

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season

Chapter 41:06:01; 41:06:07; 41:06:56

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	January 11-12, 2024	Pierre
	Public Hearing	March 7, 2024	Pierre
	Finalization	March 7-8, 2024	Pierre

SEASON INFORMATION

Duration of Proposal: 2024 and 2025 hunting seasons

Season Dates: September 1 – December 31, 2024 for BHS-BH2 and Custer State Park
September 1 – October 31, 2024 for BHS-BH4 hunt period 1
November 1 – December 31, 2024 for BHS-BH4 hunt period 2

September 1 – December 31, 2025 for BHS-BH2 and Custer State Park
September 1 – October 31, 2025 for BHS-BH4 hunt period 1
November 1 – December 31, 2025 for BHS-BH4 hunt period 2

Open unit: Units 2, 4, and Custer State Park. See unit map for boundaries.

Licenses: 16 “ram bighorn sheep” licenses.

One of the licenses shall be an auction “ram bighorn sheep” license if a minimum of three total bighorn sheep licenses are allocated.

Requirements and Restrictions:

1. Except for the auction license, application for a license may be made by any resident hunter who has not been previously issued a bighorn sheep license in South Dakota.
2. Landowner - operator preference is not applicable to these licenses.
3. All licensees are required to attend an orientation meeting prior to the first day of hunting by the license holder at the regional office in Rapid City.
4. One bighorn sheep license may be allocated as an auction license if a minimum of three bighorn licenses are approved by the Commission. The Commission shall determine in which unit or units the auction license is valid.
5. All successful hunters must submit their bighorn sheep to a designated department representative for inspection and marking within 24 hours after the kill.

COMMISSION PROPOSAL

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Increase the number of “ram bighorn sheep” licenses from 11 to 16. Modify administrative rule to specify a maximum of 20, which will allow more flexibility to adjust the number of licenses less than 20 during recommendations, without the need to adjust administrative rule, provided the total remains less than 20.

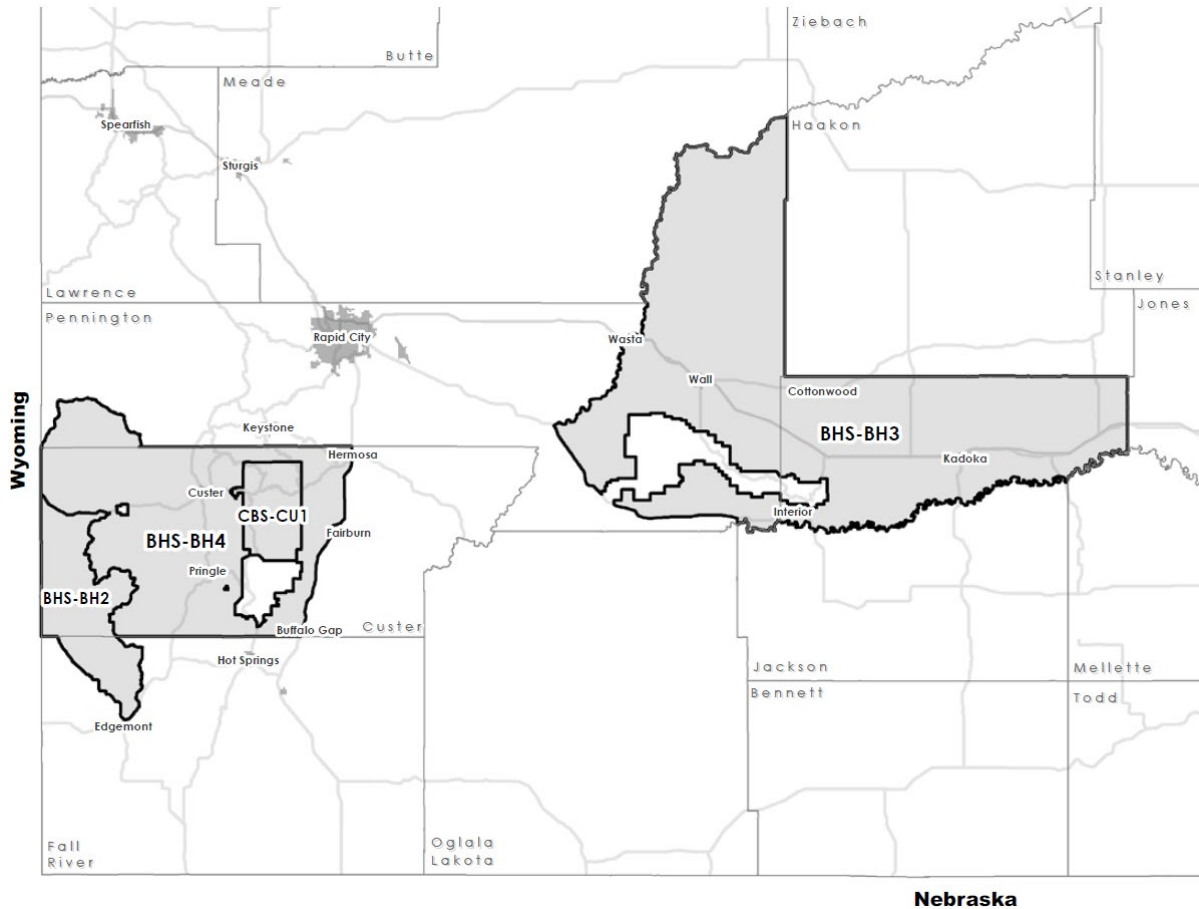
SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The bighorn sheep herd in the Hell Canyon Unit (BHS-BH4; Figure 1) has increased from a minimum count of 69 in 2022 to a minimum count of 85 in 2023, and more ram hunting opportunity can be provided without adversely affecting the ram age-structure. Surveys in Custer State Park (CBS-CU1; Figure 1) also suggest the ram population could sustain additional harvest without significantly affecting age-structure.

Table 1. Minimum bighorn sheep counts, previous license allocation (2022 and 2023) and proposed license allocation (2024 and 2025) by bighorn sheep hunting unit.

Season	Unit	Herd	2023 Min. Count	Licenses	
				2022-2023	2024-2025
Custer State Park (CBS)	CU1	CSP	37	3	4
Bighorn Sheep (BHS)	BH1	Rapid City	45	0	0
	BH2	Elk Mountain	60	3	3
	BH3	Badlands	60	0	0
	BH4	Hell Canyon	85	4	8
NA	NA	Deadwood	26	NA	NA
Auction	All	All	NA	1	1
Total			313	11	16

Figure 2. Custer State Park (CBS-CU1) and bighorn sheep units (BHS-BH2, BHS-BH3, BHS-BH4).



DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:56:03. Number and type of licenses. No more than 44 20 ram bighorn sheep licenses may be issued for the bighorn sheep hunting season. One bighorn sheep license may be issued for sale by auction pursuant to the procedures established in this chapter, valid for one ram bighorn sheep.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

1. The Issue – NA
2. Historical Considerations – NA
3. Biological Considerations – NA
4. Social Considerations – NA
5. Financial considerations – NA

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? NA
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? The increase in licenses will increase hunting opportunity.
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers, and outdoor recreationists? The recommendation will not decrease the population since only a limited number of male bighorn sheep will be harvested, and harvest losses are expected to be offset by reproduction each year.
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? NA

FISCAL IMPACT

Additional revenue will be generated from the sale of additional licenses.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____