

Below is a subset of the 3-year season setting issues. These are the issues that we feel are likely to have the highest interest from the public. There are a total of 79 issues that we are considering and all those proposals can be found [here](#) and at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/season-setting#>

Deer

Issue 1: Antler-Point Restrictions for white-tailed deer in Game Management Units 101 (Sherman), 105 (Kellyhill), 108 (Douglas), 111 (Aladdin), 113 (Selkirk), 117 (49 Degrees North), and 121 (Huckleberry)

Species: White-tailed deer

WAC(s): [220-415-020](#), [220-415-030](#)

Background: Antler-point restrictions (APRs) have become increasingly popular with some white-tailed deer hunters throughout the U.S. but they are not universally supported. The Department implemented a 4-pt. minimum APR for white-tailed deer in GMUs 117 and 121 during the 2011-2014 hunting seasons but returned to an Any Buck harvest strategy in 2015. Since that time, some hunters have advocated for the Department to reinstate APRs and to possibly expand them to include more GMUs. In association with the Department's commitment to consider APRs during our 2021-2023 rule making process, the Department partnered with Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center to conduct a survey of deer hunters in Washington that quantified their opinions regarding the management of white-tailed deer. The survey was distributed via email to more than 44,000 hunters that had reported hunting in GMUs with white-tailed deer, with approximately 13,000 responses.

Although survey results (available using the link below) indicate most respondents were dissatisfied with their opportunity to harvest a mature white-tailed buck, they also indicate a strong lack of support for implementing more restrictive regulations, especially a 4-pt. APR in GMUs 101-121 (District 1). The restrictions that were least opposed included 2 pt. and 3 pt. APRs and if considered, should not apply to youth, senior, and disabled hunters. Survey results also indicated if APRs were implemented, they should be implemented in all District 1 GMUs. However, this would limit the Department's ability to evaluate the effects of this rule change on white-tailed deer populations. As such, it would be our preference to only apply an APR to a subset of GMUs and that subset would be determined prior to the formal rule making process.

Based on survey results, the Department is presenting 4 alternatives for consideration, but with recognition that maintaining the current Any Buck season structure (No change) would be our recommended alternative.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Implement a 2 pt. APR for white-tailed deer in a subset of GMUs in District 1, but provide an exception for youth, senior, and disabled hunters.

3. Implement a 3 pt. APR for white-tailed deer in a subset of GMUs in District 1, but provide an exception for youth, senior, and disabled hunters.
4. Implement a 4 pt. APR for white-tailed deer in a subset of GMUs in District 1, but provide an exception for youth, senior, and disabled hunters.

Issue 2: Allow hunters to use dogs to assist with tracking wounded big game.

Species: Elk, Deer, Moose, Bighorn, Mt. Goat

RCW(s): [77.15.240](#), [77.15.245](#)

WAC(s): [220-413-060](#)

Background: The Department frequently receives requests from hunters to allow the use of dogs for tracking wounded big game, as is allowed in many other states. Those requests are usually associated with deer and elk hunting, but it is likely to be beneficial for recovering other big game species as well. However, the Department would not allow the use of dogs to track wounded black bears or cougars to ensure compliance with RCWs 77.15.245 and 77.15.240 and WAC 220-413-060. Specific rule language allowing the use of dogs to track wounded big game will be developed prior to the formal rule making process but restrictions are likely to include:

1. Only allowed for deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat.
2. Only allowed during legal hunting hours.
3. Can only use 1 dog at a time.
4. Dog must always be on-leash.
5. Must occur within 72 hours of the animal being wounded

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of dogs to track wounded game as proposed.

