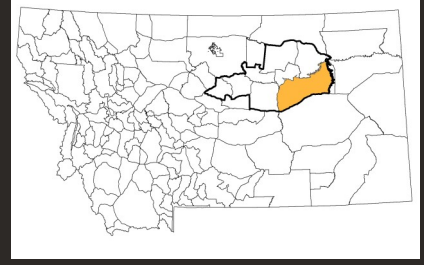


HD 700

Size: 2,786 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 49%



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit



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



District Summary

Hunting District 700 is on the south side of Fort Peck Reservoir, bordered on the west by the Musselshell River, on the east by the Dry Arm, and north of Montana Highway 200. It is located in the northern half of Garfield County. The Missouri River Breaks consists primarily of sagebrush steppe and prairie grassland habitats that transition into more timbered coulees and drainages as you move north toward the Missouri River and Fort Peck Reservoir, and west toward the Musselshell River. Most of the Missouri River Breaks is public land, specifically the areas closest to the Missouri River, Fort Peck Reservoir, and the Musselshell River. The primary land use in the HD is agriculture including farming and livestock production. Half of the land ownership in the HD (51 percent) is private land. The elk in this district are mostly nonmigratory.

Public hunting access is limited in HD 700 due to a combination of large tracts of private land and difficulty accessing public land. Due to the rugged terrain of the Missouri River Breaks and very few public roads much of the public land is difficult to access. The majority of the Block Management cooperators within this HD allow for elk harvest and are enrolled in order to help manage the elk population.

The elk in this HD are fairly new and are slowly expanding into unoccupied but available habitat. Winter surveys first began in 2006, but reliable and repeatable surveys began in 2008. Reliable and repeatable surveys were established once biologists and pilots better understood elk behavior in the area and occurred after a large wildfire in the HD impacted a large portion of the habitat, changing elk distribution and observability. Since 2012 the total counts have remained fairly steady, with a dip in 2017 after the Lodgepole Complex Fire displaced some elk that later came back. This population is surveyed in its entirety every other year.

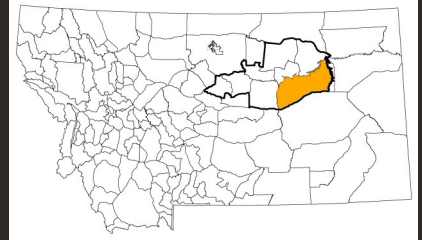
Management Challenges:

- Hunter access to elk is often a management challenge due to a large portion of private land, landlocked public land, the roughness of the terrain, and limited roads.
- This population is fairly new and expanding in distribution, causing variation in public and landowner opinion and tolerance.
- Landowner tolerance of hunter pressure and numbers is being exceeded.
- The USFWS has the authority to manage and set special regulations on the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, which comprises much of the public land and elk security habitat. This could present challenges in FWP's ability to manage the elk population in this HD.



