

2025-2029 Big Game Season Structure Preliminary Alternatives and Staff Recommendations

CPW Commission Meeting
March 14, 2024



What is BGSS?

- BGSS guides annual big game hunting regulations.
- Sets the timing, length, and number of seasons for hunting big game in Colorado.
- CPW's BGSS framework covers 5 years.
 - *Current BGSS expires at the end of **2024**.*

What does CPW consider?

- Various biological, social, and economic factors
- Internal staff input and public input from resident and nonresident members of the public
- Financial implications to CPW and local economies and hunting-related businesses.



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Topics for 2025-2029 BGSS

1. **Season structure for early seasons**
2. **Season structure for regular rifle seasons**
3. **Additional seasons:** optional deer in first rifle and optional second pronghorn rifle
4. **Over-the-Counter** archery/rifle elk limitation
5. **Administrative topics**
6. **BGSS cycle length**



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Three Step Approval Process in 2024



**Step 1: Preliminary
recommendations**

**Step 2: Draft
recommendations**

**Step 3: Final
recommendations**



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Early Seasons

Recommendation: Status Quo + optional additional stand-alone limited archery antlered deer season.

- Early seasons were the major focus of the previous 2020-2024 BGSS process.
- Some concern over safety issues, but most hunters are content with the Status Quo.
- Creates an archery buck hunt that doesn't overlap with other methods of take.
- Highly desirable opportunity.

August 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
						1	2
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
						Optional Archery	Optional Archery
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery
	31						
	Optional Archery						

September 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
		1	2	3	4	5	6
	Optional Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery
	28	29	30				
	Regular Archery	Regular Archery	Regular Archery				



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August 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
						1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
					Optional Archery	Optional Archery	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery	Optional Archery
31							
Optional Archery							

September 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Optional Archery	2 Regular Archery	3 Regular Archery	4 Regular Archery	5 Regular Archery	6 Regular Archery
7 Regular Archery	8 Regular Archery	9 Regular Archery	10 Regular Archery	11 Regular Archery	12 Regular Archery	13 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader
14 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	15 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	16 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	17 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	18 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	19 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	20 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader
21 Regular Archery + Muzzleloader	22 Regular Archery	23 Regular Archery	24 Regular Archery	25 Regular Archery	26 Regular Archery	27 Regular Archery
28 Regular Archery	29 Regular Archery	30 Regular Archery				

Regular Rifle Seasons

Recommendation: Revert to the previous (2015-2019) season structure, 5-9-9-5.

- Previous BGSS is more congruent with the current population management goals for elk and mule deer.
- Split support between current and previous BGSS.
- 3rd season reverts to 9 days (2 weekends).
- Helps to address access concerns.
- Removes overlap with Thanksgiving holiday.

October 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
				1	2	3	4
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11 <i>1st Season</i>
	12 <i>1st Season</i>	13 <i>1st Season</i>	14 <i>1st Season</i>	15 <i>1st Season</i>	16	17	18 <i>2nd Season</i>
	19 <i>2nd Season</i>	20 <i>2nd Season</i>	21 <i>2nd Season</i>	22 <i>2nd Season</i>	23 <i>2nd Season</i>	24 <i>2nd Season</i>	25 <i>2nd Season</i>
	26 <i>2nd Season</i>	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
						1 <i>3rd Season</i>	
	2 <i>3rd Season</i>	3 <i>3rd Season</i>	4 <i>3rd Season</i>	5 <i>3rd Season</i>	6 <i>3rd Season</i>	7 <i>3rd Season</i>	8 <i>3rd Season</i>
	9 <i>3rd Season</i>	10	11	12 <i>4th Season</i>	13 <i>4th Season</i>	14 <i>4th Season</i>	15 <i>4th Season</i>
	16 <i>4th Season</i>	17	18	19	20	21	22
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	30						



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October 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
				1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
						<i>1st Season</i>	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
<i>1st Season</i>	<i>1st Season</i>	<i>1st Season</i>	<i>1st Season</i>			<i>2nd Season</i>	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
<i>2nd Season</i>	<i>2nd Season</i>	<i>2nd Season</i>	<i>2nd Season</i>	<i>2nd Season</i>	<i>2nd Season</i>	<i>2nd Season</i>	
26	27	28	29	30	31		
<i>2nd Season</i>							

