

ALTERNATIVE PRONGHORN HUNT MANAGEMENT (updated 12/21/2017)

PURPOSE

Increase sustainable hunting opportunities in New Mexico while maintaining robust populations, based on pronghorn biology and modern population survey techniques.

PRONGHORN BIOLOGY

Pronghorn population growth is driven by both adult female and fawn survival and is typically not greatly affected by male harvest. Compared to deer and elk, pronghorn have shorter lifespans with higher reproductive output. A single male will breed many females within a breeding season, and because pregnancy rates are consistently above 95%, populations remain huntable (unless the number of bucks falls below 10-15 bucks per 100 does). Furthermore, over 99% of the does that are pregnant carry twins. This biological mechanism allows pronghorn populations to respond quickly when conditions are favorable.

Pronghorn reach sexual maturity earlier and their horn growth peaks at 2-4 years of age (for more information see: http://www.boone-crockett.org/news/featured_story.asp?area=news&ID=94). In contrast, deer are ~5 years of age and elk ~7 years of age when they finally reach their peak trophy potential. Because pronghorn mature rapidly, older-aged males are not required within a pronghorn herd for robust populations or population growth. Additionally, low harvest of males is not necessary to provide quality hunting opportunities.

CONCERNS WITH THE CURRENT ANTELOPE PRIVATE LAND USE SYSTEM (A-PLUS)

- 1) The New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (Department) is not able to meet targeted harvest objectives and could be offering more hunting opportunity.
- 2) Some properties cannot be hunted because they do not meet minimum qualifying acreage in a Game Management Unit (GMU) despite having a huntable population and a desire to hunt pronghorn.
- 3) Little to no flexibility in hunt dates, huntable areas, or numbers of people hunting a particular property, although this flexibility could be incorporated into the hunt structure.
- 4) Private landowners do not receive licenses for archery and mobility impaired hunts, although these licenses are allocated to public hunters. This creates an inequity in the number of public versus private licenses.
- 5) Some private landowners do not want to accommodate public hunters on their ranch and therefore choose not to participate in the program. This limits hunting opportunity.
- 6) Public hunters are restricted to hunting only a specific ranch and cannot pursue pronghorn in other areas of the GMU.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PRONGHORN HUNTING

Improved pronghorn survey methods have resulted in better data from which to base harvest recommendations. However, the Department is currently unable to reach targeted sustainable harvest levels because A-PLUS does not provide rifle hunting opportunities in many areas where robust pronghorn populations occur. Our proposal is structured similarly to how deer are hunted in New Mexico, providing increased opportunity for both public and private land hunters, and includes:

- 1) Public licenses allocated by GMU through the big game draw
 - a. Public hunters would be able to hunt accessible public land in the GMU they draw, and would also be able to hunt private deeded land with written permission;
- 2) Private licenses (unlimited) offered over-the-counter during established seasons. These would run concurrently with public hunts in the same GMU
 - a. Private hunters would be able to hunt private deeded land with written permission.

UPDATES (12/21/2017)

The Department continues to take public comment, but has made some modifications to our proposal based on comments received to-date. Changes from our initial proposal include;

- Length of rifle hunts changed from up to 5 days to 3 days.
- Hunt dates shifted earlier in the year (the Department is no longer proposing any pronghorn hunts in Oct., see hunt structure below for details)
- The Department recognizes that some checker boarded properties may be difficult to hunt (for both public and private hunters). We propose 2 options as a solution to this problem (Unitization or Ranch-wide agreements)
 - o See the full proposal for more details:
<http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/download/commission/rule-development/Alternative-Pronghorn-Hunt-Management-Presentation.pdf>

ORIGINAL PROPOSED HUNT STRUCTURE (proposed 8/24/2017)

<u>Hunt Description</u>	<u>Hunt Start Date and Duration</u>
— Archery hunt:	2 nd Sat. in Aug. (~9-10 days in length)
— 1 st rifle hunt:	4 th Sat. in Aug. (up to 5 days in length)
— 2 nd rifle hunt:	4 th Sat. in Sept. (up to 5 days in length)
— 3 rd rifle hunt:	1 st Sat. in Oct. (up to 5 days in length)
— Youth rifle hunt:	2 nd Sat. in Oct. (up to 5 days in length)
— Mobility impaired:	4 th Sat. in Sept. (up to 5 days in length)
— Maintain current public muzzleloader hunts	
— Go from ~60 public hunt codes to a proposed ~150 public hunt codes (proposing to have >1 rifle season and draw public licenses on a GMU level)	

CURRENT PROPOSED HUNT STRUCTURE (updated 1/11/2018)

<u>Hunt Description and Duration</u>	<u>Hunt Start Date</u>
- Archery hunt (9 days in length):	1 st or 2 nd Sat. in Aug. (depending on year)
- 1 st rifle hunt (3 days in length):	3 rd or 4 th Sat. in Aug. (depending on year)
- 2 nd rifle hunt (3 days in length):	4 th Sat. in Sept. (depending on year)
- <u>3rd rifle & Youth hunts (3 days in length):</u>	<u>2 options*:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o <u>Last Sat. in Sept. (depending on year)</u>o <u>Mid-week (Tues.-Thurs.) in mid-Aug.</u>
- Mobility impaired (3 days in length):	4 th Saturday in August (depending on year)
- Maintain public muzzleloader hunts	
- Increase from ~60 public hunt codes to a proposed ~150 public hunt codes (proposing to have >1 rifle season and draw public licenses on a GMU-level)	

*The Department is seeking input on which of the two options above (underlined in red) the public prefers.

*If you would like to comment on the proposal, please send an email to Nicole Quintana:
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