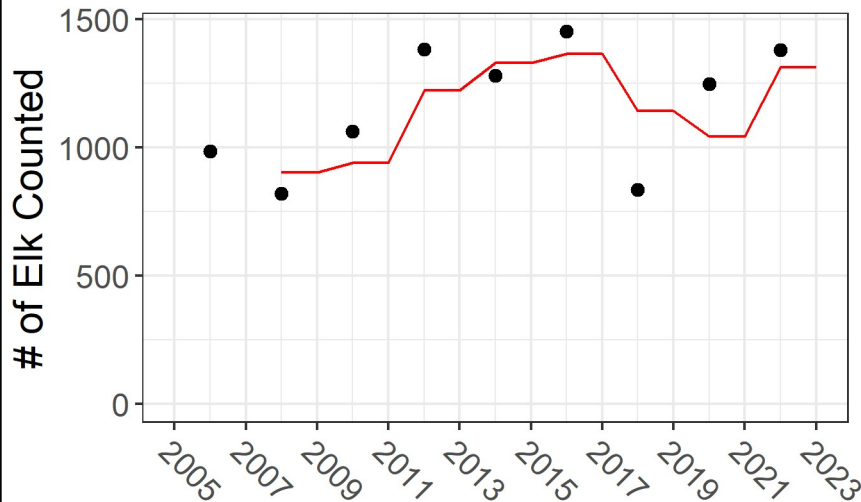
HD 700

Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit



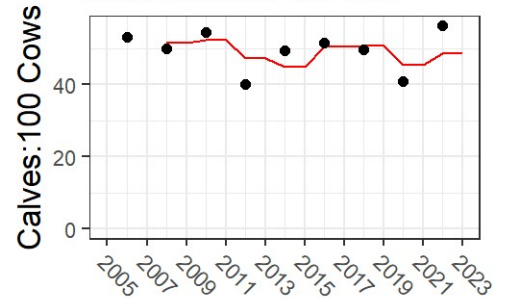
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 700

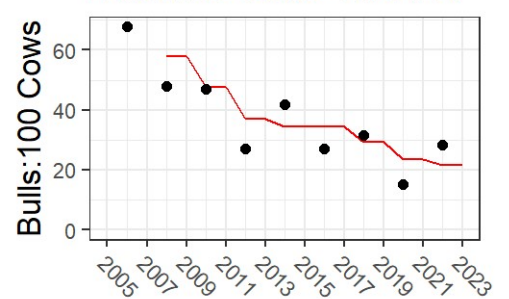


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 4-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 700



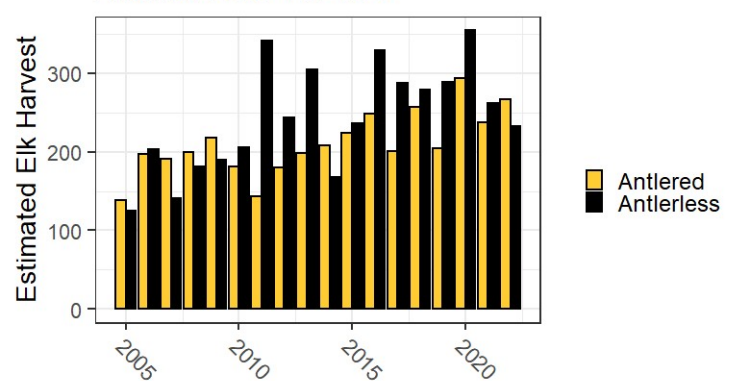
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 700



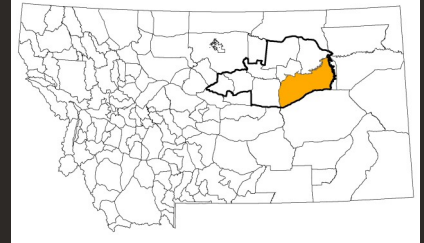
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
700	2006	953	5,513
	2008	1,324	8,929
	2010	1,088	6,584
	2012	1,172	7,533
	2014	1,283	8,244
	2016	1,724	12,374
	2018	1,633	11,076
	2020	1,817	12,721
	2022	1,560	11,716

Elk Harvest- HD 700



HD 700



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,600-2,400 elk observed	4-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 bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	4-year average bull:cow ratio is within goal range for bull:cow ratio	<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
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest by landownership is within 20% of previous 3-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk GPS collar locations show use of public/private land that is proportionate (within 10%) to the amounts of public/private land within mapped elk range (over a 3-year period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security Promote public land habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges

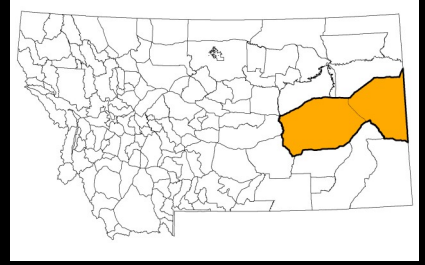
Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Most recent antlerless harvest estimate is within 20% of 3-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	60% or more of bull elk classified during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls 3-year average of harvested bulls with 6 points or more on one antler is 50% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain 3-year average of 40-60% of the total bull harvest by archers and 40-60% by rifle hunters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust archery and rifle limited permit quotas accordingly