November 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 <i>3rd Season</i>
2 <i>3rd Season</i>	3 <i>3rd Season</i>	4 <i>3rd Season</i>	5 <i>3rd Season</i>	6 <i>3rd Season</i>	7 <i>3rd Season</i>	8 <i>3rd Season</i>
9 <i>3rd Season</i>	10	11	12 <i>4th Season</i>	13 <i>4th Season</i>	14 <i>4th Season</i>	15 <i>4th Season</i>
16 <i>4th Season</i>	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

First Rifle Deer Season

Recommendation: Optional, limited deer hunting during the first rifle season when necessary to meet biological objectives and/or social management objectives.

Would be determined on a herd-by-herd basis (DAUs).



- Would manage to herd objectives.
- Provides additional regional flexibility.
- Could potentially reduce hunter crowding and pressure on deer during the 2nd and 3rd rifle seasons.
- Would maintain focus on a quality elk hunting experience.



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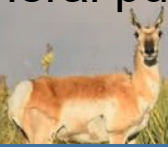
Second Rifle Pronghorn Season

Recommendation: Second 9-day rifle pronghorn season starting the third Saturday in October. Would be optional and determined on a herd-by-herd basis (DAUs).

- Provides additional regional flexibility to distribute license allocation to meet management objectives.
- Would reduce hunter crowding/pressure during opening weekend.
- General public support.

October 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
				1	2	3	4 <i>1st Season</i>
	5 <i>1st Season</i>	6 <i>1st Season</i>	7 <i>1st Season</i>	8 <i>1st Season</i>	9 <i>1st Season</i>	10 <i>1st Season</i>	11 <i>1st Season</i>
	12 <i>1st Season</i>	13	14	15	16	17	18 <i>2nd Season</i>
	19 <i>2nd Season</i>	20 <i>2nd Season</i>	21 <i>2nd Season</i>	22 <i>2nd Season</i>	23 <i>2nd Season</i>	24 <i>2nd Season</i>	25 <i>2nd Season</i>
	26 <i>2nd Season</i>	27	28	29	30	31	



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October 2025

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12 <i>1st Season</i>	13	14	15	16	17	18 <i>2nd Season</i>
19 <i>2nd Season</i>	20 <i>2nd Season</i>	21 <i>2nd Season</i>	22 <i>2nd Season</i>	23 <i>2nd Season</i>	24 <i>2nd Season</i>	25 <i>2nd Season</i>
26 <i>2nd Season</i>	27	28	29	30	31	

Commission Discussion



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Limitation of Over-the-Counter (OTC) Elk Licenses



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OTC Archery Elk and Rifle Elk - Public Outreach

2023 Spring/Summer BGSS
Public Engagement Process

Winter 2023 Public OTC
Survey



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Winter 2023 OTC Survey - Overview

- Roughly 6,000 invitations to elk hunters via email.
- 50-50 distribution to archery & firearm hunters.
- 75-25 distribution to resident & non-resident hunters.
- Opinions on alternatives, influences, possible behavior change.
- 26% response rate.



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Winter 2023 OTC Survey - Results Overview

Alternatives	<p>Overall, similar results between archery & rifle alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <u>Most supported</u> - limited licenses (OTC, draw) available by management area● <u>Least supported</u> - status quo, eliminating OTC
Influences	<p>Again, similar results between archery & rifle alternatives. Top influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <u>Herd health</u>● <u>Overcrowding</u>



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Winter 2023 OTC Survey - Behavior Change

If OTC elk licenses for your preferred method of take were eliminated for BOTH RESIDENTS and NON-RESIDENTS, and ALL licenses were distributed through the draws, would you change your hunting behavior? [choose one]

- I wouldn't change my elk hunting behavior.
- I'd change my elk hunting behavior.
- I'm unsure if I'd change my elk hunting behavior.

Use the scale below to indicate the ways in which you would change your elk hunting behaviors if OTC elk licenses were eliminated for BOTH RESIDENTS and NON-RESIDENTS.

