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Washington state's hunting seasons are determined through a rule-making process that involves public input and Department staff recommendations. Every year, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) makes relatively minor changes to seasons or permits, as well as responds to emerging needs. Some seasons are set on a three-year cycle to maintain continuity and efficiency in the rule-making process. During this three-year cycle, WDFW considers public feedback and staff recommendations. The public has multiple opportunities to provide input, both during the initial scoping and development of recommendations, and during the formal process when WDFW presents their recommended season changes to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for consideration. The proposals considered by the Department typically align with the guidance provided in the Game Management Plan (GMP), a planning document that informs rule-making. The final step in this process is the Fish and Wildlife Commission setting seasons based on public input and staff recommendations. Washington's Big Game Hunting Seasons & Regulations pamphlet outlines the rules and procedures for hunters to follow each season. This process involves several steps, including monitoring statewide populations and harvest, conducting public comment periods, and evaluating data before making final decisions. The annual Big Game Season Setting Process is a multi-step procedure that includes:

- January 31: Big game hunting activity report deadline
- Early February: Follow-up telephone surveys to assess non-response bias for hunters who failed to report their hunting activity
- Late February-Early March: Estimating harvest, hunter numbers, and hunter days based on previous steps
- The WDFW files hunting season recommendations online for public review and comment. The Fish and Wildlife Commission sets seasons based on public input and staff recommendations. Early to mid-March, the Fish and Wildlife Commission holds public hearings and collects feedback from the public. In late March, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) adjusts its hunting season recommendations based on survey results, harvest data, winter conditions, and comments received during the review period. By April, WDFW presents final recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for adoption. Once adopted, the seasons and rules are published in a pamphlet that is printed and posted online. To report poaching or predatory wildlife incidents, you can dial 911 for emergencies or call 377-933-9847 or submit an online report. You can also text your tip to 847411 (TIP4111). The WDFW website posts all reported incidents involving "predatory wildlife," which includes cougars, wolves, and grizzly bears. Washington state hunters face new regulations this season due to the spread of chronic wasting disease. The Department of Fish and Wildlife has introduced three major changes to hunting practices in Washington, aimed at preventing the disease's spread. Regulations in Washington now prohibit baiting and feeding deer or elk, require hunters to report their activities, and impose strict limits on transporting dead game. These measures are part of a proactive approach to wildlife management aimed at containing the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) before it becomes widespread. CWD experts warn that people can unknowingly pick up the disease and move it to new areas, highlighting the importance of preventive action. The state's new regulations for chronic wasting disease are set to have a significant impact on its economy, with millions of dollars annually being generated by hunting tourism. These populations must be protected from disease as it not only affects their well-being but also has economic implications for rural communities that heavily rely on this industry. A statewide approach will be taken, with officials keeping a close eye out for any further cases while ensuring hunters are aware of the new rules and the potential consequences of non-compliance. It's recommended that hunters familiarize themselves with these regulations before heading into the field to avoid any issues. The Department of Fish and Wildlife has published detailed information about the rules on its website, including hunter education programs, to help ensure a smooth transition. The state's proactive stance is based on lessons learned from other areas where chronic wasting disease has become established, highlighting the importance of early intervention and prevention measures over trying to control the disease once it spreads widely. It's worth noting that these new regulations come with some restrictions, including fines and potential loss of hunting privileges for those who fail to comply. Additionally, there are specific guidelines in place for trappers, such as passing an exam on safe and humane trapping techniques before purchasing a license. Licenses can be obtained online or at various locations throughout the state, with fees ranging from \$41.60 for residents to \$200 for non-residents. Season dates and restrictions vary by species, with some areas closed off due to specific regulations. It's recommended that hunters review the guidance on preventing human transmission of SARS-CoV-2 to wildlife before engaging in their activities. The trapping season in Okanogan, Wenatchee, and Gifford Pinchot national forests allows for the lethal harvest of furbearing animals for their hides and pelts only. However, certain regulations must be followed. For instance, furbearers cannot be taken from the wild and held alive for sale or personal use without a special permit. Additionally, wildlife trapped during closed seasons must be released unharmed, and those that cannot be released should be left in the trap with a WDFW representative notified immediately. Lawfully trapped animals must be humanely dispatched or released. A firearm may be used to dispatch trapped animals where permitted. It is also essential to follow specific guidelines for trapping, including daily trap checks and removal of captured animals within 24 hours. For bobcat and river otter pelts, a WDFW identification seal is required, and these animals must be presented to an authorized employee or individual with a permit for sealing by April 20. The pelt and hide must be fully thawed before submission, and the harvester must provide accurate