GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON PRIVATE LAND/PUBLIC WILDLIFE

PUBLIC ACCESS

BLOCK MANAGEMENT

A MONTANA LANDOWNER • HUNTER • FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS PARTNERSHIP

PRIVATE LAND

BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT

(MAY 1997)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Review of Council Action.....1

2. Highlights of HB 195/Implementation Through December 1996.....3

3. Statistical Summary of the 1996 Block Management Program.....9

4. Synopsis of 1996 Landowner and Hunter Evaluations.....10

5. 1997 Program Policies and Guidelines.....22

SECTION 1

REVIEW OF COUNCIL ACTION

On February 20, 1996, Governor Marc Racicot appointed a mix of new members and former members to the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council. A total of 12 people were named to staff the council for the next two years. These members are:

Jean Kelly, Kalispell
Rep. Emily Swanson, Bozeman
Darlyne Dascher, FWP Commissioner, Fort Peck
Russ Smith, Phillipsburg
Tony Carroccia, Big timber
Steve Christensen, Corvallis
Steve Roth, Big Sandy
Verle Rademacher, White Sulphur Springs
Alan Charles, Miles City
Sen. John Hertel, Moore
Dave Cole, Helena
Lonnie McCurdie, Conrad

The Private Land/Public Wildlife(PL/PW) Council met four times during 1996 and once, by teleconference, during 1997. The first meeting, held March 7, 1996, allowed the council to review the work of the former PL/PW Council and discuss the role of the current council. HB 195 provided for the Governor to appoint a committee to "review the success and progress of the hunter management program" and "to report to the governor regarding the success of the hunter management program, including a report of annualo landowner participation and the number of acres annually enrolled in the programs. The report may also include suggestions for funding, modification, or improvement of the programs." FWP Director Pat Graham explained that the original council's role was to design the program. FWP's role is to implement the program, with input from two citizen's advisory councils, the Licensing Committee and the Incentives Committee. The role of the current PL/PW Council is to review and evaluate this process, as well as to monitor the progress of other aspects of HB 195 and the earlier PL/PW Council's recommendations.

A second meeting was held June 24 in Helena. Issues discussed during that meeting included a study proposed by FWP Conservation Education Division focusing on advanced hunter education. Since this was one of the former council's recommendations, the PL/PW Council expressed interest in maintaining contact with the Conservation Education Division about hunter education projects. FWP staff also briefed the council on the current status of license sales and block management enrollment. FWP biologists presented mule deer management information so that the council could consider how mule deer management issues might affect HB 195 programs.

A third meeting, held July 24 in White Sulphur Springs, focused almost exclusively on various mule deer management proposals and how they might affect HB 195 programs. While

public comment focused on the pros and cons of specific proposals, the council decided its role was strictly to determine how individual proposals might affect HB 195 programs, and not to endorse any one particular proposal.

A fourth meeting, held December 19 in Helena, allowed the PL/PW Council to focus attention on the progress of the 1996 Block Management Program. Working with a FWP facilitator and a member of the FWP Responsive Management Team, the council outlined basic information needed to review the 1996 program. This information was incorporated into surveys that will be sent to landowners and hunters who used the block management program in 1996. A need to develop ideas for surveying members of the outfitting industry was identified as a future agenda item.

In early January, with initial funding projections indicating that incentives paid to landowners in the 1996 Block Management Program had exceeded revenue generated by the sale of the variable-priced nonresident outfitter set-aside licenses, the PL/PW Council met by teleconference and discussed funding alternatives. A consensus was reached to support the recommendations of the former PL/PW Council and recommend that a resident funding source of some kind be identified to help fund the 1997 Block Management Program and provide resident sportsmen with a sense of ownership in the program.

Based on these recommendations, Representative Emily Swanson introduced HB 520, a bill for an act entitled: "AN ACT ALLOWING THE FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS COMMISSION TO ESTABLISH A FEE NOT TO EXCEED $10 FOR A BLOCK MANAGEMENT AREA HUNTING PERMIT." HB 520 was heard March 6 before the House Fish, Wildife, & Parks committee. Supporting testimony was provided by the Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Wildlife Federation, Russell Country Sportsmen, Prickly Pear Sportsmen, Montana Bowhunters Association, and the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks. The House Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Committee tabled HB 520 in Executive Action on March 11, 1997, with a vote of 13 to 6.