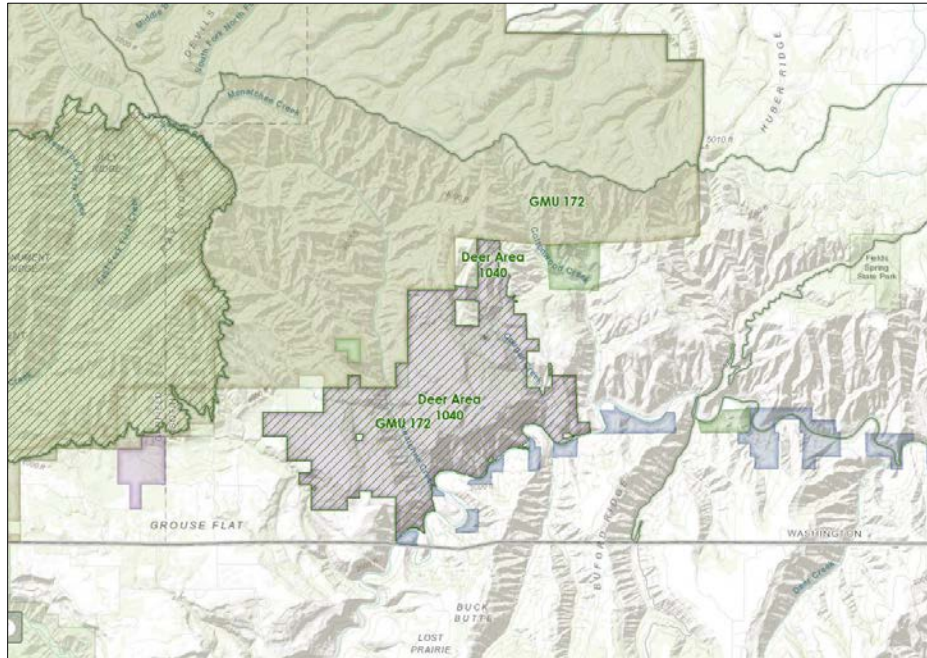
Issue 3: Eliminate Deer Area 1040 and open the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Unit during general deer seasons

Species: Deer

WAC(s): [220-415-020](#), [220-415-030](#)

Background: Deer Area 1040 (area shaded purple in the above image), is the area in Game Management Unit 172 (Mountain View) that is associated with lands managed by the Department as the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Unit. Since 2014, the Department has provided limited special permit opportunities within the Deer Area and excluded general season opportunities with the intent of providing a quality hunting

experience. However, because Deer Area 1040 is within the ceded area of the Nez Perce Tribe, tribal hunters also pursue deer in this area. To ensure opportunities to access this area and hunt deer are similar for state and tribal elk hunters, the Department is proposing to eliminate Deer Area 1040, expand the hunt area for the special permits to GMU 172, and open the area during general deer seasons.



Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Eliminate Deer Area 1040 and open the area during general deer seasons as proposed.

Elk

Issue 1: Implement a program that can be used to evaluate the potential for using hunters to manage elk hoof disease.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): WAC 220-415-060

Background: With no treatments or vaccines available, efforts to reduce the prevalence and distribution of elk hoof disease are limited to lethally removing diseased elk. The Department is proposing to implement a program that will be used to evaluate the potential for using hunters to manage this disease. Importantly, the goal of this program is to increase the proportion of diseased elk within total harvest, but total harvest is not expected to increase. This program would be

initiated in 400, 500, and 600 series Game Management Units, evaluated on an annual basis, and if warranted, discontinued before the 2023 hunting season. The two main components of this program are briefly outlined here, but you can review the Department’s full proposal using the link provided below.

Incentivize All Elk Hunters to Harvest Diseased Elk

The Department will create a special incentive permit drawing for hunters that harvest an elk with hoof disease. This drawing would be similar to permits offered to incentivize hunters to submit their harvest report early. The specific opportunities (season date, number of permits, hunt area, etc.) will be determined prior to this proposal being formally adopted, but the Department plans to offer multiple permits in order to create a legitimate incentive. Any hunter (*except Hoof Disease special permit*) can participate by submitting hooves from their elk harvest at a Department collection location. Hunters that submit a hoof set with at least one hoof indicating infection enter the drawing.

Hoof Disease Special Permits

The Department will create special permits within the Master Hunter special permit category that provide an opportunity to harvest diseased elk that are not identified as a legal elk during most general seasons (e.g., antlerless elk) or may otherwise not be targeted. If a Master Hunter successfully harvests a diseased elk under this special permit as their first elk, they will be issued an additional permit that would allow them to harvest a 2nd elk during the established permit season. The Department will require permitted Master Hunters to submit all four hooves from their harvest to evaluate the effectiveness of this permit opportunity. WDFW will offer low quantities of these permits (i.e., < 20 per District).

