
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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February 6, 2015

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource
Operations

Harvest allocation ensures certainty for hunting sector

VICTORIA – Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Minister Steve Thomson released a revised decision on wildlife harvest allocations today.

Conservation is the highest priority, and if there are concerns for the viability of a wildlife population then harvest opportunities will be reduced or even suspended. Allocations for resident and non-resident hunters are set only after conservation requirements and First Nations food, social, and ceremonial harvest opportunities have been met.

Currently, there are 34 hunts in the province that need to be allocated between resident hunters and non-resident hunters. Initially issued in December 2014, today's decision revises allocation splits for the following hunts:

- Bull elk and either sex elk on Vancouver Island.
- Moose in the Thompson and Omineca regions.
- Bison in the Peace.
- Bighorn sheep and grizzly bear in the Kootenays.

Overall, the number of animals transferred to guide outfitters from resident hunters as a result of today's decision is about 60 animals, when compared to 2014. Of the 45,700 animals harvested by resident hunters each year in B.C., only about 8% are on allocation.

Thomson has also committed to a review of the thinhorn sheep hunt and "either-sex elk hunt" in agricultural portions of the Peace by fall 2015.

Other elements of the December decision remain. Specifically, the wildlife harvest allocation policy ensures:

- By regionally tailoring the allocation decision, impacts on resident hunters are minimized. Resident hunters will continue to receive priority shares of the wildlife allocation, with a stable and predictable percentage.
- Vacant areas and areas not currently allocated to guides will continue to be maintained as unguided areas, and available for resident hunting.
- The decision to have clear and legislated splits for each harvest will result in less discretion in the hands of regional managers – and therefore more certainty for all user groups. Until legislative amendments can be made, the allocation splits will be set in policy.
- Targeted increased shares of allocation for guide outfitters to help ensure the guide outfitter industry remains economically viable.

The Harvest Allocation Policy Review project began in 2003. Its goal was to give certainty to

both resident and non-resident user groups in how wildlife allocations were made to each group. The previous wildlife harvest allocation policy had been transitionally in place since 2007, with the most recent changes coming in 2012.

Over the last few years, ministry staff have worked closely with the BC Wildlife Federation on a number of programs and policies to benefit their members. In addition to working on a hunter recruitment strategy to increase the number of resident hunters from 82,000 to over 102,000, the ministry has done the following:

- Formed the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Committee and regional hunting committees to ensure that proposed changes to wildlife management regulations receive comprehensive stakeholder review.
- Invested more than \$750,000 since 2011 in inventorying big game including deer, elk, goat, sheep, moose and caribou.
- Have undertaken a comprehensive five-year moose study that will investigate the declines, determine what is causing them and what can be done to reverse them.
- Committed to the hunter licensing transformation project, which once complete in 2016, will allow hunters to make all licensing transactions online 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Quote:

Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Minister Steve Thomson –

“I made slight revisions to the hunts for moose, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, Roosevelt elk and bison to address the concerns I heard after the decision was released. I now look forward to working with the BC Wildlife Federation and Guide Outfitters Association of B.C. on ways we can all work more effectively together on wildlife management.”

Quick Facts:

- Sustainable hunting contributes over \$350 million to the B.C. economy.
- There are over 102,000 resident hunters in the province; up from 82,000 only 10 years ago.
- There are approximately 245 licensed guide outfitters in the province employing over 2,000 people and providing services to roughly 5,000 non-residents hunting in the province each year, generating an estimated \$116 million in economic activity each year.

Learn More:

A Frequently Asked Questions document with breakdowns of the hunts by region and species is available online at:

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/harvest_alloc/docs/Wildlife-Allocation-Decision-2015-FAQ.pdf

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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Wildlife harvest allocation

- Wildlife harvest opportunities in British Columbia are managed according to four pre-established priorities.
- Conservation is the highest priority. If there are concerns for the viability of a wildlife population or for its ability to sustain harvests, then harvest opportunities will be reduced or even suspended.
- If a harvestable surplus exists, the first priority for harvest goes to First Nations exercising their Aboriginal rights entitling them to hunt for food, social or ceremonial purposes.
- If the needs of First Nations have been met then harvest opportunities for non-First Nations individuals can be provided.
- Non-First Nations resident hunters (hereafter referred to as 'residents') are the third order of priority.
- Non-residents (people who reside outside B.C.) are the fourth order of priority.
- While resident hunters are a higher priority than non-residents, this does not imply that resident demand must be fully satisfied before non-residents can be granted harvest opportunities. Instead, it means that the share that goes to residents is considerably greater than the share that goes to non-residents.

Harvest Allocation Policy overview:

- The Harvest Allocation Policy is a suite of policies and procedures that guide provincial decision-makers in determining the split between the final two priorities noted above: residents and non-residents.
- Non-residents are required to hire the services of a guide outfitter who is licensed to operate in a specified territory.
- The policy is intended to address those species (by region) where resident and non-resident hunting pressure exceeds the number of animals that are available. This might be as a result of low productivity (mountain goats, grizzly bears), high demand (moose) or for a class of animal critical to the productivity of a herd (female elk).
- For relevant species, wildlife professionals calculate an annual allowable harvest (AAH) for populations throughout the province. The AAH is the number of animals (or type of animals) that can be harvested each year by resident and non-resident hunters combined.
- An established procedure is used to advise on the splits of the AAH that are allocated to the resident hunters and to the guided non-resident hunters. The resultant proportions are referred to as 'the allocation', and those splits generally apply for five year periods called allocation periods. The total number of animals (or type of animals) of a species that can be harvested through a guide in a licence year is known as the quota.
- While guidelines do allow annual quotas to exceed an individual guide's share for a given year, they are managed so that over a five-year allocation period the cumulative harvest

does not exceed the five-year harvest share for the territory.

- The policy is designed to be transparent, objective and consistently applied, and provides resident opportunity and guide outfitter viability. Currently there are 34 hunts in the province that are managed under the policy.
- In many regions highly productive species such as white-tailed deer, mule deer, rocky mountain elk, black bear and wolf are not allocated or on quota and are managed under General Open Seasons for both resident and non-resident hunters. As such, they fall outside of the policy.

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