

CDFW seeks authority to refund elk, pronghorn tags for areas impacted by wildfires, forest closures

September 25, 2020



The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is pursuing a regulation change that would allow elk and pronghorn (antelope) hunters whose seasons were cut short or eliminated due to wildfires and forest closures to receive a refund of their 2020 tag fees along with a restoration of their preference points used to acquire their tags. Eligible hunters would also receive an additional preference point for elk or pronghorn for the 2020 season.

“We need to do right by these hunters who have lost most if not all of their hunting opportunity in 2020 due to these unprecedented forest closures and wildfires,” said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham. “These are expensive tags that can take many years – sometimes a lifetime – to draw. Refunding tag fees and restoring preference points is the least we can do for this group that does so much to fund our scientific research and conservation of these iconic California species.”

The proposed change to the California Code of Regulations must be approved by the California Fish and Game Commission. On Sept. 17, the Commission's Wildlife Resources Committee approved the proposed regulation concept, which is expected to be taken up by the full Commission in December and if approved, would go into effect in April 2021.

The proposed regulation identifies 14 elk hunts and two pronghorn hunts whose tag holders would be eligible for a refund of tag fees and a restoration of their preference points after submitting their unused tag along with a signed statement that they were unable to hunt for the entire season or a significant portion of the season due to the statewide closure of national forests and other affected lands as a result of the September 2020 wildfires.

The 14 elk hunts eligible for tag refunds would be:

- Marble Mountains Either-Sex Apprentice (Roosevelt), Sept. 9-20
- Northeastern California Archery Either Sex (Rocky Mountain), Sept. 2-13
- Marble Mountains Antlerless (Roosevelt), Sept. 9-20
- Marble Mountain Bull (Roosevelt), Sept. 9-20
- Northwestern California Antlerless (Roosevelt), Sept. 2-24
- Northwestern California Bull (Roosevelt), Sept. 2-24
- Siskiyou Antlerless (Roosevelt), Sept. 9-20
- Siskiyou Bull (Roosevelt), Sept. 9-20
- East Park Reservoir Antlerless (Tule), Sept. 5-Oct. 1
- East Park Reservoir Bull (Tule), Sept. 5-Oct. 1
- Lake Pillsbury Period 1 Antlerless (Tule), Sept. 9-18
- Northeastern California Either-Sex Apprentice (Rocky Mountain), Sept. 16-27
- Northeastern California Bull (Rocky Mountain), Sept. 16-27
- Northwestern California Either-Sex (Roosevelt), Sept. 2-24

The two pronghorn hunts eligible for tag refunds would be:

- Zone 4 Lassen Period 2 General Buck, Sept. 5-13
- Zone 3 Likely Tables Period 2 General Buck, Sept. 5-13

The proposed regulation does not include a refund for deer tag holders, whose hunting seasons generally are longer and whose tags are less expensive. Some premium deer tags may be returned to CDFW with a request

to have preference points reinstated and one preference point awarded for the species for the current hunt year prior to the season opening. Tag return and preference point eligibility requirements and additional information is available on CDFW's website.

A California resident elk tag costs \$461.50, not including application and processing fees. A California resident pronghorn tag costs \$155.27, not including application and processing fees. Application and processing fees would not be eligible for refunds. Hunting license fees similarly cannot be refunded.