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Incentivize all elk hunters to harvest elk with hoof disease as proposed.
3. Create hoof disease special permits within the Master Hunter category as proposed.
4. Alternatives 2 and 3.

Issue 2: Remove the “True Spike Bull” restriction during general archery seasons in Game Management Units 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), 334 (Ellensburg), and 335 (Teaway).

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: To increase the survival of yearling bulls, harvest of bulls during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons has been limited to “True Spike” bulls in the core Colockum elk herd area (GMUs 328, 329, 334, and 335) since 2009. Since that time, yearling bull survival has increased and consistently met the Department’s management objective. The Department anticipates removing this restriction during general archery seasons would result in only modest effects on yearling bull survival. Moreover, archery hunters no longer have opportunities to harvest antlerless elk during general archery seasons in GMUs 328 and 329. Although the Department replaced some of that lost opportunity with special permit opportunities beginning during the 2020 season, concerns related to equity remain. The Department is proposing to remove the “True Spike” restriction during general archery seasons in response to those concerns.

Alternatives:

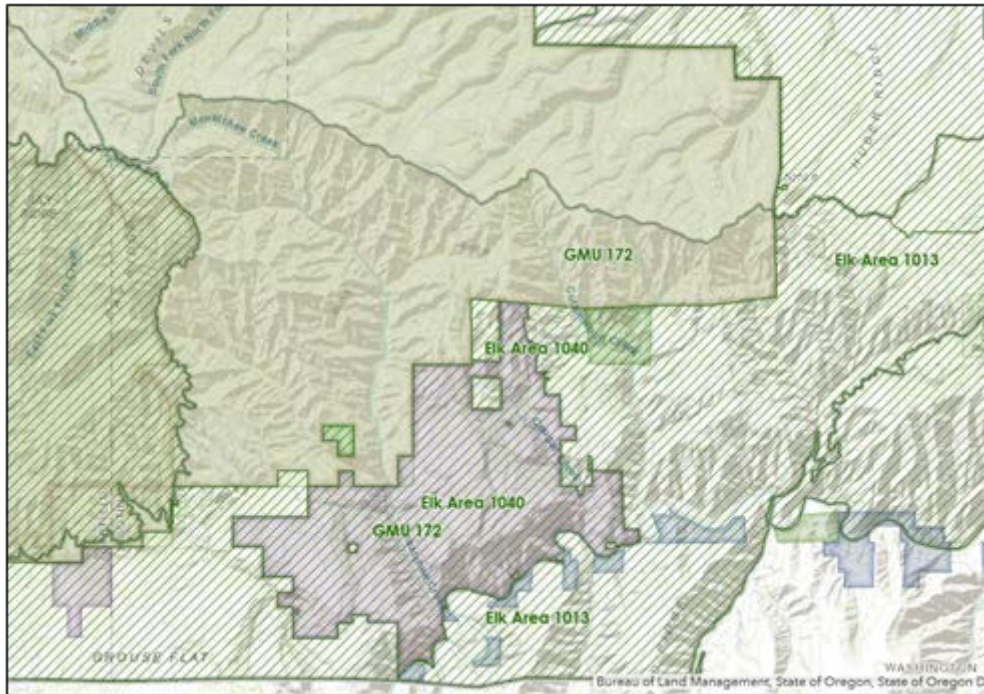
1. No change.
2. Remove the “True Spike Bull” restriction during general archery seasons in GMUs 328, 329, 334, and 335.

Issue 3: Eliminate Elk Area 1040 and open the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Unit during general elk seasons

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-040](#), [220-415-050](#)

Background: Elk Area 1040 (area shaded purple in the above image), is the area in Game Management Unit 172 (Mountain View) that is associated with lands managed by the Department as the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Unit. Since 2014, the Department has provided limited special permit opportunities within the Elk Area and excluded general season opportunities with the intent of providing a quality hunting experience. However, because Elk Area 1040 is within the ceded area of the Nez Perce Tribe, tribal hunters also pursue elk in this area. To ensure opportunities to access this area and hunt elk are similar for state and tribal elk hunters, the Department is proposing to eliminate Elk Area 1040, expand the hunt area for the special permits to GMU 172, and open the area during general elk seasons.



Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Eliminate Elk Area 1040 and open the area during general elk seasons as proposed.

Issue 4: Add Elk Area 5066 (Norway Pass) to Game Management Unit 522 (Loo-Wit)

Species: All game species

WAC(s): 220-410-050, 220-415-040, 220-413-180

Background: Currently, Elk Area 5066 (see image below) represents the eastern portion of GMU 524 (Margaret) and opportunities to hunt elk in this Elk Area are limited to special permit opportunities. Elk Area 5066 also represents that portion of the Mount Saint Helens National Volcanic Monument (Monument) that is within GMU 524. Hunters can currently hunt in this area during general seasons for other game species (e.g., black bear, grouse, cougar, deer, etc.).

This proposal seeks to remove Elk Area 5066 from GMU 524 and add it to GMU 522 because it would assist with clarification and enforcement of elk hunting regulations in the Monument. However, GMU 522 is currently closed to all hunting and trapping except for hunting elk and mountain goat by special permit holders during established seasons in designated areas. As such, hunters that have pursued game species other than elk or mountain goat would no longer be able to do so unless the Department also made modifications to the rule that prohibits these activities in GMU 522 (WAC 220-413-180).



Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Add Elk Area 5066 to GMU 522 and retain the current rule that would only allow hunting for elk and mountain goats during established permit seasons in Elk Area 5066.
3. Add Elk Area 5066 to GMU 522 but modify the current rule to allow opportunities to hunt all game species within Elk Area 5066.

Hunting Equipment

Issue 1: Allow the use of cell phone trail cameras during established hunting seasons for big game

Species: All Big Game

WAC(s): TBD

Background: Technological advancements now make it possible for people to use their cell phone or computer to receive real-time images or videos from trail cameras they have deployed in the field. Some hunters have expressed a concern that these capabilities are unethical and suggest they should be illegal to use during established hunting seasons for big game. It is currently legal for hunters to use trail cameras with these capabilities during an established hunting season. Because some people use these cameras for purposes other than hunting, it could prove difficult to enforce this rule if it were adopted.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Make it illegal for hunters to use cell phone trail cameras during established hunting seasons for big game.

Issue 2: Allow the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-060](#)

Background: Under current rule, sights on muzzleloading firearms must be open, peep, or of other open sight design. Optic sights are allowed, but telescopic sights or sights containing glass are not. The Department routinely receives requests from hunters to allow the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms. Common arguments in support of allowing them to be used are related to increased hunter participation, hunter retention, and ensuring a clean and ethical kill. One-power scopes do not magnify the target, but rather provide a clearer sight window, in much the same way eyeglasses correct someone's vision (i.e.—they make the target clearer, but don't make it bigger). Common arguments against their use are typically related to the use of scopes not adhering to the spirit of primitive weapons. The Department is not opposed to allowing the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms because we do not anticipate it would result in more animals being harvested.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms as proposed.

Issue 3: Allow the use of telescopic scopes on muzzleloading firearms

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-060](#)

Background: Under current rule, sights on muzzleloading firearms must be open, peep, or of other open sight design. Optic sights are allowed, but telescopic sights or sights containing glass are not. The Department received a formal petition to allow the use of telescopic scopes on muzzleloading firearms. This proposal differs from the one presented under **Issue 3** because it would allow the use of scopes that magnify the target, whereas that proposal only included 1x scopes, which do not magnify the target. Common arguments in support of allowing telescopic scopes to be used are related to increased hunter participation, hunter retention, and ensuring a clean and ethical kill. Common

arguments against their use are typically related to the use of telescopic scopes not adhering to the spirit of primitive weapons. It is the Department's recommendation that telescopic scopes not be allowed on muzzleloading firearms.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of telescopic scopes on muzzleloading firearms as proposed.

