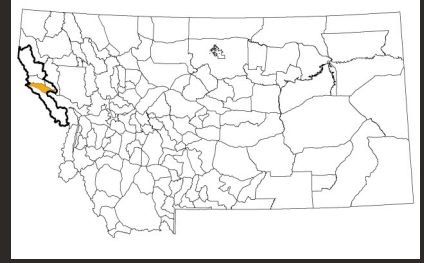


HD 200

Size: 238 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 90%



Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 200 is found in the Lolo National Forest and consists of steep, heavily timbered (i.e., about 80 percent of district) drainages in the southern portion of the Coeur d'Alene Mountain Range near the Montana-Idaho state line. It is bounded in the north primarily by the hydrological divide (CC Divide) between the lower and middle Clark Fork subbasins (i.e., the Mineral and Sanders county line). To the south, the HD boundary follows the St. Regis drainage from the Montana-Idaho border to the Clark Fork drainage and then nearly to Combest Peak within Mineral County. Public land accounts for 90 percent of the HD and is nearly all administered by the Lolo National Forest while the remaining 10 percent private land is primarily found in the river bottoms. Private land uses are primarily residential with some agriculture and livestock production. Currently, there are 940 acres of private land enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program. Historically, an average of 300 elk have wintered in HD 200 at lower elevations on south-facing slopes, mostly in the mid to eastern portions of the district. Collaring studies from the late 1980s revealed that cow elk wintering in HD 200 often migrate to higher-elevation summer range throughout HD 200 and to some extent into HD 202. Conversely, some cow elk wintering in HD 123 migrate to higher-elevation summer range in HD 200. Migratory corridors between and among these HDs (123, 200, and 202) are important supporting elements of the life history strategy of elk in this area.

Although 95 percent of the HD is within 1 mile of open roads, which provides a high degree of access during the hunting season, relatively low elk densities combined with the steep, heavily timbered terrain results in minimal hunting pressure and generally low levels of harvest. Lack of recent fire and other disturbances (e.g., timber harvest) creates thick, mixed stands of conifers that provide vast expanses of security cover, but limited productive winter range. Habitat security may be jeopardized by illegal motorized use on closed USFS roads. Surveys are conducted every two to three years during spring green-up, but observability can be challenging due to the heavily forested terrain. Survey results are therefore presented as a five-year moving average to eliminate concern when a survey is missed or of poor quality because of inclement weather or low observability (i.e., sighting elk from plane obscured by canopy cover and thick timber). This HD has abundant predator populations; however, the elk population level has remained relatively stable over the past decade, and human harvest has been gradually declining since 1998.

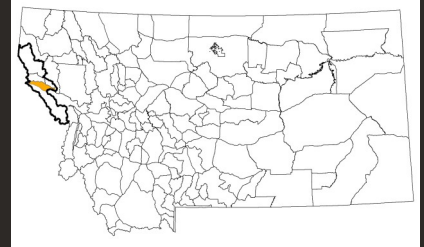
Management Challenges:

- Low observability of elk during spring surveys due to high density forest canopy cover.
- Low productivity of habitat for elk.
- High densities of large carnivores.
- Illegal motorized use of closed USFS roads.



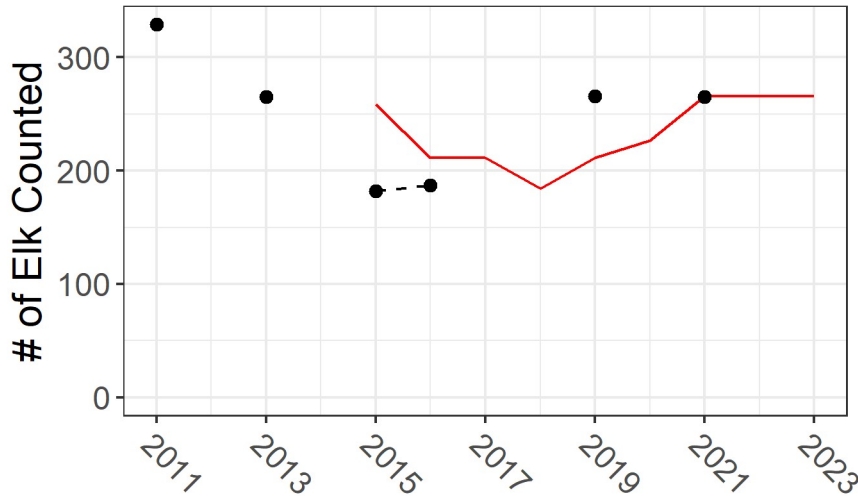
HD 200

Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit



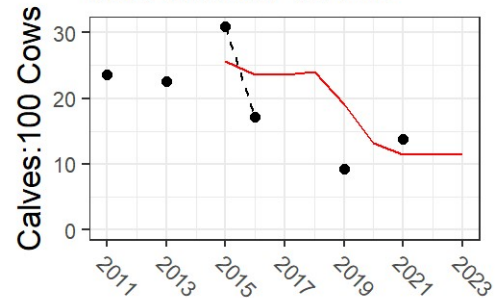
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 200

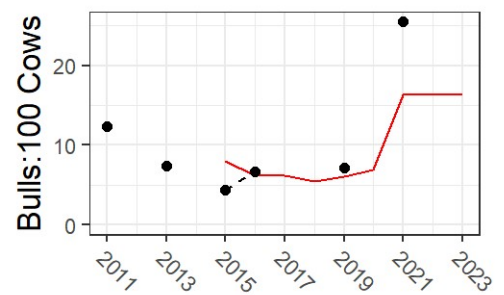


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 5-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 200



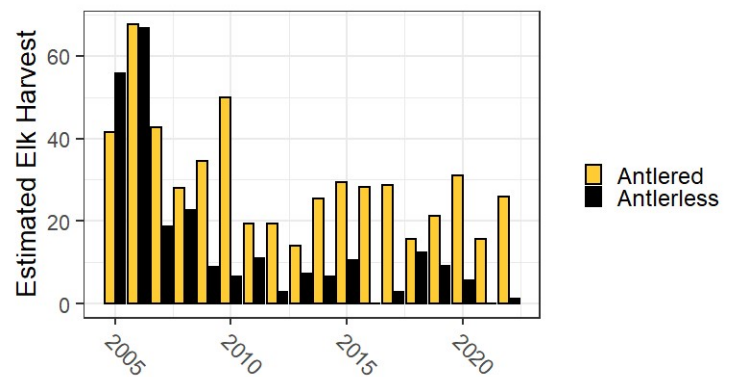
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 200



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
200	2006	709	5,413
	2008	833	6,892
	2010	651	5,487
	2012	582	4,871
	2014	449	3,930
	2016	526	5,381
	2018	517	4,056
	2020	581	5,172
	2022	392	3,788

Elk Harvest- HD 200



HD 200

Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 240-360 elk observed	5-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	5-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	5-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

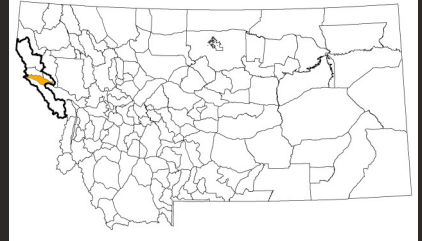
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	No year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Focus PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities on private land



HD 200

Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas• Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

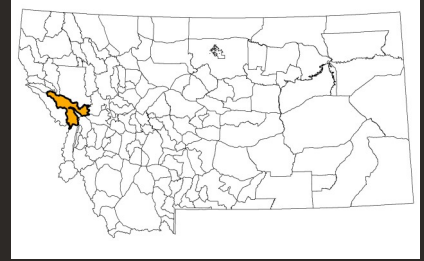


HD 201

Size: 1,045 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 75%



Missoula/Ninemile Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 201 is found primarily in the Lolo National Forest and consists of moderate to steep, relatively heavily timbered drainages in the Clark Fork River basin. This HD is bounded by the Flathead Indian Reservation and the Sanders/Missoula county line to the north except for a small portion in the northwest corner where the boundary follows the Clark Fork River and encompasses a small piece of Sanders County. The boundary of this HD is the Clark Fork River from St. Regis to Petty Creek, from just southeast of Alberton, where it follows the Petty Creek/Graves Creek drainage to Lolo Creek. The border then jaunts southward along USFS road 37 to the Montana/Idaho state line and follows the USFS boundary for the Lolo National Forest. The remainder of the HD excludes a large portion of the northern Missoula Valley but does include the Rattlesnake Wilderness and National Recreation Area. In 2022 the boundary of HD 201 was expanded south of I-90 and east to include U.S. 12, a portion of former HD 240, and all of former HD 203. New population size goals were set to account for this change.

Nearly 25 percent (157,412 acres) of the HD is private lands, of which 20,733 acres are currently enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, and nearly 70 percent (446,147 acres) is public land. Private land along the Clark Fork River corridor is generally made up of agriculture, residential housing, and hobby farms. Some public lands in this HD have experienced recent fires and timber harvests, which both have improved elk habitat; however, disturbance/fire on a larger scale is needed in some of the more heavily timbered areas. Some elk herds in this unit migrate seasonally (e.g., North Hills herd migrates into Rattlesnake Wilderness during summer months) while others exhibit more resident-like patterns (e.g., Sixmile herd remains in the same general area year-round).

Land access in this HD is abundant with a high density of both motorized and nonmotorized roads on public land and additional private land access. However, access to elk can be challenging especially closer to Missoula due to the patchwork of land status. Maintaining hunting opportunities in the urban interface is especially important to help prevent habituation of elk to urban areas and to decrease game damage, congregations of elk in areas they cannot be safely hunted, and risk of vehicle strikes and other safety concerns. Though some key winter ranges have been protected, habitat loss continues to be a concern as Missoula and surrounding communities continue to grow. Recreation on public lands has greatly increased in recent years, putting increasing year-round pressure on sensitive elk habitat.

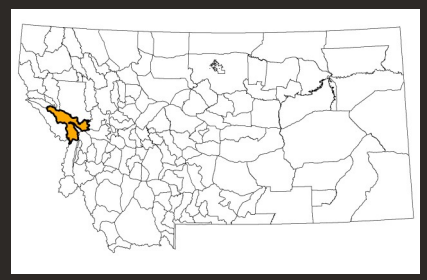
Management Challenges:

- Maintaining/increasing access to private land.
- Habituation of elk in urban interface.
- Increasing recreational use near Missoula.
- Increasing development and loss of habitat.



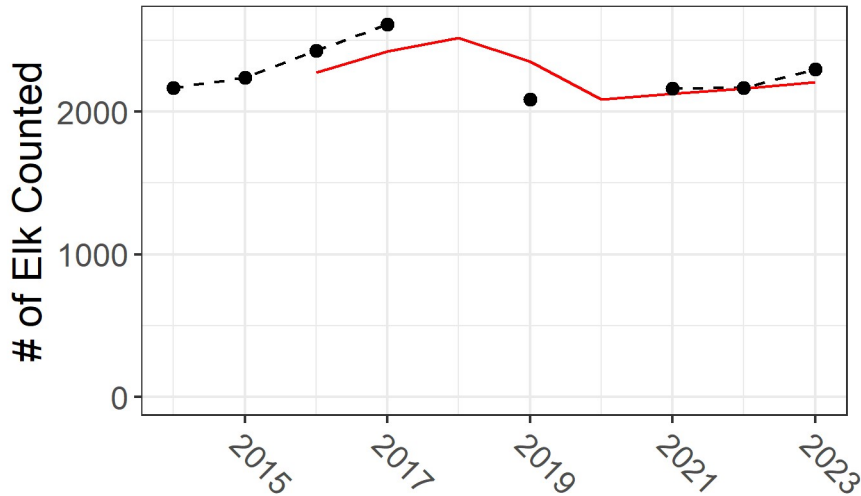
HD 201

Missoula/Ninemile Elk Management Unit



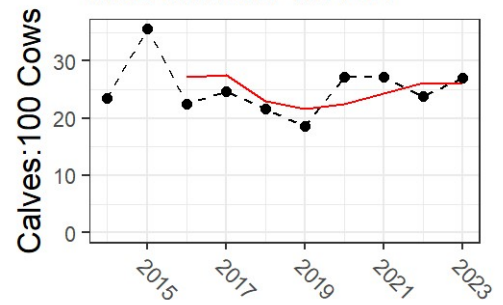
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 201

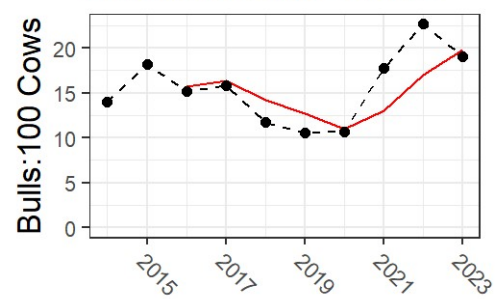


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 201



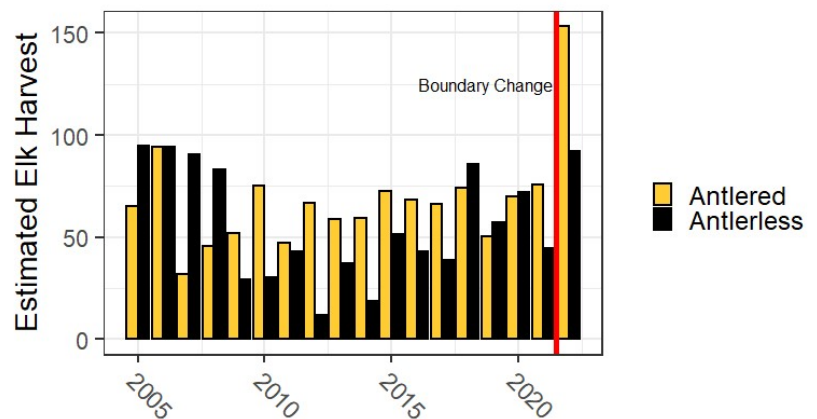
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 201



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
201	2006	1,349	9,559
	2008	1,649	14,404
	2010	1,350	10,831
	2012	1,335	10,234
	2014	1,245	9,264
	2016	1,254	9,818
	2018	1,479	10,072
	2020	1,432	11,882
	2022*	2,276	17,321

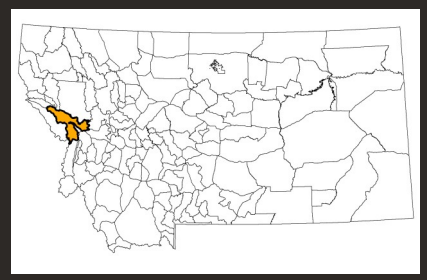
Elk Harvest- HD 201



**Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022.



HD 201



Missoula/Ninemile Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

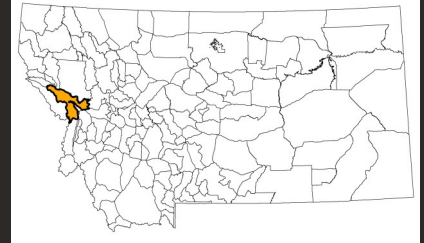
Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 1,600-2,400 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 170-250 elk observed in North Hills	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Focus PTHV/youth antlerless opportunities on private land



HD 201



Missoula/Ninemile Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide elk viewing opportunities in areas that the public can reasonably access	Good observability of elk on Mt. Jumbo as measured by Elk Spotter Program administered by city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with City of Missoula to manage seasonal closures of winter range on Mt. Jumbo
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	3-year average B License success rate is within 20% of 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Adjust quota

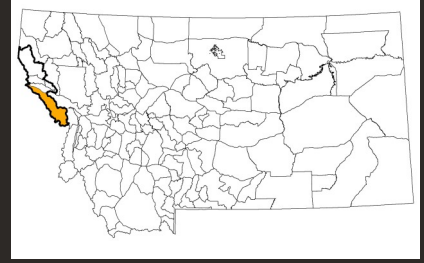


HD 202

Size: 959 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 95%



Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 202 has a northern boundary that follows the path of the St. Regis River (later becoming the Clark Fork River) and Interstate 90 corridor from Lookout Pass at the Montana/Idaho state line to Petty Creek Road. The Petty Creek/Graves Creek drainage serves as the eastern most boundary while the Montana/Idaho state line serves as the southern boundary. In 2022 the boundary of HD 202 was expanded east to Petty Creek and south to include the upper portion of the Lolo Creek drainage. New population size goals were set to account for this change.

This HD is made up of steep, heavily timbered terrain; however, about 100,000 acres have recently burned or experienced other disturbance such as timber harvest. This HD is mostly public land, primarily USFS (Superior and Ninemile ranger districts), with some state (DNRC and FWP) ownership. FWP owns Fish Creek WMA (about 35,000 acres) and Fish Creek State Park (about 5,600 acres), a popular destination for hunters and other recreationists. The approximately 5 percent that is private land mostly comprises agricultural and residential properties along lower elevations of drainages and river corridors. Currently, there are about 2,300 acres of private enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program.

Roads provide reasonable vehicle access to much of the unit with the exception of several USFS designated Inventoried Roadless Areas and the proposed Great Burn Wilderness, which spans about 250,000 acres across the Montana/Idaho border in the upper Fish Creek watershed. There are about 400 miles of roads (mixed use, motorized/nonmotorized with some seasonal closures) within the Fish Creek WMA alone, and hundreds more throughout the rest of the HD. Elk security in the HD is generally good due to the steep and heavily forested nature of much of the terrain but habitat is a limiting factor. In some areas that have experienced severe stand replacement fires there are patches of extensive blow down, which is largely unusable by elk as summer or winter range. Other parts of the HD have experienced very little fire or other disturbance for over a hundred years (since fires of 1910). Similar to other nearby HDs, 202 has abundant predator populations; however, the elk population level and hunter harvest rate has remained relatively stable over the past decade. Elk are surveyed annually by fixed wing or helicopter during spring green-up.

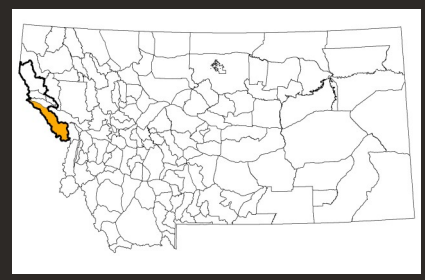
Management Challenges:

- Low observability of elk during spring surveys due to high density forest canopy cover.
- Low productivity of habitat for elk.
- High densities of large carnivores.



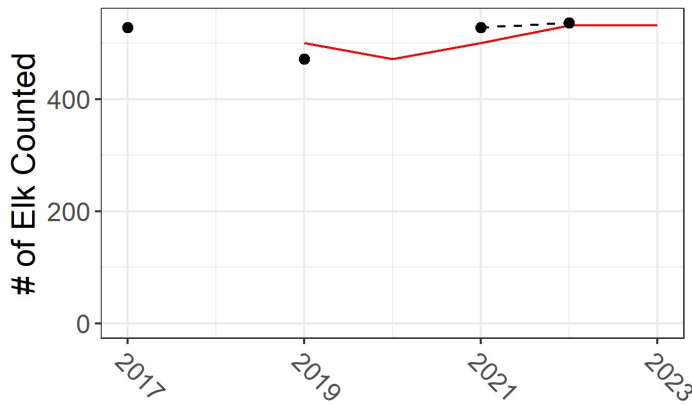
HD 202

Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit

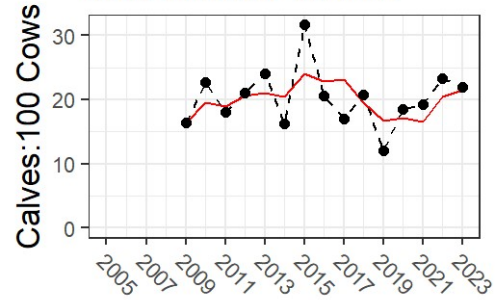


Current Population Status & Trend

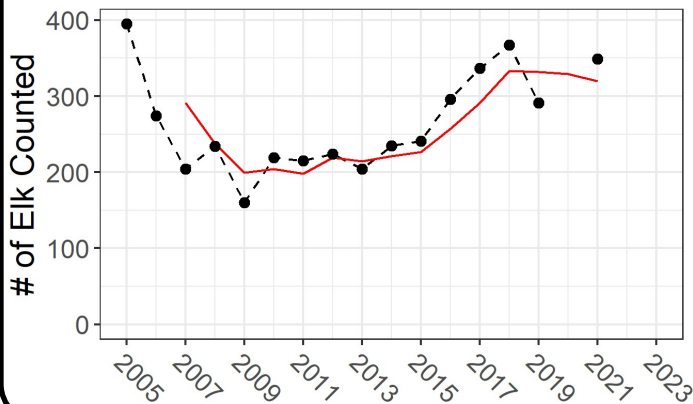
Total Elk Counted- Current HD 202



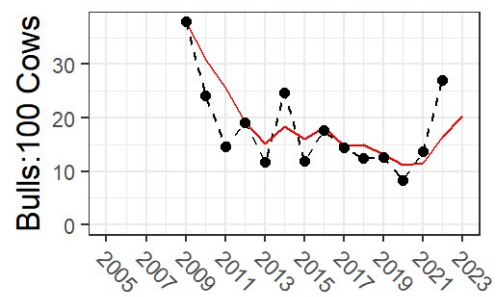
Recruitment- HD 202



Total Elk Counted- Former HD 202



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 202

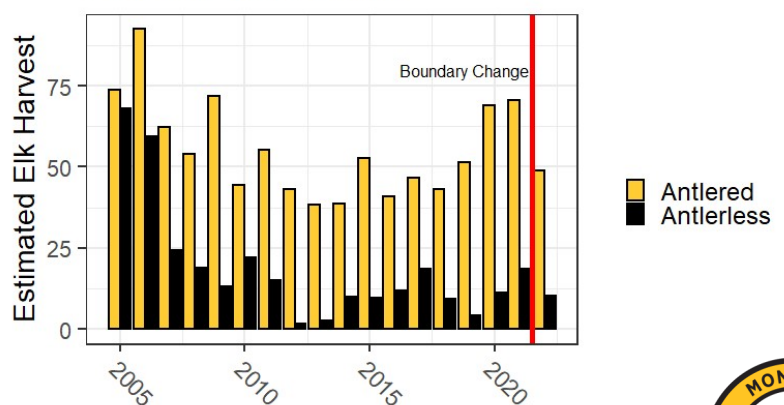


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. Former count data was reconciled to current HD boundary in figure titled "Total Elk Counted- Current HD 202".