NOTE: Sale of the 1997 Nonresident Variable-Priced Licenses (B-10 Big Game Combination and B-11 Deer) generated revenue similar to the 1996 license sales. The B-10 Big Game Combination License, priced in 1997 at $835, reached the 5500 target on April 30. The B-11 Deer Combination License, priced in 1997 at $675, oversold the target of 2100 by 295 licenses, for a total of 2,395 Deer Combination Licenses.

SECTION 2

HIGHLIGHTS OF HOUSE BILL 195 AND IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH DECEMBER, 1996

PROGRAMS FOR HUNTER MANAGEMENT AND HUNTER ACCESS

- HB195 establishes within Block Management: (1) a Hunter Access Program and (2)Landowner Incentives Program (HEP) for landowners who provide access.

- Participation is voluntary and based on agreements between the landowner and FWP in the same manner as the current Block Management Program.

- Recreational liability protection (as described in 70-1-201 MCA) is extended to cooperators participating in these programs.

- Private landowners who provide public hunting on their property will be eligible for up to $8,000 in benefits.

- Benefits will be provided to offset impacts associated with public hunting access including, but not limited to general ranch maintenance, conservation efforts, weed control, fire protection, liability insurance, and road, fence and parking-area maintenance. mount.

- All enrolled resident landowners may receive a non-transferrable resident Sportsman's License.

- Nonresident landowners enrolled in the program could elect to receive a non-transferable nonresident Big Game Combination License in lieu of compensation. Licenses granted in this program will not affect the quota of 11,500 nonresident Big Game Combination Licenses.

FUNDING THE PROGRAMS

- Revenues generated by the sale of variable-priced hunting licenses set aside for clients of licensed outfitters will be used to fund the expanded hunting-access programs. The variable-priced licenses are key to success of the Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council recommendations. Nonresident deer and elk licenses for clients of outfitters will

be priced to limit demand and thus guarantee licenses for those willing to pay.

- Prices will be set at market rates to ensure an average annual sale of 5,500 Big Game Combination Licenses and 2,300 Deer Combination Licenses. The annual average sale will be calculated over a 5-year period.

- Any remaining licenses could be sold at a second market rate, established by the Commission. Any licenses remaining after the second round could be added to the unreserved nonresident drawing quota.

- The variable rate is set annually by the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission based on input from a citizen advisory working group.

LICENSING CHANGES

- HB195 reduced the Big Game Combination Licenses set aside for outfitter clients from 5,600 to 5,500 licenses.

- HB195 increased Deer Combination License set aside for outfitter clients from 2,000 to 2,300.

- HB 195 placed a 5-year moratorium on the issuance of new land-based hunting outfitting licenses by the Board of Outfitters.

LANDOWNER-SPONSORED LICENSES

- Landowner sponsors are allowed to submit no more than 20 applications.

- Landowners who obtain these licenses as a means of outfitting on their property have until the year 2000 to decide if they want to apply to the Board of Outfitters to become licensed outfitters. Beginning in 2000, landowner sponsors will be limited to 10 applications.

- Effective Oct. 1, 1995, Landowner-sponsored hunters must conduct all deer hunting on the deeded property of the sponsor. This includes any over-the-counter antlerless licenses purchased by the sponsored hunter. As before, sponsored hunters may not hunt on leased, state or federal lands.

OTHER ASPECTS OF HB 195

- HB195 provides for 5 Law Enforcement positions (4 field wardens and 1 investigator who will work illegal outfitting cases) and 4 Conservation Specialist positions.

House Bill 195 was passed by the Montana Legislature and signed into law in April of 1995. Governor Racicot referred to its passage as a "...minor miracle" as it made its way through the legislative process with minimal opposition and was signed by the governor in essentially the same form it had when it was submitted in January.

IMPLEMENTATION (LICENSING)

Implementation of the variable-priced license aspect of HB-195 began in 1995 with internal FWP planning and solicitation of a Licensing Advisory Council. Membership of the council included 4 outfitters, 2 sportsmen and 1 FWP Commissioner. The Licensing Advisory Committee consists of:

Max Chase, Outfitter	Jack Billingsley, Outfitter	Russ Smith, Outfitter
Ray Perkins, Outfitter	Robert Lovegrove, Sportsman	Bob Jensen, Sportsman
Charlie Decker, FWP Commissioner		