Licensing

Issue 1: Allow hunters who draw a special permit to return it if they are unable to go on the hunt

Species: Multiple

WAC(s): [220-412-080](#)

Background: Every year we get multiple requests from people who have drawn a special permit or multiple special permits and are unable to go on their hunt for multiple reasons. We currently have no mechanisms to restore points for those people if they turn in those permits. Losing their points reduces their chances of drawing in the future. This proposal will allow people to return their permits and get their points restored. The permits will have to be returned with enough time to reissue those permits to other hunters prior to the start of the season. This time period will be determined through the public review process and could be two weeks to a month before the season starts.

Alternatives:

1. No change
2. Change the rule to allow people to turn in their special permits for point restoration if they are unable to go on their hunt, provided the permit is returned within a time that will allow the department to reissue that permit. This time period will be determined through the public review process and could be two weeks to a month before the season starts.

Small Game and Furbearer WAC Revision proposals

Issue 1: Hunting for turkeys with dogs during the fall season

Species: Turkey

WAC(s): [220-416-010](#)

Background:

Robust turkey populations in some parts of Washington, combined with other factors, have led to human-wildlife conflicts with turkeys in developed areas. Fall seasons are in place in order to maintain or control these populations to mitigate damage while providing additional hunting opportunity.

Hunting fall turkeys with dogs is most common as a traditional practice in southeastern states, though several other states allow this opportunity. The goal of this change is to increase participation in fall turkey hunting. This change would also allow hunters to use dogs when hunting turkeys along with other small game and game bird species.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow hunting for turkeys with dogs during the fall season EXCEPT during the dates established for modern firearm deer or elk general seasons.

Issue 2: Using handguns chambered for shotshells for turkey hunting

Species: Turkey

WAC(s): [220-414-020](#)

Background:

Per [WAC 220-414-020](#):

“(6) It is unlawful to hunt turkey with a weapon other than shotgun shooting #4 or smaller shot, bow and arrow, crossbow, or muzzleloading shotgun shooting #4 or smaller shot.”

Current regulations do not allow turkey hunting with a handgun. However handguns that perform similarly to legal weapons would be suitable for harvest. These handguns could increase accessibility for hunters with handicap conditions who cannot pull a bow or carry a full shotgun or crossbow while using canes, crutches, or other supporting devices. Handguns may also be more accessible to youths and people of smaller stature. Hunters pursuing multiple species could more easily carry their rifle along with the handgun, without having to carry two long guns or return to their vehicle to exchange weapons.

The goal of this change is to increase hunter participation and better enable some hunters, for example those with disabilities, to participate in turkey hunting. To comply with existing regulations, these handguns may not hold more than three shells.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of legal handguns which can be modern or muzzleloading style, designed for hunting, with a minimum barrel length of nominal 10 inches inclusive of choke tube. Modern centerfire handguns must fire a minimum 3 inch shotshell of .410 caliber or larger. Muzzleloader style handguns must be 45 caliber or larger. Handguns must use #4 shot or smaller.

Issue 3: Using rimfire rifles for fall turkey hunting

Species: Turkey

WAC(s): [220-414-020](#)

Background:

Per [WAC 220-414-020](#):

“(6) It is unlawful to hunt turkey with a weapon other than shotgun shooting #4 or smaller shot, bow and arrow, crossbow, or muzzleloading shotgun shooting #4 or smaller shot.”

Current regulations do not allow hunting turkeys with a rifle, primarily due to safety concerns resulting from the longer range of rifles and the risk to hunters who are calling and hidden from view. Allowing only rimfire rifles would expand weapon options while limiting the power of those weapons to mitigate safety risks and waste. Unlike spring turkey hunting when calling is the predominant method of hunting, in the fall turkeys are more commonly hunted by a variety of methods (calling and stalking). Additionally, turkey hunting in the fall frequently consists of removing birds from conflict situations on private lands where hunter density may be less.

The goal of this change is to increase hunter participation and to enable hunters pursuing multiple small game species to utilize the same weapon on their multi-species hunt. This would also allow another tool for removals from conflict situations.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of rimfire rifles for turkey hunting during the fall season only.