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
202	2006	1,180	8,840
	2008	1,106	8,700
	2010	1,028	8,695
	2012	881	7,425
	2014	825	6,921
	2016	933	7,533
	2018	912	6,869
	2020	970	8,624
	2022*	1,094	8,326

Elk Harvest- HD 202



**Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022.



HD 202

Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit

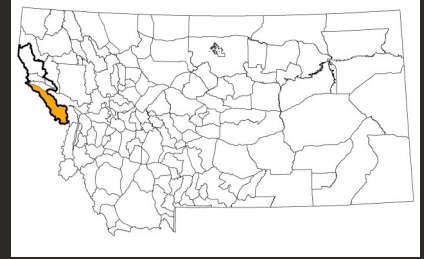


Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain total spring aerial survey counts between 400-600 elk observed	3-year average of total elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal Range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 250-350 elk observed in Cold Creek/Trout Creek	3-year average of sub objective counts is within goal range for population size	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 50-100 elk observed in Cougar Creek/Quartz Creek	3-year average of sub objective counts is within goal range for population size	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 100-150 elk observed in N. Fork Fish Creek	3-year average of sub objective counts is within goal range for population size	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio across all three sub populations is 10:100 or greater	



HD 202



Lower Clark Fork Elk Management Unit

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	No year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Focus PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities on private land

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

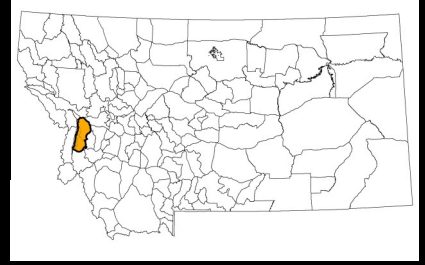


HDs 204, 261 & 262

Size: 742 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest, Grass-
land and Human Land Use

Public Ownership: 53%



North Sapphire Elk Management Unit

District Summary

The North Sapphires EMU comprises Hunting Districts 204, 261, and 262. It encompasses the northern half of the Sapphire Mountains on the east side of the Bitterroot River Valley and is bounded on the east by the Bitterroot-Rock Creek hydrological divide, on the south by Skalkaho Highway, on the west by the Eastside Highway, and on the north by I-90. In 2014, in response to rampant game damage in the active agricultural land and housing developments on the west sides of HDs 204 and 261, HD 262 (the “Bitterroot Farmlands”) was formed to allow maximum harvest pressure to redistribute elk.

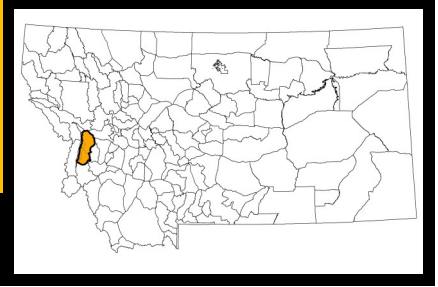
Elk movements are fluid between the three HDs, primarily between HDs 204 into 261 across the Burnt Fork of the Bitterroot, and from HDs 204/261 into 262 during the winter. Elk counted in HD 262 during spring surveys are included in totals for 204/261; therefore, HD 262 does not have a population objective but is incorporated into those of surrounding HDs. Most of the lower-elevation winter range is private land, with the exception of DNRC and two WMAs. Some elk migrate into high elevations in the east during the summer, while many are year-round residents in and around private land in the west. Some agricultural lands are protected by conservation easements, but much of the remaining private land has been or is being converted to residential developments to support the rapidly expanding human population in the valley. Several BMAs support public hunting access, but private land hunting access is generally poor. On public land, elk security ranges from moderate in HD 204 to good in HD 261, due to varied road densities and seasonal travel restrictions.

Hunting District 204 is comprised of 403 mi² between Missoula on the north and Stevensville on the south. It is 64 percent public land and 36 percent private land, with the majority of the public land managed by the Lolo and Bitterroot national forests, in addition to about 3 mi² of DNRC and a small BLM parcel. The 44 mi² Welcome Creek Wilderness lies in the northeast of the HD, and the 6,437-acre Threemile WMA is in the west-central portion of the HD. The Ambrose Creek Conservation Easement/BMA allows 5,200 acres of private land hunting access.

Hunting District 261 comprised 214 mi² between Stevensville on the north and Skalkaho Highway on the south. It is 62 percent public land and 38 percent private land, with the majority of the public land managed by the Bitterroot National Forest, in addition to about 5 mi² of DNRC. The 2,348-acre Calf Creek WMA lies in the west-central portion of the HD. There is currently one BMA that adds 280 acres of private land hunting access. (Continued on next page)



HDs 204, 261 & 262



North Sapphire Elk Management Unit

District Summary (continued)

Hunting District 262 comprises 125 mi², 4 percent public and 96 percent private. Public land is either DNRC or local city/county ownership. This HD includes the communities of Corvallis and Stevensville as well as numerous housing developments associated with those communities and those of Hamilton/Grantsdale, Victor, and Florence. There are currently two BMAs that allow a total of 550 acres of private land hunting access. Although there is no population objective specific to HD 262 due to its geographical relationship with HDs 204 and 261, some elk will likely always be present here during the winter. Hunting regulations are intended to allow periodic redistribution of herds within and between adjacent districts when they are causing damage.

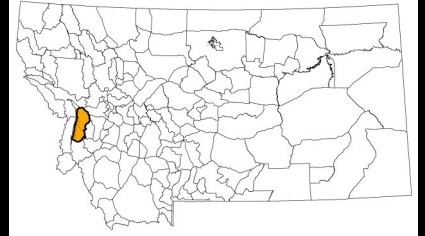
Management Challenges:

- Particularly in HD 204, elk harvest is limited and there is an overwhelming proportion of animals that spend hunting seasons on inaccessible private land.
- Harvesting enough antlerless animals to maintain population objectives is challenging without landowner cooperation.
- Hunting pressure on adjacent public lands is high, despite limited access points and good elk security.
- Hunter crowding is an issue.
- Continued use of HD 262 by elk in the winter and need for liberal regulations to manage.



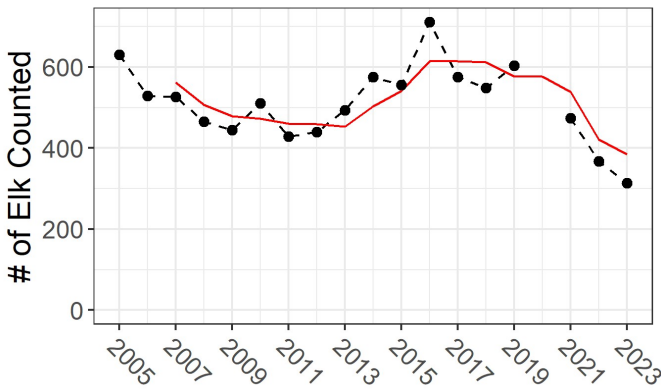
HDs 204, 261 & 262

North Sapphire Elk Management Unit

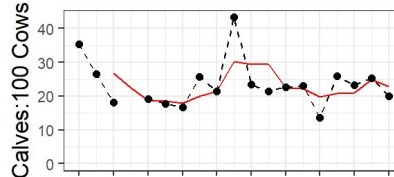


Current Population Status & Trend

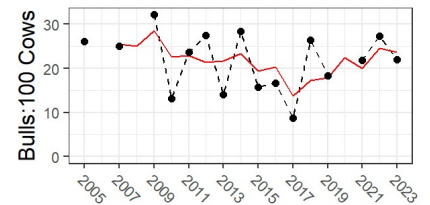
Total Elk Counted: Skalkaho-Willow



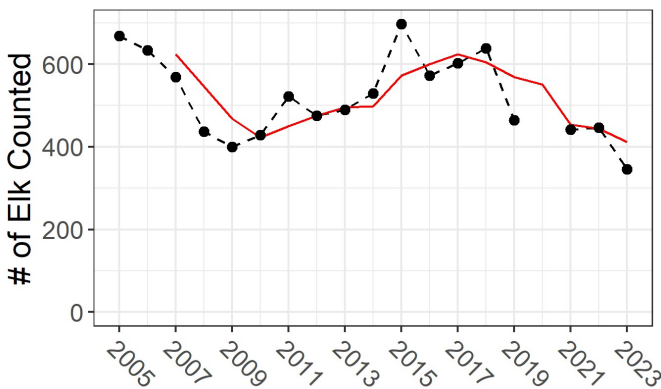
Recruitment- Skalkaho-Willow



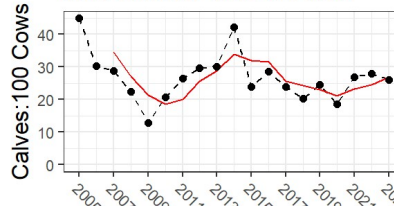
Bulls:100 Cows- Skalkaho-Willow



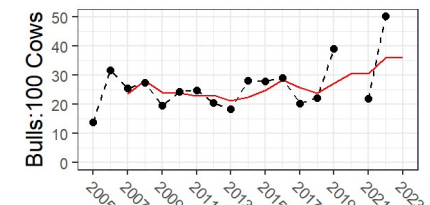
Total Elk Counted: Willow-8 Mile



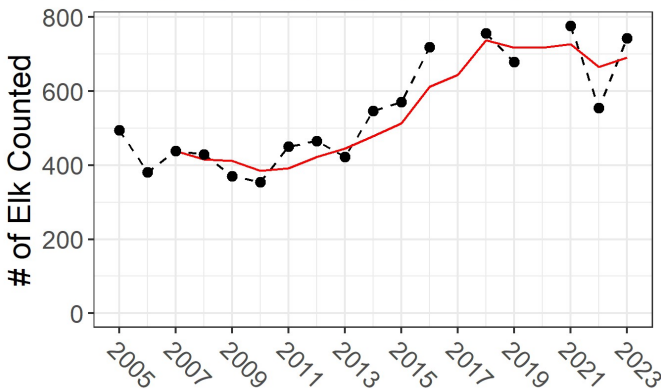
Recruitment- Willow-8 Mile



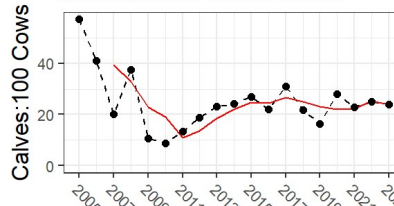
Bulls:100 Cows- Willow-8 Mile



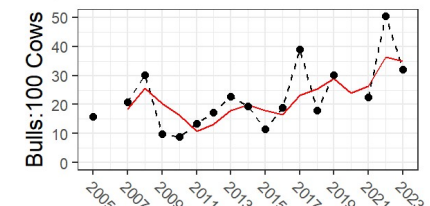
Total Elk Counted: 8 Mile-North



Recruitment- 8 Mile-North



Bulls:100 Cows- 8 Mile-North

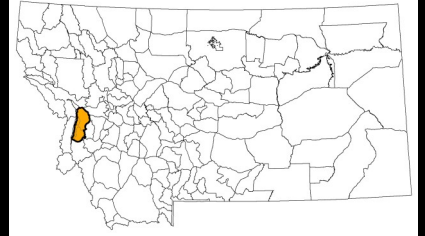


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.



HDs 204, 261 & 262

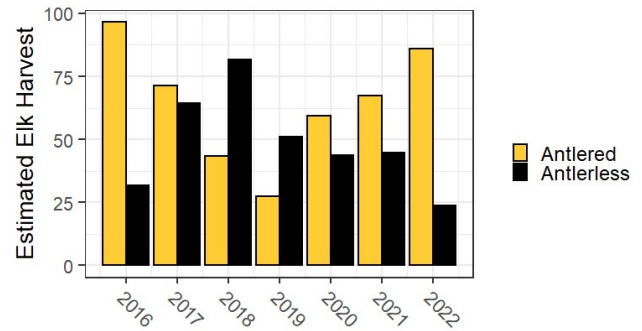
North Sapphire Elk Management Unit



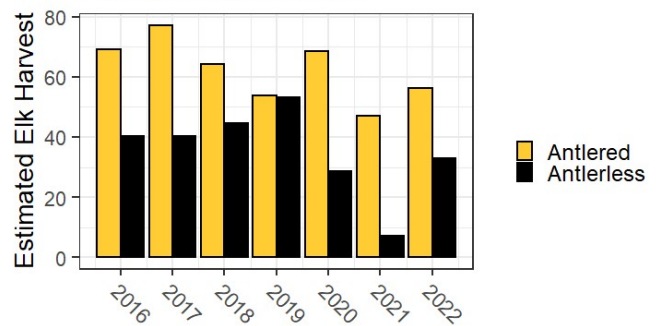
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
204	2016	1,041	7,932
	2018	1,015	6,890
	2020	914	6,341
	2022	927	6,836
261	2016	791	6,374
	2018	691	4,695
	2020	549	4,443
	2022	520	3,671
262	2016	298	2,498
	2018	356	3,089
	2020	417	2,636
	2022	362	2,352
North Sapphire EMU	2016	2,129	16,805
	2018	2,062	14,674
	2020	1,880	13,419
	2022	1,809	12,858

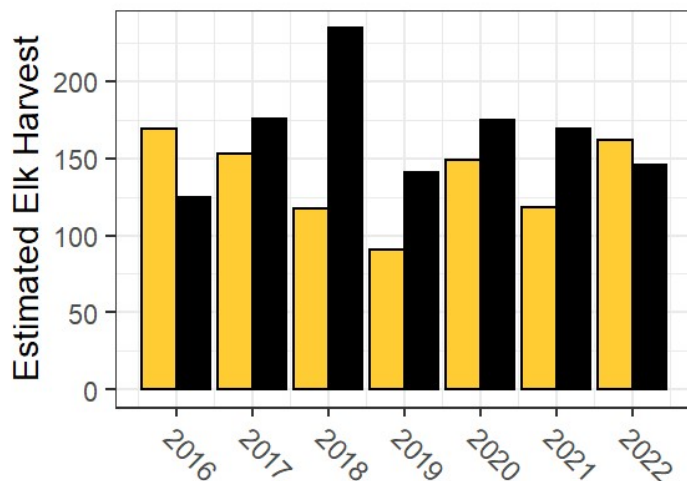
Elk Harvest- HD 204



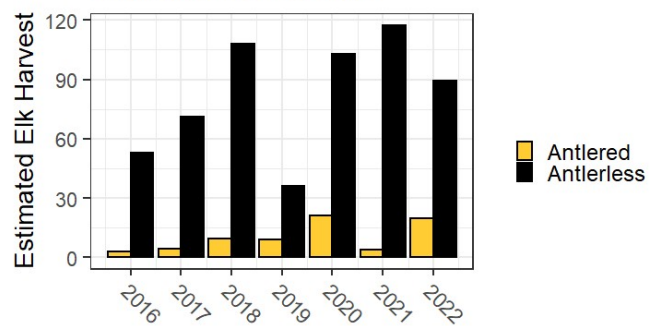
Elk Harvest- HD 261



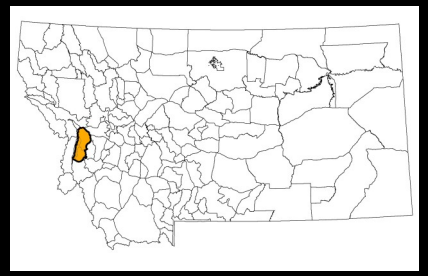
Elk Harvest- North Sapphire EMU



Elk Harvest- HD 262



HDs 204, 261 & 262

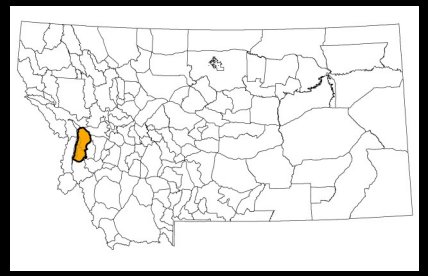


North Sapphire Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets		
Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 300-500 elk observed in Skalkaho-Willow herd (HD 261)	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 360-540 elk observed in Willow-Eight Mile herd (HD 261/204)	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment of 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 400-600 elk observed in Eight Mile-North herd (HD204)	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater across subdistricts	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	
*No population size goal in HD262; elk found here added into 204/261 counts, see HD description		



HDs 204, 261 & 262



North Sapphire Elk Management Unit

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maximize elk use of Threemile WMA (HD204) and Calf Creek WMA (HD261)	Presence of elk on WMAs during spring aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Habitat improvement projects on WMAs • Exclude WMAs from over-the-counter opportunities and opportunities outside

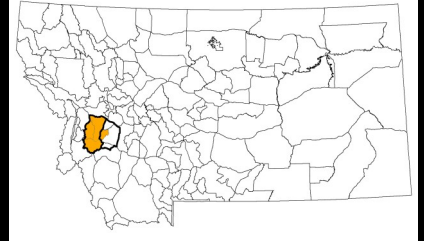
Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain/increase public access to elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average in HDs 204 and 261	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B License success rate of 20% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Adjust quota



HDs 210, 211, 212 & 216

Size: 1,001 mi²
Primary Habitat: Forest
Public Ownership: 33%



Rock Creek and Flint Creek Elk Management Units

District Summaries

Elk populations in Hunting Districts 210, 211, 212, and 216 are assessed mid-winter when animals are congregated on winter range. Thousands of elk from all four HDs share winter resources in the southern end of the Philipsburg Valley, and a smaller, resident group is recognized to winter in the northern end of the valley in HD 210. Much of the winter range in both areas is privately owned and managed for hay and livestock production. Some elk may be resident, but most are migratory moving upslope in the summer. In the southern end, fine-scale seasonal movement patterns between the HDs have not been evaluated and are not fully understood. Thus, extrapolating a single winter count precisely across four hunt districts to meet population objectives at an individual HD level is not possible. As a result, population trends are monitored collectively with a single population objective set to include all elk that winter in the southern end of the Philipsburg Valley with a sub-objective for the resident group in the northern end of HD 210.

Hunting District 210 incorporates most of the Philipsburg Valley. The boundaries are the Skalkaho Road (south), I-90 (north), Montana Highway 1 (east), and an indirect boundary that includes Rock Creek, Willow Creek, and Brewster Creek Roads (west). The HD sits in the John Long Mountains and includes the Clark Fork River Basin. The district is 43 percent public land administered by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Lolo national forests, BLM, and DNRC. Currently, private landowners contribute 15,930 acres enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program. Conservation easements exist on 904 acres. Much of the district is working ranch lands managed for agriculture and livestock production.

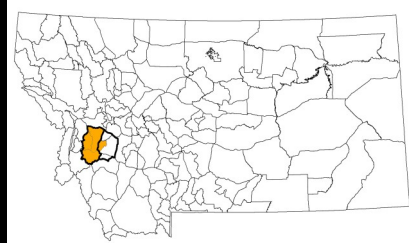
Some elk congregate on inaccessible private lands during the hunting season, which makes it challenging to meet management goals. Changing private landownership in recent years has created increasing access challenges. Population objectives have been difficult to meet and elk populations in the south have steadily increased. Consequently, many neighboring livestock-producing landowners experience considerable losses from elk damage each year. In contrast, a population decline has been observed in the northern sub-herd. Elk damage to private lands has declined but may still occur.

Hunting District 211 lies at the southern end of the Philipsburg Valley and includes the Georgetown Lake community. The boundaries are Storm Lake Road and Montana Highway 1 (east), the Continental Divide (south), the Granite County line (west), and Skalkaho Road (north). The HD sits in the Anaconda and Sapphire Mountains and includes Georgetown Lake, East Fork Reservoir, and several tributaries to Rock Creek. The primary elk habitat here is a mix of grassland (9.9 percent) and forest (53.9 percent). Nearly a third (36.4 percent) has been impacted by fire. Between 2000 and 2021, 33 fires affected habitat on 94,801 acres (148 mi²). Almost all the public land is administered by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and includes a large portion of the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. Currently, landowners contribute 2,336 acres to two properties enrolled in FWP's Block Management program. A few large, privately owned ranches, where access to the public is limited or prohibited, have been identified as refuges for elk.

Access varies across the HD, and in general, public access is not a limiting factor. Roads provide access to areas such as East Fork Reservoir and the Middle Fork of Rock Creek. Motorized-use restrictions in the wilderness provide a backcountry hunting experience. BMA properties facilitate key public access in this area. (Continued on next page).



HDs 210, 211, 212 & 216



Rock Creek and Flint Creek Elk Management Units

District Summaries (continued)

Hunting District 212 lies along the eastern edge of the Philipsburg Valley and includes the town of Philipsburg. The boundaries are Montana Highway 1 (south and west), Princeton Road and County Road 1500 (north), and an indirect boundary from Eureka Ridge through the Flint Creek Mountains to Georgetown (east). The HD sits in the Flint Creek Mountains and includes Echo Lake and Flint Creek. The district is 78 percent (104 mi²) public land managed primarily by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, with a small amount of BLM and State Trust Lands. Currently, there are 1,016 acres enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program by one landowner. Some private lands in HD 212 are managed for agriculture and livestock production.

The HD varies from heavy timber throughout the higher elevations in the east to a more urban landscape along the valley floor. A relatively small group of elk has been recognized to use the timbered areas to the east of Philipsburg and move upslope in the summer. Though this group generally stays to the east of Montana Highway 1 (in HD 212), they may move to the west into the Philipsburg Valley and come in contact with elk from other HDs during severe winters. Access varies throughout the district. Many roads exist but the district is most easily accessed via Georgetown and Philipsburg. Pack trails facilitate access via horses.

Hunting District 216 lies to the west of the Philipsburg Valley. The boundaries are Skalkaho Road (south), the Granite County Line (west), Rock Creek Road (north), and an indirect boundary that includes Rock Creek, Willow Creek, and Brewster Creek roads (east). The HD sits in the Sapphire Mountains and includes the Quigg West Wilderness Study Area (BLM), Ranch Creek, Upper Willow Creek, and Rock Creek. The district is 89.8 percent (266 mi²) public land, most of which is managed by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Lolo national forests with some interspersed BLM and State Trust Lands. Few roads exist, but several pack trails provide access via foot or horseback. Access varies throughout the district and some large private properties have changed ownership in recent years. Currently, there are 1,164 acres enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program by one landowner. Conservation easements exist on an additional 692 acres. Large tracts of private land along the east side are managed for agriculture and livestock production.

