MEMO **S-2**

TO: Larry D. Voyles, Director

FROM: Mike Senn, Assistant Director
Wildlife Management Division

PRESENTER: Brian F. Wakeling, Game Branch Chief

TITLE: Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 2, 5–10, and 26 for 2010–2011 Hunting Season, Commission Orders 11–18 for 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 Hunting Seasons, and Commission Order 23 for the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 Trapping Seasons.

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Orders 2 (deer), 5–10 (turkey, javelina, bighorn sheep, buffalo, bear, and mountain lion), and 26 (population management) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers, and open areas for the 2010–2011 season. The Commission will also consider and may vote to approve Commission Orders 11–18 (tree squirrel, cottontail rabbit, predatory and furbearing mammals, other mammals and birds, pheasant, quail, chukar partridge, and blue grouse) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, and open areas for the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 seasons. Additionally, the Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Order 23 (trapping), establishing season dates, legal species, open and closed areas, and bag and possession limits for the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 seasons. A detailed description of proposals is available for public review at Department offices. Spring turkey, spring bear, spring buffalo, and spring javelina Commission orders are presented at the August Commission meeting, whereas elk and pronghorn antelope are presented at the December Commission meeting.

DATE: March 16, 2010

<u>Summary</u>:

The Department is recommending seasons, season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers, and open areas for Commission Orders 2 (deer), 5–10 (fall turkey, fall javelina, bighorn sheep, fall buffalo, fall bear, and mountain lion), and 26 (population management seasons) for 2010–2011 according to hunt guidelines approved by the Commission during September 2009 for a two-year period. The Department is also recommending seasons, season dates, legal species, bag and possession limits, and open and closed areas for Commission Orders 11–18 (tree squirrel, cottontail rabbit, predatory and furbearing mammals, other mammals and birds, pheasant, quail, chukar partridge, and blue grouse) and 23 (trapping) for 2010–2011 and 2011–2012. The hunt guidelines were approved by the Commission for a two-year period that

extends through spring 2012. Consequently, no public meetings discussing the guidelines were held prior to the April 2010 Commission meeting. Each Region hosted a public meeting, prior to meeting with the Game Branch, to discuss their harvest prescriptions with the public and an open house, prior to the April Commission meeting, where final recommendations were available for public review and discussion. These meetings are generally lightly attended, with an average of about 5 attendees.

The Commission has provided the Department with direction through the hunt guidelines to offer specific hunting opportunities.

Specifically, the Department was to allocate at least 5% of the general deer permits to juniors-only seasons. According to hunt guidelines, units with multiple deer hunts will have stratified 7-day seasons.

Statewide, white-tailed deer hunting opportunity in December is limited to 5% of the total white-tailed deer permits, although alternative white-tailed deer units (Units 6A, 23, 30B, 31, and 36C) will be structured to harvest up to 30% of the expected take for that unit during December. Units 12A, 12B, 13A, 13B, 45A, 45B, and 45C are managed according to the alternative deer guidelines for mule deer. Archery deer seasons are recommended for season length adjustments or permitting to attain 10–20% of the total deer harvest by archers, although no unit south of the Colorado River will be permitted for archery.

Fall turkey hunts are recommended as limited-weapon-shotgun-shooting-shot seasons. Juniors-only turkey permits will be recommended as over-the-counter nonpermit tags in specific units. Archery turkey seasons have been adjusted to overlap with corresponding archery deer seasons.

Fall javelina hunts are to be offered during juniors-only seasons to strive for 10% of total tags (both fall and spring) for juniors hunters. Juniors-only seasons should coincide with a juniors-only deer season, and companion population management seasons are recommended to capitalize on juniors deer hunters in the field.

All bear seasons have specific female harvest limits that close a season on the following Wednesday when that number of female bears have been harvested. Each unit that provides a bear hunt will also have an annual female harvest limit. If the annual female harvest limit is met, this will close any open season on the following Wednesday or any subsequent season in that unit during the current calendar year, even if the subsequent season has not yet opened. The annual female harvest limit is comprised of female bears lethally removed through Department action (e.g., nuisance) and female bears harvested by hunters.

All other small game, trapping, and big game seasons are recommended in accordance with the approved guidelines, unless specifically noted under the species-specific information provided under the corresponding Commission Order.

Hopi tribal members will be allocated a small portion of deer tags in Units 4A, 4B (5 permits), 5A, and 5B (20 permits) according to the Hopi Trust Land allocation authorized through the hunt guidelines.