Issue 4: Using air rifles to hunt bullfrogs

Species: Bullfrog

WAC(s): [220-416-120](#)

Background:

Per [WAC 220-640-050](#), bullfrogs are classified as Prohibited level 3 species. They are also classified as game animals by [WAC 220-400-020](#). As an invasive species, they can cause significant damage to aquatic ecosystems through aggressive predation. Under current regulations, bullfrogs can only be taken by angling, hand dip netting, spearing (gigging) or with bow and arrow. There is no daily limit on the number of bullfrogs that may be taken, no possession limit, and no size restrictions.

Allowing the use of air rifles may enable more frequent and effective removals of this invasive species. Only nontoxic ammunition would be allowed to prevent lead poisoning in aquatic environments. The goal of this change is to increase participation in and efficacy of bullfrog hunting in order to increase removals and to protect native ecosystems.

Alternatives:

1. No change.

2. Allow the use of air rifles for hunting bullfrogs. Hunters may use only air rifles with calibers .177 to .22 and that produce a muzzle velocity of at least 600 feet per second. Only nontoxic ammunition may be used.

Issue 5: Using air rifles to hunt forest grouse and lagomorphs

Species: Forest grouse, cottontail rabbit, and snowshoe hare.

WAC(s): [220-414-020](#)

Background:

Under current regulations it is illegal to hunt game birds with anything other than a firearm, a bow and arrow, a crossbow, or by falconry. During modern firearm deer or elk seasons, forest grouse may not be killed with any rifle or handgun 24 caliber or larger, or shotgun containing slugs or buckshot, unless appropriate deer or elk tags are in the hunter's possession. Forest grouse may be taken with shotguns as well as firearms smaller than 24 caliber during the entire grouse hunting season.

Per [WAC 220-414-020](#):

- “(2) It is unlawful to hunt game birds with a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells.
- (3) It is unlawful to hunt game birds or game animals, except bullfrogs, in a manner other than with a firearm, a bow and arrow, a crossbow, or by falconry.
- (4) It is unlawful to hunt game animals or game birds with a shotgun larger than 10 gauge.
- (5) It is unlawful to hunt game birds with a rifle or handgun, with the exception of blue grouse, spruce grouse and ruffed grouse.”

The goal of this change is to recruit new small game hunters and to encourage more participation in small game hunting by expanding the weapon options to allow the use of air rifles.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of air rifles for hunting forest grouse, cottontails, and snowshoe hares. Hunters may use only air rifles with calibers .22 to .25, producing a muzzle velocity of at least 600 feet per second.

Issue 6: Delay the start of forest grouse season

Species: Forest grouse (ruffed, sooty, dusky, and spruce grouse)

WAC(s): [220-416-010](#)

Background:

Harvest data, based on catch-per-unit-effort, indicate that Washington's forest grouse populations are in a long-term decline. The current season runs from September 1st to December 31st. In early September, brood hens are particularly vulnerable to harvest. Delaying the start of the season would

reduce this disproportionate vulnerability. The goal of this change is to improve forest grouse populations by increasing survival of brood hens.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Set the forest grouse hunting season for Sept. 15 to Dec. 31 (delay the start by two weeks)
3. Set the forest grouse hunting season for Sept. 15 to Jan. 15 (delay the start by two weeks and add two weeks to the end)
4. Allow forest grouse hunting during Labor Day weekend, then close the season until a second opening on Oct. 5 when other upland game bird seasons open.

Issue 7: Trapping for rabbits and snowshoe hares

Species: Cottontail rabbit and snowshoe hare

WAC(s): [220-417-010](#)

Background:

Current regulations allow trapping for furbearers and unclassified species only. Cottontail rabbits and snowshoe hares are classified as game animals and may be hunted but not trapped. See WAC [220-416-010](#) for hunting seasons and bag limits. The goal for this change is to increase opportunity by allowing an additional method of take for cottontail rabbits and snowshoe hares.

Only cage and box traps are being considered for harvesting cottontail rabbits and snowshoe hares. Body-gripping traps are prohibited to capture any mammal for recreation or commerce in fur per RCW [77.15.194](#).

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow trapping for cottontail rabbits and snowshoe hares with box or cage traps.