Much of the HD is heavily timbered or recently disturbed by fire and contains quality elk habitat. Nearly half (45.9 percent) of HD 216 has been affected by fire. Three large fires (two in 2007 and one in 2017) impacted habitat on 86,894 acres. The various successional stages of forest regeneration post-fire affect the diversity of resources available to elk in HD 216.

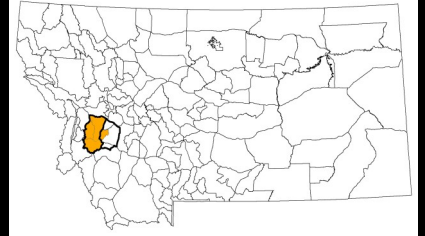
Management Challenges:

- Changes in private landownership and ability to maintain hunting access (HDs 210, 211 and 216).
- Seasonal dispersal and movement patterns between the Philipsburg Valley and the high country are not fully understood (HD 210, 211 and 216).
- Observability of elk is difficult during winter surveys (HD 212).
- Higher accessibility of elk to harvest and higher hunting pressure due to proximity to Philipsburg (HD 212).



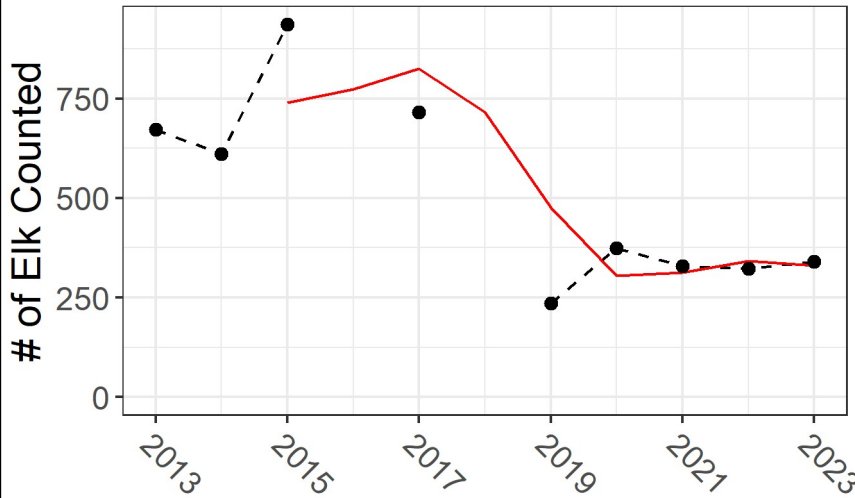
HDs 210, 211, 212 & 216

Rock Creek and Flint Creek Elk Management Units

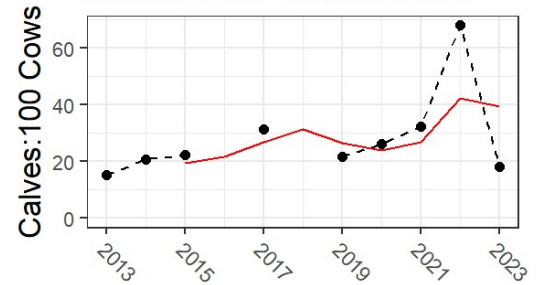


Current Population Status & Trend

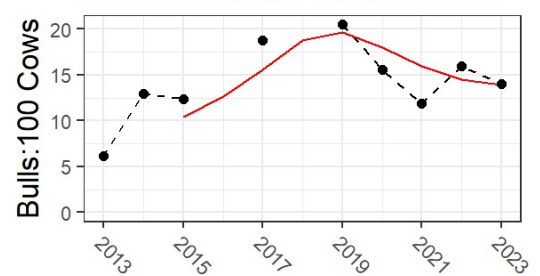
Total Elk Counted- HD 210 North



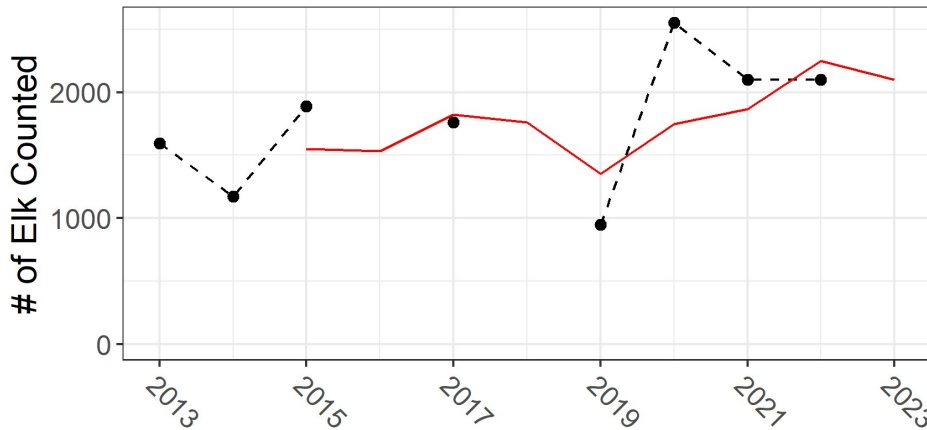
Recruitment- HD 210 North



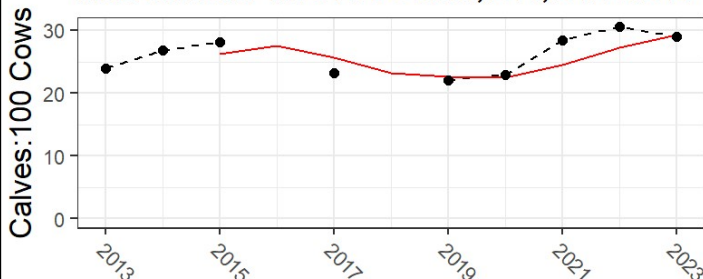
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 210 North



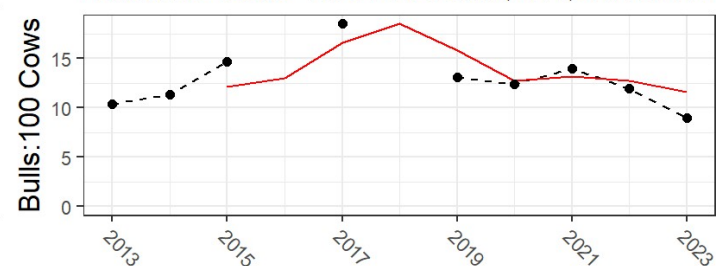
Total Elk Counted- HDs 210 South, 211, 212 & 216



Recruitment- HDs 210 South, 211, 212 & 216



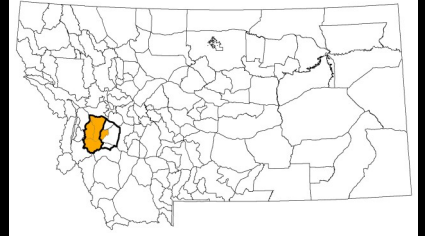
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 210 South, 211, 212 & 216



Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.



HDs 210, 211, 212 & 216



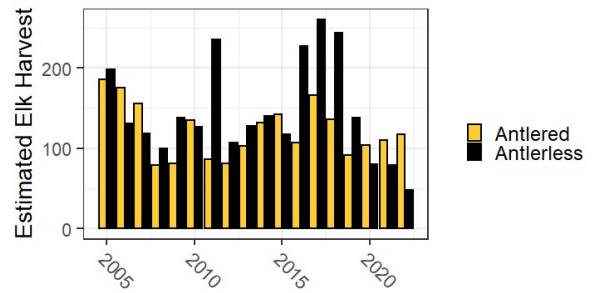
Rock Creek and Flint Creek Elk Management Units

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

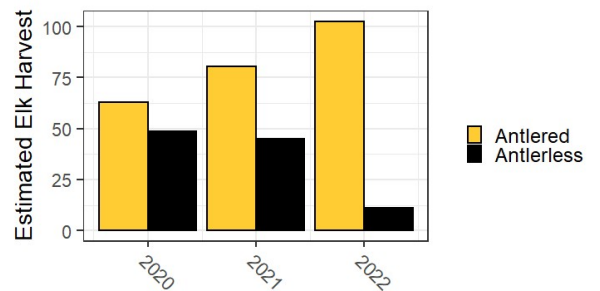
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
210	2006	1,300	7,666
	2008	1,338	9,093
	2010	1,306	8,797
	2012	1,438	9,527
	2014	1,576	10,883
	2016	1,413	10,554
	2018	1,613	10,924
	2020	1,507	10,680
	2022	1,067	8,139
211	2020	764	5,454
	2022	776	6,684
212	2020	814	5,125
	2022	455	3,233
216	2006	404	2,324
	2008	396	3,028
	2010	416	2,737
	2012	482	3,031
	2014	537	2,852
	2016	443	2,847
	2018	499	3,353
	2020	490	3,248
	2022	500	3,345

HDs 211 and 212 had boundary changes in 2020. Data presented represent the current boundaries.

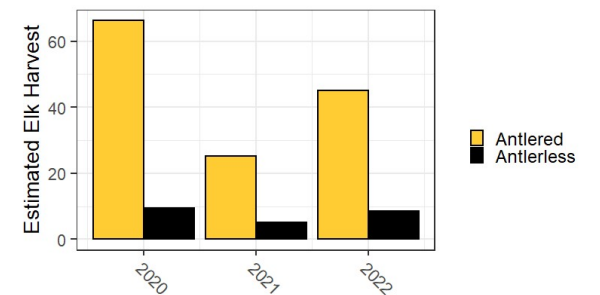
Elk Harvest- HD 210



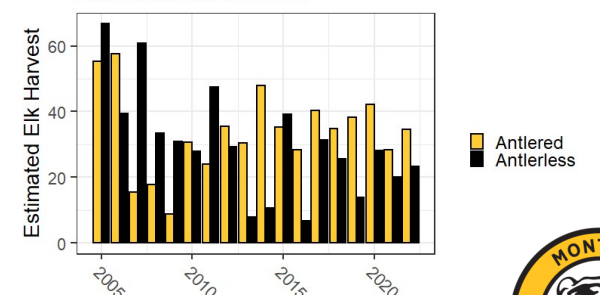
Elk Harvest- HD 211



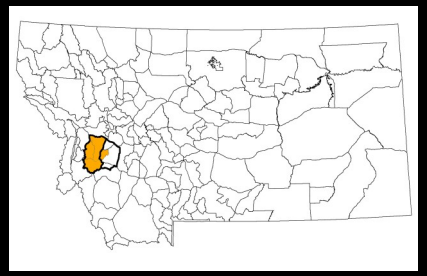
Elk Harvest- HD 212



Elk Harvest- HD 216



HDs 210, 211, 212 & 216



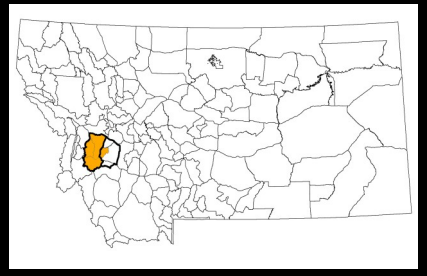
Rock Creek and Flint Creek Elk Management Units

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,440-2,160 elk observed in HDs 210/211/212/216	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment of 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 400-600 elk observed in the northern part of HD 210	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment of 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,040-1,560 elk observed in HDs 210 (southern part)/211/212/216	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment of 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	



HDs 210, 211, 212 & 216



Rock Creek and Flint Creek Elk Management Units

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Harvest is distributed between HDs within 20% of 10-year averages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to find an appropriate level of harvest pressure on public lands and accessible private lands that does not redistribute large groups of elk onto inaccessible private land
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities

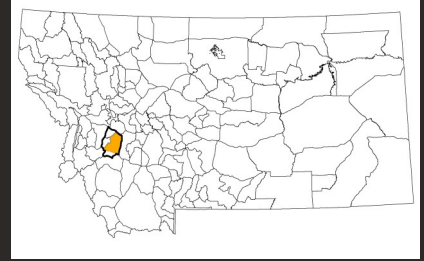


HD 213

Size: 496 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest & Grassland

Public Ownership: 58%



Flint Creek Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 213 lies along the I-90 corridor and includes Deer Lodge, Anaconda, and Georgetown Lake. The boundaries are I-90 (east and north), Montana Highway 1 (south), and an indirect boundary through the national forest from Georgetown Lake to Gold Creek (west). HD 213 is in the Flint Creek Mountains and includes the Upper Clark Fork River Basin. The district is 58.4 percent (290 mi²) public land, most of which is managed by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, BLM, and includes State Trust Lands. Four WMAs, including Blue-Eyed Nellie, Stucky Ridge, Lost Creek, and Warm Springs, provide public access to 3,215 acres. Montana Correctional Enterprises provides restricted hunting access to 32,032 acres. Private landowners provide public hunting access on 14,414 acres across five properties enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program during fall hunting season. Much of the district is working ranch lands managed for agriculture and livestock production. The HD is readily accessible via an extensive road network in the national forest to the west.

This district includes quality elk habitat providing year-round resources for elk. Some elk are migratory moving upslope (to the west) in the summer. However, most elk are resident with sub-herds residing in relatively small areas all year. One example is a sub-herd that occupies the southeastern corner of the district. Much of this area is a remediation zone owned by ARCO Environmental LLC. FWP works with ARCO to provide public hunting opportunity where possible to manage this growing, relatively isolated elk population.

Elk have been observed remaining on large properties where public access is restricted or not permitted, creating challenges to meeting management objectives. Populations have been relatively stable and above objective despite efforts to reduce the herd. As a result, some agricultural operations and private landowners experience game damage. FWP will continue to work with all stakeholders to find creative solutions to achieve the harvest needed to meet population objectives that are biologically supported and socially tolerated. Hunter pressure in HD 213 is among the highest in Region 2. As a result, hunter crowding on public land as well as accessible private land is a concern and shoot-outs have been observed to occur.

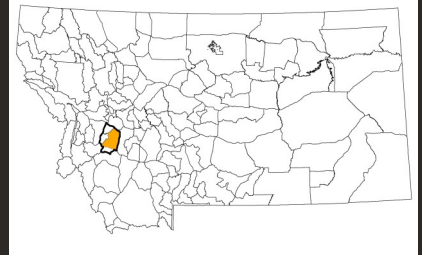
Management Challenges:

- Much of the winter range is private land and congregations of elk cause game damage and crop loss to livestock producers each year.
- High off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on summer range may diminish wildlife security and habitat integrity.
- Variable access across the valley bottoms creates high hunter pressure and safety issues when elk move across publicly accessible private lands.



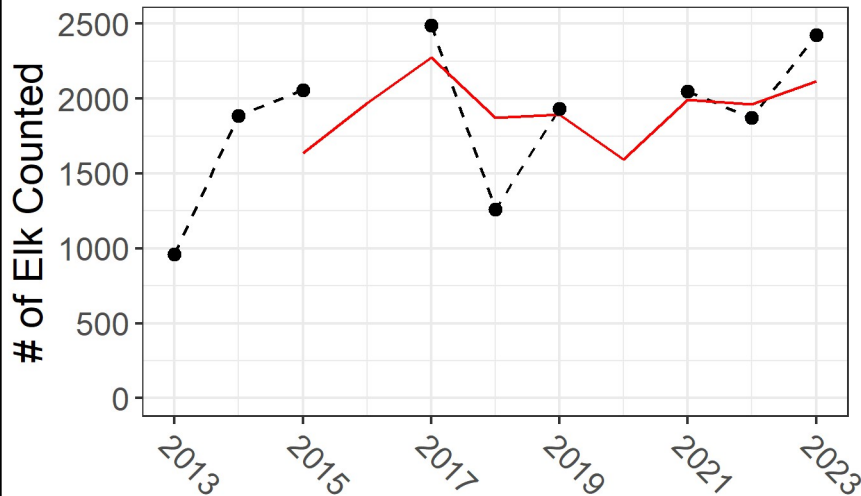
HD 213

Flint Creek Elk Management Unit



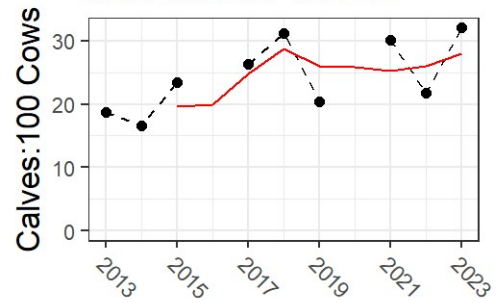
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 213

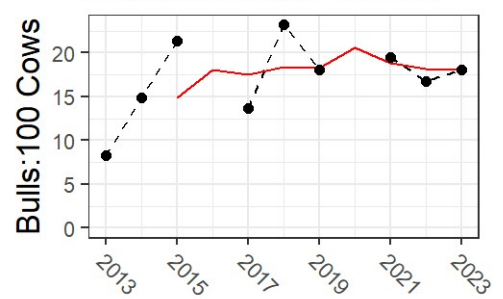


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 213



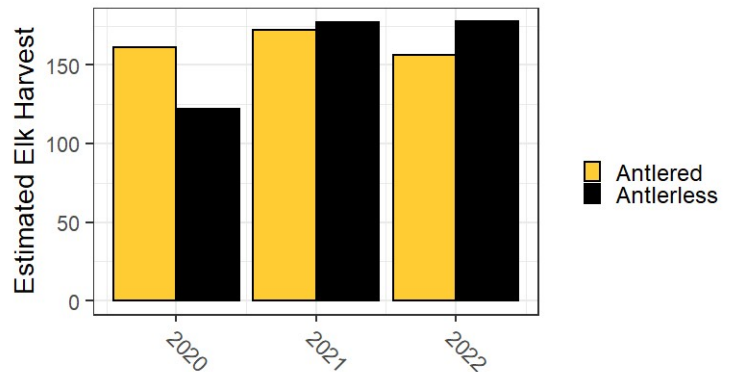
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 213



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
213	2020	1,401	11,188
	2022	1,278	10,959

Elk Harvest- HD 213

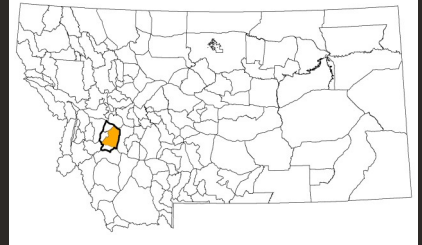


HD 213's boundary changed in 2020. Data presented represent the current HD boundary.



HD 213

Flint Creek Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 920-1,380 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

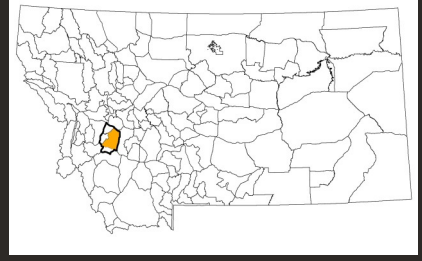
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access



HD 213

Flint Creek Elk Management Unit



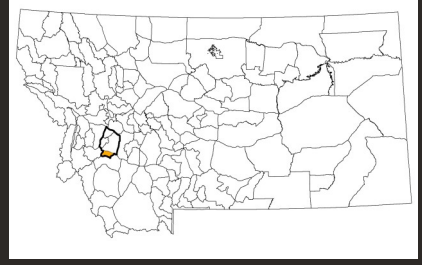
Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	No shoot-out incidents (uncontrolled shooting at visible elk congregations by large groups of hunters) in popular areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with landowners to increase hunting access
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to find creative solutions • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HD 214

Size: 116 mi²
 Primary Habitat: Forest
 Public Ownership: 59%



Flint Creek Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 214 lies to the south of the town of Anaconda. The boundaries are Mill Creek Road (east), the Continental Divide (south), Storm Lake Road (west), and Montana Highway 1 (north). The HD sits in the Anaconda Mountains and includes Warm Springs Creek, Mill Creek, and several lakes. The district is 58.7 percent (68 mi²) public land. This district encompasses a portion of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (including a small portion of the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness), the 10,833-acre Garrity WMA, and a 2,762-acre county-owned property south of Anaconda. Currently, no block management properties or conservation easements exist in HD 214. A large, privately owned remediation zone around Anaconda Smoke Stack State Park flanks the eastern edge of the district. In general, public access is not a limiting factor in HD 214.

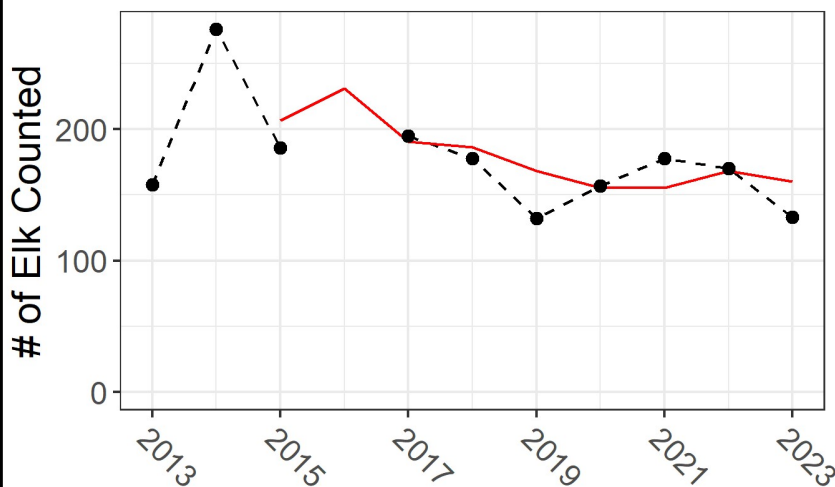
In HD 214, elk are generally migratory, moving upslope in the summer and down to the open hillsides on Garrity WMA and near Anaconda in the winter. Since 2013, elk populations have been relatively stable, with counts ranging from a high of 276 in 2014 to a low of 132 in 2019. The limiting factors to population growth have not been fully explored but may include the lack of winter range, high predation rates, and heavy hunting pressure.