	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Moderately likely	Highly likely
I would apply through the draw.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would try to hunt in Colorado more often.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would no longer hunt in Colorado.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would change my behavior in another way. [please specify or type N/A]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/>				



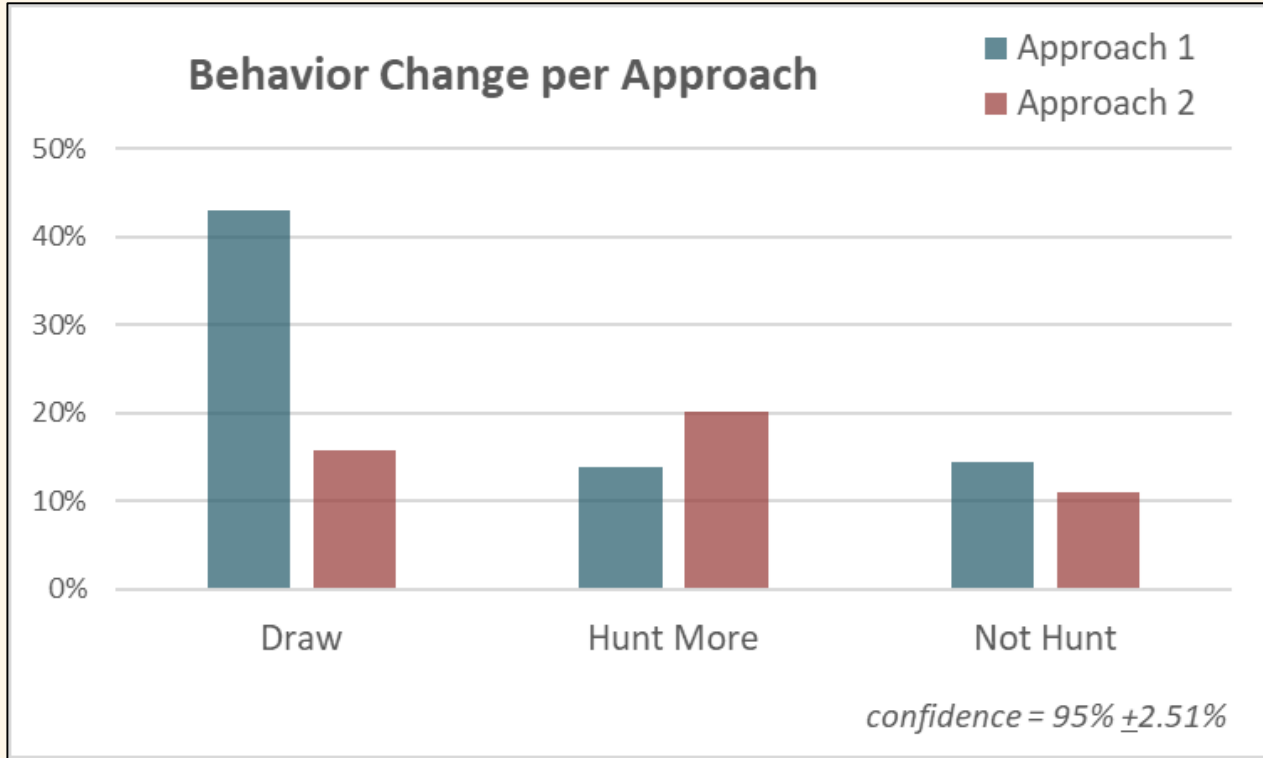
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Approach 1

Limit resident & nonresident OTC, draw available by management unit.

Approach 2

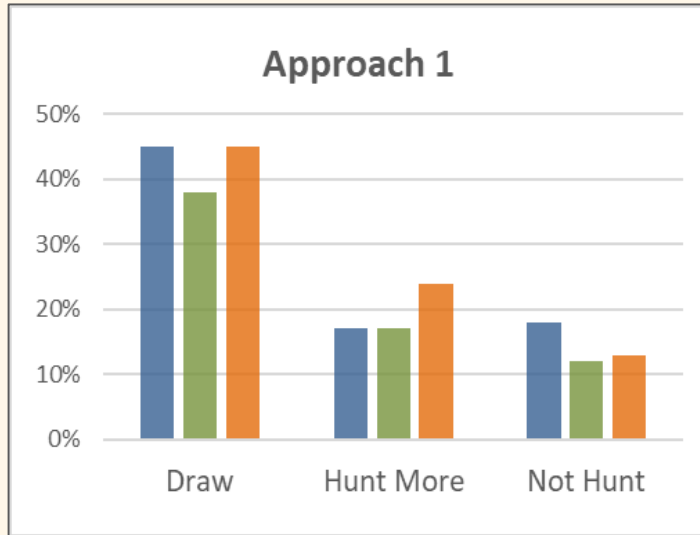
Limit nonresident OTC, draw available by management unit.
Status quo for residents.