The Licensing Advisory Council met twice in 1995 to address factors which may affect the demand (and therefore price) of the two categories of licenses, consider impacts of sales over and under the target averages, and prepare a recommendation for the FWP Commission as to what the price should be for the first year of the program. The first meeting was held June 15. It was decided at this meeting that a survey of nonresident outfitter sponsored applicants might of help. This survey was performed and the results presented at the second meeting August 30. This meeting resulted in consensus on the recommended prices. The recommendation presented to the FWP Commission was that the B-10 (or Big-game) combination license should sell for $835 and the B-11 (or Deer) combination license should sell for $515. It was also recommended that if an undersell in either category occurred, the remainder (up to the target average) should be offered first-come first-served. These recommendations were tentatively adopted by the FWP Commission within the Annual Rule for sale of nonresident combination licenses at their 1995 October Commission meeting.

Public comment was accepted on the tentative Annual Rule. The department received less than 20 comments on the proposed rule. Most of the comments were related to individuals not understanding that other alternatives existed for nonresidents. The tentative rule was accepted as final at the 1995 December Commission meeting.

By the March 15, 1996 deadline, 5,213 B-10 and 3,114 B-11 licenses for the clients of outfitters were sold.The remaining B-10 licenses were offered first-come first-served. The target of 5,500 licenses was reached on May 7th of 1996. Over the course of the summer, both categories saw some licenses refunded and not reissued. This resulted in slightly lower numbers to consider in the 5 year average, but there was no substantial change (fewer than 100 per category).

These sales can be viewed as within 5% of the total goal, which is extremely good for the first year of a program such as this. However, viewed separately, the B-11 (Deer) combination

category oversold by approximately 35%. This over-sale increased the likelihood of having to increase the price to reduce demand (or willingness to pay) for the 1997 season.

The Licensing Advisory Council met August 29, 1996 to address the program and make recommendations for prices for the 1997 season. Their recommendations were presented to the FWP Commission at it's 1996 October Commission meeting in the form of the tentative Annual Rule. Two comments were received during the public comment period. At this meeting, the FWP Commission chose to leave the price of the B-10 license at $835 and increase the price of the B-11 license to $675. It was also understood that the new target average for the B-11 category would be 2,100. This is the average which must be met over the last 4 years of the program to meet the originally mandated average of 2,300 over 5 years.

The FWP Commission adopted the 1997 Annual rule as final for the 1997 season at their December Commission meeting . The Licensing Advisory Council is expected to again meet, during the summer of 1997, to again review the results of the license sales and make recommendations for the 1998 season.

IMPLEMENTATION (INCENTIVES)

Like the Licensing Advisory Council, the Incentives Advisory Committee was appointed by the Director from nominees submitted by the public. The committee sought to provide recommendations to the FWP Commission for the department's administration of the tangible benefits of enhanced Block Management Program.
The committee members included:

Alan Charles, Miles City, Chair
Ross Bruner, Bozeman
John Gibson, Billings
Ella Mae Howard, Great Falls
Jack Puckett, Missoula
Darlynne Dascher, Ft. Peck (FWP Commissioner)
Scott Blackman, Wolf Creek
Sam Waters, Glasgow
Tom Hougen, Melstone
Clint McRae, Colstrip
Maynard Smith, Glen

To establish a means of distributing tangible benefits, the committee examined four basic elements of the Hunting Enhancement Program:

* Eligibility
* Enrollment Considerations
* Compensation System/Guidelines
* Program Accountability

The committee met throughout 1995, in Helena twice, Bozeman, Lewistown, Billings and Great Falls. All meetings were open to the public and those in attendance were invited to offer their comments.

The committee believed that four factors were critical in determining who should be involved in the Hunter Enhancement Program:

1. The number of hunter days expended on a property;
2. The degree to which lands were open to the full range of legal hunting opportunities for the entire season;
3. Providing access to isolated state or federal lands;
4. The enhancement of regional management needs which may include but are not limited to:
   - history of game damage
   - quality of hunting opportunities
   - condition of wildlife habitat
   - availability of local hunting opportunities.