Management Challenges:

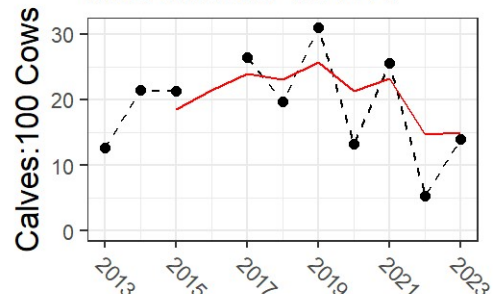
- North-facing slopes and heavy timber dominate the HD and open hillsides typical of winter range are scarce, likely limiting population growth.
- The proximity to Anaconda contributes to the popularity of this HD and results in high hunting pressure.

Current Population Status & Trend

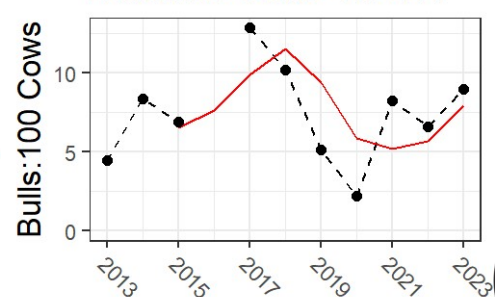
Total Elk Counted- HD 214



Recruitment- HD 214



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 214

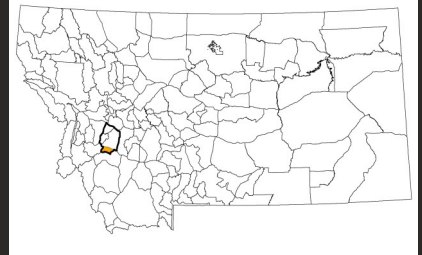


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.



HD 214

Flint Creek Elk Management Unit

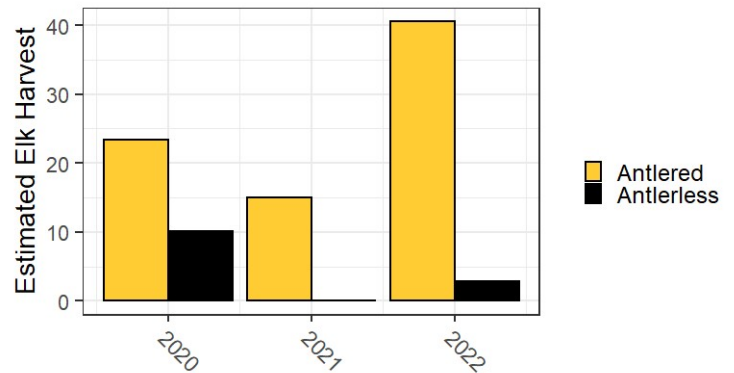


Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
214	2020	301	2,628
	2022	326	2,434

HD 214's boundary changed in 2020. Data presented represent the current HD boundary.

Elk Harvest- HD 214



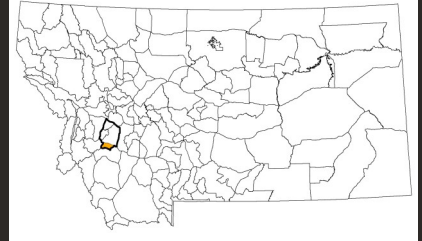
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 160-240 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average recruitment of 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	



HD 214

Flint Creek Elk Management Unit



Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use of Garrity WMA	Presence of elk on WMA during winter aerial survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat improvement projects on WMA

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

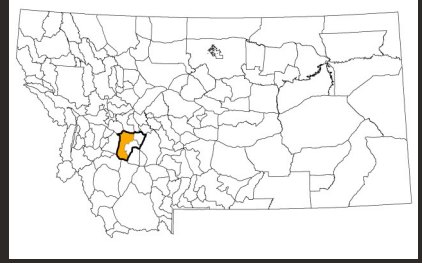


HD 215

Size: 579 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest & Grassland

Public Ownership: 51%



Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 215 lies along the I-90 corridor to the east of Deer Lodge, to the north of Butte, and to the south of Elliston. The boundaries are the Continental Divide (east), Interstate 15 (south), I-90 (west), and U.S. 12 (north). The HD is in the Boulder Mountains and includes a portion of the Little Blackfoot River and the Upper Clark Fork River. The district is 51.0 percent (295 mi²) public land with the majority managed by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Helena national forests, with some interspersed State Trust Lands and the Spotted Dog WMA. Private landowners provide public hunting access on 23,166 acres across five properties through FWP's Block Management Program. Additionally, conservation easements protect 79 acres of riparian habitat. Much of HD 215 is largely working ranch lands with private lands managed for agriculture and livestock production. The HD is easily accessible via southern routes, such as Brown's Gulch, and via Spotted Dog WMA to the north.

In 2010, FWP acquired Spotted Dog WMA. This acquisition accounts for 10.2 percent of the district and opened 37,690 acres of previously inaccessible land to public use. Spotted Dog is a unique WMA in that its conception was the product of a collaborative community effort involving FWP biologists, conservation groups, neighboring landowners, and sportsmen. As a result, Spotted Dog is managed as critical elk winter range paired with the same community perspective fundamental to its establishment.

Much of HD 215 includes quality elk habitat providing year-round resources for elk. Elk are primarily migratory with summer range to the east along the Continental Divide and winter range consisting of open hillsides spanning the lower elevations along the western half.

Hunter pressure in HD 215 is consistently among the highest in the state with an average of 2,733 hunters per year between 2012 and 2020. As a result, hunter crowding is a concern as is the potential effect that consistently high hunting pressure may have on elk behavior.

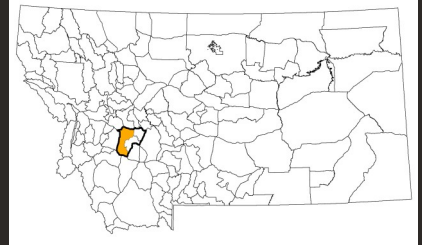
Management Challenges:

- Public concern of potential effects of sustained hunting pressure on elk behavior with significant hunter pressure on Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area and in the south end of the HD, near Butte.
- Heavy elk use of private land winter range and associated high levels of game damage.
- Resolving conflicting public views regarding elk management on Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area.



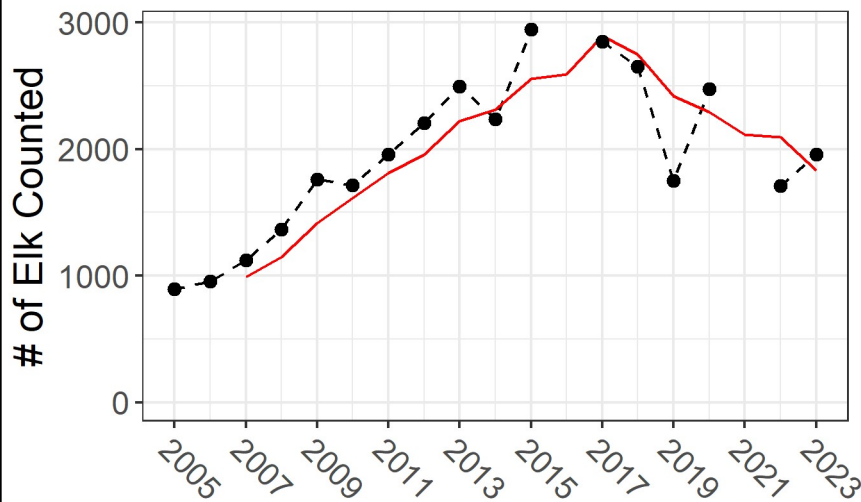
HD 215

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit



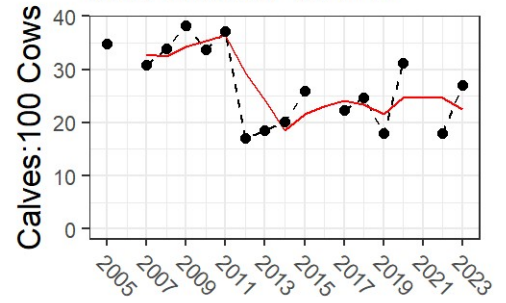
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 215

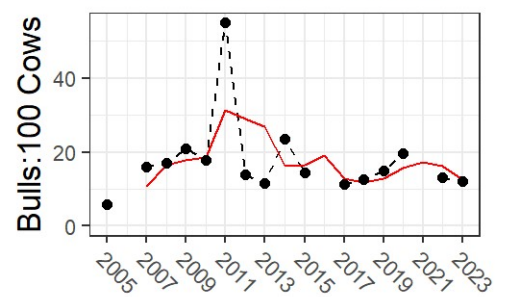


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 215



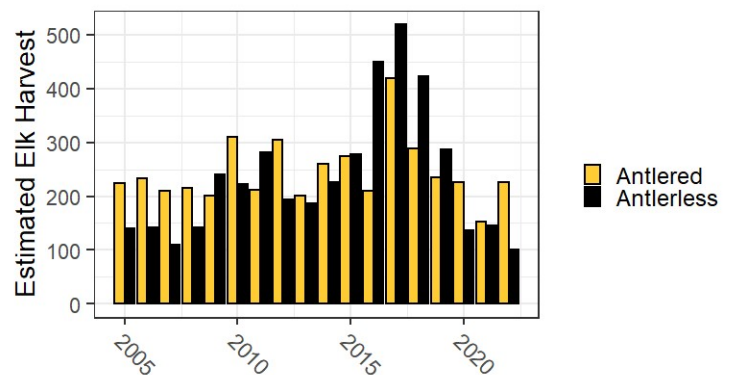
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 215



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

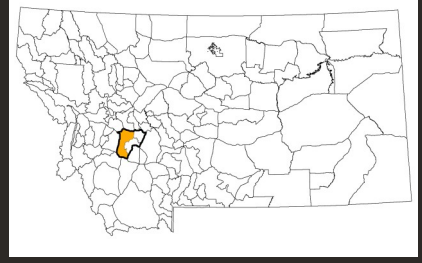
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
215	2006	1,818	14,230
	2008	2,033	16,217
	2010	2,260	17,859
	2012	2,666	21,212
	2014	2,568	20,646
	2016	2,836	24,198
	2018	3,306	25,288
	2020	2,288	17,770
	2022	1,909	14,851

Elk Harvest- HD 215



HD 215

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit



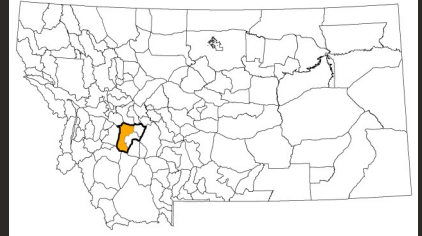
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,360-2,040 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or
	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	



HD 215

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit



Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Maximize elk use of Spotted Dog WMA	50% or more of elk observed during winter aerial surveys north of Deer Lodge are on the WMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to increase hunting access
	Hunting pressure does not disperse large groups of elk off the WMA during hunting season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Maintain hunting pressure that does not disperse large groups of elk off of the WMA during hunting season • Work with stakeholders to find creative solutions • Habitat improvement projects on WMA • Exclude WMAs from opportunities that

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities

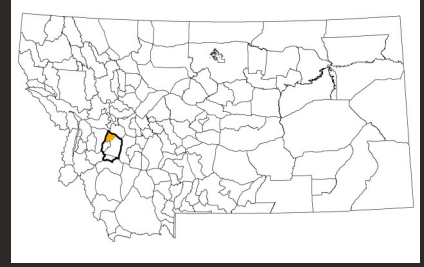


HD 217

Size: 143 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 29%



Flint Creek Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 217 lies along the I-90 corridor and includes the Town of Drummond. The boundaries are from Maxville north along Montana Highway 1 to the junction with I-90 at Drummond, east along I-90 to the junction at Gold Creek, from Gold Creek southwest along Gold Creek Road to the junction with Gold Creek Lakes Road, southwest to Eureka Ridge Road, and west on Princeton Mountain Road to the junction with Montana Highway 1 in Maxville. The HD sits in the Flint Creek Mountains and includes the Upper Clark Fork River Basin. The district is 29.2 percent public land, almost all of which is administered by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Private landowners contribute 16,565 acres to three properties enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program. Additionally, conservation easements provide hunting access on 1,193 acres. This district is a traditional ranching community with private lands managed for agriculture and livestock production.

Much of this district includes quality elk habitat providing year-round resources to elk. Some elk are migratory moving upslope in the summer months. However, most reside on typical winter range (largely agricultural lands) all year long. The majority (70.8 percent) of HD 217 is private land, including large tracts with limited public access. At times elk congregate on inaccessible private lands which makes meeting management objectives challenging. Elk occasionally cross I-90 near the Jens exit into HD 291, creating a public safety hazard to motorists.

In 2015, a high count of 1,443 elk was observed in this area and agricultural producers sustained a high level of standing and stored crop damage. Elk residing on inaccessible private lands, substantial game damage impacts to neighboring landowners, and shoot-outs on adjacent public lands contributed to the modification of the elk management strategy. In 2016, HD 217 was carved out of the northern end of former HD 212. The objective was set at 600 elk and an aggressive harvest strategy to reduce elk numbers was implemented. By 2018, the population was nearing the objective and was within the objective range by 2019. FWP anticipates access limitations will continue to be a challenge influencing elk management in HD 217. FWP will continue to work with all stakeholders to find creative solutions.

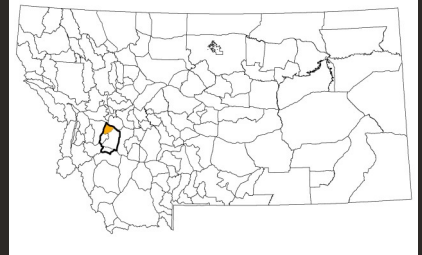
Management Challenges:

- Heavy elk use of private land winter range and associated high levels of game damage.
- Resolving conflicting public views regarding elk management strategies.
- Large tracts of inaccessible private land.

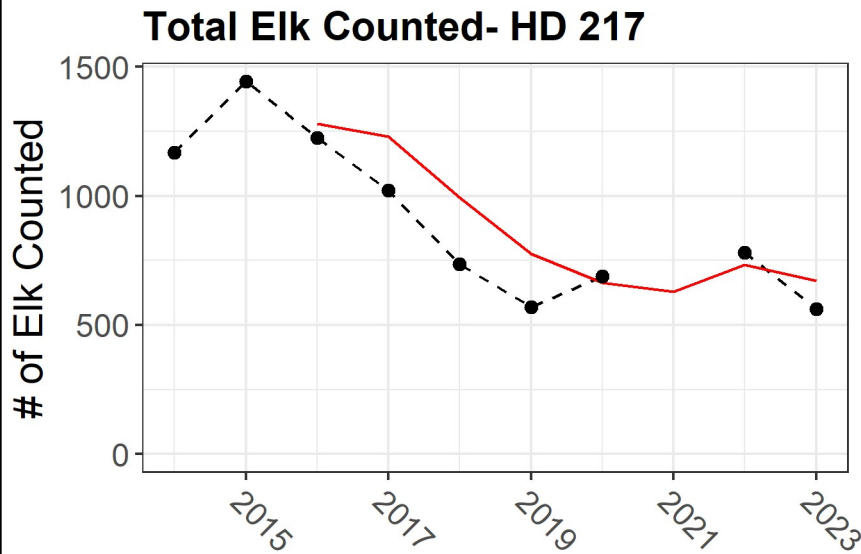


HD 217

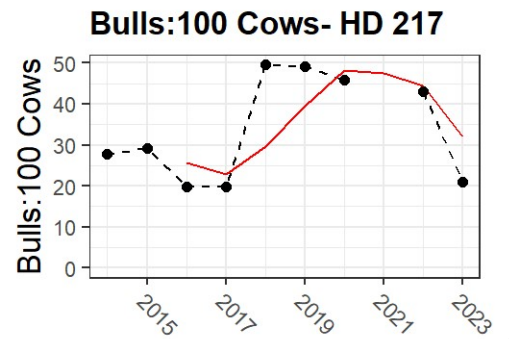
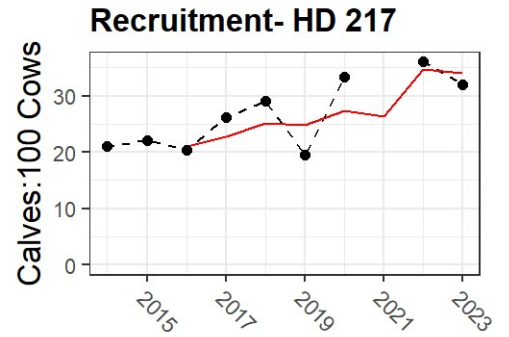
Flint Creek Elk Management Unit



Current Population Status & Trend



Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

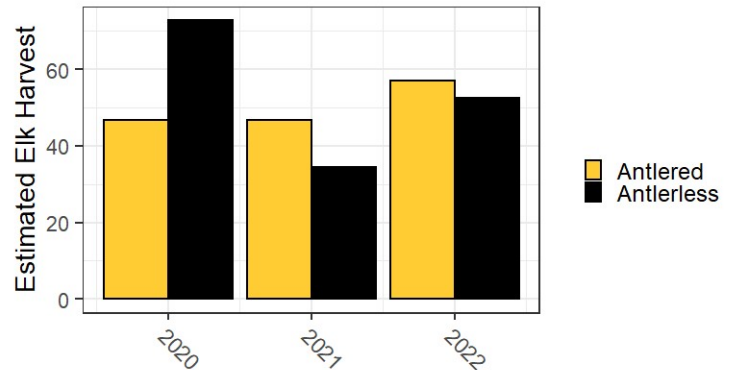


Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
217	2020	525	4,094
	2022	444	3,361

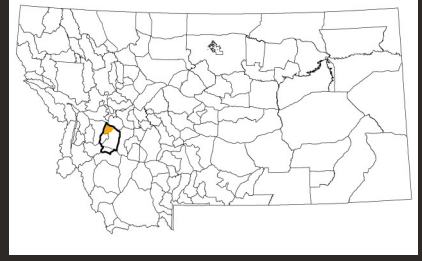
HD 217's boundary changed in 2020. Data presented represent the current HD boundary.

Elk Harvest- HD 217



HD 217

Flint Creek Elk Management Unit



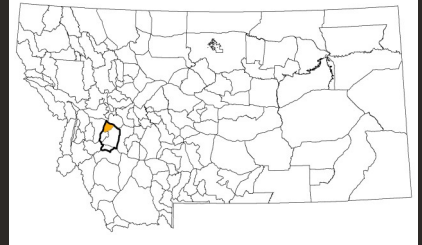
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 480-720 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or



HD 217

Flint Creek Elk Management Unit



Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to find an appropriate level of harvest pressure on public lands and accessible private lands that does not create shoot-out scenarios or redistribute large groups of elk onto inaccessible private land • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	Maintain 3-year average of 50% or greater of bulls harvested on non-youth permit have 6 points or more on one antler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Reduce hunter crowding	No complaints of hunter pressure on landowner fence lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain 3-year average either-sex permit success rate is 20% or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Adjust quota

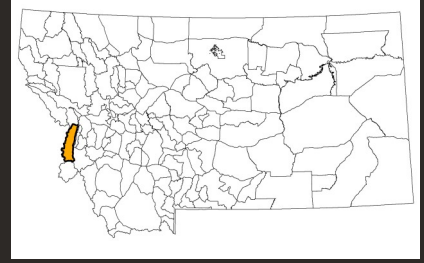


HD 240

Size: 671 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 80%



Bitterroot Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 240 encompasses the Bitterroot Mountain Range, composed of numerous rugged canyons with creeks that empty into the mainstem Bitterroot River. This HD is generally bounded by the Idaho border on the west (which is also the Bitterroot-Selway hydrologic divide), Trapper Creek on the south, U.S. 93 on the east, and Carlton Creek on the north.

Eighty percent of this HD is public land, 99 percent of which is administered by the Bitterroot National Forest with a few small parcels of Lolo National Forest and Montana State Trust Land. About 60 percent (320 mi²) of the national forest land is part of the vast Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness that extends into Idaho; only one road reaches the Idaho border from the valley floor, but numerous trails offer good nonmotorized backcountry access. There is other motor vehicle access on front country road systems. Lake Como and Larry Creek are popular year-round recreation destinations on public land, and as of 2023, three private properties are enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, providing 1,540 acres of private land hunting access.

Some elk found seasonally in HD 240 may migrate west to lower-elevation winter range in Idaho, but the extent to which this migration occurs is poorly understood. While only 20 percent of this HD is privately owned, private land provides the majority of the elk winter range, much of which has been experiencing heavy conversion in recent decades from agricultural production to residential development. Elk security on public lands is excellent; however, habitat imitations and predation risk limit elk use of these lands. Wildfires adjacent to and sometimes within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness are quickly suppressed due to the danger they pose to the numerous residential areas in the wildland-urban interface.

On winter range, some private landowners may harbor elk herds while others hunt them; thus, elk security is highly variable, and caution must be taken to prevent overharvest especially through the patchwork of smaller private properties. Winter game damage is a chronic problem, both for larger producers and the abundant small ranches that store haystacks for horses or hobby animals. Many of these smaller properties are generally not eligible for FWP's game damage assistance.

Both the northern and southern HD 240 boundary have changed over time. In 2014, a portion of former HD 250 was added to the south end of HD 240 to better represent elk herd movements. In 2022, the northern boundary was shifted south from U.S. 12 to Carlton Creek.

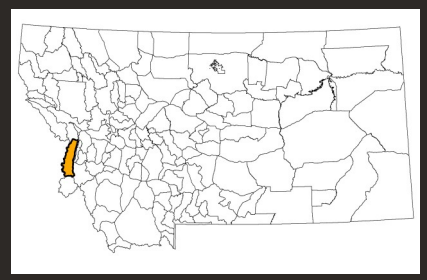
Management Challenges:

- Difficulty in managing wilderness habitat, particularly regarding wildfires and risks to adjacent residential communities.
- Balancing tolerance/game damage with risk of overharvest on private land, due to small landownerships and variable hunting practices.
- Uncertain habitat use by elk, especially higher elevations in the Bitterroot Mountains and migration into/out of Idaho.