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Approach 1

Limit resident & nonresident OTC,
draw available by management unit.

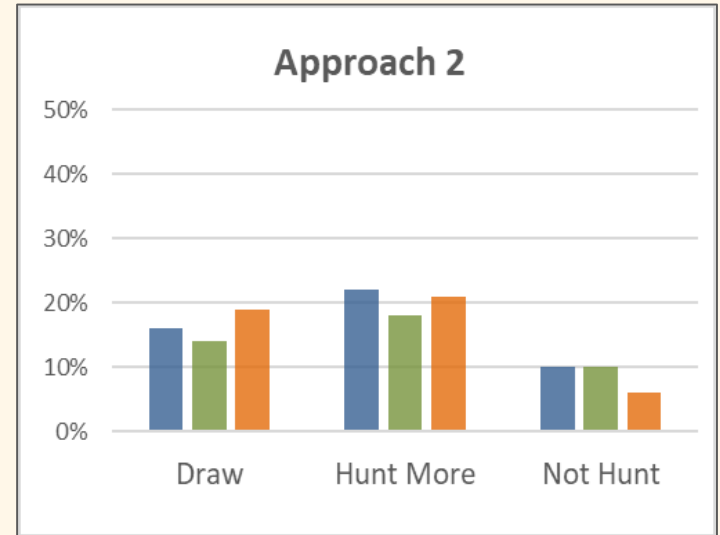


Archery (587)
Rifle (434)
Mixed (488)

confidence = 95% \pm 2.51%

Approach 2

Limit nonresident OTC, draw available
by management unit. Status quo for
residents.



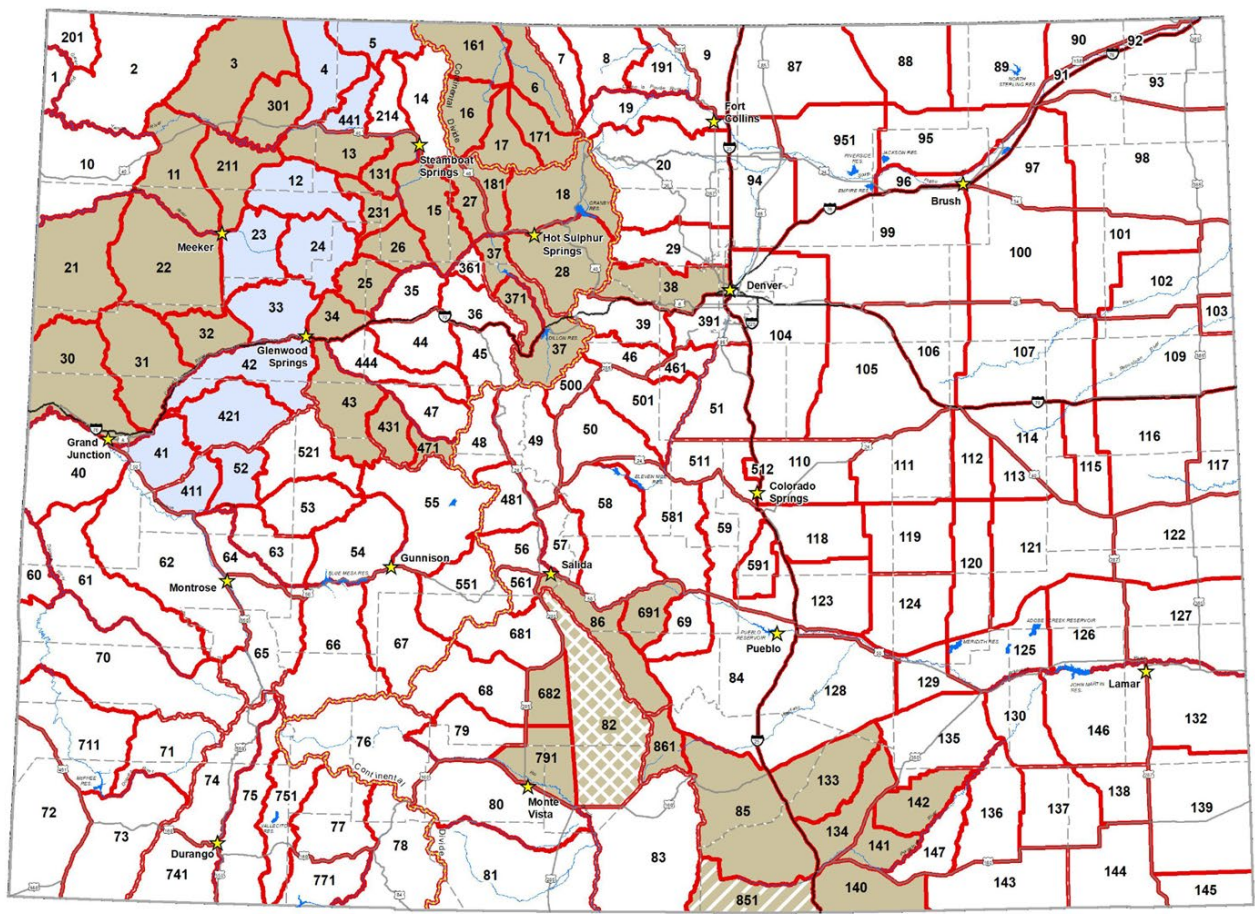
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Winter 2023 OTC Survey - Key Takeaways

