



desired buck ratio objectives stated in the approved deer herd management plans.

The actual tag numbers for each affected zone will be reflected in the Final Statement of Reasons and will be selected from the range of values provided by this proposal. The number of tags is intended to allow the appropriate level of hunting opportunity and harvest of bucks in the population, while achieving or maintaining the buck ratios at, or near, objective levels set forth in the approved deer herd management plans. These final values for the license tag numbers will be based upon findings from the annual harvest and herd composition counts. However, under circumstances where severe winter conditions adversely effect herd recruitment and over-winter adult survival, final tag quotas may fall below the proposed tag range.

(b) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation:

Authority: Fish and Game Code Sections 200, 202, 203, 220, 460, 3452, 3453, and 4334.

Reference: Fish and Game Code Sections 200, 202, 203, 203.1, 207, 458, 459, 460, 3452, 3453, and 4334.

(c) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change:

None.

(d) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change:

2007 Final Environmental Document Regarding Deer Hunting.

(e) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication:

The Department conducted a public scoping session in Sacramento on October 11, 2006 and November 18, 2010. Public input, discussions and recommendations regarding the environmental document and mammal hunting and trapping regulations were taken at this time.

Additionally, in 2000, the Department of Fish and Game held a total of twenty-three (23) "Deer Stakeholder" meetings throughout the State. The meetings were open to the public and the Department provided information on a variety of deer management strategies and issues including: Deer Assessment Unit (zone complex) planning and tag draw method alternatives. Attendees were asked to participate in a survey and public comment was also received. The Department also conducted four public meetings at which regulation change concepts and specific proposals for mammals, furbearers, including deer were discussed, and additional public comment was received.

While these meetings were conducted prior to the establishment of current and proposed regulations, the concepts and proposals which were derived through

these meetings are still being implemented as part of the current year regulatory process.

#### IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action:

##### (a) Alternatives to Regulation Change:

##### 1. Number of Tags (B Zones - Low Kill Alternative)

An alternative would be to set the tag quota to a number within the Low Kill Alternative range of 25,000-34,999 identified in the 2007 Environmental Document. In recent years, concerns over declining deer harvest and population trends in the B zones have been voiced by local groups and individuals. Specifically, the Siskiyou County Deer Working Group (SCDWG) has proposed a number of harvest management actions be implemented to reverse declining trends in deer harvest, herd performance and population levels as follows:

- A) Dissolve "Big Green" and allocate zone specific tags for individual B zones;
- B) Establish zone specific tag quotas for individual B zones;
- C) Eliminate second deer tag option (make B zones a one deer tag area); and
- D) Establish Area-Specific Archery Hunts for each zone (i.e. eliminate use of Archery Only tags and make zone tags valid for general season only).

All four of these recommendations cannot be specifically implemented at this time, since they are not identified as alternatives within the current operational Environmental Document. However, a significant reduction in the overall B zone tag quota into the Low Kill Alternative tag range could in effect accomplish several of these recommendations.

Most deer herds throughout the western states, including California and the B zone herds, have been experiencing a steady slow decline since population highs in the 1950s and 1960s. Reasons for these population declines are numerous; however the primary factors are large scale land management practices that have resulted in later seral stage habitats, instead of early successional habitats most beneficial to deer. The B zones are no exception and the primary factors which have negatively influenced deer populations are increased efficiency in fire suppression, overall decreased timber harvest and advancements in silvicultural practices, all of which promote development of later seral stage habitats.

While a significant B zone tag quota reduction into the Low Kill Alternative might accomplish goals of reducing harvest and increasing harvest success (prior 5 year average estimated success of 20%), tag reductions would have little to no effect on herd dynamics (buck ratios) and population levels which are most influenced by habitat conditions. Significant B zone tag quota reductions would also decrease hunter

opportunity and flexibility, which is in direct conflict with one of the primary purposes for creating the B zones complex, “Big Green” concept.

In addition, the recommendations proposed by the SCDWG and the Low Kill Alternative may not be representative of opinions from other counties, groups or individual hunters. Reduced B zone tag quotas would have consequences well beyond Siskiyou County, since Siskiyou County only comprises approximately 20% of the total B zone area.

The proposed action to reduce B zone tag quotas into the Low Kill Alternative was considered and rejected. Significant reductions in tag quotas would have little effect on herd performance or population levels, especially in the current bucks-only harvest strategy. While significant tag reductions may reduce buck harvest and increase hunter success, it would unnecessarily restrict hunter opportunity, an action that is in direct contradiction with reasons for creating the B zone complex.

(b) No Change Alternative:

1. Number of Tags

The no change alternative was considered and found inadequate to attain the project objectives. Retaining the current number of tags for the zones listed may not be responsive to changes in the status of the herds. The deer herd management plans specify objective levels for the proportion of bucks in the herds. These ratios are maintained and managed in part by modifying the number of tags. The no change alternative would not allow management of the desired proportion of bucks stated in the approved deer herd management plans.

(c) Consideration of Alternatives:

In view of information currently possessed, no reasonable alternative considered would be more effective in carrying out the purposes for which the regulation is proposed, or would be effective as and less burdensome to the affected private persons than the proposed regulation.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action:

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action:

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made.

- (a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businessmen to Compete with Businesses in Other States.

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed action adjusts tag quotas for existing hunts. Given the number of tags available and the area over which they are distributed, these proposals are economically neutral to business.

- (b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California.

None.

- (c) Cost Impacts on Private Persons.

The agency is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action.

- (d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State.

None.

- (e) Other Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies.

None.

- (f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts.

None.

- (g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4.

None.

- (h) Effect on Housing Costs.

None.

**INFORMATIVE DIGEST  
(Policy Statement Overview)**

Existing regulations provide for the number of license tags available for the A, B, C, and D Zones. This regulatory proposal changes the number of tags for all existing zones to a series of ranges presented in the following table. These ranges are necessary, as the final number of tags cannot be determined until spring herd data are collected in March/April. Because severe winter conditions can have an adverse effect on herd recruitment and over-winter adult survival, final tag quotas may fall below the proposed range.

<b>Deer: § 360(a) A, B, C, and D Zone Hunts</b>		
<b>Tag Allocations</b>		
Zone	Current	Proposed
A	65,000	30,000-65,000
B	55,500	35,000-65,000
C	8,150	5,000-15,000
D3-5	33,000	30,000-40,000
D-6	10,000	6,000-16,000
D-7	9,000	4,000-10,000
D-8	8,000	5,000-10,000
D-9	2,000	1,000-2,500
D-10	700	400-800
D-11	5,500	2,500-6,000
D-12	950	100-1,500
D-13	4,000	2,000-5,000
D-14	3,000	2,000-3,500
D-15	1,500	500-2,000
D-16	3,000	1,000-3,500
D-17	500	100-800
D-19	1,500	500-2,000