

Department recommendation for 3-year season setting for 2024-2026 seasons.

The Department recommends the following related to the current season setting process:

Open and delegate the following:

- Deer and elk general seasons and small and upland game seasons require revision on a three-year cycle, thus those rules must be revised.
- Migratory game birds and ungulate permit rules are revised annually and will also need to be revised this year.

Do not open and no changes this year:

- Leave the cougar and bear rules as is until the game management plan is complete, or the Commission creates a carnivore hunting policy.

As part of this three-year season setting process, we asked for internal and external ideas to consider for rule making. We have summarized these ideas and developed recommendations related to what should move forward for this year’s rule making. To move an idea forward means that we will consider it for rule making and vet it through the public process. We recommend delegating the following proposals to the Director for rulemaking.

Species/topic	Proposal	Rational
Deer	Eliminate all Deer Area 5382 special permit hunts (archery, muzzleloader, modern firearm, youth). Stop excluding Deer Area 5382 from all general deer seasons in 382.	Feasible.
Deer	Add 382 to general late archery deer (3pt min, same dates as 388).	Feasible.
Deer	Remove antlerless mule deer harvest from the general early archery season in District 6	Justified.
Deer	Remove Antlerless harvest from Archery General Season for Units 272 and 278 in both early and late seasons. Change that opportunity to Antlerless permit.	Justified.
Elk	Add a new elk damage area and antlerless damage permits in the north boundary of GMU 654 (boundary with GMU 652) focused on reducing elk in the industrial timberland of that area that are dropping into the Orting Valley and causing significant elk damage. Consider inviting tribal participation as supported by co-management agreements. Recommended hunt will likely be split between MZ (60%) and Archery (40%) to provide increased opportunity as requested by public while simultaneously trying to maximize harvest success.	Feasible.
Elk	Change the General Season Archery Bag Limit to 3-point or larger bull (eliminate antlerless) in GMUs 520, 550, 560 and 572.	Necessary.
Elk	Change the bag limit for Late Archery Elk in GMUs 506 and 530 from 3-point and antlerless to just 3-point or larger bulls and supplement with Special Permits for Antlerless.	Feasible.

Elk	Add early rifle season in GMU 371 and additional youth tags.	Feasible.
Elk	Change early muzzleloader general elk season from true spike bull to spike bull in GMU 249.	Consistency.
Elk	Establish an elk area in the Fruitland Valley area of District 1, Stevens County. Add 15-20 special permits (antlerless elk) valid within this elk area during winter months/outside of general hunting seasons	Feasible.
Elk	Add GMUs to the General Season Elk, Master Hunters Only, antlerless hunt December 9-31 to facilitate reduction of damage to commercial farming. Current season includes GMUs 127 & 130. Revise that to include all GMUs 127-142.	Feasible.
Hunting equipment restrictions	Eliminate "except bear and cougar" from Part (2): It is unlawful to hunt big game, except bear and cougar, with modern firearm equipment at any time in any manner unless the hunter is wearing fluorescent hunter orange and/or fluorescent hunter pink clothing.	Feasible.
Furbearers (trapping)	Add requirement that proof of sex needs to be attached to #2 (bobcat/otter) and #3 (cougar) Add requirement to collect bobcat jaws for ageing Add to #2 "Any person who takes a bobcat or river otter must provide the date, location, and method of the take,"	Some aspects of this should be considered if feasible.
Furbearers (trapping)	WAC 220-417-030: change 4c) to visual in-person inspection once every 24 hours (or once daily – a little more flexible)	Maybe a variation of the proposal.
Game Management Units (GMUs) and hunting areas	Change the mutual boundary of GMUs 503 and 516 so that the valley bottom habitat and predominantly agricultural land-use property is mostly included in GMU 503, where 516 would continue to be almost entirely U.S. Forest Service Lands.	Feasible.
Game Reserves, waterfowl closures, waterfowl regulated access areas	Evaluate the Game Reserve status and/or boundaries for the Skagit Delta Game Reserve, Fir Island Farm Game Reserve and Johnson DeBay's Game Reserve	Feasible.
Game Reserves, waterfowl closures, waterfowl regulated access areas	Work with property owners and Waterfowl section to move forward a proposal of lifting the Carnation Farms Game Reserve due to ongoing elk management complaints of the property owner/staff, other immediate area ag producers that are affected by the elk that use this reserve as refugia, and greater ag producer damage by elk in the lower valley. WDFW LSD needs more "active" options to work with CF and adjacent affected landowners to effectively manage the elk on those sites and throughout the entire lower valley - all tied to that site and immediate area. Outreach to immediate adjacent properties would be needed if/when such proposal would be put through.	Feasible.
Hunting equipment restrictions	Add crossbow as a legal hunting method for the muzzleloader deer and elk season.	Feasible.
General Game Management Issues	Amend the WAC to remove 1(b) which states it is legal to use 22 caliber for hunting cougar.	Feasible.
Migratory Bird & Waterfowl	Permit a limited harvest of harlequin duck through either (1) a special permit application and lottery process (like limited big game permits), or (2) random selection when a sea duck hunt authorization is purchased. Design the limited harlequin duck hunt to be managed spatially through either (1) permits explicitly allowing harvest in specific Salish Sea regions, or (2) blanket closures of specific Salish Sea regions with depressed abundance (e.g., South Puget Sound, Whidbey Basin) with permits allowing harvest in areas that remain open. This will allow the recovery of harlequin duck with	Feasible.