HDs 701 & 703

Size: 12,677 mi²
Primary Habitat: Shrubland & Grassland
Public Ownership: 18%



Prairie Badlands Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting Districts 701 and 703 overlap portions of Garfield, Rosebud, Treasure, Prairie, Custer, McCone, Dawson, Wibaux, Richland, and Fallon counties, in the southeast part of the state. Most (79 percent) of this area is prairie habitat where the primary land use is grazing. Dryland farming occurs throughout, where topography and soils allow. The combined HDs contain over 275 Yellowstone River miles, with associated riparian habitat and irrigated farmland. Over 250,000 acres in HD 701 and 480,000 acres in HD 703 have a tillage history (9 percent of the HDs combined). The sagebrush steppe and grassland dominated landscape is highly permeable to elk, with limited areas of security cover. Elk historically occurred in this prairie habitat, and if allowed, populations could grow exponentially. However, this is incompatible with existing agriculture practices. Elk are generally better-tolerated in the southwestern part of HD 701, where there is less farming and more security cover.

Collectively, the HDs are 83 percent private land (82 percent in HD 701 and 84 percent in HD 703). Of the public land, 40 percent is not publicly accessible. Access to elk will generally depend on private landowner discretion. The amount of private land enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program varies annually. For the 2022 hunting season, there were 146 BMAs, as well as four conservation easements and four WMAs. Elk densities in this area range from low to none, and, if present, elk are often transient and passing through. Some hunters go to HDs 701 and 703 specifically looking for an elk, but most elk hunting is opportunistic by hunters primarily looking for deer, but also possessing an elk license.

Elk populations and distribution have been slowly increasing over the past two decades, but elk densities generally remain low. Scattered herds and/or occasional sightings of elk may occur throughout, but the majority of the two HDs is not currently occupied by elk. Elk in this area are not known to be migratory but may exhibit long-distance movements seasonally or in response to hunting pressure. Given low elk numbers, and spatiotemporally variable elk use of the landscape, long-term elk trend surveys have not been established.

Elk from HD 590 use a portion of southwestern HD 701. Based upon the desire of landowners and the public to manage for older age class bulls in this area, as well as to practice consistent management of an elk herd that overlaps HDs, the management of antlered elk in the portion of HD 701 north of the Yellowstone River, south of U.S. 12, and west of the Sumatra-Hysham Road is aggregated with HD 590.

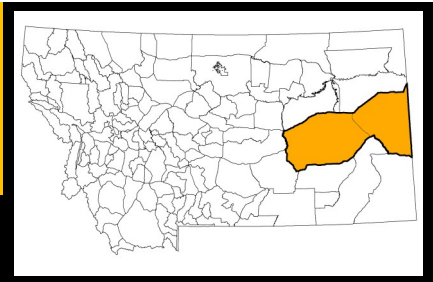
Management Challenges:

- There is a high potential for elk conflict with row crop agriculture.
- These HDs combined are 83 percent private land and neighboring landowners may have widely variable tolerance for elk and public hunting access, creating challenges for managing elk population growth and preventing conflict at the local and EMU scale.
- Public access to elk is limited, therefore achieving sufficient hunter harvest to control population growth will be difficult.



