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## G&F<sup>39</sup> computers await big game applications

In January, Wyoming Game and Fish introduces its new computerized level of service for both resident and non-resident sportsmen.

For the first time hunters will be able to apply online for limited quota deer, antelope, elk, mountain goat, big-horn sheep, bison and turkey licenses. G&F will still accept mail applications as well. This is even bigger news than the original Cheyenne miracle, which finally allowed sportsmen to make VISA and MasterCard payment for limited quota licenses in lieu of the previous "certified check/money order only" policy.

Reading about this new G&F online licensing magic brought back bittersweet memories of how many silly mistakes I compounded when annually wrestling with an application for a basic antelope license – the simplest drawing of all – for Hunt Area 88. This often required several tries before achieving occasional success. Meanwhile, I absorbed heaps of humorous abuse during frantic post office visits to beat application deadlines.

Dealing on an official level with electronic systems triggers my sensitive love-hate relationship and general trepidation over computers in general. So, I thought it prudent to call Julie Arp at Game and Fish headquarters in Cheyenne. As electronic license program coordinator, Julie is the brain trust who will oversee the January launch of this monumental system. Julie is also in charge of the Internal Point of Sale (IP) license program slated to begin later in the year at selected license agents and regional G&F offices.

On the phone and right before Christmas, Julie resembled a happy-go-lucky character who has this bevy of new operations well under control.

After all, she has been weaving computer systems into the G&F fabric for two and a half years.

Of the state's 150 top license sales agents who were polled by G&F managers, 99 reported wanting the IP system. In fact, IP was scheduled by the G&F higher-ups to happen last summer. But despite Julie's best efforts, there were

more problems with the computer server arrangements statewide than had ever been anticipated.

"So we're taking first things first," she admitted. "With increasing demand for elk licenses, handling the influx of mail-in paper license applications taxes the entire organization. It becomes painful for everyone to endure the process.

Last year for instance, the department received over 34,000 non-resident elk applications in January and they had to be processed, billed and sorted by preference points and regular or special draw in less than three weeks. The non-resident elk drawing comes up pretty quickly in late February."

Then Julie shared a tidbit that I'll bet most of the public has never realized or even considered.

"Remember that a majority of those elk applications don't arrive until the last few days of January, so it's impossible to spread out the workload!"

Added to this first postal wave of '06 were a few more non-resident deluges such as 37,900 deer and 36,800 antelope license requests. With this mail volume streaming in, it's easy to visualize why G&F offices resemble the North Pole mail box for Santa's workshop!

After Jan. 2 hunters can log in to the G&F Web site and using a Sportsman ID number, apply as an individual or as a party, purchase preference points and pay licenses and application fees with



### Outdoors

Paul Bruun

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either VISA or MasterCard. The online application information is identical to the traditional paper application.

Julie reports enormous public interest in the new system. "We've had lots of calls and almost everyone is positive about the opportunity to apply online."

Before beginning to submit an online application, however, Julie advises that hunters collect all necessary information. This is especially true for group applications.

Online applications will be entered into the established system and the draw conducted as in previous years. Deadlines for online applications will also remain the same, with the online portal closing at 5 p.m. MST on application deadline day. Refund warrants from G&F will be mailed to online applicants unsuccessful in the draw, just the same as with paper applicants.

Remember the new online system is for limited quota licenses only. This system does not offer conservation stamps, fishing, bird or small game licenses. Customers must still purchase those at a license selling agent or G&F office.

Since my talk with Julie, I've examined all of the online resident hunting license information. Other than a few overprints in informational sections and having to utilize the magnification + sign on the Adobe versions of hunting area maps for deer and antelope, I was impressed with the system. Having a printed paper hunting regulations packet (which can also be printed at home) would simplify the online application process for computer challenged operators such as myself.

"We've established a telephone information center [(307) 777-4600] that is skilled in helping license applicants with any problems they encounter," Julie said, emphasizing Bruun should make a personal note of the number.

So impressed am I with the new online G&F license program that the

resumption of an antelope application for Sublette County is undergoing strong consideration. Of course, finding a place to hunt on BLM ground that is free of new oil exploration equipment is a major concern. But probably more pertinent will be counting the number of times it takes Bruun to get the new electronic application form completed properly. At least by switching my efforts to the online program, the post office observers won't get the opportunity to satirize my bumbling antics.

Check out the new limited quota license application system at <http://gf.state.wy.us>.

### New Year's wish

I am continually gratified over responses to these columns. Although I try to vary subject content to involve a wider range of readers, it's difficult to know exactly how successful such efforts are. Any feedback, even scathing "Letters to the Editor," if that is the way you feel, is encouraging. Happily, the Christmas column honoring and remembering my mother, Josephine, was especially well received.

For this I am grateful. You see, without Josephine's determined encouragement (OK, some threats and persistent nagging), I would have never had the motivation even to begin, let alone continue, newspaper column writing.

I am frequently asked why I don't submit more material to publications of greater circulation and exposure. My answer is that my greatest fulfillment comes from attempting to inform and entertain the best readers a *Jackson Hole News&Guide* columnist can ever have. In 2007 these attempts will continue.

Happy New Year.

*Paul Bruun writes weekly on his adventures and misadventures in the great outdoors.*