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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 28, 2024
To: Wildlife Board and Regional Advisory Council Members
From: Rusty Robinson, Once-in-a-lifetime Species Coordinator
Subject: Shed Antler Gathering Recommendations and Big Game Rule Changes

In 2023, a shed antler gathering committee was formed to address concerns regarding shed antler gathering in Utah. The committee met three times and made several recommendations to the DWR. Some adopted recommendations were incorporated into H.B. 382 - Wildlife Amendments to be codified May 1, 2024, and some require changes to the big game rule (R657-5).

This memorandum outlines recommended adjustments to the current shed antler and shed horn gathering regulations with the associated rule changes highlighted on the attached red-line document. We are also recommending other rule changes to aid in law enforcement, streamline processes, and add clarity to existing rules.

Antler Gathering Recommendations and associated rule changes:

- 1) Seasonal Closure Recommendations
 - We are recommending no closure or shed antler season for residents. Residents may gather antlers year-round.
 - We are recommending a nonresident season of May 1 - December 31.
- 2) Ethics Course Requirement
 - Both residents and nonresidents are still required to complete the antler gathering ethics course annually with a recommended date requirement change of January 1 and May 31.
- 3) Emergency Closure Provisions
 - We are recommending that emergency shed antler gathering closures be triggered by winter feeding (when supplemental feeding is required by policy). The closure would be statewide.
 - We are recommending that exceptions be applied if shed antlers interfere with normal agricultural operations on private land.
- 4) Regulatory Adjustments and Clarification for Commercial Antler Markets
 - We are recommending a definition of "commercial antler buyer" in rule.
 - We are recommending a certificate of registration be required for commercial antler buyers.

- We are recommending clarifications regarding the legality of antler markets, including commercial dog chews, jewelry, antler crafts, etc.
- 5) Other Recommended Changes to the Big Game Rule
- Night Vision Devices: The language will change from "unlawful to use" to "unlawful to possess" while taking or locating big game from July 31 to December 31, to enhance enforceability.
 - Improved Airstrips: The requirement for taking off and landing only on improved airstrips will be removed, maintaining other provisions that limit hunting from an aircraft.
 - Bighorn Sheep Plug: The requirement to plug bighorn sheep will be removed, simplifying the process, and data can still be collected electronically.
 - Management and Cactus Bucks: The requirement for hunters to check in management bucks and cactus bucks will be eliminated, simplifying the process, and data can still be collected electronically.
 - Grammar/spelling Cleanup: Correct typos and errors as needed for clarification.