

Wildlife Program

Elk Area 3911 Changes for 2018

Elk Area 3911 – Elk area 3911 is a dedicated area of Kittitas County. Master Hunter general elk seasons help mitigate damage to commercial crops. This elk area consists of areas within GMUs 328, 329, 334, 335, 336, and 340. Much of the elk area consists of private farmlands.

Seasons Changes – During the three year season setting process that started in May 2017, WDFW proposed that the 3911 second elk tag be discontinued and the seasons brought into line with Master Hunter only seasons for GMU 371 and Elk area 3912. The three year season setting process is as follows:

Regions Submit 3-Year Hunting Season Setting Ideas: May – June 2017

WDFW Regions submitted 2018-2020 three-year hunting season setting ideas. Regional ideas were incorporated with ideas received from the public since the last 3-year hunting season setting process. The public had an opportunity to comment through a survey conducted from mid-July through August.

Formulate Recommendations and Alternatives: July – August 2017

Members of the public provided comments to help shape the 2018-2020 hunting seasons at a series of public "open house" meetings planned by the department in July and August. The public also provided online comments from July 17 through August 31, 2017. Public comments received at the meetings and through the survey helped the department understand the level of support for the proposed hunting regulations for 2018-20. Using that feedback, department staff members further refined the proposals.

Public Comment Period: January 24 - February 14, 2018

The public was able to comment on the proposed rule changes from January 24, 2018 to February 14, 2018. These comments helped shape the final proposed rules that were presented at the Fish and Wildlife Commission on March 15-17, 2018 meeting.

Tag Requirement Changes – This change no longer requires a Master Hunter to purchase a second elk tag to hunt in elk area 3911 in the early season. The former early and late seasons are now combined. Master Hunters will use their general season tag to hunt and harvest in elk area 3911. Also with this change, Master Hunters will be required to hunt with the legal weapon identified on their elk tag. For example, a muzzleloader tag holder can hunt with muzzleloader hunting equipment or archery equipment, but not modern firearm equipment.

Rationale for Rule Change – There are several reasons that regional staff no longer see a need to use the elk area 3911 second elk tag system. Over the last 3 years (2015-2017), Master Hunter participation in the elk area 3911 second elk tag early season has been lower than expected with 213 (13%) purchasing the second tag in 2015. Removing the requirement to

purchase a second tag will not limit Master Hunter participation in the elk area 3911 season. Master Hunters have shown their willingness to participate in the late elk area 3911 hunt using their general season tag. The total number of antlerless permits in District 8 have been reduced by almost 85% in the past five years. When opportunity for some user groups is affected, it is appropriate to distribute reductions among all user groups. The single tag system has worked well in elk area 3912 and GMU 371. These Master Hunter only hunts have been in place since 2006 and have effectively managed the elk that are causing damage in those areas.