

9-29-22

Hello Sublette County and LaBarge, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from the interim of the 66th Legislature. On September 16, I participated in the Wyoming Wildlife Taskforce meeting in Casper. The purpose of the Wyoming Wildlife Taskforce is to study top-priority wildlife policy issues facing the state related to the allocation of hunting opportunity, sportsperson access, and other issues.

The Wildlife Taskforce continued to examine the issue of fair chase and new technologies. The current statutory authority for the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission to regulate new technologies is very limited. The Taskforce is going out for public comment with a recommendation to the Wyoming Legislature that a bill be passed providing additional statutory authority to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission to regulate the use of new technology for hunting, as those technology evolves. Trail cameras would be included in that authority. The Taskforce will vote on that concept in November or December, so please let me know what you think by November.

The Taskforce also examined the special draw statutes for non-resident deer, elk and antelope. The Taskforce voted on and approved a recommendation to the Wyoming Legislature to increase the nonresident special license fee to \$1950 for elk and \$1200 for deer and antelope. Currently, the special draw non-resident license fees are \$1268-Elk, \$662-Deer, and \$614-Antelope. The money from this increase in license fee would help support a variety of wildlife and hunter access programs. The increase will also help the outfitting industry, as non-resident special license holders often utilize outfitters. The Taskforce is also examining moving the split on the special draw from 40 percent to 50 percent of non-resident special draw licenses. The Taskforce is sending that concept out for public comment as well.

The Taskforce passed a recommendation to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission to modify regulations regarding the issuance of landowner licenses in the following ways:

- More detailed definition of "subdivide for the purpose of obtaining landowner licenses"

- Requirement that a landowner applicant must have a significant interest in the property in order to qualify. The Task Force recommends the Commission define "significant interest" as a specific value between 10 and 25 percent
- New language to require landowners to provide specific data to establish their qualification for animal use days
- Require the Department to verify animal use days and qualification at least every 5 years
- No more than 20 percent of available tags can be issued as landowner tags. If landowner tags exceed 20 percent of available tags, then a landowner tag draw will be established in that area.

I can be reached at albert@albertsommers.com with questions or comments.