COMMISSION ORDER 2 – DEER

The Department is recommending 43,930 general deer permits in 2010, an increase of 350 permits statewide from 2009. Archery deer seasons for 2010 are generally unchanged from 2009, except that Units 1, 3A and 3C, and 7 will be available as over-the-counter nonpermit tags rather than draw permit tags. Units 12A and 12B, 13A, and 13B will remain permitted, with no change in permits in Units 13A and 13B. Units 12A and 12B will be reduced by 240 permits, in conjunction with the overall buck harvest reduction in those units, which should keep archery harvest at or near 20% of the total harvest. The total number of tags permitted for archery is recommended at 1,010. Archers that draw a permit tag will not be required to report their harvest through the phone line, and the 10% cap on nonresident participation will apply to these draw hunts.

Several changes are recommended for deer seasons. White-tailed deer permits are recommended for an increase of 135 permits. Antlered mule deer permits are recommended for an increase of 215. Juniors permits are recommended at 2,170 (5% of general), a 135-permit increase over 2009 (2120 general, 50 muzzleloader). This recommendation includes a 250-permit (increase of 50 from 2009) antlerless deer hunt for juniors-only in Unit 12AW, which is consistent with allowing population growth on the Kaibab described in the hunt guidelines. A 20-permit juniors-only muzzleloader deer season is recommended in Units 15A, 15B, 15C, and 15D, whereas a 20-permit general juniors-only deer season in Unit 16A is recommended to be removed. The December archery deer and general deer seasons are recommended to begin on December 10, 2010. Muzzleloader permits are recommended at 1,025 permits, an increase of 15 from 2009.

A 10-permit CHAMP hunt is again recommended for Unit 12AW for 2010, although the season is recommended for later dates (November 5–11, 2010).

Total permits for general, muzzleloader, and juniors-only seasons is 47,135, which is an increase of 500 permits above 2009 levels.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 2 – DEER AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 5 –TURKEY

The fall limited weapon shotgun-shooting-shot turkey season is recommended to run October 1–7, 2010 with 6,820 permits, which is an increase of 700 permits over 2009. There are seven units

(Units 1, 4A, 4B, 6A, 8, 10, 12A, 23, and 27) recommended for juniors-only seasons where over-the-counter nonpermit tags will be offered. These seasons will run concurrently with the permitted turkey season in the unit.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 5 – TURKEY AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 6 – JAVELINA

For fall 2010, the Department continues recommending fall javelina seasons to juniors only during general seasons for which season dates coincide with a juniors-only deer season, with 800 permits. Units within Region 5 allocate 15% of the annual permits to either an October 8–14 or a November 19–25, 2010 season. Additional units in Region 3 (Units 16A, 17B, 18B, and 20A) also offer this juniors-only opportunity, although season dates would be October 8–17. Unit 39 in Region 6 is recommended to change from muzzleloader and archery to general, and run November 19–28, 2010.

In accordance with the 2009 hunt guidelines, the Department is also recommending the juniors-only deer hunters in Units 16A, 28, 29, 30A, 30B, 31, 32, 33, 36A, 36B, and 36C be provided with the opportunity to purchase over-the-counter "companion" tags for javelina, which must be authorized within Commission Order 26.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 6 – JAVELINA AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 7 – BIGHORN SHEEP

Bighorn sheep permits are recommended for a total of 97, an increase of 10 from last year. Permit increases are recommended in Units 12B East (1 permit), 15B (1 permit), 15C North (1 permit), 15D (3 permits), 16A (1 permit), 22 (2 permits), 24B South (1 permit), 31 and 32 (1 permit), 39 West (1 permit), and 40B Tinajas Altas (1 permit). A new hunt for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep is also recommended in Unit 6A with 1 permit. Permit decreases are recommended in Units 40B Gila Mountains (1 permit), 41 East (1 permit), 41 West (1 permit), and 45B (1 permit). The season in Unit 13B South is recommended for lengthening, with proposed dates of November 16–December 31, 2010. Units where recent declines have been detected or suspected, specifically 15A, 15B, 15C, 15D, 45A, 45B, and 45C, have received recent surveys and hunt recommendations are based on these data.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 7 – BIGHORN SHEEP AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 8 – BUFFALO

Two hunts for 2 permits each are recommended for the Raymond Wildlife Area herd in Units 5A and 5B. These hunts are recommended to run September 24–26 and October 8–10, 2010. All 4 tags are proposed to be for yearling buffalo.