information about the animal, including its sex and harvest method. Furthermore, those submitting bobcat or river otter pelts must also provide a cleaned and dried complete lower jaw (both sides) for aging prior to sealing. More information can be found on WDFW's website regarding pelt sealing and jaw collection. Given text: by permit to abate an animal problem under WAC 220-417-040. These include, but are not limited to, padded foot-hold traps, unpadded foot-hold traps, all snares, and combear-type traps. Using game birds, game fish, or game animals for bait, except nonedible parts of game birds, game fish, or game animals may be used as bait. Within thirty feet of any exposed meat bait or nonedible game parts which are visible to flying raptors. Identification of traps and disclosure of identities Trappers shall attach to the chain of their traps or devices a legible metal tag with either their WDFW identification number (trapper ID or Wild ID) or the name and address of the trapper in English letters not less than one-eighth inch in height. Failure to identify traps is a misdemeanor punishable under RCW 77.15.190. When a property owner, lessee, or tenant presents a trapper identification number to WDFW and requests the identification of the trapper, WDFW shall provide the requestor with the name and address of the trapper. It is unlawful to take a wild animal from another person's trap without permission, or to spring, pull up, damage, possess or destroy the trap; however, it is not unlawful for a person to remove a trap placed on property owned, leased, or rented by the person. See RCW 77.32.545. Permission to trap on private land A state trapping license allows the holder to trap furbearing animals throughout the state; however, a trapper may not place traps on private property without permission of the owner, lessee, or tenant where the land is improved and apparently used, or where the land is fenced or enclosed in a manner designed to exclude intruders or to indicate a property boundary line, or where notice is given by posting in a conspicuous manner. Closed areas Most public lands are open to trapping, but some areas may be closed. Closed areas include, but are not limited to, state and national parks, most federal wildlife refuges, and state game reserves. Trappers should check with land managers prior to trapping. Legal descriptions of state game reserves are found in the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Pamphlet and Chapter 220-411 of the Washington Administrative Code. Trapper report of catch All licensed trappers must report their trapping activity (regardless of success or whether they trapped or not) by April 20. Annual reports must be made using the department's WILD licensing system, found online at fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov. It is the responsibility of the licensed trapper to ensure their report is complete, with all trapping activity and harvest reported. Any trapper not reporting by April 20 will be in noncompliance of reporting requirements. False reports will be considered the same as noncompliance. Failure to report trapping activity is an infraction, punishable under RCW 77.15.160. Incidental take of fox The Cascade red fox is a state-endangered subspecies of fox that are protected in Washington. Fox trapping is the protection of the red fox subspecies is ensured within the boundaries of four National Forests: Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, Okanogan, Wenatchee, and Gifford Pinchot. Uninjured foxes caught accidentally in closed trapping areas must be released promptly, and their release or capture details reported to WDFW within a day. This includes describing the incident, observing the fox's physical state, and noting its final disposition. Trapped animals that cannot be freed unscathed should remain in the trap, with an immediate notification to WDFW required. Similarly, Canada lynx, fisher, and wolverine are protected in Washington; any accidentally caught and uninjured must also be released immediately, with a report submitted within 24 hours detailing their circumstances, physical condition, and final fate. If release is not possible without harm, the animal should remain trapped, prompting an immediate WDFW notification. This pamphlet outlines trapping seasons and regulations as per Washington's Administrative Code chapters (220-400, 220-417, 220-440, and 220-450) adopted by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. It is essential to note that this summary does not encompass all department regulations. Be aware of possible emergency regulation changes during active trapping seasons, which will supersede information in this pamphlet. Such updates will be communicated through local news media. Hunting seasons and bag limits are summarized for various species, including wild turkey, bobcat, fox, raccoon, hare/rabbit, grouse, coyote, and other small game animals. Similarly, seasons are outlined for waterfowl such as duck, coot, snipe, pigeon, mourning dove, goose, and brant. The guide also covers fishing opportunities in different areas, including Puget Sound, Coastal Rivers, Columbia Basin Rivers, Westside Lakes, Eastside Lakes, and others. Special rules apply to certain freshwater areas, and all anglers must follow Statewide Rules unless otherwise specified. When fishing for sturgeon, it's crucial to check if any Special Rules apply in your area. These rules can modify the Statewide Freshwater Rules and vary depending on the region. For example, some lakes or rivers might have specific regulations regarding gear restrictions or bag limits. To confirm the most up-to-date information, consult the WDFW Fishing Hotline at (360) 902-2500, visit their website at [www.wdfw.wa.gov](#), or contact customer service at (360) 902-2700. Some areas may have Emergency Rules in place due to various reasons. When handling sturgeon, note that only fish within the legal size range can be kept, and any tagged sturgeon must not have its tag removed. Additionally, there are specific regulations regarding catch-and-release fishing for white sturgeon, which includes restricted areas like the Columbia River from Bonneville Dam downstream and some coastal waters. It is also important to note that Sturgeons in this range can only be fished with a single-point barbless hook and bait. You must provide length, name and address details if fish is retained. 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