HDs 701 & 703

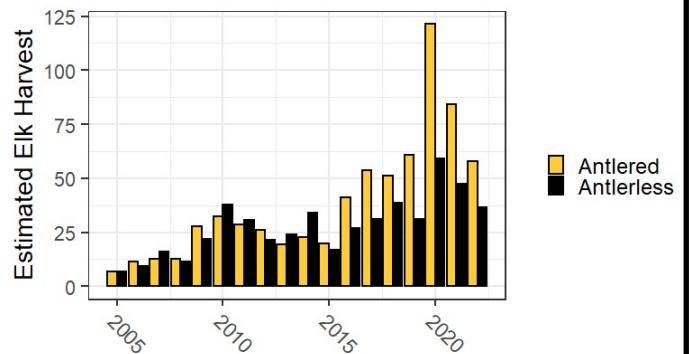
Prairie Badlands Elk Management Unit



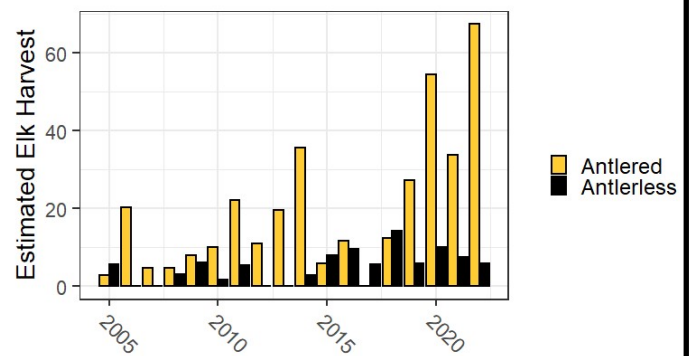
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
701	2006	128	841
	2008	204	1,028
	2010	215	1,280
	2012	300	1,450
	2014	309	1,652
	2016	401	2,482
	2018	174	967
	2020	656	3,850
	2022	503	3,217
703	2006	74	406
	2008	90	743
	2010	127	918
	2012	130	635
	2014	211	1,015
	2016	238	1,387
	2018	209	1,577
	2020	264	1,885
	2022	431	2,931

Elk Harvest- HD 701



Elk Harvest- HD 703



No population demographic objectives. Elk population surveys are not conducted in this EMU.

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide elk hunting opportunities across landownership types	License structure allows for harvest on all landownership types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest either-sex elk	Maintain harvest opportunity for either-sex elk throughout the EMU, excluding the portion of HD 701 that uses a limited either-sex permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	3-year average of harvested bulls on limited permit with 6 points or more on one antler is 40% or greater in the portion of 701 that uses a limited either-sex permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

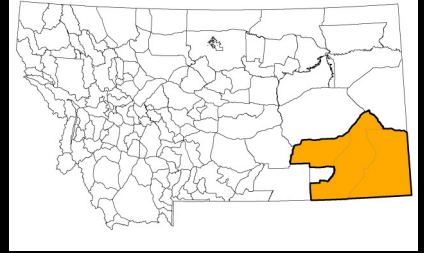


HDs 702, 704 & 705

Size: 14,358 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 27%



Southeastern Montana Elk Management Unit



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



District Summary

Hunting Districts 702, 704, and 705 encompass the southern portion of administrative Region 7 and make up the Southeastern Montana EMU. The current elk distribution covers 5,433 mi² (38 percent), of which approximately 73 percent is on private lands. Twenty-seven percent of the EMU is public land administered primarily by the USFS, BLM, and DNRC. HD 702 consists of 88 percent private land, with most of the public land comprising DNRC and BLM. The occupied elk habitat in HDs 704 and 705 consists of approximately 65 percent private land, with most of the public land comprised of USFS, BLM, and DNRC. A large percentage of public lands in the HDs (31 percent) is land-locked and often inaccessible to the general public.

The predominant cover types are grassland (42 percent), shrubland (24 percent), and forests (11 percent, primarily ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper). The primary land uses include livestock (predominantly cattle) grazing and haying, and the majority (88 percent) of grazing lands are native range or improved pasture with minimal cultivated cropland (4 percent). Since elk have recolonized this area beginning around the early 1990's, their range has continued to expand, occupying more of the available habitat.

In HD 702 most of the elk reside in the western half of the HD with the highest abundance around the base of the Little Wolf Mountains. Other herds are established in the Sarpy Creek, Tullock Creek, and Rosebud Creek drainages. Elk occupy the majority of the southern half of HD 704, as well as the timbered habitat of the Pine Hills east of Miles City. In HD 705, elk occupy the Powder River Breaks in the southwest corner of the HD, the timbered areas near Belle Creek, and the available habitat near Ekalaka. Elk in these HDs are not migratory but do exhibit localized, seasonal movements in response to habitat conditions and hunting pressure.

