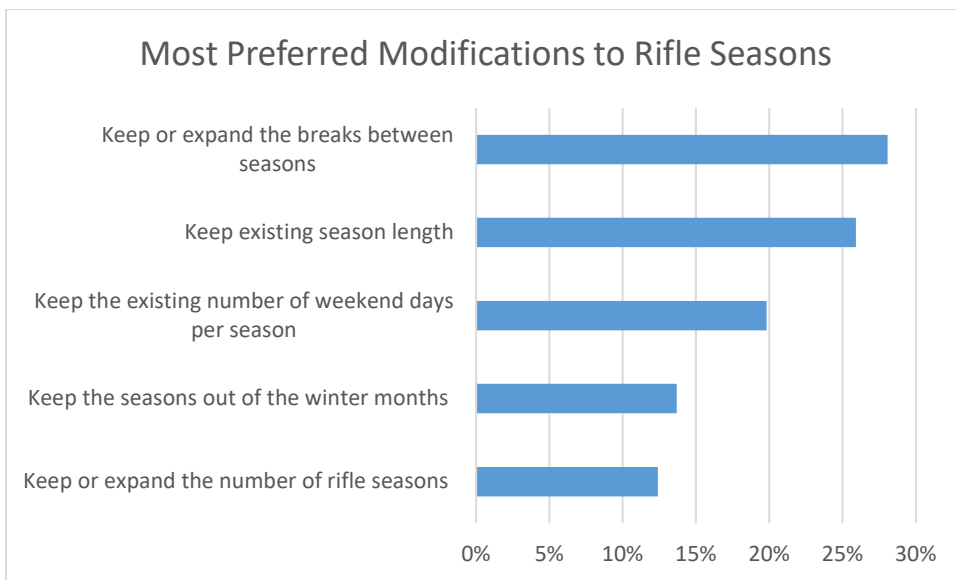


Figure 5: Live Audience Polling- preferences for modifications to the deer and elk rifle seasons





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