

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season

Chapter 41:06:56

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	January 9-10, 2025	Pierre
	Public Hearing	April 3, 2025	Pierre
	Finalization	April 3-4, 2025	Pierre

PROPOSED CHANGES

Duration: 2025 hunting season

Season Dates: September 1 – December 31

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

Licenses: 2025 license numbers are recommended on following agenda item.

10 “ram bighorn sheep” licenses were available in 2024.

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.

Proposed changes from last year:

1. Modify § 41:06:56:02 to expand the unit boundary for BHS-BH4 to include those portions of Lawrence and Meade counties west of Interstate 90 (Figures 1 and 2) and clean-up unit descriptions.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED CHANGES FROM PROPOSAL

None.

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

The Hell Canyon unit (BHS-BH4) bighorn sheep herd is currently experiencing a *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* related die-off and only seven rams have been documented in this herd in November and December 2024 compared to 22 ewes and 7 lambs. For the 2024 hunting season, the BHS-BH4

unit was expanded to include bighorn sheep near Rapid City. Like Rapid City, bighorn sheep in Deadwood may not be available for harvest, depending on their location and land ownership. The Department's recommendation is to again expand BHS-BH4 to include additional areas to hunt in 2025. Specifically, the recommendation is to expand the unit into Lawrence and Meade counties west of I-90 to encompass the Deadwood bighorn sheep population.

Reports of sheep with symptoms indicative of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* in Custer State Park have been documented, although the disease related die-off is not perceived to be as significant of that in Hell Canyon. However, only 9 of 60 bighorn sheep in Custer State Park were rams in 2024 compared to 47 ewes and 4 lambs. It is unknown whether these low ram counts are the result of disease, harvest, migration, inability to detect animals, or a combination of all four. Regardless, the recommendation will be conservative to ensure adequate adult ram survival in this herd.

Table 1. Minimum bighorn sheep counts by hunting unit.

Season	Unit	Herd	2023 Min. Count	2024 Min. Count
Custer State Park (CBS)	CU1	CSP	61	60
Bighorn Sheep (BHS)	BH2	Elk Mountain	58	70
	BH3	Badlands	66	65
	BH4	Hell Canyon and Rapid City	130	67
No Current Hunting Unit		Deadwood	26	23
Auction	All	All	NA	NA
Total			341	285

Figure 1. Custer State Park (CBS-CU1) and bighorn sheep units (BHS-BH2, BHS-BH3, BHS-BH4).

