## WDFW Commission approves hunting rules, defines options for octopus protection Local News

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OLYMPIA – The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted 17 new hunting rules and agreed on a range of possible options for providing more protection for Puget Sound's giant Pacific octopus population during a public meeting April 12-13 in Olympia. The commission, a nine-member panel appointed by the Governor to set policy for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), approved the new hunting rules after holding a public hearing March 1 in Moses Lake and reviewing written comments received earlier this year. One new regulation approved by the commission will allow bow hunters to use electronically illuminated arrow nocks, which can be helpful in finding and retrieving arrows. Other new rules will: Restore archery hunts for antlerless elk in Yakima County, specifically in game management units 352 (Nile) and 356 (Bumping). Expand the boundaries of Elk Area 4941 to help address elk-damage issues in the Skagit River Valley. Rescind the five special hunting permits previously available for the Tieton bighorn sheep herd, which WDFW recently eliminated to prevent the spread of a deadly outbreak of pneumonia. Restrict importation of dead game animals from Missouri, Texas and Pennsylvania, which are among a number of states with deer and elk populations known to harbor chronic wasting disease. All 17 hunting rules approved by the commission will be included in the 2013 Big-Game Hunting pamphlet, which will be available in sporting goods stores and other license vendors late this month.

In other business, the commission approved a list of four options for managing Puget Sound's giant Pacific octopus population that will be submitted for public comment this month. Those options, developed by WDFW in consultation with a 12-member citizen advisory group, range from one that would make no change in current rules to a ban on harvesting octopuses anywhere in Puget Sound. Under current rules, a person with a valid state fishing license can harvest one giant Pacific octopus per day in most areas of Puget Sound. The commission called for a review of those rules after the legal harvest of a giant Pacific octopus near Alki Point in Seattle sparked a public outcry last October. The commission received three petitions signed by hundreds of scuba divers and other members of the public seeking protection for octopuses from recreational harvest.WDFW has scheduled two workshops to solicit public input on the issue at the following locations and times:Port Townsend, April 23 – 6 to 8 p.m., Cotton Building, 407 Water StreetSeattle Aquarium, April 24 – 6 to 8 p.m., 1483 Alaska Way, Pier 59The public can find more information about the four options now under consideration and post comments online at

http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/octopus/ through May 31. The commission will consider taking action on new regulations governing the harvest of octopuses in Puget Sound later this year.

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