	fidelity to basins with depressed abundance while permitting limited harvest in areas with stable and sufficient populations.	
Small Game (hunting bobcat, fox, raccoon, rabbit, or hare)	Open Chukar season in Western Washington to match dates in Eastern Washington.	Feasible.
Small Game (hunting bobcat, fox, raccoon, rabbit, or hare)	Restrict night hunting for bobcat in GMU 108 (or all of District 1) to avoid the accidental killing of a lynx.	Feasible.
Turkey	Change bag limit for fall general season turkey to Two either sex turkeys in GMUs 382, 388, 568-578.	Feasible.
Waterfowl/Migratory Game Birds	September Canada Goose season dates	See what the public thinks. May be difficult to implement right away.
Waterfowl/Migratory Game Birds	Youth hunt dates	See what the public thinks.
Weapons	Muzzleloader - allow 1x scope	See what the public thinks.
Waterfowl/Migratory Game Birds	September Canada Goose season dates	See what the public thinks.

- We recommend leaving these rules unchanged for this three-year season setting. The rules that govern these species can be open at any time as needed and we often contemplate changes during the three-year season setting process.

Species/topic	Proposal	Rational
Black Bear	Spring bear permit season on the Blue Mountains	Commission policy decision.
Black Bear	To address the illegal sale of bear gall bladders and other carnivore parts, modify the (c) and (d) sections of the WAC to state: (c) The nonedible parts are of bighorn sheep or mountain goat; claws or teeth of bear that are not permanently attached to a full bear skin or mounted bear; claws or teeth of cougar that are not permanently attached to a full cougar skin or mounted cougar, velvet antlers of deer, elk, or moose; and a permit has not been granted by the department allowing for the sale, purchase, or barter of any of the animal parts listed in this subsection (2)(c). (d) Bear gall bladders cannot be sold, bartered, or given away	Not necessary, enforcement thinks the current language is sufficient.

