ISSURE STATEMENT, VISION, INTERESTS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES DEVELOPED BY THE ELK ARCHERY COMMITTEE

Issue Statement (Developed/approved by the Committee June 4, 5, 2008)
Realizing that FWP is statutorily mandated to manage elk populations at, or near, objectives; that hunters without access are not an effective management tool; that landowners without hunters cannot effectively manage wildlife on their property, a collaborative process involving incentives and sacrifices from resident and non-residents hunters, landowners, and commercial interests is the most effective long-term way to create a pro-active management structure for elk in the 23 hunting districts outside the Missouri Breaks.

We recognize that resident and non-resident hunters, landowners, and rural economies within these districts are facing pressure now and in the future. This fact requires FWP to take proactive steps to address these pressures to protect the mutually valued heritage of resident and non-resident hunters, landowners, commercial interests, and rural communities. Whereas we recognize and believe that the elk of the 23 hunting districts outside the Missouri Breaks are owned by the public, we understand and respect that private landowners are critical to the successful management of Montanan's elk herds.

Draft Vision (Developed July 8, 2008)
Established collaborative groups work in transparent processes with FWP to assure mutual resolution of issues regarding private land, management of public wildlife, and hunters - in and around the Missouri Breaks. The FWP Commission generally approves recommendations from those groups because they have confidence in their diverse make-up and their track record using problem-solving and collaborative approaches.

Quality herds exist with population objectives based on biology. Through prior planning and working with collaborative groups, FWP establishes a baseline for animal numbers and the baseline determines license numbers. Hunting regulations are simple and as few as possible. When the baseline fluctuates, license numbers are adjusted through a system that is generally perceived as "fair". FWP decisions, while based on science, take economic and cultural factors into account. Landowners feel that elk and other game animals are assets and they have a sense of being compensated for their contribution to public wildlife management. Incentives and management tools are in place that insure reasonable public access as well as achievement of population objectives. In a general sense, landowner/hunter relationships are positive. All parties recognize and demonstrate that they carry part of the responsibility regarding access. The Block Management Program is useful and successful including as an adaptive management tool.

FWP recognizes that hunting is more likely to continue as a part of Montana's heritage and culture when people have choices rather than additional limitations and when the needs of private interests are honored in public wildlife management strategies.

Interests (Identified by Individually and Collectively June 4, 5, 2008)

- It’s in the interest of sportsmen to see the culture of hunting passed to the next generation and the traditions of hunting in Montana respected and preserved.
- It is in the interest of sportsmen, including bowhunters, to have the heritage and legacy of hunting, preserved as a part of the Montana lifestyle.
- It’s in our interest to unite affected parties/sportsmen (non-residents, residents, Main Street and recreational business owners, outfitters, landowners and FWP) in an effort where all parties embrace our opportunity to hunt in Montana rather than allowing fissures among us.
- It is in the interest of some fathers/families that hunting, including bowhunting, be available to future generations.
- It is in the interest of sportsmen have maximized hunting opportunities across the State of Montana so that passion for hunting with bow and/or rifle continues.
- It is in the interest of the individual sportsmen to have a quality hunt.
- It is in the interest of bowhunters to have bowhunting opportunities preserved.
- It is in the interest of some sportsmen to have areas where true trophy quality animals can be hunted.
- It is in the interest of the Agriculture community to be able to survive financially.
- It is in the interest of landowners to have their private property rights protected.
- It’s in the interest of hunters/FWP to understand landowner needs and landowners/commercial outfitters to understand needs/interest of hunters/public.
- It is in the interest of sportsmen and landowners to have good relationships.
- It is in the interest of outfitters to be able to have a viable business.
- It is in the interest of the archery business owner to maintain and enhance archery opportunities and that those opportunities be available for residents and non-residents.
- It is in the interest of business owners to have all sides of the issues include examination an economic standpoint.
- It is in the interest of communities/counties to remain viable.
- It is in the interest of FWP Wildlife professionals to maintain healthy, viable populations and adaptive management strategies to accomplish those objectives.
- It is in the interest of all Montanans and wildlife to have habitat promoted.
- It is in the interest of the culture of hunting in Montana, to not have hunting come down to “money”.
- It is in the interest of all Montanans to have their interests respected by FWP and that the Department be biology-based rather than political.
- It’s in the Department’s interest to have it understood that they attempt to balance all interests in the “decision space” to arrive at what people are seeking.
- It is in the interest of sportsmen, landowners, businesses, communities and FWP to have the “interests” well understood and consensus recommendations made that resolve the issues within the 23 hunting districts outside the Missouri Breaks.
- It is in everyone’s interest to have perspectives represented, recognized and addressed and to have questions asked and answered to the extent possible.
- It’s in everyone’s interest, including the Department, to examine our own “paradigms” regarding management strategies, philosophies, and values.

- It is in the interest of the Committee, FWP, and the Commission to have a final product that reflects a common, understood, relevant direction.

Guiding Principles (Edited/Approved by the Committee August 13, 2008)

- We recognize that wildlife in Montana is held in public trust and that Montana FWP has a statutory responsibility to manage the wildlife on behalf of the public.
- We believe that maintaining Montana's hunting tradition is very important to all the involved interests including local and statewide communities.
- We recognize that private property rights are important values in Montana and in this process, we will respect those rights.
- We respect and understand that access to private land is a property right controlled by the landowner.
- We believe that access is more available when there is mutual benefit for the landowner and the hunter.
- We believe that archery and gun hunting are management tools and legitimate recreation experiences.
- We believe that all parties including non-residents, should be cognizant of their role and responsibility regarding wildlife management.
- We believe that simplicity in regulations lessens confusion and frustration.
- We recognize the positive value of incentives in problem-solving. We also acknowledge that there are consequences to actions and decisions.
- We believe that all involved interests should be reasonably represented in the discussion and listened to - with no group favored over the other. We also believe that no one interest should bare the full burden or cost of the solution.