With these in mind, the committee set out to establish an incentive compensation system. Following lengthy discussion, the committee agreed on the following system:

1. All landowners would receive an equal Basic Enrollment Payment.
2. Landowners could receive Impact Payments in various combinations. These payments were classified as:
   - Base Impact Payment, which was computed at an amount per hunter day;
   - Length of Season Impact Payment for all enrollees who place no restrictions on legal fall hunting season dates, computed at at 1/3 the Base Impact Payment, by hunter day;
   - Species/Gender Impact Payment for enrollees who place no restriction on the species or gender hunted on their property. This would also be computed at 1/3 the Base Impact Payment, by hunter day;
   - Access Corridor Payment available to cooperators who provide access to isolated state/federal lands but with no enrollment of deeded land with hunting access. This payment would be computed at ½ the Base Impact payment, and, if applicaable, ½ the Length of Season Payment;
   - Special Circumstances/Exceptions were addressed with the authority to negotiate on a case-by-case basis with landowners which involve special or unique public hunting opportunities, within specified ARM rules.

Those landowners who chose to have the department handle hunter management duties would have the cost of that work deducted from the total impact payment amount.

The committee also recommended minimum amounts for the basic enrollment payment ($500.00) and Basic Impact Payment ($6.00 per hunter day.)

A report on the work and recommendations of the committee was published in February of 1996 and was adopted as a tentative rule for public comment by the Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Commission. Three public hearings were held in March, 1996(Miles City, Great Falls,Missoula) and the Commission adopted the recommendations as rule along with payment amounts ($500 for Basic Enrollment and $6.00 per hunter day for Basic Impact) on March 27, 1996.

IMPLEMENTATION (BLOCK MANAGEMENT)

Following adoption of the rules the department began working with regional personnel to implement the program. Meetings were held at all seven regional headquarters during April and May of 1996 and formal landowner enrollment in the program began during the second week of May, 1996. The implementation of this expanded program was one of the most intensive efforts that the department has ever made. The implementation of the program was a department priority which brought together all department divisions and expertise to focus on the first year of this expanded program. The primary implementation workload fell to wardens, biologists and block management coordinators who sought out and signed up landowners who had previously been in the Block Management Program. By July 1, 1996 this had been accomplished and the department then initiated enrollment of new landowners into the program. By August 15, 1996 it was estimated that all available funds for the enhanced Block Management Program had been committed.

SECTION 3

1996 SEASON SUMMARY

REGION	TOTAL BMA'S	HUNTER NUMBERS	HUNTER DAYS	INCENTIVE PAYMENT	PRIVATE ACRES	OTHER ACRES*	TOTAL ACRES
1	7	12,060	70,726	$3,040**	793,220	67,320	860,540
2	103	5,005	17,809	$215,579	215,222	11,610	226,832
3	64	15,979	43,375	$315,478	295,122	20,800	315,922
4	170	19,020	41,827	$450,608	825,588	111,380	936,968
5	117	15,426	26,801	$305,949	596,727	150,775	747,502
6	133	30,751	58,400	$12,390	687,917	136,469	824,386
7	289	31,994	86,895	$868,128	2,408,324	809,644	3,217,969
TOTAL	**883**	**130,235**	**345,833**	**$2,756,792**	**5,822,120**	**1,307,821**	**7,130,119**

* Other acres include state trust lands, BLM,USFS, and leased lands.

** Most of the Region 1 block management land belongs to Plum Creek Timber Company, for which no monetary compensation is paid. Instead, FWP provides patrolling assistance during the hunting season.

In addition to the incentives payments paid to cooperators, the department provided a total of $62,991 worth of hunter management services. These services were deducted from the total amount of payments for which a cooperator qualified.

STATISTICS

*** 883 cooperators in 1996, compared to 471 in 1995

*** Over 7 million acres enrolled in 1996; aproximately 5 million acres in 1995

*** Over 130,000 hunters hunted on block management areas in 1996

*** Hunters accounted for nearly 350,000 hunter days on block management areas in 1996

*** FWP paid over $2.7 million in incentives payments to landowners in 1996

SECTION 4

1996
BLOCK MANAGEMENT

LANDOWNER/HUNTER SURVEY RESULTS
(SYNOPSIS)

BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

1996 HUNTING SEASON

LANDOWNER/HUNTER SURVEY RESULTS

SURVEY BACKGROUND AND METHOD

The purpose of this survey was to measure satisfaction levels associated with the 1996 Block Management Program.

Two separate surveys were actually conducted. The Landowner Evaluation polled landowners(cooperators) who enrolled in the 1996 Block Management Program. The Hunter Evaluation polled hunters who hunted on one or more block management areas(BMA's) during the 1996 hunting season.

These surveys were produced as a collaborative effort between the Governor's Advisory Council on Private Land/Public Wildlife(PL/PW), Fish Wildlife & Parks(FWP) Responsive Management Team, and FWP Coordinator of Landowner/Sportsman Relations.