Conflict	Require a permit and follow-up reporting for conflict related removals. Add a reporting requirement to 3c.	Needs more research unable to get done in time for this 3-year season setting process.
Cougar	Add verbiage to 220-415-100, 4b, to state "any cougar license purchased after the season has opened is not valid until 3 days after purchase".	Not necessary. Has impact for other big game. Enforcement program did not think this was necessary.
Cougar	Remove "other than cougar" from the language regarding wastage	Not Rulemaking this language is in RCW.
Cougar	Change harvest to a single season of November-March to avoid opportunistic kills during deer season and to reduce issues with April kills	Do not recommend opening cougar rule until the commission develops a carnivore policy or until the Game Management plan is completed. Current season structure and season dates are sufficient.
Decoys and calls	Restrict use of electronic calls for big game (currently only deer are considered)	Not necessary at this time.
Deer	Allow crossbows and short-ranged modern firearm weapons with limited shell/round capacity to be used during Muzzleloader deer season. For firearms specifically, allow plugged shotguns and handguns with limited magazine capacity (6 rounds or less).	Not supported internally as it goes against the primitive weapon distinction.
Deer	Allow the use of a spear as a weapon type to hunt deer or other big game animals	Not feasible.
Deer	Something needs to be changed to our "General deer seasons". We are losing hunter participation due to the lack of deer numbers. As a Fish and Wildlife officer who has worked in my area for 10 plus years, it is very clear that it's gone downhill drastically. During the entire 2022 deer season, I checked 3 legal mule deer bucks. I used to check 30+ legal bucks a season. I don't even see the number of hunters that there used to be in my area. Most of the hunters I speak to also believe something needs to be changed. I suggest we go to a general permit-only season. Most of the people I know hunt out of state and only buy big game tags in this state so we can put in the special permits which is another joke that we need to fix.	Unclear path.
Deer	Make the Multi-season deer tag an over-the-counter purchase instead of a draw.	Not Rulemaking
Elk	Create a new GMU in Skagit (437) to separate out elk areas 4941 and 437.	Need more conversation with co-managers.
Elk	GMU 407 - change all general statewide (west) concurrent with zero early cow harvest. Primitive will have a late cow harvest.	Need more conversation with co-managers.
Elk	GMU 437 - move to any elk.	Need more conversation with co-managers.
Elk	All elk hunting in the Blue Mtns by permit only. Recommended by members of the public for consideration.	Needs more research unable to get done in time for this 3-year

		season setting process.
Firearm Restriction Areas	Add "rifles chambered in straight walled cartridges of at least .357 caliber to no larger than .50 caliber" to be allowed in firearm restriction areas. The change would be to WAC 220-413-180.5(d) and would read as follows: (d) Modern firearm tag holders may hunt during established modern firearm seasons with bows and arrows; crossbows; muzzleloaders; rifles chambered in straight walled cartridges of at least .357 caliber to no larger than .50 caliber; revolver-type handguns; semiautomatic handguns of .40 (10 mm) caliber or larger; or shotguns, so long as the equipment and ammunition complies with department rules.	Needs more research unable to get done in time for this 3-year season setting process.
Furbearers (trapping)	1. Update species names: otter (Lutra to Lontra), marten (add caurina species) 2. Add spotted skunk and coyote to furbearer list and add coyote to small game list	Recommend waiting until the Commission is ready. We could proceed if the commission advises us to do so.
Furbearers (trapping)	WAC 220-417-040 add: common rat and mouse traps cannot be used to trap furbearers	This requires investigating the legality. RCW states that common mouse and rat traps are not considered body gripping.
Furbearers (trapping)	Implement a harvest limit for beaver	This is part of a larger internal discussion that is taking place to develop a comprehensive approach to beaver management. Recommend waiting until that process is completed.
Game Management Units (GMUs) and hunting areas	Reinstate previous youth, disabled, archery and over 65 antlerless seasons in unit 124.	Not supported by region.
General Game Management Issues	Allow the transfer of Special Permits to Youth Family Members	Consider later as part of the R3 plan implementation.
General Game Management Issues	Allow individuals to transfer Special Permits to any Youth (Family Membership Not Required).	Consider later as part of the R3 plan implementation.
General Game Management Issues	Allow Individuals to transfer Special Permits to Anybody.	Consider later as part of the R3 plan implementation.
General Game Management Issues	Allow for the transfer of Special Permits Drawn in the Hunter Education Incentive Pool. These transfers could be limited to Youth or broadened to include anybody.	Consider later as part of the R3 plan implementation.
General Game Management Issues	Allow a deceased person's Preference Points to be inherited by a Family Member at the time of their death.	Points are not proprietary.
General Game Management Issues	Cube Preference Points above 25 (instead of squaring).	Needs more work, GMAC subcommittee is working on this