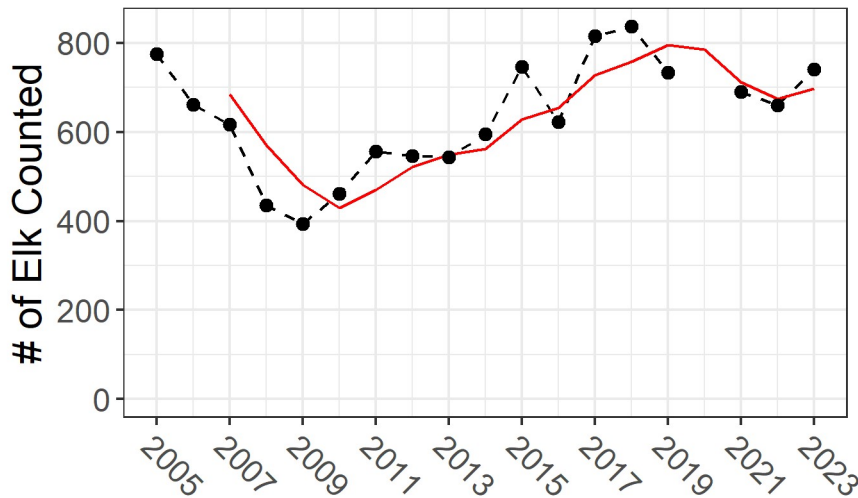
HD 240

Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



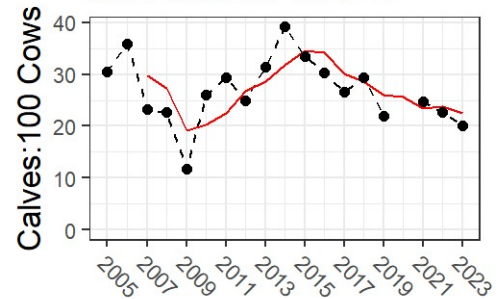
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 240

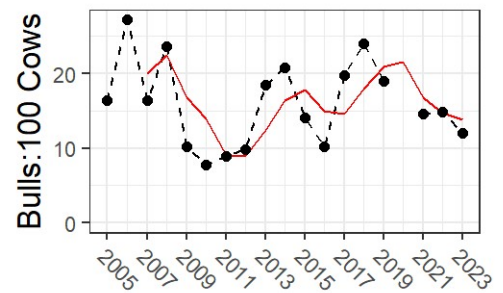


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 240



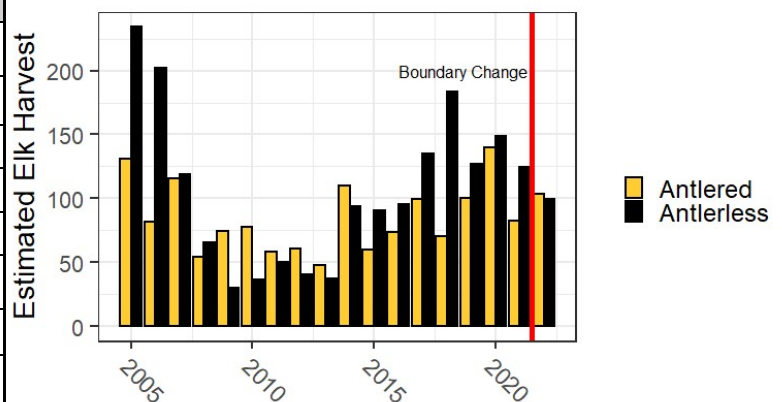
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 240



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
240	2006	2,189	13,810
	2008	1,585	11,269
	2010	1,290	8,085
	2012	1,213	7,774
	2014	1,289	8,420
	2016	1,653	12,506
	2018	1,654	12,110
	2020	1,316	9,497
	2022*	1,266	9,421

Elk Harvest- HD 240

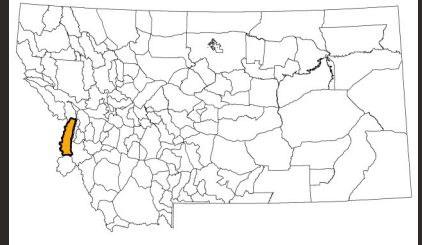


**Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022.



HD 240

Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



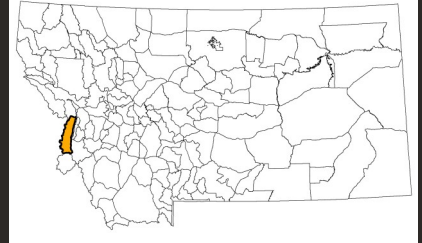
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 600-900 elk observed	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size</p> <p>3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Evaluate migratory patterns of elk into/out of Idaho and how to account for hunting opportunity on herds that may



HD 240

Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

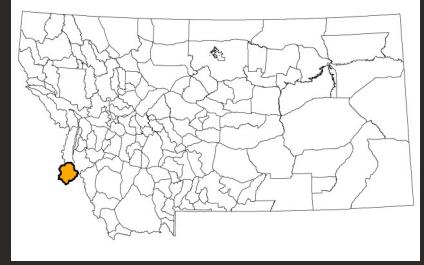


HD 250

Size: 555 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 97%



West Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



****Special Management District for Bull Elk****



District Summary

Hunting District 250 encompasses the majority of the West Fork of the Bitterroot River drainage in the Bitterroot Mountain Range. The Idaho state line bounds the west and south sides, the East Fork-West Fork hydrologic divide forms the east boundary, and Trapper Creek forms the north boundary. In 2014, this HD was reduced in size from 707 mi² with sections added to adjacent HDs 240 and 270 to better represent the movements of elk herds in these areas. A portion of the huntable elk population in HD 250 migrates to Idaho winter range in the Selway and North Fork Salmon drainages. More specifically, cow elk radio-collared in winter in HD 250 remained in the HD for most of the year, but a portion of calves tagged with VHF transmitters in summer migrated with their herds to Idaho winter range. Therefore, many elk available in HD 250 for archery and/or early rifle hunting (including bulls) may migrate to Idaho for winter (Proffitt et al. 2016). Since HD 250 aerial surveys occur in spring (before migration back to summer range), these migratory animals are not counted toward population objectives.

This HD is composed of 97 percent public land, with all but a few acres administered by the Bitterroot National Forest. The remaining 3 percent private land is located mostly in narrow strips along the West Fork and Nez Perce Fork river bottoms and other minor tributaries. Some of these properties engage in livestock and hay production, and elk regularly cause damage on these properties. Below-objective population status and restrictive elk hunting regulations make these situations more challenging to manage.

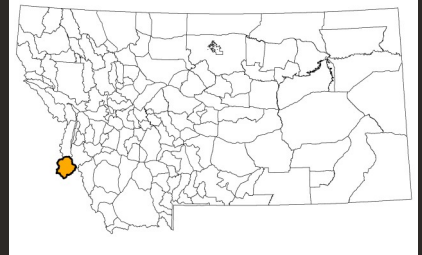
The northwestern portion of HD 250 forms the southern edge of the 2,107 mi² Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (which also encompasses much of HD 240), and the Blue Joint Wilderness Study Area encompasses 99 mi² along the western edge of the HD. Overall, elk security is good, owing to the ruggedness of the HD, heavy timber, wilderness areas, and relatively low road densities. Currently, there are no FWP-held conservation easements or BMAs.

Compared to other Bitterroot HDs, elk populations in HD 250 have struggled to rebound after several years of both predator recolonization and heavy hunter harvest in the early 2000s. Following a period of extremely low calf recruitment during this time, FWP initiated an intensive study on habitat quality and predator-prey dynamics in HD 250. Proffitt et al. (2016) followed collared cow and calf elk to evaluate survival and causes of mortality, with several key findings: (1) pregnancy rates were overall lower in HD 250 compared to neighboring HD 270, likely as a result of lower habitat quality; (2) cow survival was similar to other Montana elk populations, and (3) mountain lion predation was a significant source of calf mortality.



HD 250

West Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit

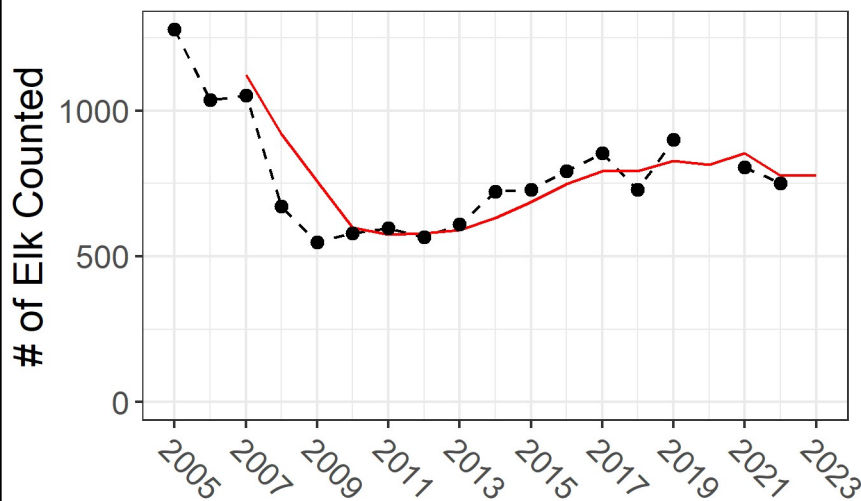


Management Challenges:

- Low-quality habitat and abundant large carnivores (wolves, mountain lions, and black bears), which may limit elk populations and productivity even with minimal human hunting pressure.
- General propensity for elk herds to congregate on inaccessible private lands during hunting and winter seasons.
- Difficulty in counting/considering huntable elk population that migrates to Idaho.
- High, conflicting demand for both general hunting opportunity and mature bull opportunity.

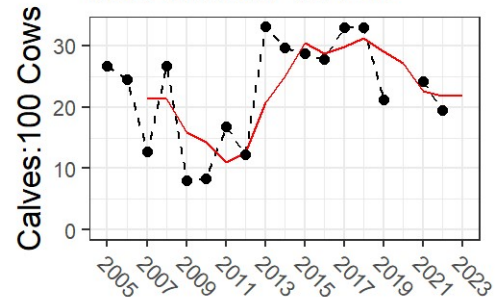
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 250

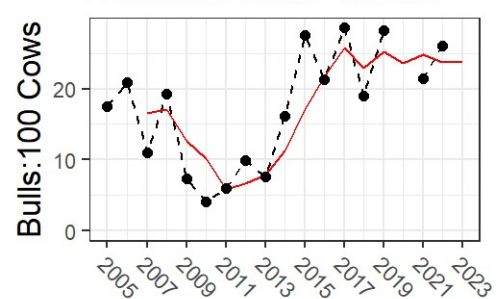


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 250



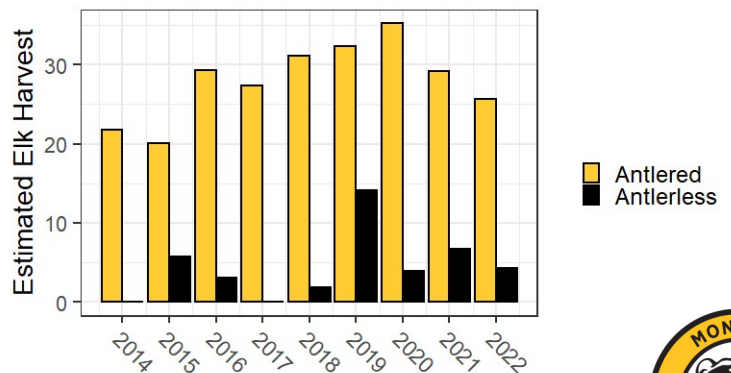
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 250



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

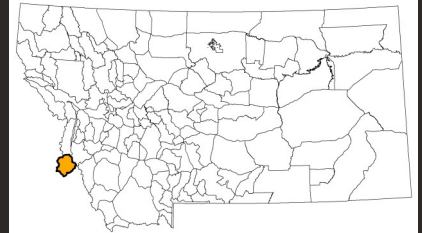
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
250	2014	132	790
	2016	128	1,450
	2018	147	1,336
	2020	136	1,355
	2022	138	1,410

Elk Harvest- HD 250



HD 250

West Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
<p>Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 800-1,200 elk observed</p>	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	<p>If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	<p>3-year average recruitment of 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Evaluate migratory patterns of elk into/out of Idaho and how to account for hunting opportunity on herds that may move to Idaho during spring counts
<p>Maintain bull:cow ratio of 20:100 or greater</p>	<p>3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas



HD 250

West Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain 3-year average permit success rate of 30% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust quota
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls during archery season	40% or greater of bulls harvested have 6 points or more on one antler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity during rifle season	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

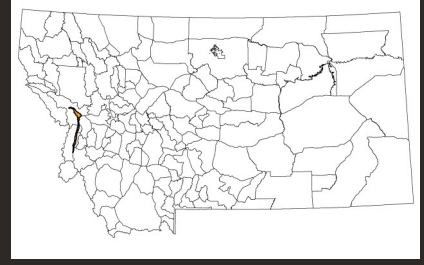


HD 260

Size: 155 mi²

Primary Habitat: Human Land Use

Public Ownership: 13%



Bitterroot/Clark Fork Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 260 runs along the Bitterroot River bottom and is a long, narrow HD spanning the Bitterroot River/Clark Fork floodplains between Darby in the south (Ravalli County) and Frenchtown in the north (Missoula County). In the south, it is bounded primarily by U.S. 93 on the west and Eastside Highway/Old Darby Road on the east, with a few variances to account for river and highway movements. In the north, the HD encompasses most of the urbanized areas around Missoula and Frenchtown.

This HD is 87 percent private property in active agricultural production and urban/suburban residential development. The remaining 13 percent public land comprises scattered Lolo National Forest, Montana State Trust, Montana FWP (fishing access sites and Council Grove State Park), and local/county government parcels, as well as the 2,800-acre Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge administered by the USFWS. Currently, there are 10 private properties open to public hunting access (8 of which are enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program), although most hunting opportunities are generally focused on white-tailed deer.

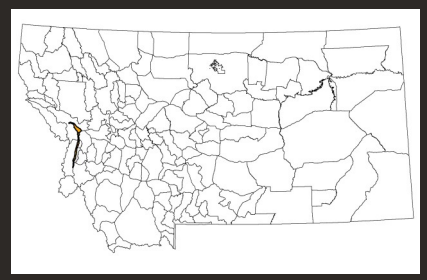
Due to the lack of elk habitat in HD 260, management goals focus on managing and/or preventing agricultural conflicts associated with elk residency. Most of the elk frequenting HD 260 are seasonal, generally unwelcome visitors on agricultural lands that spend most of their lives in adjacent HDs 201, 204, and 240. These herd movements are well known and are included in counts for those districts. However, several herds remain year-round residents in the Bitterroot floodplain, particularly around the Stevensville and Hamilton areas, and these elk are included in HD 260 counts.

In addition, HD 260 has been managed as a special archery-only district for decades due to its flat topography and human density, and generally predates the existence of resident elk herds in the area. Since its inception, HD 260 has become very important culturally to bowhunters. However, the archery-only restrictions present challenges to managing elk that are causing damage to private property and cannot be efficiently hunted with archery equipment. The density of housing and urban development continue to pose safety concerns for longer-range weapons.

Historically, HD 260 hunting regulations have often differed between Missoula and Bitterroot portions to satisfy public demands related to game damage mitigation, safety concerns, and cultural significance. In the 2005 Elk Management Plan HD 260 was combined with HD 240. To recognize the complexity of HD 260 amid the larger landscape, it is now considered a separate entity.



HD 260



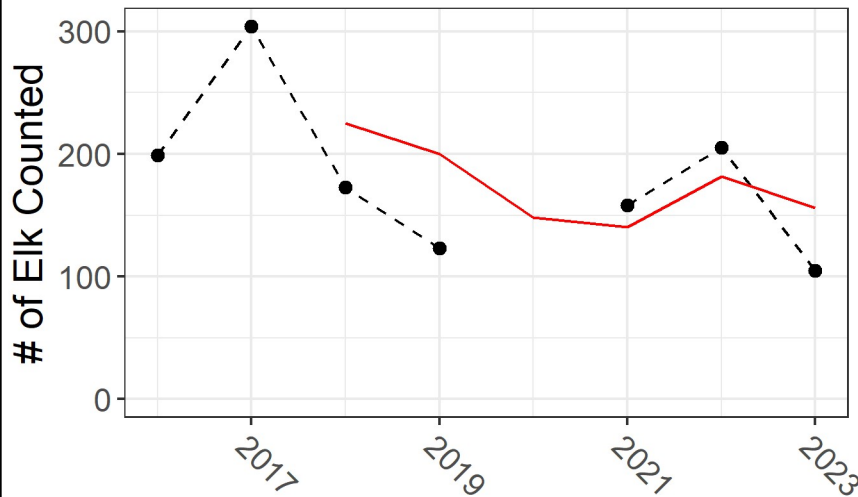
Bitterroot/Clark Fork Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

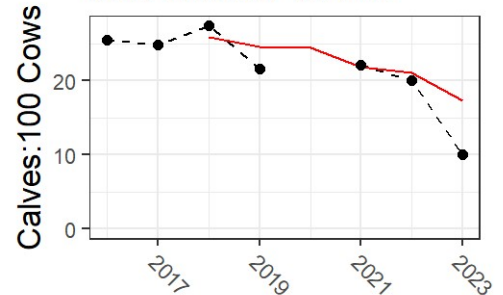
- Inaccessible private land.
- Safety concerns (flat land, proximity to homes/businesses).
- Cultural significance as an archery-only area.
- Ability to effectively harvest elk with weapons limitations due to safety concerns.

Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 260



Recruitment- HD 260



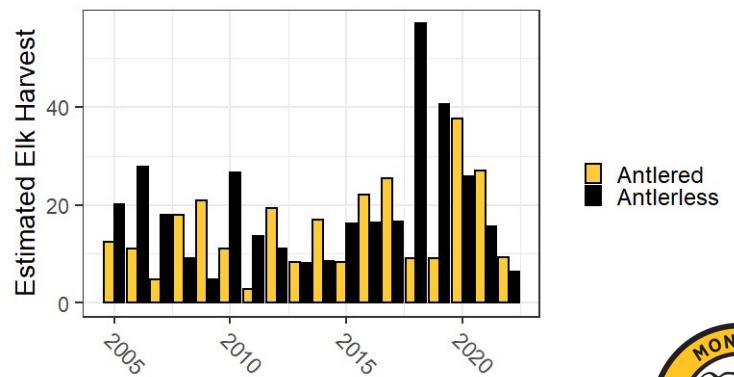
Most of HD 260 is river bottom private land, with few bulls that reside there.

Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
260	2006	332	2,605
	2008	345	3,048
	2010	278	2,196
	2012	202	1,467
	2014	192	1,184
	2016	335	2,984
	2018	348	3,539
	2020	413	3,164
	2022	238	2,079

Elk Harvest- HD 260



HD 260

Bitterroot/Clark Fork Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 0-100 elk observed	Most recent elk count is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
NO BULL RATIO GOAL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize year-round residency of elk	Number of resident elk is 0 or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land • Work with private landowners to increase hunting access • Special weapons opportunities • Explore options to implement rifle opportunities where safe

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Balance safety concerns with harvest opportunities	Minimal/no safety issues during hunting season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special weapons opportunities

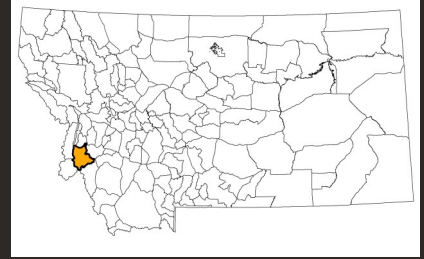


HD 270

Size: 664 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 85%



East Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 270 is located in the southeast Bitterroot Valley, encompassing the upper Bitterroot River watershed (excluding the upper West Fork) and the southern end of the Sapphire Mountain Range, as well as the northwestern slopes of the Pintler Mountains. It is bounded by the Continental Divide on the southeast, the West Fork-East Fork Bitterroot hydrologic divide on the southwest, U.S. 93 on the northwest, Skalkaho Highway on the north, and the Bitterroot-Rock Creek watershed divide on the east. HD 270 supports an abundant elk population, a significant portion of which migrate from summer range in adjacent HDs during the fall.

This HD comprises 85 percent public and 15 percent private land. The Bitterroot National Forest administers the majority, although 4 percent of the total area in HD 270 is Montana State Trust Land (mostly represented by the 11,774-acre Sula State Forest in French Basin). The 148 mi² Sapphire Wilderness Study Area spans both sides of the Bitterroot-Rock Creek hydrologic divide to encompass the northeastern portion of HD 270. The southeastern portion contains about a quarter of the 248 mi² Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness.

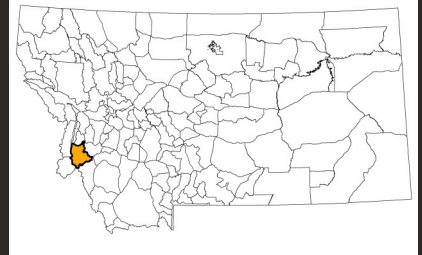
Outside of wilderness areas, the public land in HD 270 contains moderate to high road densities; 83 percent of the HD is within 1 mile of open public roads during hunting seasons. In cooperation with FWP, the Bitterroot National Forest applied several seasonal road closures intended to increase elk security along migration routes during rifle season; these closures include routes between HD 270 and HD 321, and from high elevation summer range within HD 270 to winter range in French Basin. Currently, three BMAs provide 2,210 acres of private land hunting access. The 1,170-acre Lazy J Cross BMA is held under a CE with the Bitter Root Land Trust, but with perpetual hunting access managed by FWP. This BMA is prime winter range in French Basin, with a high level of use by both hunters and elk, often leading to conflict.

Due to the size, accessibility, habitat quality, and population of elk, both elk harvest (especially antlered bulls) and hunter pressure in HD 270 (measured as total number of hunters) is consistently among the highest in the state. Past management has focused on maximizing hunting opportunity for both antlered and antlerless elk, while managing crowding issues and preventing overharvest/shoot-out situations related to the timing of migration and severe weather events. It is possible that the current high elk population is approaching the carrying capacity of the winter and/or summer range and managing this population will become increasingly important especially given the habitat needs of competing and culturally significant ungulate species such as bighorn sheep and mule deer.