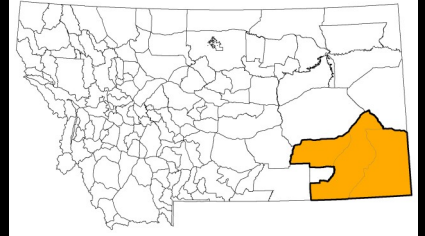
Aerial elk surveys were initiated in 2013 for HD 702, 2016 for HD 704, and 2011 for HD 705. Surveys are conducted biennially using fixed-wing aircraft. Currently, it is believed that landowner tolerance has not been exceeded because formal game damage complaints are less than five annually. There are 15 BMAs, encompassing 167,429 acres of land open to public hunting in HD 702. In HD 704 there are 5 BMAs that contain 20,274 acres of public elk hunting access. In HD 705 two BMAs contain 4,591 acres of public hunting access with a reasonable opportunity to harvest elk. Public hunting opportunities vary across private lands. Several ranches allow free access, while most of the private land is restricted to friends/family, fee hunting, or outfitting. Road densities are fairly high on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest, which provides ample hunting opportunity but may limit elk security.

Management Challenges:

- Approximately 30 percent of public lands are land-locked and inaccessible to the general public.
- Minimal public land harvest opportunity across significant portions of the EMU.
- Relatively high road density on the Custer Gallatin National Forest reduces elk security.
- Despite a liberal hunting season structure, the annual recruitment exceeds harvest and there is limited access to harvest antlerless elk on private land.



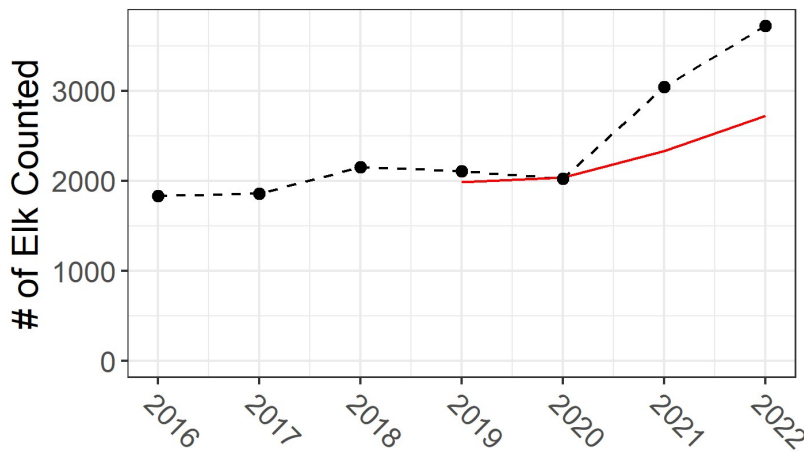
HDs 702, 704 & 705



Southeastern Montana Elk Management Unit

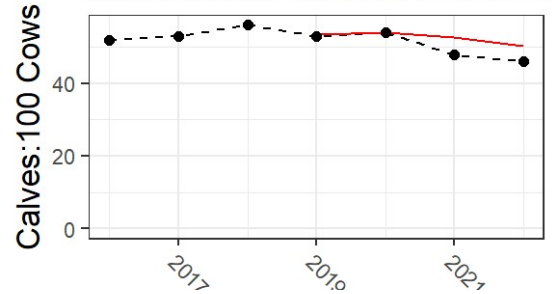
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HDs 702, 704 & 705

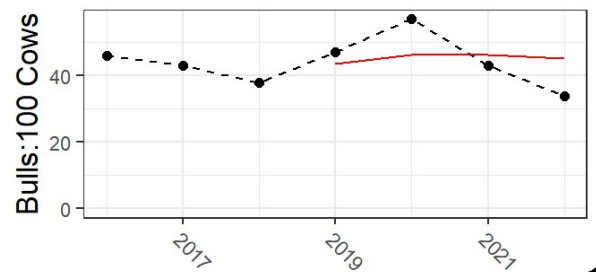


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 4-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 702, 704 & 705



