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MDC Sets Turkey and Deer Hunting Dates

DECEMBER 14TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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MDC Sets Turkey and Deer Hunting Dates and Regulation Changes

Jefferson City, Missouri - At its meeting on Dec. 11, the Missouri Conservation Commission approved recommendations by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) for the 2016-2017 deer-hunting season and the 2016 turkey-hunting seasons. The recommendations include turkey-hunting and deer-hunting season dates, changes to turkey-hunting allowed methods, and changes to the deer-hunting season structure and allowed methods.

SPRING TURKEY HUNTING DATES

Spring Youth Portion: April 9 and 10, 2016

Spring Turkey Season: April 18 through May 8, 2016

FALL DEER AND TURKEY HUNTING DATES

Archery Deer and Turkey: Sept. 15 through Nov. 11, 2016, and Nov. 23, 2016, through Jan. 15, 2017

Firearms Turkey: Oct. 1 through 31, 2016

Firearms Deer Early Youth Portion: Oct. 29 through 30, 2016

Firearms Deer November Portion: Nov. 12 through 22, 2016

Firearms Deer Antlerless Portion: Dec. 2 through 4, 2016

Firearms Deer Alternative Methods Portion: Dec. 24, 2016, through Jan. 3, 2017

Firearms Deer Late Youth Portion: Nov. 25 through 27, 2016

DEER AND TURKEY HUNTING REGULATION CHANGES

The Commission approved the following regulations regarding deer and turkey hunting:

Expand the deer-hunting late youth portion to three (3) days beginning the first Friday after Thanksgiving.

Reduce the length of the deer-hunting antlerless portion from 12 to three (3) days and begin it on the first Friday in December.

Eliminate the urban-zones portion of the firearms deer season.

Allow crossbows as a legal method during archery deer and turkey seasons.

Allow the use of crossbows during the fall firearms turkey season.

Remove the hunting method exemption requirement related to crossbows.

Reduce the limit of antlered deer from three (3) to two (2) during the combined archery and firearms deer hunting season, with no more than one (1) antlered deer taken during the firearms deer hunting season.

Set the 2016 spring turkey season from April 18 through May 8 with a limit of two (2) bearded turkeys during the season; provided only one (1) turkey may be taken during the first seven (7) days of the season.

Set the 2016 youth spring season April 9 and 10.

Set the 2016 fall turkey hunting season from Oct. 1 through 31 with a limit of two (2) turkeys of either sex during the season.

The regulation changes will become effective March 2016.

The Commission initially approved the deer-hunting recommendations at its August 2015 public meeting followed by a public-comment period.

Changes to the deer-hunting season structure and methods come after Department efforts over the past 18 months to gather public input. That public input included hunter and landowner surveys, numerous public open houses around the state, community presentations, media communications, information in various MDC publications, discussions with conservation partner organizations, and other efforts.

The Department will also continue to gather public input through surveys and the MDC

website in early 2016 on a variety of deer-hunting-related topics, including nonresident permits and prices.

The approved recommendations were also based on the Department's use of deer population simulations, biological data, and harvest information.

"The goal of the Conservation Department's deer management program is to use research-based wildlife management combined with public input to maintain deer population levels throughout the state that provide quality recreational opportunities while minimizing human-deer conflicts," said MDC Deer Biologist Jason Sumners. "As deer populations in Missouri have changed over the last 75 years, so have our management strategies. In modifying the hunting-season structure, our aim is to achieve a deer population that is biologically and socially acceptable while also promoting hunter participation, recruitment, and retention."

DEER HUNTING IN MISSOURI

Missouri offers some of the best deer hunting in the country, and deer hunting is an important part of many Missourians' lives and family traditions. Deer hunting is also an important economic driver in Missouri and gives a \$1 billion annual boost to the state and local economies.

According to MDC, more than 90 percent of land in Missouri is PRIVATELY owned so landowners are essential to creating and maintaining wildlife habitat on private land. The Department works with more than 25,000 landowners in Missouri to help them manage their land for wildlife, such as deer and turkey.

For more information on deer and turkey hunting, visit mdc.mo.gov and click on Hunting/Trapping on the MDC homepage.

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