In December, 1996, the PL/PW Council developed ideas for survey content. The FWP Responsive Management Team and FWP Landowner/Sportsman Coordinator drafted survey questions in January, 1997. Pre-test surveys were sent to 18 landowners and 17 hunters during early February, 1997. Results of that pre-survey yielded only minor changes, which were incorporated into the final survey format. Surveys were sent to landowners and sportsmen on February 15, 1997. Survey results were tabulated by FWP Responsive Management Team in April, 1997.

A total of 881 Landowner Evaluations were sent, one to each cooperator enrolled in the 1996 Block Management Program. A total of 647 completed surveys were returned, for a response rate of 73%.

A total of 1250 Hunter Evaluations were sent to hunters randomly selected from permission slips and rosters used on 1996 BMA's. This number represented approximately 1% of the total of 130,000 hunters who used the program in 1996. Each region submitted a portion of the 1250 hunter names commensurate with the percentage of total hunters who hunted on BMA's in that region. (NOTE: Region 1 did not submit names because the hunters in Region 1 hunted almost exclusively on Plum Creek Timber lands where sign-in is not required.) A total of 782 completed hunter surveys were returned, for a response rate of 62%.

INTRODUCTION

While the Block Management Program has been existence in Montana for over a dozen years, it changed dramatically in 1996 with the passage of HB 195. A product of the Governor's Advisory Council on Private Land and Public Wildlife, along with nine local citizens' advisory groups, over 140 interest groups, and a vast amount of public comment, this landmark legislation enhanced the existing Block Management Program in various ways.

A variable-priced, nonresident hunting license was created for nonresident hunters who desired to hunt with an outfitter. Revenue generated by the sale of these licenses was directed into the Block Management Program to provide compensation to landowners to offset potential impacts associated with allowing public hunting on private property. Also offered as incentives to allow public hunting on private property were liability coverage, game damage program eligibility, livestock loss compensation, and a complimentary resident Sportsman's License. Nonresident landowners were offered the option to receive a nonresident Big Game Combination License in lieu of compensation.

A citizen's advisory committee, the Incentives Committee, developed a system to implement the incentives portion of HB 195, finalizing its recommendations in February, 1996. Following a public review process, final rules were adopted at the end of March, 1996 by the FWP Commission.

The implementation of this program represented one of the most intensive efforts the Department has ever made. In May, 1996, FWP personnel began enrolling landowners into the 1996 Block Management Program. By mid-September, 1996, it was determined all available funds had been committed.

The Block Management Program increased from a total of **471 cooperators enrolling over 5 million acres in 1995** to **883 cooperators** enrolling over **7 million acres in 1996.** During the 1996 hunting season, over **130,000 hunters** accounted for over **350,000 hunter days** on block management areas (BMA's). FWP paid over $2.7 million dollars in incentives payments to landowners in 1996.

While anecdotal response indicated the 1996 Block Management Program was very successful, the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council and FWP wanted to measure satisfaction levels of hunters and landowners who participated in the program. That served as the primary focus for the 1996 Block Management Landowner and Sportsman Evaluations

1996
Block
Management

HUNTER
EVALUATION

LANDOWNER EVALUATION

HIGHLIGHTS

*** 80% of landowners surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with block management

*** 94% of 1996 cooperators said they'd like to continue participating in block management

*** 74% of surveyed landowners said block management was important or very important as a way of managing HUNTERS on the farm or ranch

*** Over 70% of surveyed landowners said block management was important or very important as a way of managing GAME numbers on the farm or ranch

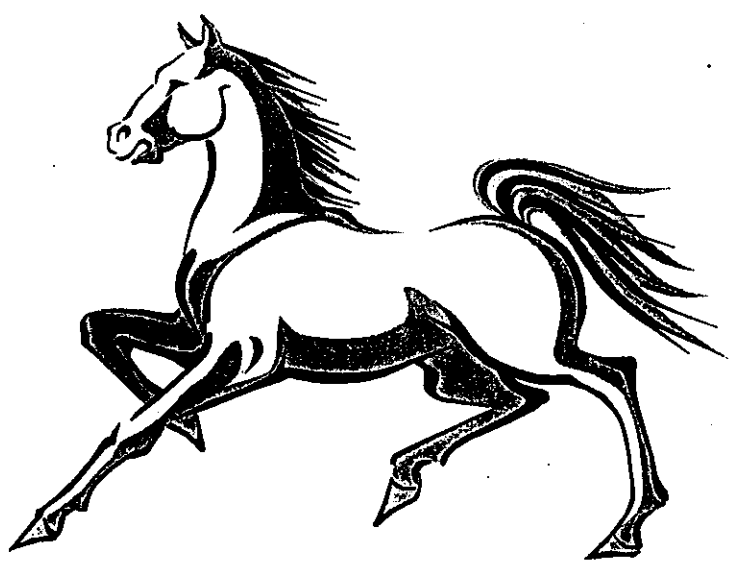
*** Over 75% of surveyed landowners were satisfied or very satisfied with the various payments offered under the incentives portion of the program