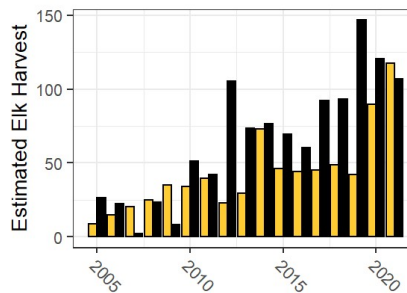
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 702, 704 & 705



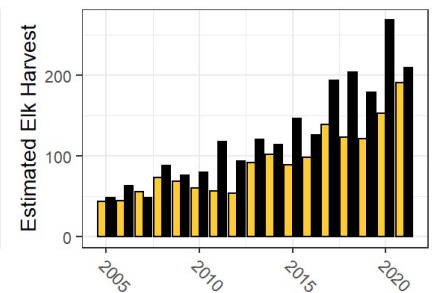
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

HD	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
702	2006	180	913
	2008	254	1,602
	2010	326	1,904
	2012	523	3,140
	2014	617	3,494
	2016	555	4,068
	2018	609	4,107
	2020	661	4,537
	2022	716	4,859
704	2006	458	3,041
	2008	678	5,063
	2010	745	5,590
	2012	719	5,448
	2014	907	6,130
	2016	1,119	8,384
	2018	1,409	10,525
	2020	1,492	11,973
	2022	1,323	10,458
705	2006	206	1,223
	2008	186	1,161
	2010	239	1,348
	2012	277	1,743
	2014	351	2,451
	2016	416	2,923
	2018	602	3,834
	2020	529	3,535
	2022	566	4,039

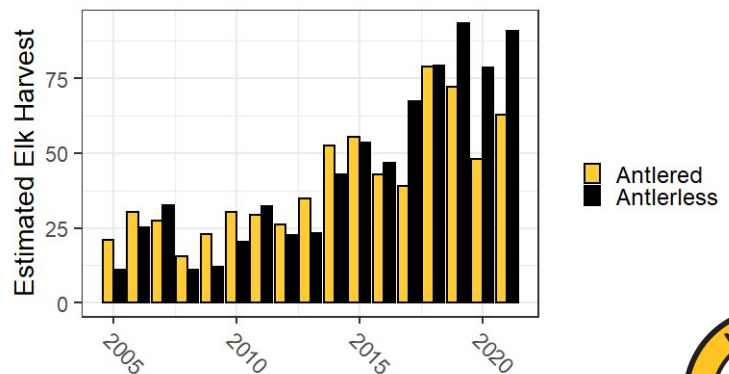
Elk Harvest- HD 702



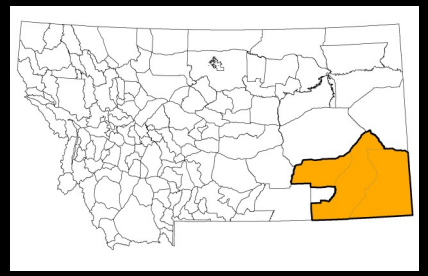
Elk Harvest- HD 704



Elk Harvest- HD 705



HDs 702, 704 & 705



Southeastern Montana Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 3,240-4,860 elk observed	4-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 • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	4-year average bull:cow ratio is within goal range for bull:cow ratio	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk are observed across different landownerships during winter aerial surveys	<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 • Promote public land habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges • Use USFS/non-USFS land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest towards landownerships where harvest is most needed
Distribute elk harvest among access types	Elk harvest by access type is within 10 percentage points of previous 3-year average	
Increase elk use of USFS land	4-year average proportion of elk counted on USFS land is similar to or greater than the proportion of USFS land in the HD 704 elk trend area	
	3-year average of hunters that observed elk on USFS land is greater than 20% (data obtained via Ashland check station)	

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 • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Adjust archery and rifle limited permit quotas accordingly
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	3-year average of bulls harvested on either-sex permit with 6 or more points on one antler is 50% or greater	
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	The average percentage of bulls harvested on either-sex permits is 40-60% for both archery and general seasons	