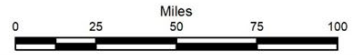
<p>Approach 1 (limit resident and nonresident OTC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw applications likely to increase.• With methods of take combined, equal proportion of those likely to hunt in CO more often & those likely to no longer hunt in CO (14% for both).
<p>Approach 2 (limit nonresident OTC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With methods of take combined, higher proportion of survey takers likely to hunt in CO more often (20%) than those likely to no longer hunt in CO (11%).
<p>Comparing Approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Approach 1</u>: slightly higher proportion likely to no longer hunt in CO (14%) vs. Approach 2 (11%).• <u>Approach 2</u>: higher proportion likely to hunt in CO more often (20%) vs. Approach 1 (14%)



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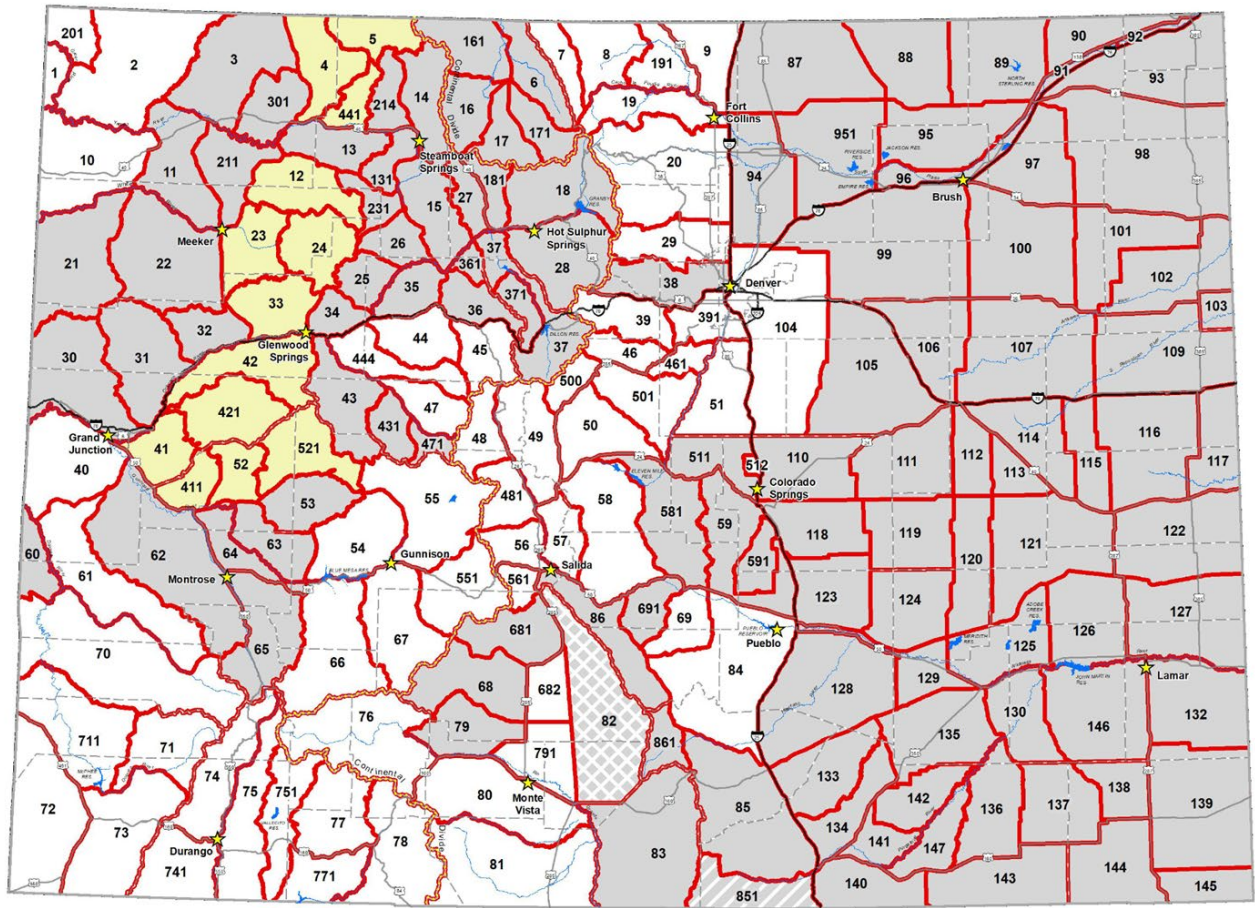