*** 97% of surveyed landowners thought the majority of hunters were courteous

*** 96% of surveyed landowners said the majority of hunters abided by the ranch rules

*** 62% of surveyed landowners felt that the Block Management Program had improved or greatly improved their relationships with hunters

*** 90% of cooperators felt that FWP employees had been responsive or very responsive to their needs



SURVEY RESULTS

Questions in the Landowner Evaluation addressed various issues, including such things as overall program satisfaction, importance of the program in managing hunters and game numbers, satisfaction with various components of the program, and relationships with hunters and FWP employees. Survey results are presented in a format that groups questions according to the issues addressed.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH PROGRAM

Respondents were asked three questions that measured their overall satisfaction with the program. Over half felt that the Block Management Program was important to farm or ranch operations, 80% were satisfied with the overall program, and 94% said they would participate in the program next year.

SATISFACTION WITH INCENTIVES PACKAGE

Respondents were asked five questions that measured the importance of, or their satisfaction with, various benefits offered under the incentives portion of the block management program. Nearly 88% of the respondents said the benefits received from the program were what they expected. Importance of the individual components of the incentives package(signs, maps, permission slips, enforcement, etc.) ranged from 47% to 90%. Satisfaction with components of the compensation system ranged from 74% to 85%.(NOTE: Satisfaction levels were lower for the components of Access Corridor Payments and Resource Manager due to limited applicability.) Nearly 60% of the respondents felt that receiving a complimentary Sportsman's License was important.

HUNTER/GAME MANAGEMENT

Respondents were asked four questions about the importance of, or their satisfaction with, the hunter management and game management aspects of the Block Management Program. Game management was important to more than 70% of the cooperators, and nearly 60% of respondents were satisfied with the game management results. Hunter management was identified as being important to 74% of surveyed landowners, with nearly 77% of respondents reporting satisfaction with the hunter management aspects of the program.

PERMISSION SLIPS

Respondents were asked two questions concerning how well permission slips or other methods of granting and tracking permission worked. Over 76% surveyed landowners felt methods used were convenient, while 74% felt the methods used were effective.

CONTRACT TERMS

Respondents were asked one question about the terms of the block management contracts. Nearly 92% of surveyed cooperators said the terms of the contract were clear and understandable.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Four questions addressed the issue of complaints and complaint procedures. Nearly 60% of the surveyed landowners said they had no incidents or complaints during the 1996 hunting season. When asked if they had informed FWP about any complaints, 29% said yes, and 22 percent said no. Less than half the respondents indicated awareness of the formal complaint process. Respondents were also asked to specify any particular incidents that occurred during the 1996 block management season that prompted complaints.

LANDOWNER/HUNTER RELATIONSHIPS

Respondents were asked four questions about how they viewed hunter behavior and how the Block Management Program might have affected hunter behavior and hunter/landowner relationships. Nearly 97% of the surveyed landowners felt that the majority of hunters had been courteous to them and their families, 96% said that the majority of hunters had abided by ranch rules, and over 61% indicated that the Block Management Program had improved their relationships with hunters.

HUNTER NUMBERS

Two survey questions were designed to elicit comment about hunter numbers. Over 77% of surveyed landowners said they were satisfied with the number of hunters who hunted on their block management area, while a similar question asking if the numbers of hunters was about right received an affirmative response by nearly 81% of the respondents.

INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION

One question was designed to measure the cooperator's level of satisfaction with the way information about the program was distributed. Less than 5% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction, while nearly 70% were either satisfied or very satisfied.

RELATIONSHIP WITH FWP

Three questions in the Landowner Evaluation dealt with the cooperator's relationship with FWP staff. Nearly 96% of the cooperators indicated that FWP employees were courteous, and nearly 90% of the surveyed landowners said FWP employees had been responsive to their needs. Responses indicated that cooperators had interacted with employees from various divisions of FWP.