		issue and will have some recommendations.
General Game Management Issues	Consider changing the term "Quality" for special permits. This terminology infers that any hunt not in this category is not a quality hunt. A term that would better avoid this negative inference would be "Preference".	Not necessary.
General Game Management Issues	<p>WAC 220-413-050 hasn't had the wording changed since 1982. Many of the terms used no longer apply to corresponding RCWs and WACs regarding check stations. At a minimum, the word "agent" needs to be replaced by "a uniformed fish and wildlife officer (See RCW 77.12.620)" and "punchcards" should be updated to "catch record cards (see RCW 77.12.620)." "Checking stations" should just be "Check stations." The title needs to have the word "game" changed to "wildlife." The term "wildlife" does not include food fish such as salmon and sturgeon. I would strongly recommend the terms "game" and "wildlife" be updated to "wildlife and food fish."</p> <p>The term "wildlife" not including food fish is a legacy issue from the old Department of Wildlife and Department of Fish days when each managed a different spectrum of the state's animal resources. In the long run, the RCW definition of wildlife needs to be changed.</p> <p>WAC 220-413-050 Checking stations—Inspection of game and licenses. Hunters and fishermen occupying a motor vehicle approaching or entering a check station established by a wildlife agent must stop and produce for inspection: (1) Wildlife in their possession; (2) Licenses, permits, tags, stamps or punchcards required under Title 77 RCW or rules adopted thereunder.</p>	Not necessary much of the language comes from RCW.
General Game Management Issues	A season for shed hunting, either on WDFW lands or statewide	Can only control on WDFW lands. Recommend handling through wildlife area rules.
General Game Management Issues	WAC 220-413-100 Replace (6) with - A hunter will be required to pay a ten-dollar administrative fee for each game species reporting violation during a license year.	Requires RCW change.
General Game Management Issues	Recommend amending WAC 220-414-030 to make feeding and baiting of ungulates illegal, consistent with other species.	CWD advisory group is currently working on related topics. Recommend waiting for recommendations from that group.
General Game Management Issues	Recommend amending the WAC to state: "It is unlawful to hunt any wildlife at night or wild animals, except rabbits and hares, with dogs (hounds) during the months of October or November September through November".	Not necessary. Current regulations are working.
General Game Management Issues	Under 4, establish a new section 4; (e) to state: "Any big game species killed for personal safety or for causing private property damage cannot be retained by or awarded to a member of the public".	Not necessary. Could take away a tool.
General Game Management Issues	Propose removing the January 31 big game harvest reporting deadline language from the WAC. Instead, I suggest the WAC deadline language be changed to 10 days after the close of the hunt. This current rule seems to be supporting an outdated process which should be updated as the agency moves forward with mobile licensing and reporting opportunities. This change will allow hunters	Not Necessary.