HD 270

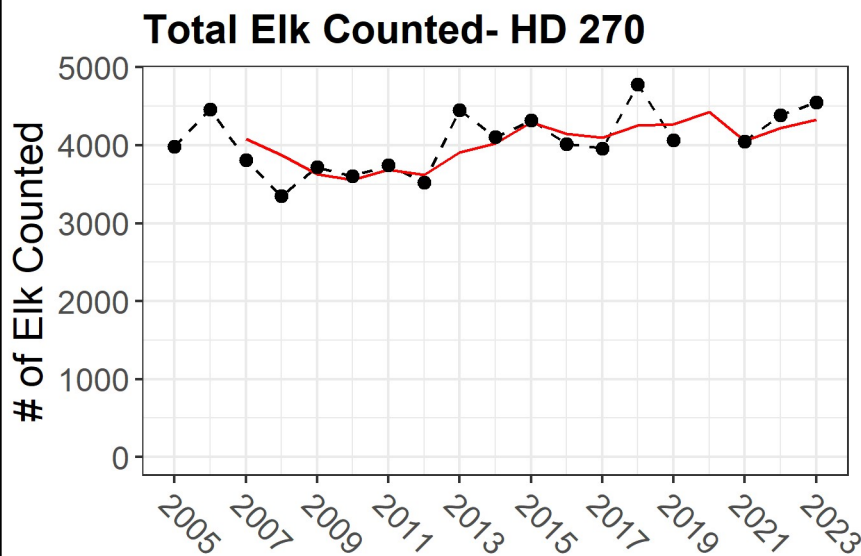
East Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



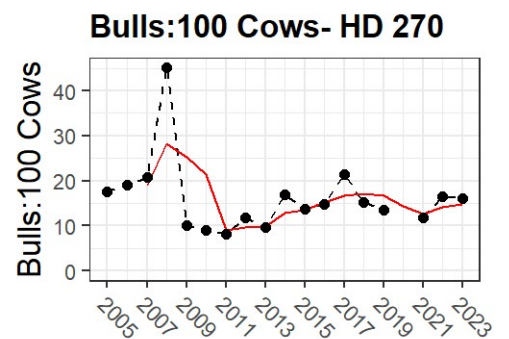
Management Challenges:

- Hunter crowding and conflict especially during rifle season, with a history of shoot-out situations in key winter range areas.
- Difficulty in harvesting antlerless elk on inaccessible private lands, and subsequent game damage.
- Conflicting habitat needs with important mule deer and bighorn sheep herds.
- Elk security challenges outside of wilderness areas, particularly in regard to migration onto winter range during hunting season.

Current Population Status & Trend

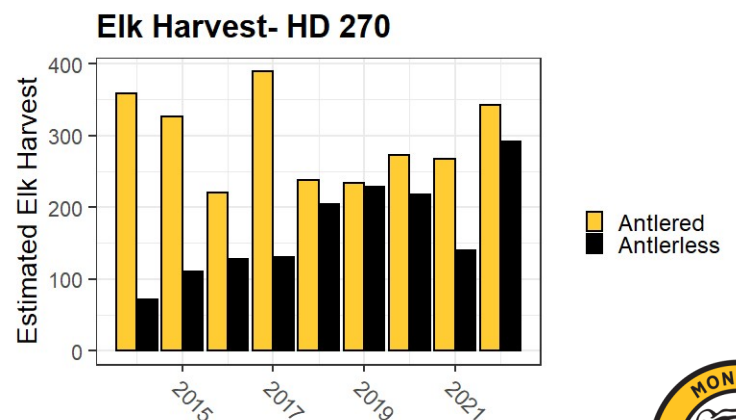


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
270	2014	2,488	19,278
	2016	2,594	21,719
	2018	2,875	22,751
	2020	2,731	23,936
	2022	2,876	22,919



HD 270

East Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 3,600-4,400 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

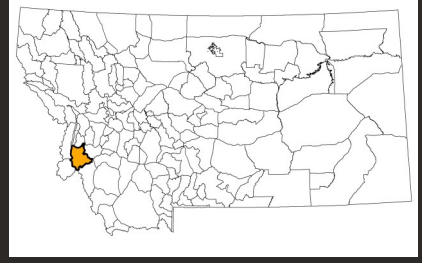
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest



HD 270

East Fork Bitterroot Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain or decrease current elk hunter numbers unless additional access opportunities are created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to find creative solutions • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding
	No shoot-out incidents (uncontrolled shooting at visible elk congregations by large groups of hunters) in popular areas	
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Adjust quota • Maintain youth archery opportunity on general license
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B License success rate of 25% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to

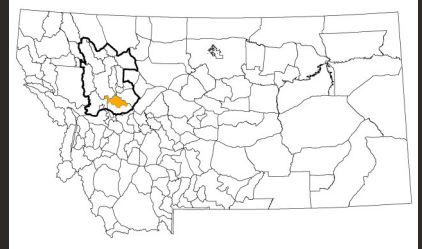


HD 280

Size: 305 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 100%



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 280 is located in the northeast portion of the Blackfoot watershed at the southern end of the Lewis and Clark Mountains and the Scapegoat Wilderness Area. The HD's northern boundary follows the Blackfoot watershed hydrological divide from the Landers Fork in the east to Monture Creek in the west. Most of the southern boundary follows the divide along the wilderness boundary. Except for a few minor private inholdings this district is composed entirely of public land administered by the Lolo and Helena-Lewis and Clark national forests.

This district is remote and rugged; elevations range from 5,000 feet along Monture Creek to 9,400 feet on Red Mountain, the highest peak in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. The roadless nature of the district requires foot or stock for access. Approximately 77 percent of the district is composed of the Scapegoat Wilderness Area, with an additional 22 percent USFS Inventoried Roadless designation. This district is managed for a traditional backcountry rifle hunting experience during the rutting season starting September 15.

HD 280 has a complex fire history, with more than half the district experiencing wildfire since 1988. This includes four large fires burning greater than 10,000 acres (1988, 2000, 2007, 2017). Since 2000, a wildfire 3,000 acres or larger has occurred approximately every 4 to 5 years. Variation in burn severity and succession result in a complex mosaic of variable elk forage and security habitat. This area also contains excellent habitat for a rich suite of carnivore species that may influence elk behavior and limit populations and productivity.

This is a high snowfall area resulting in little suitable winter range. Consequently, most elk summering here migrate in early winter to the Blackfoot and Clearwater valleys or the Eastern Front of the Rockies. Based on radio telemetry data, up to 50 percent of the elk wintering in HDs 281, eastern 285, and 422 migrate into HD 280 in early summer and accomplish the reverse migration in early winter. Timing of annual migration can be highly variable and influences the challenge of finding elk.

Due to the lack of winter range, elk are not counted in this district. Rather, trends in neighboring HDs (281, 285, and 422) in combination with bull harvest are used to monitor population trends. Elk harvest in HD 280 has declined since 2005 and currently is more than 25 percent below the long-term average.

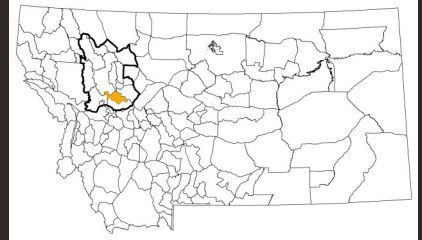
Management Challenges:

- Information gaps regarding roles of habitat and predation on elk population dynamics.
- Ability to conduct management interventions (e.g., habitat improvements and carnivore harvest) in a district with such a large percentage of designated wilderness and roadless area.
- Abundant large carnivores (wolves, mountain lions, black bears, and grizzly bears), which may limit elk populations and productivity even with minimal human hunting pressure.



HD 280

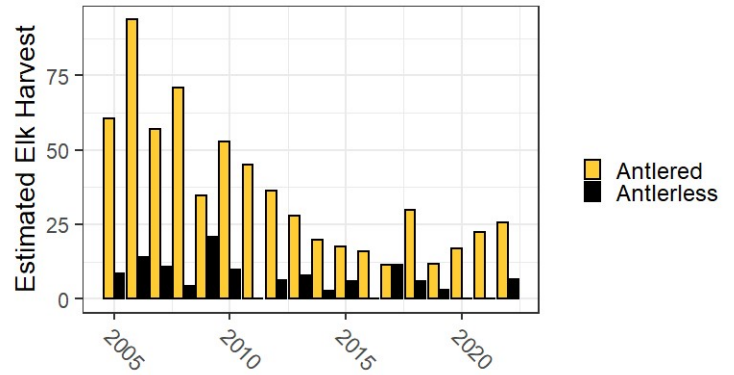
Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
280	2006	507	3,018
	2008	364	2,518
	2010	322	1,823
	2012	247	1,630
	2014	232	1,529
	2016	236	1,485
	2018	198	1,227
	2020	181	1,197
	2022	196	1,643

Elk Harvest- HD 280



No population demographic objective; elk population surveys are not conducted in this HD because there are few wintering elk.

No distribution objective; HD is entirely a backcountry/wilderness district.

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	3-year average antlerless harvest is within or above 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early backcountry rifle season with youth opportunity • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	

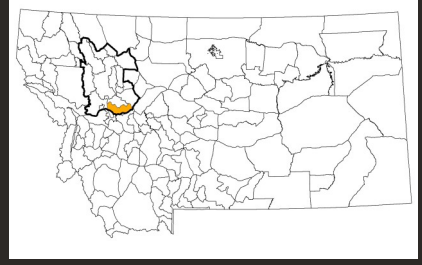


HD 281

Size: 379 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 75%



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 281 is located in the northern region of the Blackfoot watershed at the southern end of the Lewis and Clark Mountains. The HD's western boundary is Monture Creek Road north of the town of Ovando. Most of the northern boundary follows the Scapegoat Wilderness boundary and State Route 200 generally defines the southern boundary. The HD's shape largely captures the transition from rugged higher-elevation montane zones to the grassland and agricultural lands found on the floor of the Blackfoot Valley.

This HD is primarily public land (75 percent) administered by the Lolo and Helena-Lewis and Clark national forests (80 percent) and the State of Montana (12 percent). Access to elk hunting is most significantly affected by the remote character of the USFS lands in the northern one-third of the district. These higher-elevation areas are either Wilderness or USFS Inventoried Roadless Areas limiting motorized access. There are currently more than 44,000 acres of private land enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, which provides public access to private lands during the fall hunting season.

Roughly one-third of the district has experienced wildfire since 2003. Four large wildfires (over 5,000 acres) burned in 2017 along most of the northern boundary. Variation in burn severity and succession processes post-fire result in a complex mosaic of variable elk forage and security habitat. HD 281 also contains excellent habitat for a rich suite of carnivore species that may influence elk behavior and limit populations and productivity.

This district is in a high snowfall region which can result in marginal quality winter range during heavy snow years. Although elk in HD 281 exhibit a mix of resident and migratory strategies, most elk are migratory. These elk either winter in HD 281 or use the district as spring transitional range while migrating from winter ranges in neighboring districts (e.g., HD 422 and HD 290) to summer ranges in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Elk are surveyed during spring in this district; counts and objectives should account for variation in winter severity and the presence of seasonal migrants from neighboring districts.

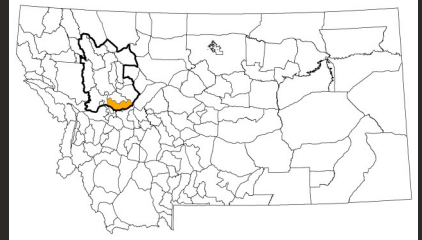
Management Challenges:

- Incorporating annual variation in winter snowpack (i.e., winter range use) and transitional use of district into spring survey data trends.
- Minimizing harvest of elk post-migration (outside the district and on winter ranges) without negatively impacting opportunity and management objectives in neighboring districts.
- Limited public winter range and heavy annual snowfall complicates potential for improving winter range habitat.



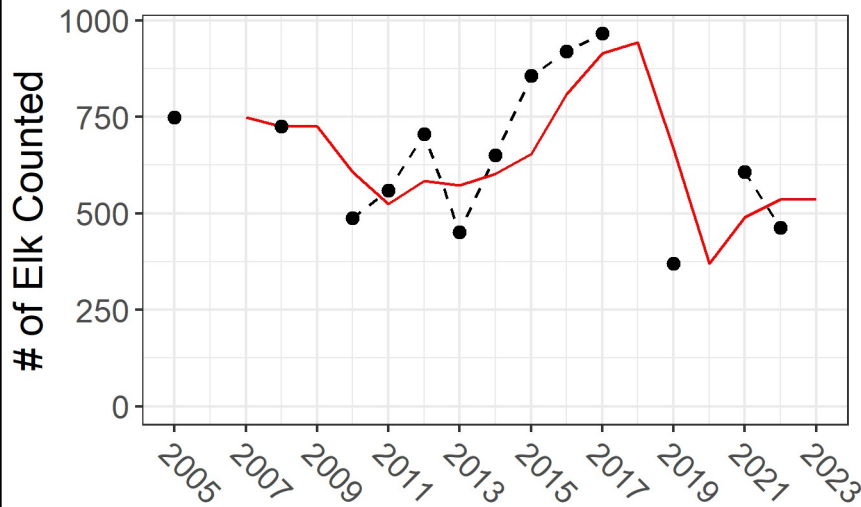
HD 281

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



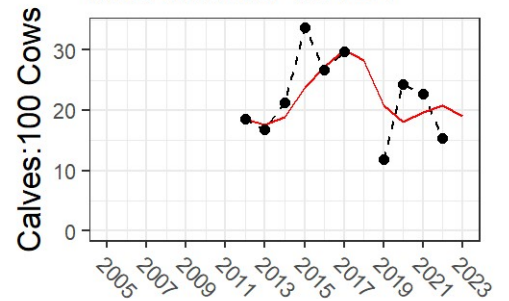
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 281

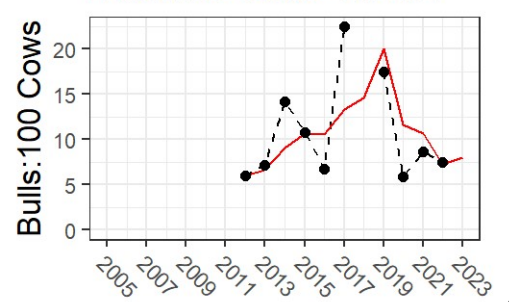


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 281



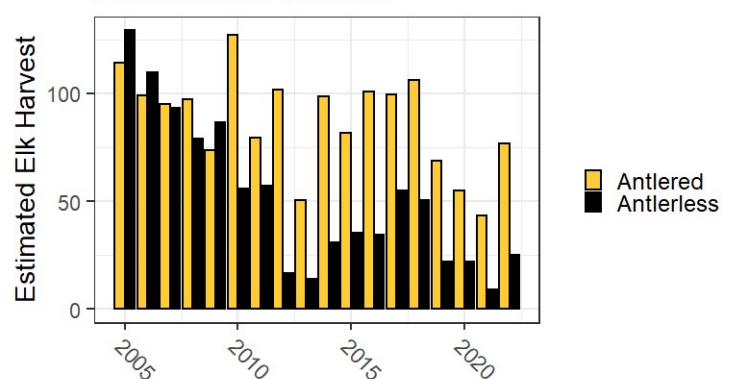
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 281



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

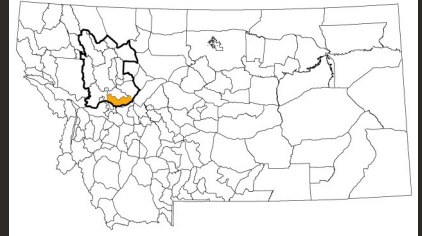
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
281	2006	1,332	8,995
	2008	1,838	13,952
	2010	1,431	12,131
	2012	1,381	9,363
	2014	1,538	11,739
	2016	1,532	11,271
	2018	1,324	10,062
	2020	1,119	8,728
	2022	997	6,801

Elk Harvest- HD 281



HD 281

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 500-700 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

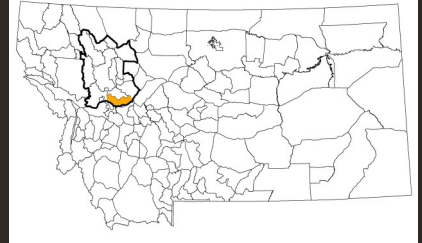
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of elk across the three subunits (Monture-Arrastra, Arrastra-Beaver Cr., Beaver Cr-Rogers Pass) is within 10% of the 10-year average during spring green-up aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HD 281

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	No complaints of hunter pressure on landowner fence lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to reduce elk refuge areas that exist at start of general rifle season
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide youth antlerless opportunities • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

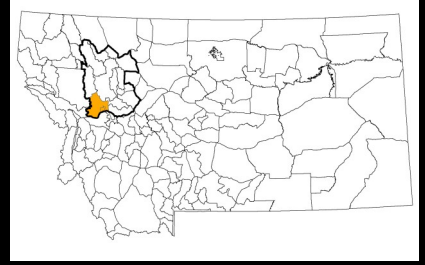


HDs 282 & 285

Size: 703 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 74%



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 282, also known as the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA district, is located in the Blackfoot and Clearwater watersheds between the Swan, Rattlesnake, and Garnet mountain ranges near the towns of Seeley Lake and Ovando. This district is unique in that most of its ownership (86 percent) falls within the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA. State Routes Montana 200 and Montana 83 define the southern and eastern boundaries, and Woodworth Road defines the eastern and northern boundaries. In the northeast, the district extends north of Woodworth Road to the Cottonwood Lakes-Monture Road between Cottonwood and Dry Cottonwood creeks.

Although a few elk may spend most of their time in HD 282, the majority of elk using this district are migratory and use HD 282 as their winter range. Collar data obtained during a 2019-20 study indicated that elk using summer range from eight different HDs (130, 150, 280, 281, 285, 290, 292, and 298) used HD 282 as part of their winter range (Millspaugh et al. 2022). Furthermore, few elk that utilize HD 282 do so exclusively for their entire winter range, with most elk using neighboring districts HD 292 and HD 285 in addition to HD 282. Individuals showed high annual variation in the amount of time spent in HD 282 versus neighboring districts across winter months.

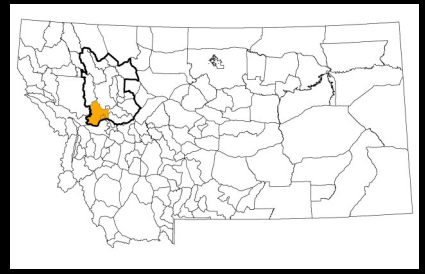
Elk are extremely vulnerable to harvest when they congregate on winter range following early winter snowstorms, and the timing of arrival on the WMA varies annually. Additionally, higher hunting pressure outside the WMA lowers elk security and can result in early migration onto winter range. This increases grazing pressure on limited winter range resources and decreases hunting opportunity outside the WMA. Conversely, too much access within HD 282 can drive elk off the WMA, onto adjacent private lands outside the district, resulting in game-damage issues on private lands and reduced hunting opportunity within the WMA.

To meet these challenges, FWP's management utilizes a combination of limited tag opportunities and variable season lengths to influence hunter numbers, access, and harvest. Unlike many districts that manage for either bull opportunity or older age-class bulls, HD 282 is largely managed for the uniqueness of the hunting experience on the WMA.

Annual surveys are conducted during winter and as early as possible before snow depth increases and elk move into more timbered country or begin using adjacent districts. The largely migratory nature of the elk using HD 282 and fluidity of movement with winter range in neighboring districts must be accounted for when interpreting survey trends. (Continued on next page)



HDs 282 & 285



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

District Summary (continued)

Hunting District 285 lies in the Blackfoot and Clearwater watersheds, and includes parts of the Mission, Swan, and Rattlesnake mountain ranges. This HD is bounded on its southern end by Montana Highway 200 and the Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area (HD 282). In the north, HD 285 follows the Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary and hydrological divide between the Clearwater and Swan watersheds. The western border follows the Flathead Reservation and Rattlesnake National Recreation Area boundaries and the eastern portion is bounded by Monture Creek Road.

Most of HD 285 is publicly accessible during hunting season. Access to elk is most significantly affected by the remote character of National Forest lands in the northern parts of the district. Approximately 13.5 percent of the district is USFS Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). The southwestern portion of HD 285, which includes the former HD 283 East (Gold-Belmont), was historically extensively roaded for timber harvest; however, many roads were closed to motorized vehicles shortly after Plum Creek Timber Company purchased lands in the mid-1990s. The northwest portion of HD 285 contains the Marshall Creek WMA, covering 24,798 acres, and BLM and TNC hold a continuous block of land north of Potomac providing public access to more than 137,000 acres. Additionally, there are more than 30,000 acres enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program.

Most habitat is elk summer and transitional range, with suitable winter range falling along the valley bottoms and south-facing hillsides. Elk are mostly migratory, either using the plentiful summer range within this large district, or migrating longer distance to summer in neighboring HDs (e.g. HD 280, HD 281). Thus, the abundance and location of elk during the hunting season will depend on migration timing, which varies annually with winter snow accumulation.

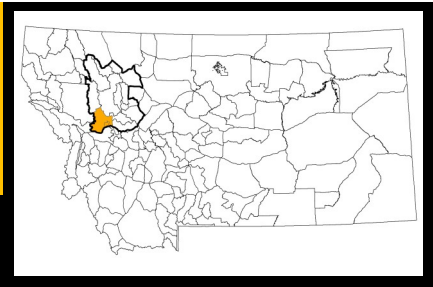
Roughly one-third of HD 285 has experienced wildfire since 2000. This includes four large wildfires burning more than 10,000 acres in the district (Mineral-Primm Fire, Jocko Lakes Fire, Liberty Fire, Rice Ridge Fire). Variation in burn severity and succession have resulted in a complex mosaic of variable elk forage and security habitat. HD 285 also contains excellent habitat for a rich suite of carnivore species that may influence elk behavior and limit populations and productivity.

Due to the heavily timbered habitat in this district and migratory nature of the elk, surveys are conducted during early winter in HD 282 and considered reflective of population dynamics in HD 285. In the southern portion of the district (Gold-Belmont) elk are surveyed during spring green-up with objectives considered separately from the rest of HD 285.