1996
Block
Management

HUNTER
EVALUATION

HUNTER EVALUATION

HIGHLIGHTS

*** 77% of hunters were satisfied or very satisfied with hunting opportunities on BMA's

*** 94% of hunters felt BMA rules were reasonable

*** 72% of hunters found the game animals they expected to see on BMA's hunted

*** Over 67% of hunters were successful in taking game on a BMA

*** Less than 15% of hunters using block management hunted on 5 or more BMA's in 1996

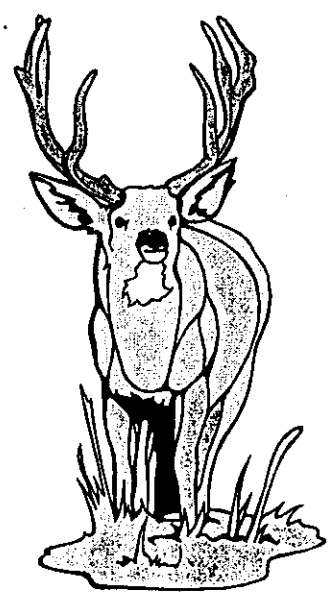
*** 93% of surveyed hunters said they had no complaints regarding BMA's in 1996

*** 89% of surveyed hunters were satisfied or very satisfied with obtaining permission by person-to-person contact with the landowner

*** 92% of surveyed hunters felt BMA landowners were courteous

*** 87% of surveyed hunters felt BMA landowners were helpful

*** Over 68% of hunters felt Block Management improved landowner/sportsman relations



SURVEY RESULTS

Questions in the Hunter Evaluation addressed various issues, including such things as overall program satisfaction, opinions about the number of game animals and number of hunters encountered on block management areas, satisfaction with the BMA rules, permission systems, information dissemination process, and complaint procedure, and relationships with block management cooperators and FWP employees. Survey results are presented in a format that groups questions according to the issues addressed.

OVERALL PROGRAM SATISFACTION

Respondents were asked three questions that measured their overall satisfaction with the program. Nearly 71% indicated satisfaction with the block management areas they'd hunted in 1996, 77% were satisfied with the hunting opportunities provided under the program, and 94% felt that the rules on block management areas were reasonable.

GAME NUMBERS ON BMA'S

Respondents were asked four questions about the game encountered on block management areas. Nearly 72% of surveyed hunters found the type of game animals they expected to find, about half of the hunters found game animals in the numbers expected, and nearly 70% of respondents were successful in taking game on a BMA.

HUNTER NUMBERS ON BMA'S

Respondents were asked two questions about the numbers of hunters encountered on block management areas. When asked their opinion about the number of other hunters on BMA's they hunted, nearly 75% said the number was about right, while 19% said there were too many. Over 93% indicated they did not have any conflicts with other hunters.

NUMBER OF BMA'S HUNTED

Respondents were asked one question about how many different BMA's they hunted during the 1996 hunting season. The majority of surveyed hunters hunted on only one or two BMA's. Less than 15% of surveyed hunters hunted on 5 or more block management areas in 1996.

METHOD OF OBTAINING PERMISSION

Respondents were asked two questions about obtaining permission. One question asked them to indicate why type of method was used to gain permission, while the other asked them to indicate their level of satisfaction with the method used. Nearly 90% indicated satisfaction with person-to-person contact with landowner, while only 3% indicated dissatisfaction with that method. Since many responses for the various categories were either neutral or not applicable, survey data reflected below indicates satisfaction or dissatisfaction, with the neutral and not applicable responses not shown.

BMA INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Surveyed hunters were asked two questions about how they obtained information about block management areas. One question asked how satisfied they were with the ease of obtaining BMA information. Over 60% of respondents indicated satisfaction, while 12% voiced dissatisfaction. A follow-up question then asked those who expressed dissatisfaction to explain why they were dissatisfied.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Four questions addressed the issue of complaints and complaint procedures. Nearly 93% of surveyed hunters indicated they had no incidents or complaints during the 1996 hunting season. When asked if they had informed FWP about any complaints, 3% said yes. Those respondents who indicated they had complaints and did not inform FWP were asked to explain why not. Less than 18% of surveyed hunters indicated awareness of the formal complaint procedure. Respondents were also asked to specify any particular incidents that occurred while hunting on BMA's during the 1996 hunting season that prompted complaints.