	with a "late season" to report as their season ends and should eliminate the confusion around the WILD system workaround of reporting "did not hunt" on their tag prior to the January 31 deadline to avoid the administrative penalty while they wait for their "late hunt" to conclude.	
Hunting equipment restrictions	Archery draw weight drop to 30lbs minimum.	Needs more research unable to get done in time for this 3-year season setting process.
Hunting equipment restrictions	Make it illegal to use a trail camera for hunting that can transmit information over any electronic means. Specifically, for hunting, only allow the use of trail cameras that have to be checked in the field.	Needs more research unable to get done in time for this 3-year season setting process.
Hunting equipment restrictions	WAC 220-414-030 (4) (c) change to this language: "Synthetic scents used for cover and attractant that are not consumed by animals"	CWD advisory group is currently working on related topics. Recommend waiting for recommendations from that group.
Hunting equipment restrictions	Make it illegal to use blue tooth enabled scopes for hunting	Needs more research unable to get done in time for this 3-year season setting process.
Migratory Bird & Waterfowl	After consulting with USFWS Law Enforcement and WDFW Game Biologists, I propose adding language to the Special Migratory Bird Closures that create a designated no waterfowl hunting areas around known grain storage/handling operations on or near the Snake and Columbia Rivers. We are currently enforcing word of mouth closures put in place by a now retired USFWS SA in order to help prevent a "Zone of influence" violation. These verbal boundaries are problematic because they are not printed anywhere and are basically unenforceable. By creating a permanent "No Waterfowl Hunting Zone" around these areas, and printing them in the pamphlet, hunters will be aware of the closure and USFWS Agents can still pursue hunting over bait investigations.	Further conversation needed; must not conflict with federal language, but is a known reoccurring issue in this region. Possible Lands Division rulemaking.
Small Game (hunting bobcat, fox, raccoon, rabbit, or hare)	Modify dates of Bobcat season. Sept 1 - Oct 15 and Nov 25th - Mar 15 th this excludes the general deer and elk seasons.	Not biologically necessary and needlessly reduces opportunity.
Small Game (hunting bobcat, fox, raccoon, rabbit, or hare)	Allow bobcats to be legally hunted with a big game license as well as a small game license.	This will make it more difficult to collect harvest information on bobcat. We currently collect small game and furbearer harvest data; big game license makes it harder to gather those data.
Small Game (hunting bobcat, fox, raccoon, rabbit, or hare)	Recommend that it be unlawful to hunt raccoon with dogs. Add "It is unlawful to hunt raccoon with dogs".	Not biologically necessary and needlessly reduces opportunity.

Unclassified Species (coyote, squirrel, skunk, porcupine, marmot, opossum, etc.)	Change Classification of Porcupine to "Game Species"	Larger conversation needed around unclassified species. Recommend waiting until a broader discussion is had.
Wild Turkey	Turkey license fees: spring tag (tag purchased before May 31 of current license year) is more expensive and valid for spring and fall season Fall tag (purchased after May 31) is cheaper but only valid for the fall season (Sept 1 - Dec. 31)/end of the current license year	RCW change needed to change the cost. Recommend looking for additional solutions.
Wolf	If someone kills a wolf, they may have their hunting license suspended for 2 years. However, there is no monetary fine like there is for other endangered species and birds of prey. I suggest creating a WAC that allows for a fine to be given under the RCW 77.15.120	Policy discussion required. May require RCW changes.
Bighorn	Create hunt opportunities for R Mtn bighorn in addition to raffle/lottery	Not necessary or biologically feasible at this time.
Black Bear	Create a clause that makes the taking of a cub or a sow with cubs illegal	Do not recommend opening black bear rule until the commission develops a carnivore policy or until the Game Management plan is completed. Current season structure and season dates are sufficient.
Black Bear	Black Bear must be sealed inside a 72-hour window. Any Bear brought in to be sealed that is lactating would require a search for the orphaned Cubs. If Cubs are found prosecution would proceed for said hunter.	Do not recommend opening black bear rule until the commission develops a carnivore policy or until the Game Management plan is completed. Current season structure and season dates are sufficient.
BTD	Establish a deer season east of highway 9 for BTD	No regional support.
BTD	Restrict all Tiger Mtn deer hunting to archery	Not necessary.
Deer	increase and/or create additional high buck hunt opportunity	User group conflict.
Deer	Open archery season in mid-August	Not necessary.
Deer/Elk	Establish split seasons, e.g., an "a" and "b" season	Too many seasons already.
Elk	Divide the Blue Creek region (GMU 154) along Lewis Peak road creating two units	No regional support.
MD	Split GMU 149 into and east/west division to allow for more prescriptive hunting pressure on deer and elk	No regional support.
Moose, goat, sheep	Cap the number of permit available to out-of-state residents (e.g., 10%)	Not necessary current number is already lower.

