



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: February 14, 2022
RESUBMITTED: March 14, 2022

APPROVED
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MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

(ASSISTANT TO THE COMMISSION)

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Elk Regulations
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 3 of 2022

Authority

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background

Current elk regulations have been in place since 2020 as part of the two-year regulatory cycle to provide consistency in regulations. Accordingly, the Department recommends that the proposed changes remain in place for the 2022 and 2023 elk seasons.

Elk Season Dates

Elk Hunt Period 1 is designed to target elk outside the core elk range in Elk Management Unit (EMU) X before these elk move for the breeding season. This elk hunt period is recommended to be twelve days long, consisting of a four-day hunt in late August/early September, a four-day hunt in mid-September, and a four-day hunt in early October. The recommended dates for Elk Hunt Period 1 in 2022 are August 30 through September 2, September 16 through September 19, and September 30 through October 3. Dates in 2023 would remain similar in structure, with recommended dates for Elk Hunt Period 1 being August 29 through September 1, September 15 through September 18, and September 29 through October 2. This recommendation would retain the same structure for Elk Hunt Period 1 that was established in 2012 and will continue through 2023.

Elk Hunt Period 2 will focus harvest where needed within individual EMUs H and I in the core elk range and will allow for additional harvest outside the core area in EMU X. The recommended dates for Elk Hunt Period 2 in 2022 are December 10 through December 18, while the recommended hunt dates for 2023 are December 9 through December 17. This recommendation would retain the same structure for Elk Hunt Period 2 that was established in 2012 and will continue through 2023.

The Department also recommends removing language in the Wildlife Conservation Order that allows the Department to hold a January hunt, if necessary, to address management issues remaining after the earlier hunts conclude. The January hunt period has not been utilized since 2008. Department staff are more confident in locations of large groups of elk on the landscape today and can focus hunter efforts in those locations during the two traditional hunt periods held each year. Additionally, when held, the January hunt leaves little preparation time for those drawn late in December with limits on finding guides, taking care of work and family responsibilities, etc. Originally developed as an option to provide extra opportunities if needed immediately after the two hunt periods were held, the Department has determined that management goals can be met by adjusting license quotas (if necessary) for the following year, while allowing hunters time to prepare for their once in a lifetime hunt without being rushed.

Issues Pros and Cons

This elk season structure designed in 2012 is intended to increase the number of successful hunters and to increase the effectiveness of hunters taking elk outside of the core range by allowing them more time to harvest an elk. Hunter success numbers increased over the last couple of years due to this regulation change. For the 2020-2021 seasons, hunter success ranged from 75 to 89 percent among the hunt periods, well within the average success rates observed over the past five years of 75 to 87 percent. In addition, the average number of days required to harvest an elk in 2019 was 5.0 days.

The Department does not expect any negative impacts as a result of maintaining the current elk season structure.

Biological

The Department does not expect a biological impact as a result of maintaining the current elk season structure.

Social

The Department gathered public input through comments and opinion surveys when determining the elk season structure. The Department did not receive any negative feedback on this recommendation.

Economic

The elk herd range is concentrated in the northeast portion of the Lower Peninsula. The elk season has a positive economic impact on that region, due to the seasonal influx of elk hunters and elk hunt guiding operations. The Department does not expect an economic impact as a result of maintaining the current elk season structure.

Elk License Quotas and Elk Management Unit Boundaries

The Department is not recommending any changes to elk license quotas or EMU boundaries. Elk license quotas have been in place for two years, and in that time, the Department has not been able to conduct a survey (aerial population survey happening this year) to estimate the impacts on the increase of license quotas in 2020. The goal of the increased quotas in 2020 was to slowly reduce the elk herd to be more in line with population goals stated in the Elk Management Plan. With success rates remaining similar to previous years, which generally indicates the herd has not been reduced to levels below goal, the Department does not recommend a change in license quotas. In addition, the Department has not received any negative feedback on the current EMU boundaries, which were updated in 2020 except for one individual who would like their property to be included in EMU X for the fall hunt. Department

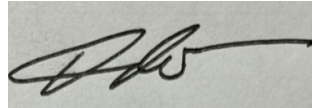
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staff feel this minor change will not alleviate the problem experienced by this particular landowner. The Department will continue to communicate with this individual to resolve their conflicts and revisit this issue in 2024.

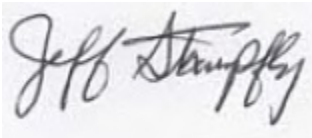
Relevant Divisions have contributed to the preparation of this order. This order was submitted for information on March 10, 2022, at the Natural Resources Commission meeting. This item appeared on the Department's February calendar and may be eligible for approval on April 14, 2022.



Jared Duquette, Chief
Wildlife Division



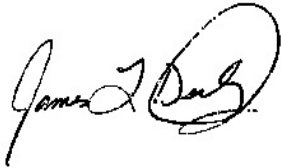
David Shaw, Chief
Law Enforcement Division



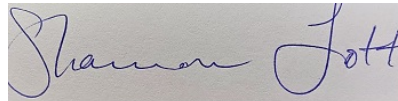
Jeff Stampfly, Chief
Forest Resources Division



Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division



James Dexter, Chief
Fisheries Division



Shannon Lott
Natural Resources Deputy

I have analyzed and discussed these recommendations with staff and concur as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger, Director

Date

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 3 of 2022

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective April 15, 2022, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

3.1 Elk open season, hunt periods; season limit.

Sec. 3.1 (1) The open season and hunt periods for taking elk shall be as shown in table 1:

Hunt Period	Open Season 2022	Open Season 2023
1	August 30 to September 2 and September 16 to September 19 and September 30 to October 3, in elk management unit "X."	August 29 to September 1 and September 15 to September 18 and September 29 to October 2, in elk management unit "X."
2	December 10 to December 18, in elk management units "H," "I," and "X."	December 9 to December 17, in elk management units "H," "I," and "X."

(2) The season limit shall be one elk per license.

Issued on this 14th day of April, 2022.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

Carol Moncrieff Rose, Chair
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Daniel Eichinger
Director