LANDOWNER/HUNTER RELATIONS

Surveyed hunters were asked three questions about their relationships with landowners. Nearly 93% of respondents indicated landowners were courteous, while 87% found landowners helpful. Close to 70% of surveyed hunters said that the Block Management Program had improved landowner/hunter relationships.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH FWP EMPLOYEES

Respondents were asked three questions about their relationships with FWP employees when using the Block Management Program. Responses indicated that hunters interacted with FWP employees from various divisions of FWP. Less than 2% of surveyed hunters felt that FWP employees had been discourteous, and only 2% felt that FWP employees had been unresponsive to their needs.

SECTION 5

1997 BLOCK MANAGEMENT

POLICY GUIDELINES

1997 Block Management Program
Policy Guidelines

The following policies and guidelines apply to the 1997-1998 block management hunting season. These rules apply equally to all regions and are designated to instill some overall consistency in the statewide program while still preserving regional flexibility. Failure to adhere to these policies can jeopardize not only the individual region's program and associated funding, but also the credibility and foundation of the entire block management program.

These policies and guidelines reflect input from various sources, including recommendations made by the Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council and the Incentives Advisory Committee, survey data gained from the Landowner and Hunter Evaluations, and program assessments derived from regional and division-level FWP meetings.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Funding for the 1997 cooperator contracts will remain at the 1996 level, minus the amount "saved" by reducing enrollment payments to $250. Any growth within the program will have to occur due whatever cost-savings the regions can apply to 1996 contracts.

Contracts must be delivered to the Helena Field Services office no later than July 15, 1997. Contract amounts MUST NOT EXCEED the total amount allocated regionally.

Enrollment payment for 1997 is $250. All other payments remain the same.

The contracting process for 1997 will utilize a fixed sum, derived either by using 1996 hunter use data or, if available and deemed more accurate, an average of previous use data. For new cooperators, an estimate of hunter use developed jointly by cooperator and FWP staff will be used to determine the fixed sum. This fixed sum identified when the contract is signed will be what the cooperator actually gets paid, regardless of a variation in actual hunter use. If actual hunter use deviates 20% or more from the fixed sum, the next year's contract will reflect a change by adjusting the negotiated fixed sum.

Enrollment prioritization will be based on the criteria articulated in the ARM Rules, plus any additional articulation of regional management needs. Contracts will be negotiated for one year only, using the annual renewal form, since funding may change dramatically from year to year. Cooperators may certainly indicate a desire to remain within the program for subsequent years.

Cooperators must submit permission slips, roster, etc. to regional offices within 30 days of the BMA contract ending date.

1997 Block Management Program
Policy Guidelines

Permission slips will credit NO MORE THAN 3 hunter days per hunter, unless more actual use is documented through daily sign-in rosters or some other method. Some BMAs might utilize more restrictive rules, such as daily permission slips, as determined by regional staff. Immediate family members of the cooperator will not count toward hunter use totals on the family BMA.

The method used to compute payments for multiple cooperators in aggregate BMAs needs to be carefully evaluated both in terms of fairness and cost-effectiveness. We obviously need to find ways to encourage enrollment in these aggregates, yet we also need to balance that with some degree of consistency statewide. Pro-rating payments according to percentage of acreage enrolled, or dividing the total number of hunter days by the total number of cooperators, and then adding a bonus of perhaps 10% of the total hunter days, are two methods that found acceptance at the April 15-16 planning meeting. (Region Six has proposed using the above "bonus" method for one of the aggregate BMAs near Medicine Lake).

Information dissemination about the Block Management Program needs to conform to the law and the ARM Rules. Failure to do so jeopardizes the entire program.

There are no additional FTE's for 1997. The annual budget allocation process is underway. **There is no funding available for paying overtime to resource managers or other temporary block management staff.** They can work more than 8 hours a day, but cannot be paid for more than 40 hours a week.

Complaints filed under the formal complaint process need to be fully documented, with a copy of the investigation results sent to Field Services in a timely manner. Upon initial notification of a complaint, the Block Management Coordinator in Helena should be contacted and appraised of the nature of the Complaint.

Regional policies concerning outfitting on BMAs need to conform to the ARM Rules. For any BMAs that do allow outfitting, the outfitter, cooperator, and regional supervisor MUST sign the Outfitting Approval Form. The regional BMA coordinator list should also reflect any BMAs where outfitting has been approved.