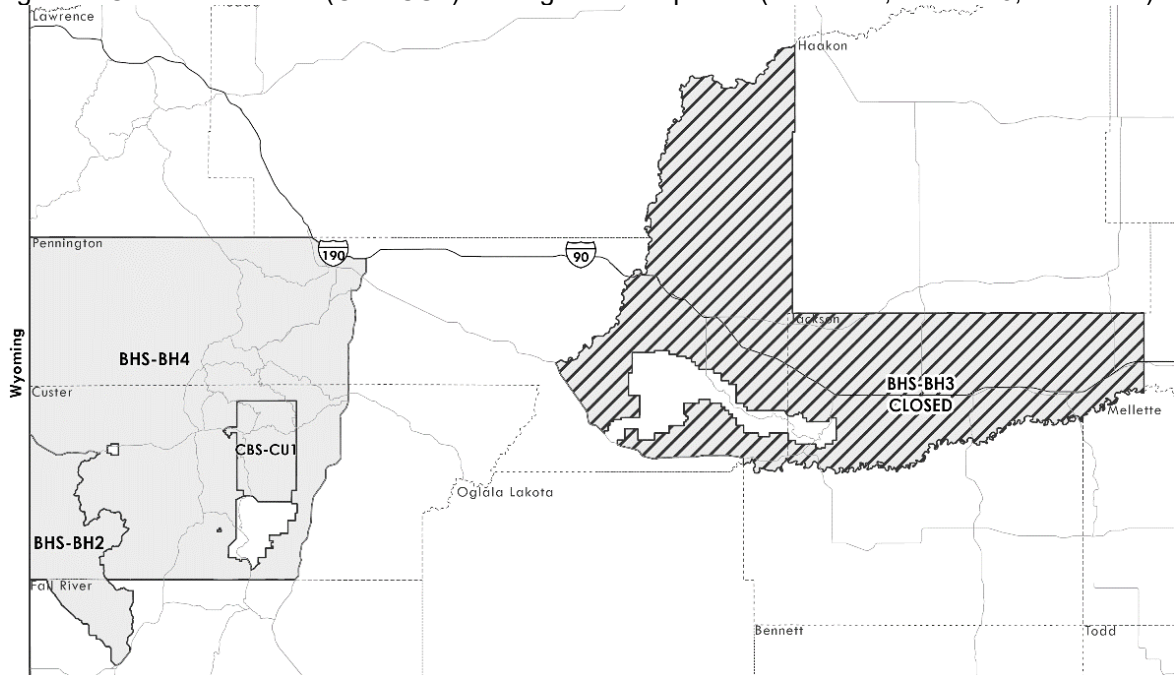
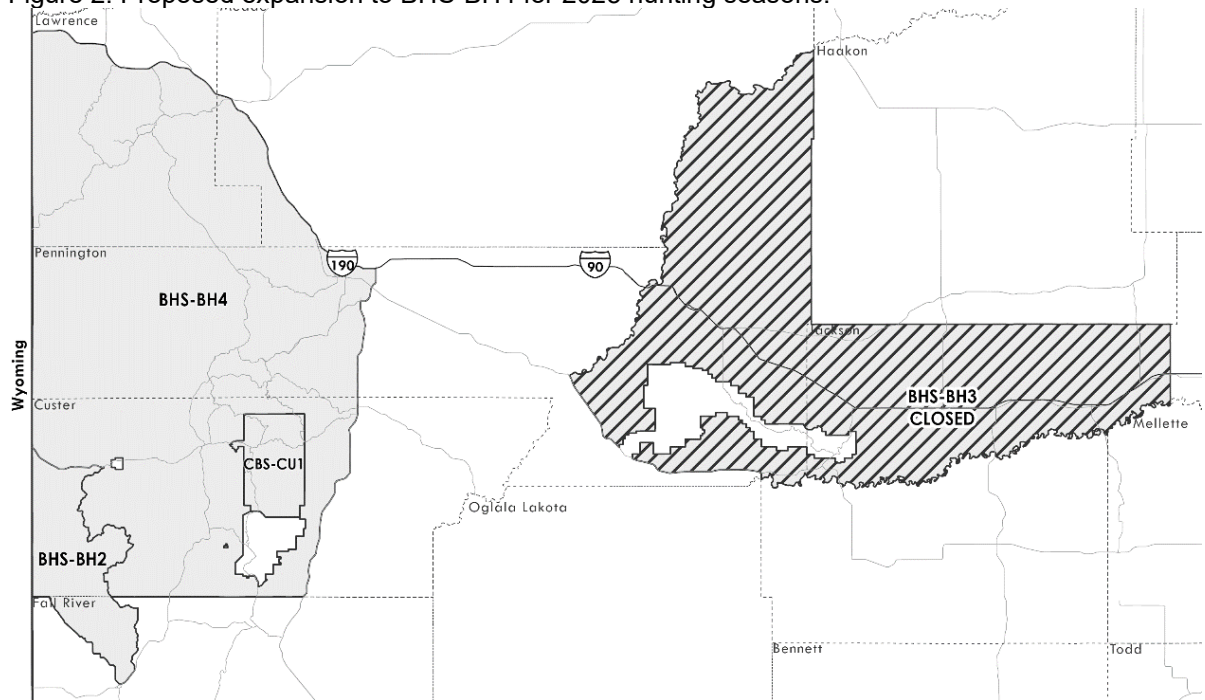


Figure 2. Proposed expansion to BHS-BH4 for 2025 hunting seasons.



DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE RULE CHANGES

41:06:56:02. Open units. The open units for the bighorn sheep hunting season are as follows:

- (1) Unit BHS-BH2: that portion of Custer and Fall River Counties within a line beginning at the junction of U.S. Highway 16 and the Wyoming state line, east on U.S. Highway 16 to the intersection of U.S. Highway 16 and Mann Road (USFS Road 270) then south along Mann Road to Pass Creek Road (USFS Road 272) then south on Pass Creek Road to Richardson Cutoff (USFS Road 276) then east on Richardson Cutoff to Pleasant Valley Road (USFS Road 715) then south on Pleasant Valley Road to Pilger Mountain Road (USFS Road 317) then south on Pilger Mountain Road to County Road 15 then south on County Road 15 to U.S. Highway 18 then west on U.S. Highway 18 to County Road 16 then north on County Road 16 to Dewey Road (USFS Road 769) then north and west on Dewey Road to the Custer County line then west on the Custer County line to the Wyoming state line then north on the Wyoming state line to the point of origin;
- (2) Unit BHS-BH3: that portion of Pennington County east of the Cheyenne River and north of Highway 44 and that portion of Jackson County north of the White River, ~~excluding the Badlands National Park;~~
- (3) Unit BHS-BH4: that portion of Custer, ~~Meade, Lawrence,~~ and Pennington Counties beginning at the junction of the Wyoming/~~South Dakota~~ state line ~~and Interstate 90, Lawrence County line,~~ and Pennington County line then east on the Pennington County line to Interstate 90 then south on Interstate 90 to Elk Vale Road then south on Elk Vale Road to SD Highway 79 then south on SD Highway 79 to the Custer/Fall River County line then west on the Custer/Fall River County line to Pilger Mountain Road then north on Pilger Mountain Road to Pleasant Valley Road then north and east on Pleasant Valley Road to Richardson Cutoff then north on Richardson Cutoff to Pass Creek Road then west and north on Pass Creek Road to Mann Road

then north on Mann Road to U.S. Highway 16 then west on U.S. Highway 16 to the Wyoming state line, then north on the Wyoming state line to the point of origin, excluding ~~Jewel Cave National Monument, Wind Cave National Park, and Custer State Park~~; and

- (4) Unit BHS-CSP: the fenced portion of Custer State Park.

RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

None.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

- 1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? No.
- 2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users? Yes, this will open new areas to bighorn sheep hunting.
- 3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers, and outdoor recreationists? This will increase hunting opportunity.
- 4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors? Yes, by increasing opportunity.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

APPROVE _____ MODIFY _____ REJECT _____ NO ACTION _____

GAME, FISH, AND PARKS COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Bighorn Sheep Hunting Licenses Chapter 41:06:56

Commission Meeting Dates:	Public Hearing Finalization	April 3, 2024 April 3-4, 2024	Pierre Pierre
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COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

2025 Ram Bighorn Sheep Licenses

Season	Unit	Ram Bighorn Sheep
Custer State Park (CBS) Bighorn Sheep (BHS)	CU1	2
	BH2	3
	BH3	0
	BH4	1
Auction	All	1
Total		7

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

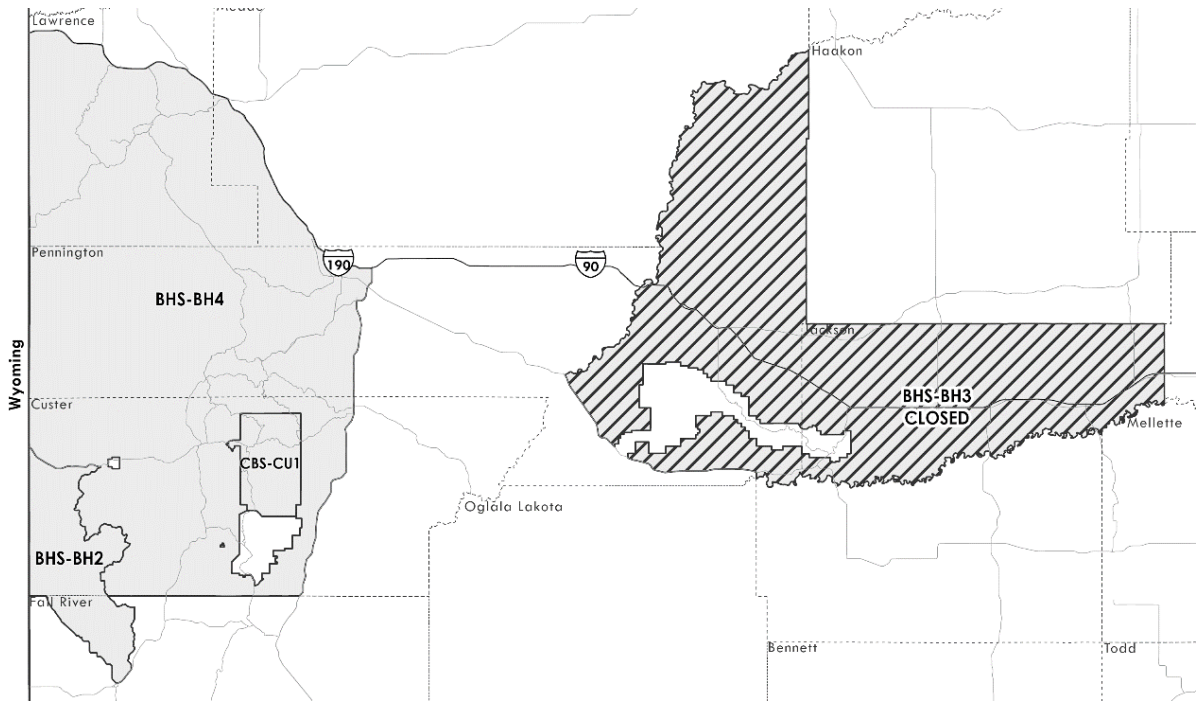
The Hell Canyon bighorn sheep herd is currently experiencing a *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* related die-off and only seven adult rams have been documented in this herd.

The Custer State Park bighorn sheep herd is currently experiencing a *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* related die-off and only nine rams have been documented in this herd.

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

Season	Unit	Herd	2023 Min. Count	2024 Min. Count	Licenses	
					2024	2025
Custer State Park (CBS)	CU1	CSP	61	60	4	2
Bighorn Sheep (BHS)	BH2	Elk Mountain	58	70	3	3
	BH3	Badlands	66	65	0	0
	BH4	Deadwood, Hell Canyon, and Rapid City	156	90	2	1
Auction	All	All	NA	NA	1	1
Total			341	285	10	7

Figure 1. Custer State Park (CBS-CU1), Black Hills bighorn sheep units (BHS-BH2, BHS-BH3, and , BHS-BH4).



APPROVE MODIFY REJECT NO ACTION