No general fall hunts are recommended on the House Rock Wildlife Area herd because structured hunts have been ineffective in harvesting buffalo during the fall. In accordance with the 2009 hunt guidelines, the Department is also recommending the general deer hunters in Units 12A West and 12A East be provided with the opportunity to purchase over-the-counter "companion" tags for buffalo, which must be authorized within Commission Order 26.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 8 – BUFFALO AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 9 – BEAR

During 2010, fall bear seasons are recommended to occur during August 6–19, from August 20 for up to 38 days, or October 1 through the end of the 2010 calendar year. The season in Units 4A and 5A is recommended to begin on November 5 and run through the end of the calendar year. General seasons may occur during any of these season dates and archery seasons may occur during the 38 day season beginning on August 22, 2008. This structure maintains open seasons while allowing Regions to manage female harvest and maintain sites to relocate nuisance bears if necessary. The 2010 recommendation is for a cumulative female harvest limit of 87 for general and 20 for archery season, which is an overall increase of 7 female bears from 2009.

The annual female harvest limit will again apply to fall seasons this year. Annual female harvest limits were established in August 2009 for the units with 2010 spring hunts. Those units that have both spring and fall hunts were considered in the spring 2010 hunt formulation. Harvest that applies to annual female harvest limits includes any take by a hunter or Department action that occurs within a calendar year. Implementation of the annual female harvest limit may result in the closure of a hunt before it opens if the annual female harvest limit is reached before the start of a season. Hunters will need to contact the Department before they go hunting to determine if a specific hunt unit is open, and notification of this need will be plainly identified within the regulations. Compliance with the mandatory physical check for bear remains high.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 9 – BEAR AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 10 – MOUNTAIN LION

The Department recommends that the mountain lion season be opened from August 20, 2010 to May 19, 2011 in all units except those units with a multiple bag limit. Units with a multiple bag limit are recommended to remain open yearlong in accordance with the approved hunt guidelines. Compliance with the mandatory physical check for mountain lion remains high.

The Department recommends removing Unit 22 (south of AZ Hwy 87 and FR 143 and west of AZ Hwy 188) from the list of units open under the multiple bag limit for next year because the management objectives for the bighorn sheep population in that unit have been met. No other changes to the units open to mountain lion hunting under the multiple bag limit approach are recommended at this time.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 10 – MOUNTAIN LION AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 26 – POPULATION MANAGEMENT SEASONS

Population management seasons are recommended for buffalo to be available to permitted general and archery deer hunters in Unit 12A. These seasons are also recommended for javelina to be available to juniors-only muzzleloader deer hunters in Unit 16A and juniors-only general season deer hunters in Units 28, 29, 30A, 30B, 31, 32, 33, 36A, 36B, and 36C. These permits are popularly known as "companion" tags. Buffalo population management restricted nonpermit tags are recommended at 1,116 for general seasons and 850 for archery seasons. Juniors-only javelina population management restricted nonpermit tags are recommended at 450 for general and 30 for muzzleloader juniors-only seasons. These permits will be available only to hunters that successfully draw a deer tag in the coincidental deer hunt.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 26 – POPULATION MANAGEMENT SEASONS AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 11 – TREE SQUIRREL

The Department recommends no change to the tree squirrel seasons for 2010–2012.

COMMISSION ORDER 12 – COTTONTAIL RABBIT

The Department recommends no change to the cottontail rabbit seasons for 2010–2012.

COMMISSION ORDER 13 – PREDATORY AND FUR-BEARING MAMMALS

The Department recommends no change to the predatory and fur-bearing mammal seasons for 2010–2012.

COMMISSION ORDER 14 – OTHER BIRDS AND MAMMALS

The Department recommends no change to the other birds and mammals seasons for 2010–2012.

COMMISSION ORDER 15 – PHEASANT

The Department recommends no changes to pheasant permits for the 2010–2012 seasons. All pheasant hunts in Units 40B are draw hunts. Dates for the individual hunts are adjusted periodically to accommodate local agricultural practices and conditions to maximize hunter success. Four limited-weapon shotgun-shooting-shot seasons are each recommended for 40 permits each, which yields a total 160 permits. Juniors-only seasons (30 permits) remain unchanged, as do archery and falconry seasons. Dates for the hunts in 2010 and 2011 are specified in the attached Commission Orders.

COMMISSION ORDER 16 – QUAIL

The Department recommends no change to the quail seasons for 2010–2012.

COMMISSION ORDER 17 – CHUKAR PARTRIDGE

The Department recommends no change to the chukar partridge seasons for 2010–2012.

COMMISSION ORDER 18 – BLUE (DUSKY) GROUSE

The Department recommends no change to the blue (dusky) grouse seasons for 2010–2012. The Department continues to recommend Units 4A and 5A remain closed to allow grouse transplants to proceed in those units.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDERS 11–18 AS PROPOSED**.

COMMISSION ORDER 23 – TRAPPING

The Department recommends no change to the trapping seasons for 2010–2012.

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 23 AS PROPOSED**.

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Attachments