HDs 282 & 285

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

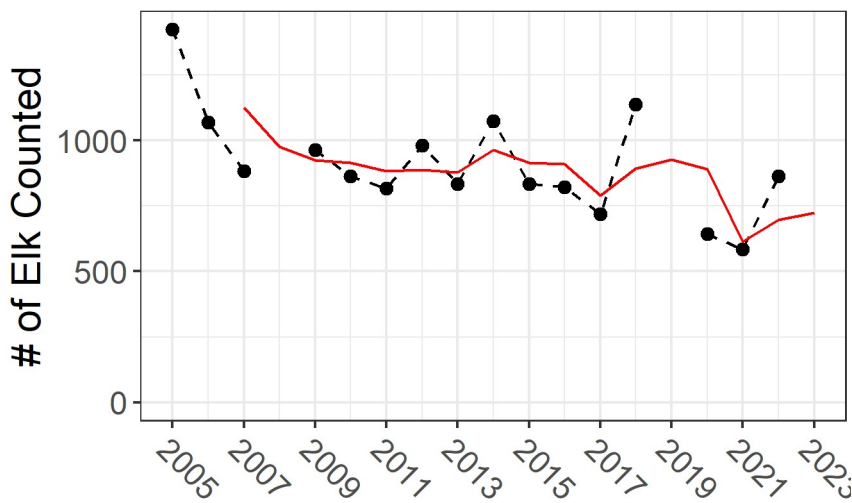


Management Challenges:

- Vulnerability of elk to harvest because the HD 282 is mostly winter range.
- Hunter pressure driving elk off WMA (HD 282) onto private lands and subsequent game damage.
- Abundant large carnivores (wolves, mountain lions, black bears, and grizzly bears), which may limit elk populations and productivity even with minimal human hunting pressure.
- Mitigating chronically low recruitment, including identifying causative factors (e.g., predation) and efficacy of management actions to influence these factors.
- High levels of access/low security in southern portion of HD 285 (Gold-Belmont).
- Annual variation in migration and hunter pressure can create early arrival on winter range (HD 282) limiting hunter opportunity in northern portions of HD 285.

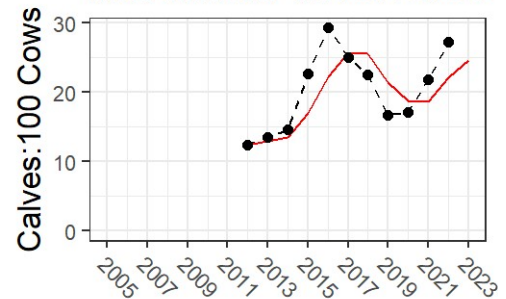
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HDs 282 & 285

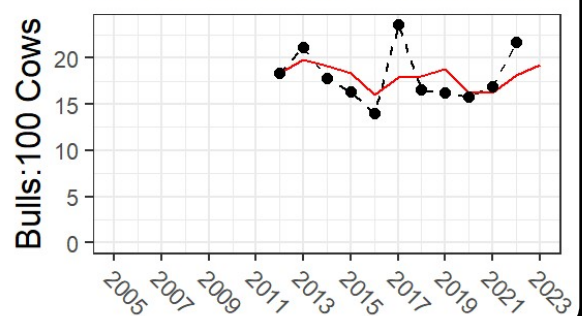


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 282 & 285

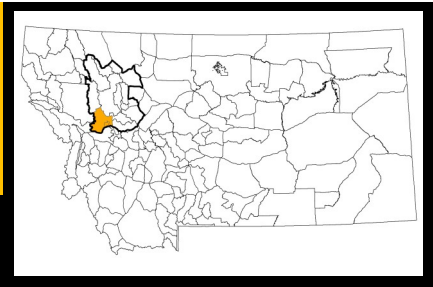


Bulls:100 Cows- HD 282 & 285



HDs 282 & 285

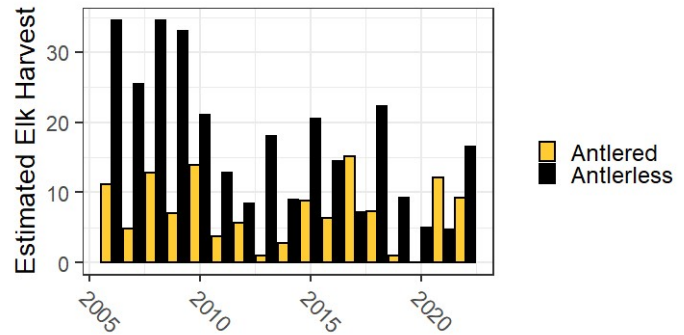
Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



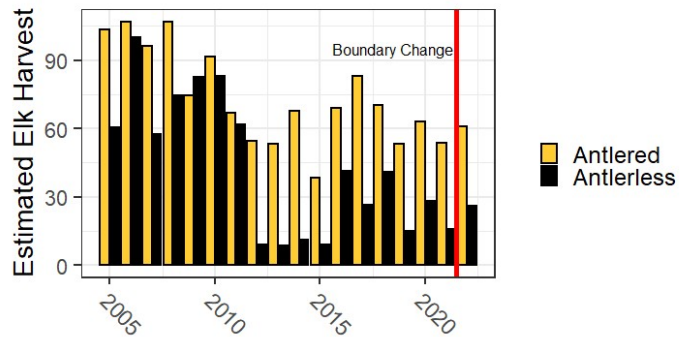
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
282	2006	303	2,084
	2008	288	1,520
	2010	208	1,353
	2012	146	932
	2014	171	1,072
	2016	203	1,532
	2018	233	1,534
	2020	211	1,366
	2022	293	1,783
285	2006	1,911	13,533
	2008	2,120	15,801
	2010	1,715	15,239
	2012	1,660	11,028
	2014	1,573	11,279
	2016	1,508	11,532
	2018	1,421	11,563
	2020	1,377	11,203
	2022*	1,545	11,964

Elk Harvest- HD 282



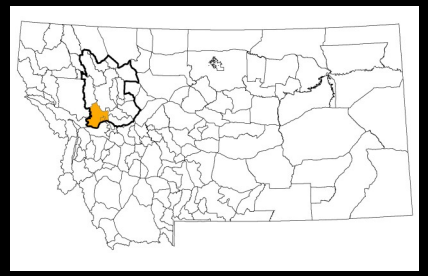
Elk Harvest- HD 285



**Disclaimer: HD 285 had a boundary change in 2022.



HDs 282 & 285



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

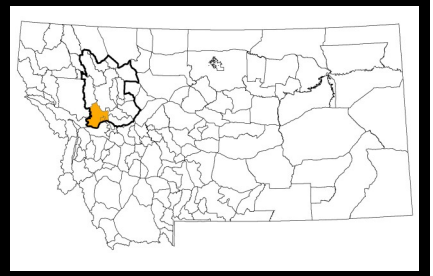
Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 900-1,100 elk observed in HD 282	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore hunting opportunities to boost elk survival when below population Goal and/or recruitment threshold
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below Goal range	
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 240-360 elk observed in HD 285 (Gold-Belmont)	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Maximize elk use of Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA	Stable to increasing proportion of total elk counted are on the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA during the winter aerial survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest • Work with private landowners to increase hunting access • Habitat improvement projects on Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA



HDs 282 & 285



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

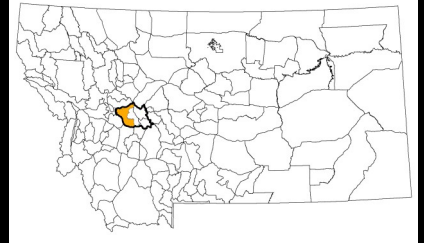
Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities in HD 285
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Promote hunter recruitment and retention	Youth hunters have a special hunting opportunity relative to non-youth hunters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide youth-only limited special permit opportunity in HD 282 • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HDs 284 & 293

Size: 461 mi²
Primary Habitat: Forest
Public Ownership: 55%



Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 284, also known as the Lincoln Archery District, lies along the Blackfoot River and adjacent to the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County. This district is composed mostly (85 percent) of private residential and agricultural lands between Lincoln Gulch in the west and Landers Fork River in the east. District boundaries follow a complex mix of roads and rivers and much of the northern boundary does not follow any clear landscape or ownership features, requiring careful understanding of one's location when hunting. Additionally, the area around the town of Lincoln (Section 24, T14N, R9W) is closed to all big game hunting. Public access can be found on state and USFS lands, and there are currently 2,223 acres enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, covering roughly 20 percent of the HD.

Given the very small size of this district, elk using HD 284 have the potential to cross district boundaries during all times of year. During the general season, the archery-only status of this district can create a situation of "relative security," or "refugia" compared with surrounding rifle districts, which receive higher hunter pressure. Accordingly, elk can congregate in HD 284, causing game damage issues and a loss of hunting opportunity in surrounding districts.

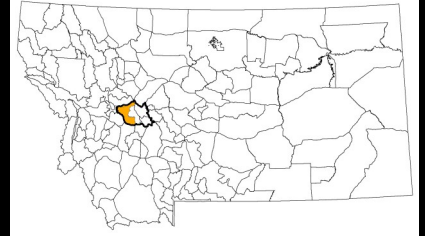
Elk in HD 284 are not surveyed as their own district. Rather, animals wintering in the southern portion of the district south of the Blackfoot River along the HD 284/293 boundary are incorporated in the HD 293 survey conducted during winter.

Hunting District 293 lies within the 1,113 mi² Granite Butte EMU along with HDs 284, 339 and 343. This EMU extends west from the Missouri River to Mineral Hill at the junction of State Route 200 and State Route 141, from Avon to East Helena along U.S. 12 and north on I-15 to Route 453 to the Missouri River and north to Holter Dam. HD 293 extends from Rogers Pass south to MacDonald Pass, south of State Route 200, east of State Route 141 and north of U.S. 12.

The majority of HD 293 is public land (59 percent) and access is generally good, though remote areas far from motorized routes are few, with approximately 97 percent of elk habitat occurring within 1 mile of a road currently open to motorized travel. Roadless Areas in excess of 250 mi² on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest include Specimen Creek, Anaconda Hill, Crater Mountain, Ogden Mountain, and Nevada Mountain. Although most of these areas provide quality elk habitat, in many cases the majority of the acreage in these roadless areas is within 1 mile of an existing road. The Nevada Lake WMA (1,523 acres) provides opportunity for walk-in elk hunting. Additionally, there are more than 43,000 acres of private land enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, providing public access during the fall hunting season. Over 12,000 acres of private lands to the south of Lincoln along the USFS boundary are protected from further development through conservation easements. (Continued on next page)



HDs 284 & 293



Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

District Summary (continued)

Habitat and landownership vary on a north-south gradient. The northern two-thirds of the district are primarily higher-elevation forested public lands with parcels of relatively small private lands in the narrow valley bottoms. On its southern edge, large open hillsides and wide valley bottoms are mostly large private ranches. Several are currently enrolled FWP's Block Management Program, and large expanses of public land exist in the higher elevations providing good access to elk. These north-south differences are reflected in elk conflicts on private land, which are a management concern in the south but relatively absent from the northern parts of the district.

Elk using HD 293 exhibit a mix of resident and migratory strategies. While some elk will winter in HD 293, a significant portion will migrate east across the Continental Divide to winter in HDs 343 and 339 to take advantage of east-slope Chinook winds. The proportion of elk exhibiting this behavior varies annually and is driven by the amount and timing of snow accumulation during early winter. Annual surveys are conducted during winter, and therefore population trends and demographic objectives should be evaluated at both the HD and EMU scales. Inferences at the district level should incorporate winter severity indices and patterns for the other districts in the EMU.

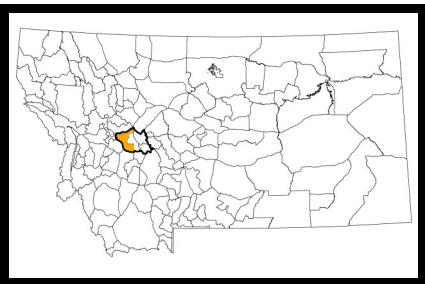
Management Challenges:

- Recurrent game damage issues in a few key places that are difficult to manage with archery-only methods (HD 284).
- Congregations of elk on private land causing crop damage (second cutting of hay) prior to archery season in the southern portion of the district (HD 293).
- Difficulty in accounting for annual variation in migratory patterns of elk and their exchange with HDs 343 and 339.
- Sightability during aerial surveys in heavily timbered winter range pockets in the northern portion of district (HD 293).
- Abundant large carnivores (wolves, mountain lions, black bears, and grizzly bears), which may limit elk populations and productivity even with minimal human hunting pressure (HD 293).



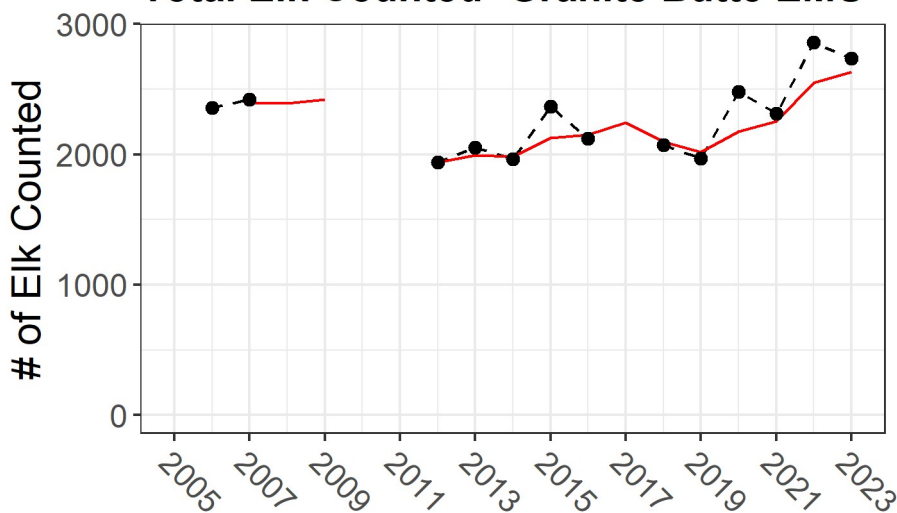
HDs 284 & 293

Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

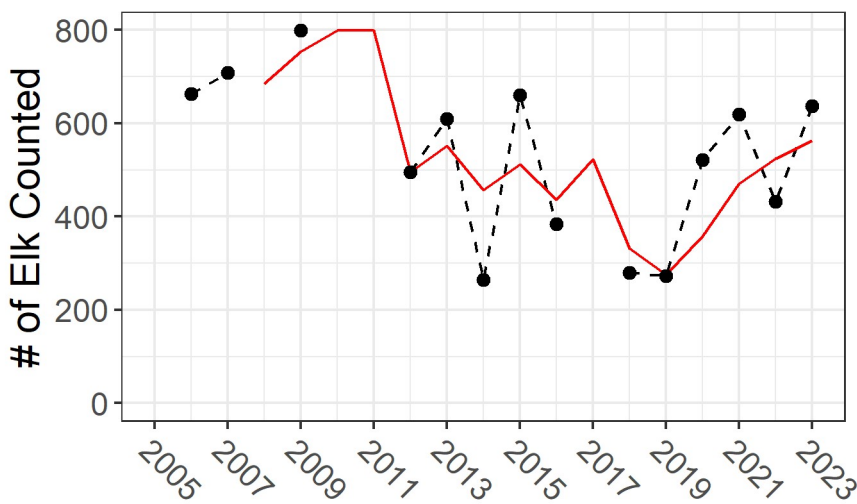


Current Population Status & Trend

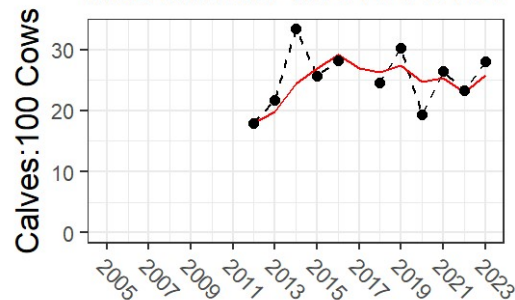
Total Elk Counted- Granite Butte EMU



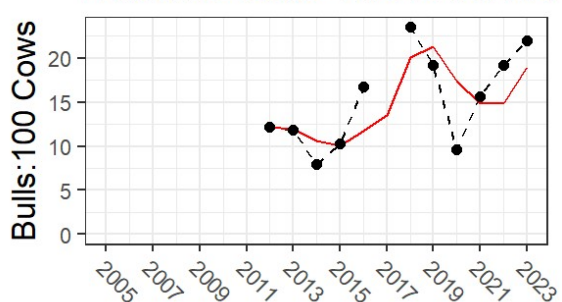
Total Elk Counted- HDs 284 & 293



Recruitment- HDs 284 & 293



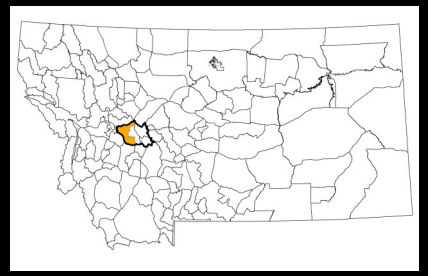
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 284 & 293



Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.



HDs 284 & 293

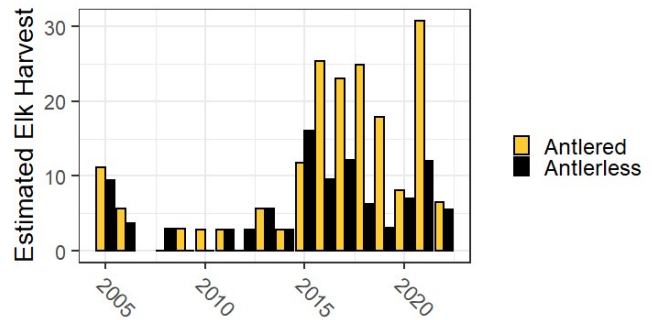


Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

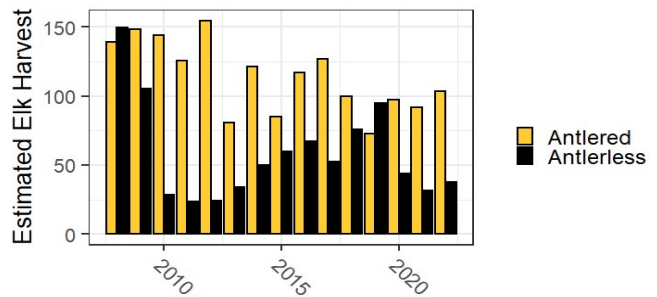
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
284	2006	124	778
	2008	93	702
	2010	138	817
	2012	88	479
	2014	187	1,057
	2016	429	3,328
	2018	287	1,967
	2020	317	2,477
	2022	167	1,557
293	2008	1,924	14,358
	2010	1,426	10,783
	2012	1,594	10,941
	2014	1,781	12,587
	2016	1,450	11,045
	2018	1,427	10,315
	2020	1,239	9,199
	2022	1,138	8,347

Elk Harvest- HD 284



Elk Harvest- HD 293

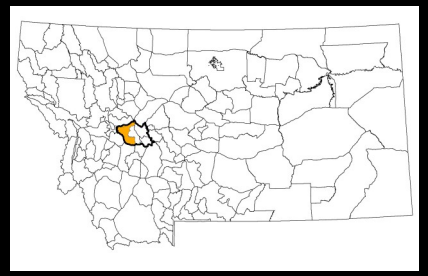


Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain aerial survey counts between 1,800-3,500 elk observed in Granite Butte EMU	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 600-900 elk observed in HD 293	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat
	3-year average recruitment 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
HD 293: Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HDs 284 & 293



Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maximize elk use of Nevada Lake WMA	Presence of elk on WMA during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest • Habitat improvement projects on

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities in HD 293

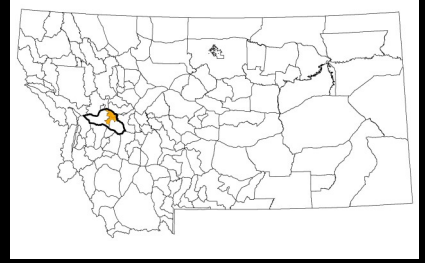


HDs 290 & 298

Size: 204 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 10%



Garnet Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 290, also known as the Helmville-Ovando Archery District, lies between the towns of Helmville and Ovando in Powell County. The district boundary is composed of the area defined by the Helmville-Ovando Road, Route 271, Montana Highway 141, and Montana Highway 200. The district contains the East-Ovando Archery Area, defined as all parts of the district west of the North Fork Blackfoot River.

Except for riparian areas, this district is mostly unforested and composed of private (83 percent) agricultural land that is generally not enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program. Public access can be found on the Aunt Molly WMA (1,182 acres), the Kleinschmidt Lake Wildlife Habitat Protection Area (322 acres), the Blackfoot Waterfowl Production Area (USFWS, 1,164 acres), and smaller parcels of DNRC and BLM lands (726 acres).

HD 290 was historically an archery-only district but chronic game damage issues and over-objective elk numbers led to changes in antlerless elk opportunity in portions of the district. Given its small size, there is limited availability of winter range, which is mostly located in the northwest portion of the district and associated with larger contiguous blocks of winter range in HDs 292 and 281. However, elk do use private agricultural lands during winter and game damage issues are an important concern in this HD. Elk wintering in this district are largely migratory, using neighboring districts for summer range.

Due to the small size of this district, the shared boundary, and similarity of both being mostly private land, elk in HD 290 are surveyed together with HD 298 as a single survey unit (HD290/298). Surveys are conducted during early spring green-up prior to elk migration.

Hunting District 298, also known as the Ovando-Helmville District, is 152 mi² and lies in the Ovando and Helmville valleys in Powell County. The district was created in 2008 to address chronic game damage issues by carving out the private land portions of HDs 290, 291, and 292 within the valley. Thus, the district boundary mostly follows the private land/public land interface bound on the north by the Ovando Valley, on the east by the unofficially named "Nevada Mountains," and on the south and west by the Garnet Mountains. The district is 93 percent private land, with half of the public land managed by USFS in the northeast corner of the district west of the Nevada-Ogden Road, which serves as the district boundary. The remaining public lands are primarily fishing access sites along the Blackfoot River and isolated parcels of state and BLM ownership. While this HD contains a substantial amount of open valley floor, it also contains higher elevation forested habitats, and transitional zones, that rise more than 1,000 feet from the valley floor. These areas are found along all but the northern district boundaries and are most abundant in the Murray and Douglas Creek drainages. (Continued on next page)

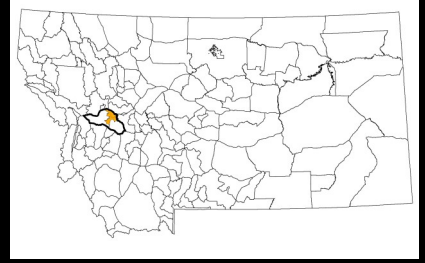


HDs 290 & 298

Size: 204 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 10%



Garnet Elk Management Unit

District Summary (continued)

Although the HD is primarily private land, access is generally good except for a few large ranches that currently do not provide public access. There are several large conservation easements covering 29,444 acres (30 percent of HD) which protect further development and allow for public access during fall hunting seasons. Additionally, there are over 8,550 acres enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, providing additional public access during hunting seasons.