**2024 OTC Archery Licenses
Valid Units for Cow Elk**



GIS Unit

- ★ CPW offices
- ☒ Valid Units
- ☐ Valid, Private Land Only
- ☒ Public land only
- ☐ Except Bosque del Oso SWA
- ☐ No OTC licenses available



2024 OTC Archery Either-Sex Elk



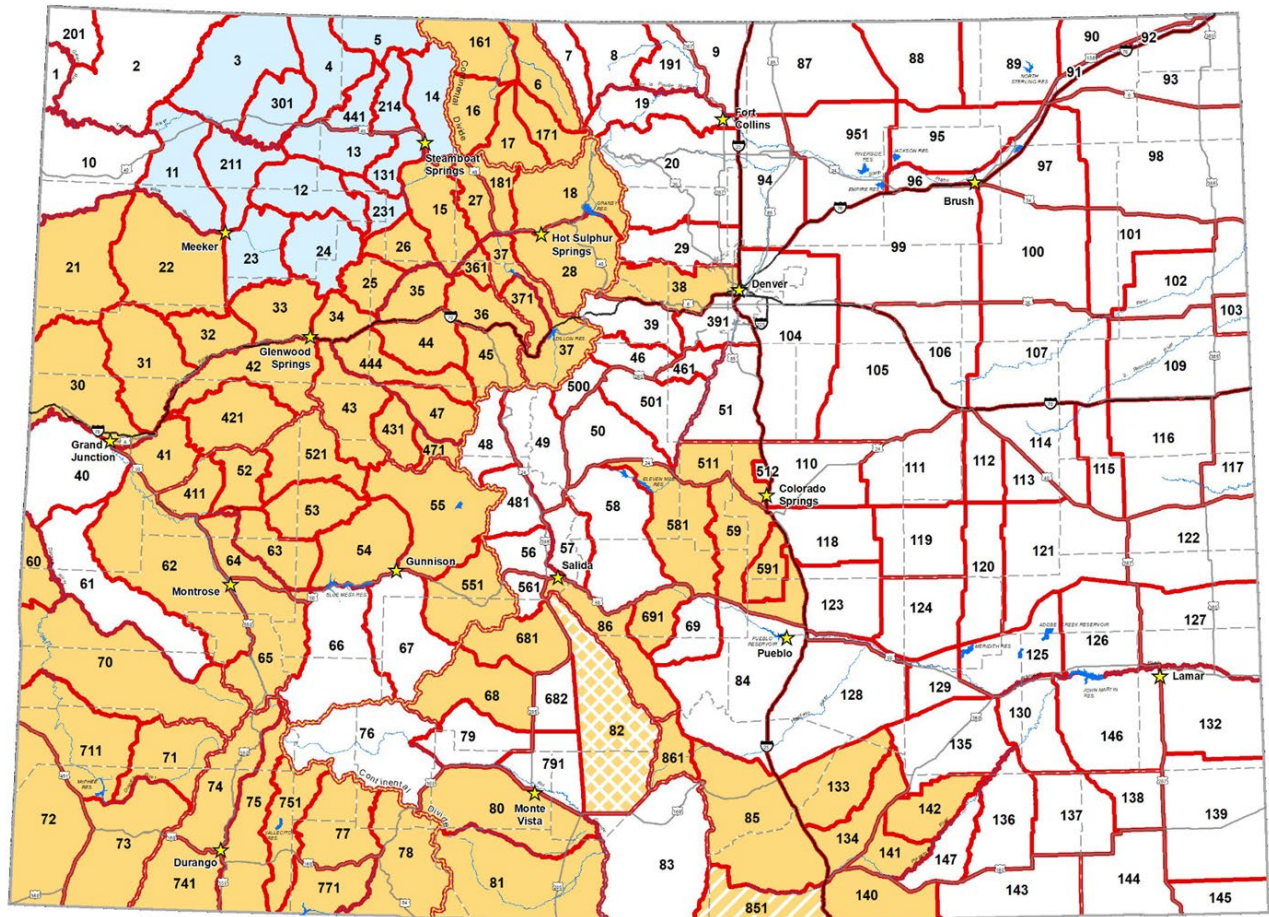
- ☆ CPW offices
- ☆ Public land only
- Valid Units
- Except Bosque del Oso SWA
- Valid, Private Land Only
- No OTC licenses available