Elk in HD 298 exhibit a mix of resident and migratory strategies, with resident elk taking advantage of the forage productivity that exists in the valley. Radio-collar studies show migratory exchange with HDs 292, 290, 293, and 291. Several adjacent HDs conduct elk surveys during winter, and therefore elk in HD 298 need to be surveyed during early spring green-up before elk migration begins, to avoid counting elk that have already been surveyed in other districts. Surveys for HD 298 include the small archery district to the north (HD 290).

Managing elk to objective status in this district has been challenging, and elk have been consistently over-objective since 2011. Thus, game damage issues are a persistent concern, though the use of shoulder seasons has proven to be an effective tool for reducing conflicts and building tolerance for elk.

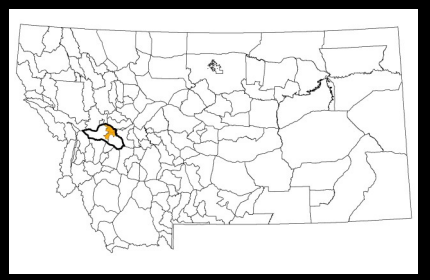
Management Challenges:

- Obtaining representative counts during spring surveys due to migratory nature of elk and timing of green-up flights.
- Abundant large carnivores (wolves, mountain lions, black bears, and grizzly bears), which may limit elk populations and productivity even with minimal human hunting pressure.
- Access to elk during hunting seasons (HD 290).
- Access to elk in a few key places (HD 298).
- Game damage issues due to limited winter range on non-agricultural land (HD 290).
- Achieving antlerless harvest at levels suitable to meet management objectives (HD 298).



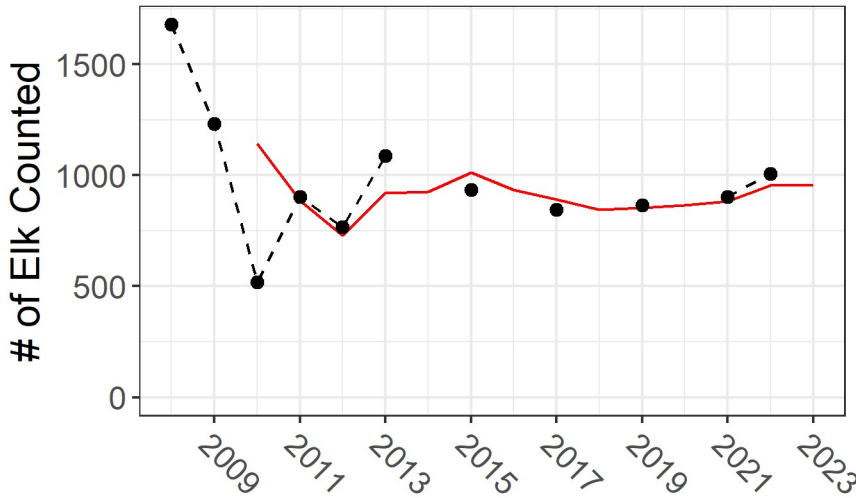
HDs 290 & 298

Garnet Elk Management Unit



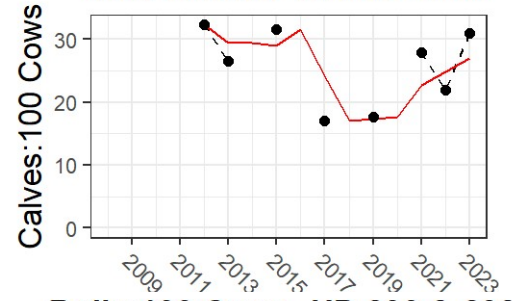
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HDs 290 & 298

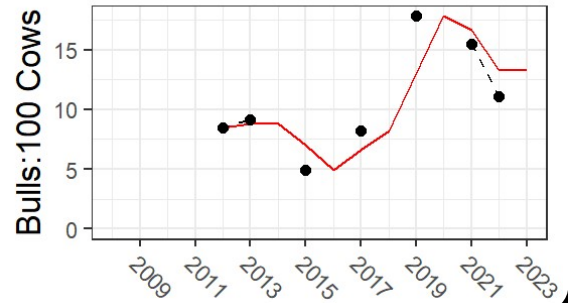


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 290 & 298



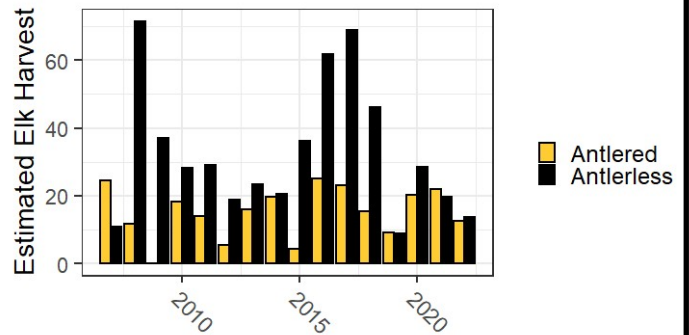
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 290 & 298



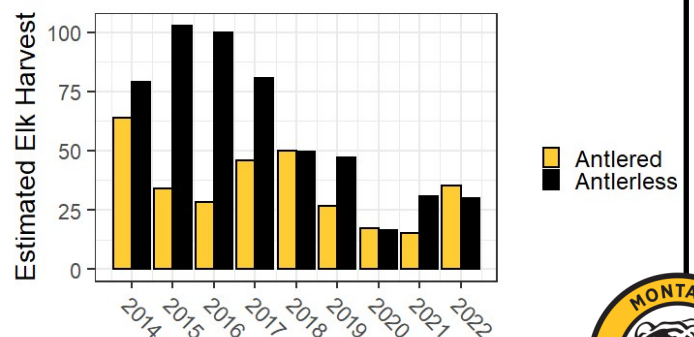
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
290	2008	281	1,417
	2010	231	1,514
	2012	249	1,344
	2014	204	1,369
	2016	377	2,254
	2018	255	1,484
	2020	362	2,362
	2022	177	935
298	2014	652	4,002
	2016	503	2,786
	2018	378	3,233
	2020	288	1,941
	2022	257	1,615

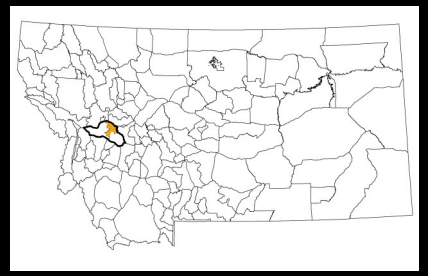
Elk Harvest- HD 290



Elk Harvest- HD 298



HDs 290 & 298



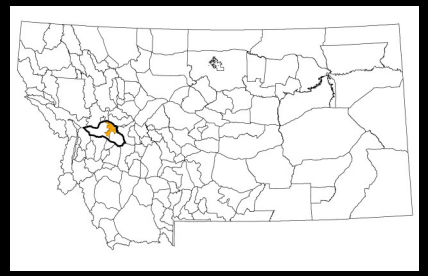
Garnet Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 480-720 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
	3-year average recruitment of 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas



HDs 290 & 298



Garnet Elk Management Unit

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Blackfoot Challenge hunt coordinator • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to increase hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

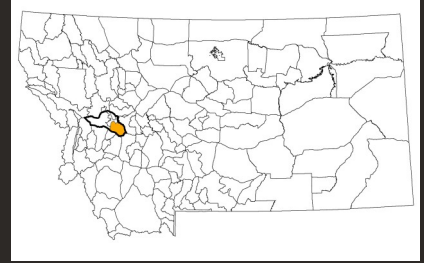


HD 291

Size: 322 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest & Grassland

Public Ownership: 20%



Garnet Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 291 lies in the Garnet Mountains north of the I-90 corridor and includes the Town of Avon and Garrison. The boundaries extend southwest from Avon along U.S. 12 to Garrison, west along I-90, north along the Helmville Road (Montana 271), southeast along Cottonwood Creek, north and east along the northern BLM boundary near Hoodoo Mountain to the intersection with Brazil Creek Road and north along Nevada Creek Road, southeast along Montana Highway 141 to the U.S. 12 junction at Avon. This district includes Nevada Lake, the Little Blackfoot River, and the Upper Clark Fork River. The district is 20 percent public land with the majority managed by the BLM and DNRC. Public lands include the Hoodoo Mountain Wilderness Study Area. Of the public land in this HD, 32 percent is classified as inaccessible by public road or waterway.

Much of the district is working ranch lands managed for agriculture and livestock production. The majority of HD 291 is privately owned, and access programs are critical for ensuring public opportunity to effectively achieve management objectives. Private landowners provide public hunting access on 51,509 acres across four properties enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program during fall hunting seasons. In addition, there are 4,612 acres protected by conservation easements in this district.

HD 291 includes quality elk habitat providing year-round resources for elk. Some elk are migratory, moving northwest into adjacent HDs. Elk tend to use the south-facing slopes along the I-90 corridor as winter range and occasionally cross I-90 to the south into HD 217. Some resident elk remain on large properties where public access is limited. The harvest required to maintain the population within objective has been achieved since 2019.

Over the last 20 years, the elk population in the district has varied greatly. Approximately 200 elk were counted in 2000 which grew to 1,587 elk by 2014. Given that the population was considerably above the objective range of 480 to 720, measures to reduce elk numbers were implemented. An aggressive harvest strategy brought the population to within objective in 2019.

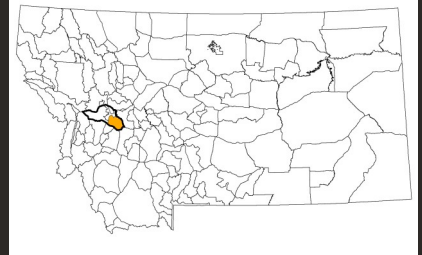
Management Challenges:

- Congregations of elk cause game damage and crop loss to livestock producers each year.



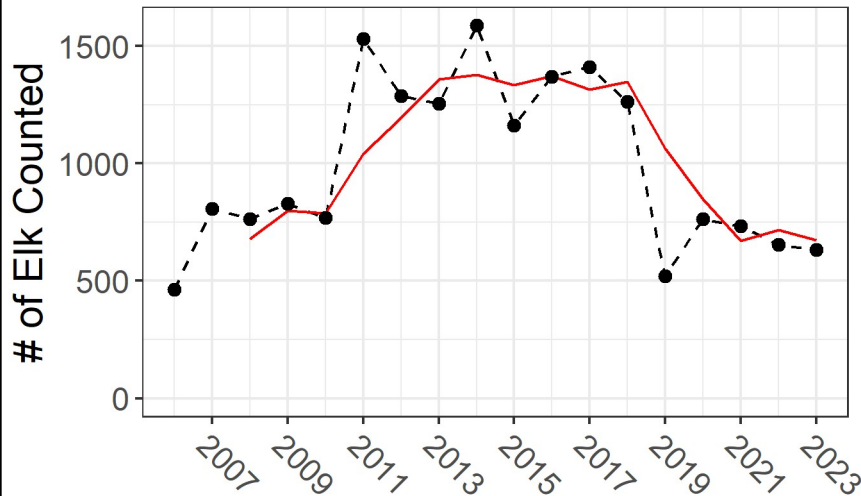
HD 291

Garnet Elk Management Unit



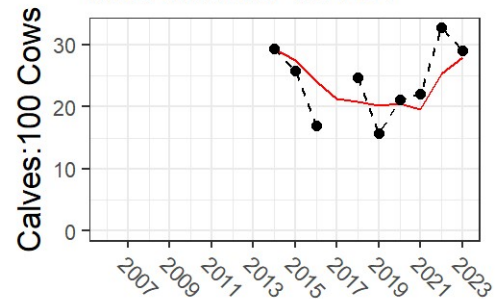
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 291

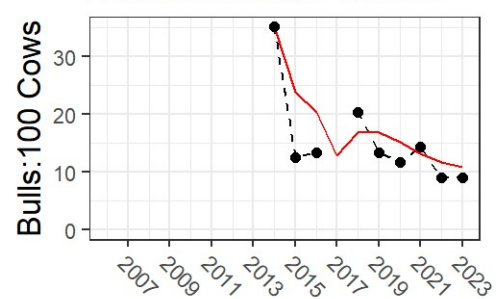


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 291



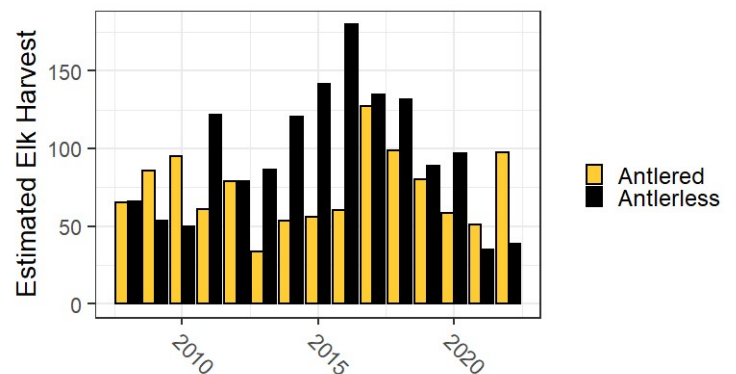
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 291



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

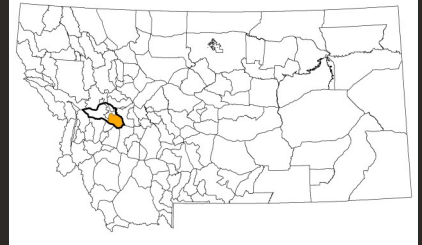
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
291	2008	856	5,624
	2010	814	5,008
	2012	868	5,113
	2014	817	5,577
	2016	960	6,542
	2018	919	6,180
	2020	741	5,377
	2022	625	4,665

Elk Harvest- HD 291



HD 291

Garnet Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 480-720 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

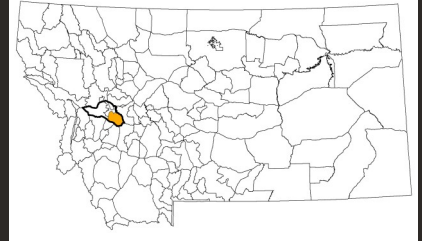
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest



HD 291

Garnet Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities

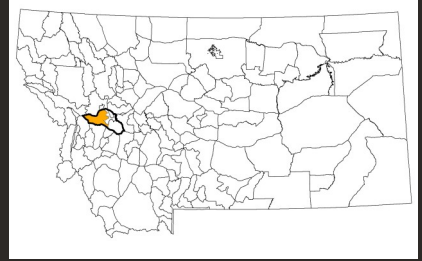


HD 292

Size: 484 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 52%



Garnet Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 292 lies in the Garnet Mountains, roughly equally distributed across the Blackfoot (north) and Clark Fork (south) watersheds. It is bounded in the north and south by Montana Highway 200 and I-90, respectively. The eastern border abutting HD 298 is a snaking boundary mostly following the Granite and Powell county line in the south and BLM and DNRC land boundaries in the north. Despite being heavily forested, this district does not contain any USFS land, and public ownership (52 percent) is primarily administered by the BLM and DNRC.

Public access is mixed. On the western side, private lands are concentrated in the Potomac and Greenough valleys, whereas on the eastern side and along the I-90 corridor large private ranches can complicate public access. However, roughly two-thirds of the public land in the district is within 1 mile of a road open to motorized use during the hunting season and only 15 mi² of the 248 mi² public lands are considered inaccessible. Several large conservation easements along the eastern boundary provide additional hunter access into this HD. In the northeast portion of the district, the 11,580-acre Wales Creek Wilderness Study Area provides an opportunity for more remote and unmotorized recreation activities. Block management has a long history in this district and currently more than 85,000 acres are enrolled, providing public access during hunting season.

Much of HD 292 includes quality year-round elk habitat. However, elk exhibit a mix of migratory and resident strategies, with some elk migrating to adjacent districts in HDs 282, 285, 290 and 298. Elk not leaving the district may congregate on the south-facing slopes along the I-90 corridor and the Potomac and Greenough valleys during winter. Some resident elk regularly remain on large properties where public access is restricted or not permitted.

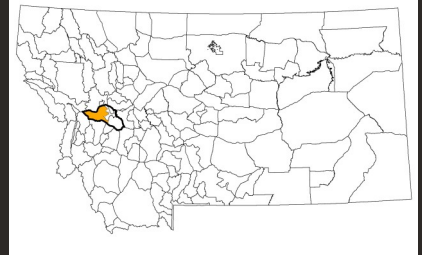
Management Challenges:

- Abundant large carnivores (wolves, mountain lions, black bears, and grizzly bears), which may limit elk populations and productivity even with minimal human hunting pressure.
- Sightability in heavily timbered portions of the northern and western portions of the district is poor and reduces effectiveness of aerial surveys.
- Congregations of elk on private land, including in neighboring HD 298, prior to archery season create game damage issues and reduce hunter opportunity in early season.
- Lack of disturbance and advancing seral stage of habitat in much of the forested portions of the district reduce quality of elk habitat.



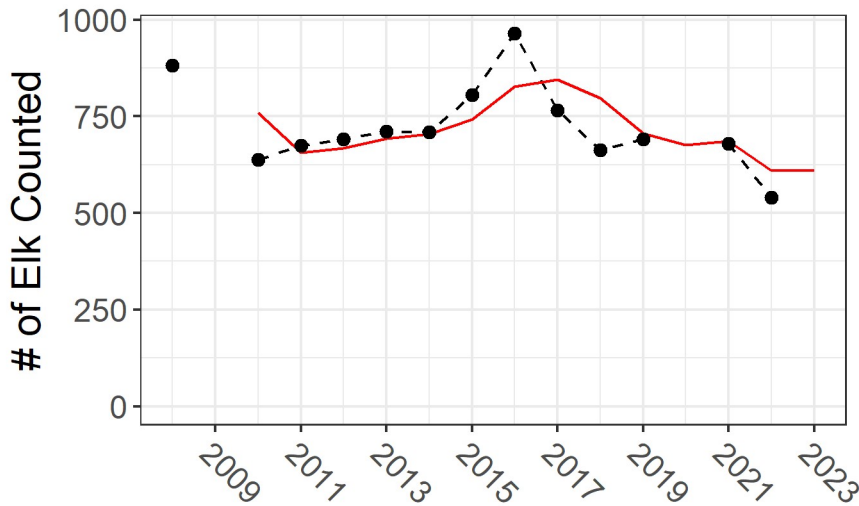
HD 292

Garnet Elk Management Unit



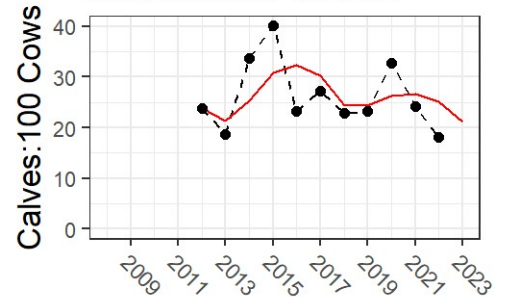
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 292

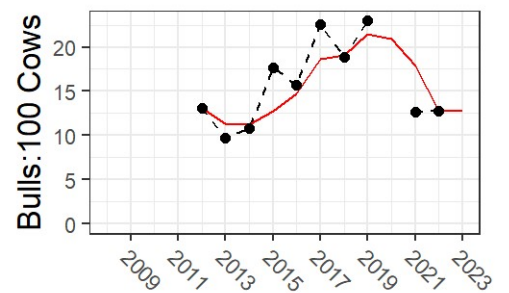


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 292



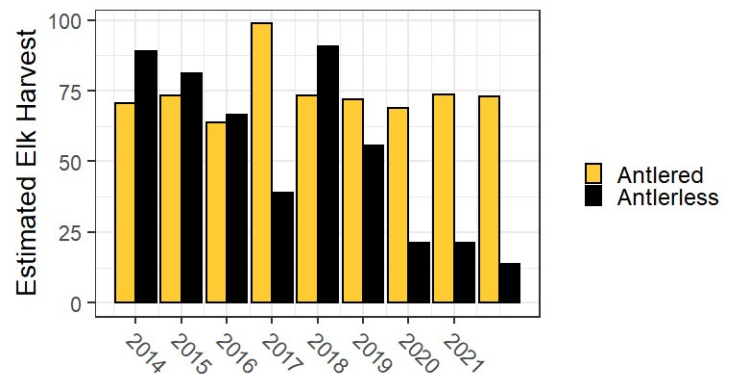
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 292



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

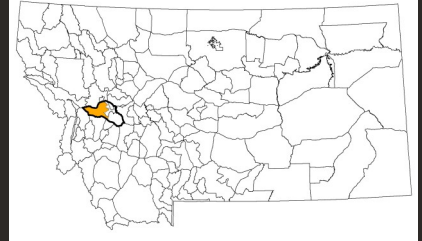
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
292	2014	1,768	11,562
	2016	1,399	10,220
	2018	1,492	10,512
	2020	1,208	9,038
	2022	948	6,711

Elk Harvest- HD 292



HD 292

Garnet Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain spring aerial survey counts between 640-960 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider expanding carnivore harvest opportunities to boost elk survival when below population goal and/or recruitment threshold
	3-year average recruitment is 20 calves:100 cows or greater when below goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers and private landowners to conserve and improve habitat
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

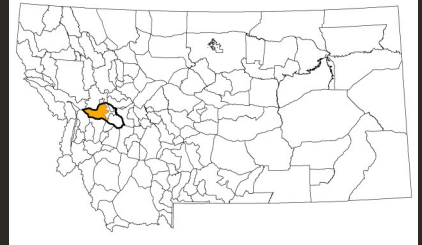
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Proportion of year-round resident (nonmigratory) elk on private land is stable or decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest



HD 292

Garnet Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	3-year average bull harvest is within 20% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide PTHFV/youth antlerless opportunities• Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security