OTC Archery Elk

<p>Alternative 1 (Staff Preferred Alternative)</p> <p><i>Alternative A6 in the OTC survey.</i></p>	<p>Limit all resident and nonresident archery licenses - limited licenses available through the draw by management area (DAU or GMU).</p>
<p>Alternative 2</p> <p><i>Alternative A5 in the OTC survey.</i></p>	<p>Limit nonresident archery licenses - limited licenses available through the draw by management area (DAU or GMU); status quo OTC for residents.</p>
<p>Status Quo</p> <p><i>Alternative A1 in the OTC survey.</i></p>	<p>No change.</p>



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2024 OTC Rifle Licenses - Valid Units for Bull Elk
Second and Third Seasons



GIS Unit

- ★ CPW offices
- Valid 2nd and 3rd season
- Valid 2nd and 3rd season, except Bosque del Oso SWA
- Valid 2nd and 3rd season, private land only
- Valid 2nd and 3rd season, public land only
- No OTC licenses available

OTC Rifle Elk

Status Quo (Staff Preferred Alternative) <i>Alternative R1 in the OTC survey.</i>	No change.
Alternative 1 <i>Alternative R5 in the OTC survey.</i>	Limit nonresident rifle licenses - limited licenses available through the draw by management area (DAU or GMU); status quo OTC for residents.
Alternative 2 <i>Alternative R6 in the OTC survey + phased limitation</i>	Phased limitation of all resident and nonresident rifle licenses - limited licenses available through the draw by management area (DAU or GMU).



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Administrative Changes - Cow Moose

Recommendation: Optional late cow moose season that is additional to the regular October 1-14 moose rifle season, and is valid for all regular rifle deer and elk seasons (with no hunting during the breaks between seasons) when necessary to **meet management objectives for moose.**

- Increases cow moose hunting opportunity and should increase cow moose harvest without increasing crowding.
- Will allow for more management flexibility.



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Administrative Changes - PLO Black Bear

Recommendation: PLO rifle bear licenses are **not required to be unlimited OTC** for every population/DAU (managers could still choose an unlimited PLO OTC strategy).

- Allows CPW flexibility to assign bear PLO seasons to either unlimited OR limited licensing strategy based on bear management plan objectives and trajectories.



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BGSS Cycle Length

Recommendation: Status Quo; maintain the **current five-year** cycle length.

- Allows for flexibility and adaptiveness to complex challenges.
- Allows staff to be responsive to changing biological conditions and social issues.
- Public generally wants to maintain 5 year structure.



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Next Steps



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