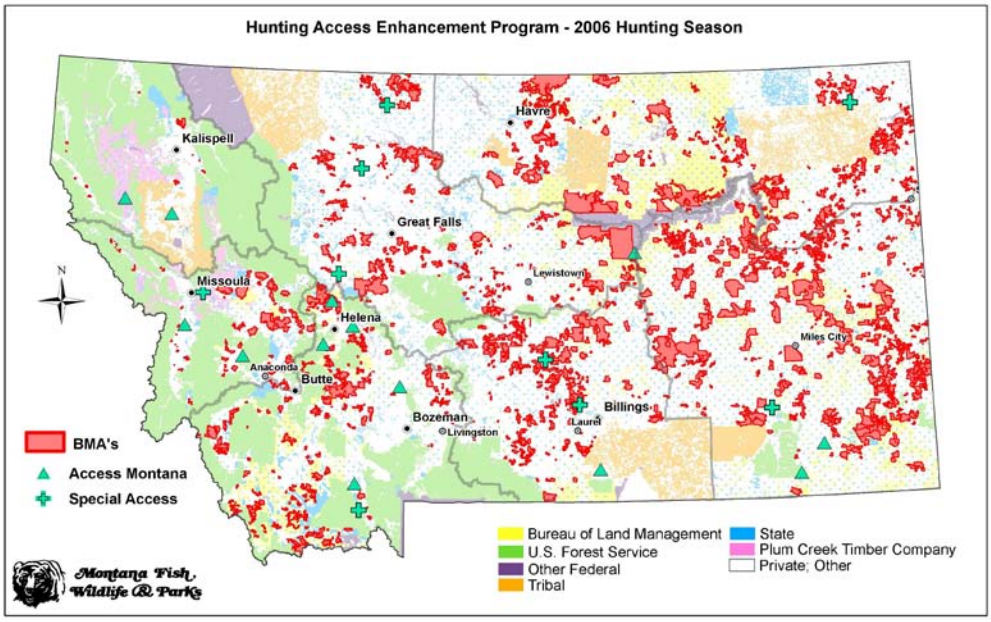
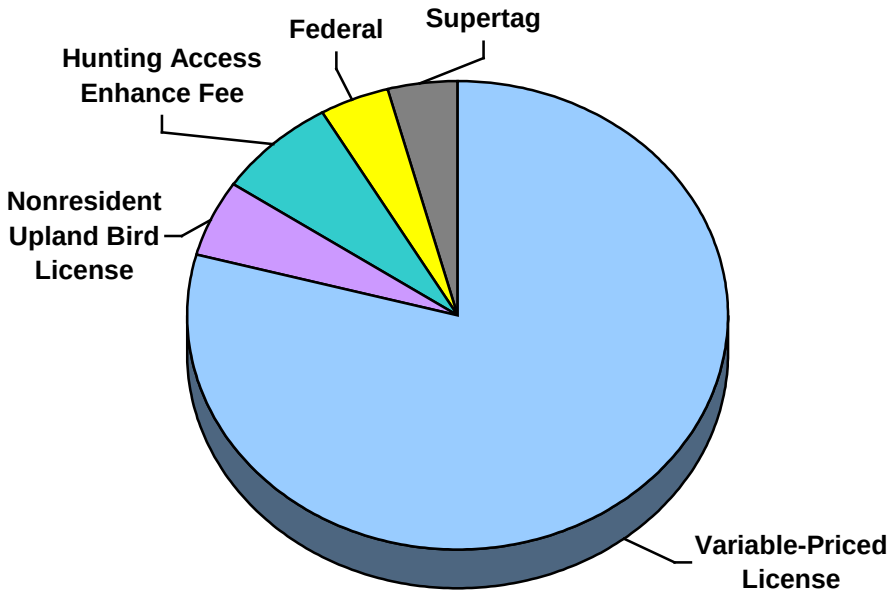
# HUNTING ACCESS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM REPORT

**(January 2011)**




**(Block Management, *Access Public Lands*, Special Access Projects)**

# HUNTING ACCESS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM – FY10 REVENUE




**Variable-Priced Outfitter-Sponsored Nonresident Big Game Combination Licenses**

A portion of the revenue generated by the sale of variable-priced nonresident hunting licenses set aside for clients of licensed outfitters is used to fund the hunting-access programs. Prices are set at market rates to ensure an average annual sale of 5500 Big Game Combination Licenses and 2300 Deer Combination Licenses. The annual average sale is calculated over a 5-year period.

**Nonresident Upland Game Bird License**

Effective 2000 license year, nonresident upland game bird license fee increased to $110, with $55 earmarked hunting access enhancement programs.

**Resident/Nonresident Hunting Access Enhancement Fee**

Effective 2002 license year, hunting access enhancement free created ($2 resident/$10 nonresident), with revenue earmarked for hunting access enhancement program.

**Supertag**

Effective 2006 license year, supertag created- lottery with unlimited chances ($5 each) for Supertag – 5 Supertags – 1 each for elk, deer, moose, sheep, goat; 2007 – antelope, mountain lion, bison added to list of Supertag options;

**Federal**

PR excise tax dollars – amount varies annually;

**Program Name**
Hunting Access Enhancement Program
**(includes Block Management, *Access Public Land*, and Special Access Projects)**

**Program Manager**
Alan Charles, Coordinator, Landowner/Sportsman Relations

**FY10 PROGRAM EXPENDITURES:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Landowner Contracts: | $5,107,109* |
| Landowner/Hunter Services: | $1,711,486 |
| Enforcement (6 FTE): | $530,138 |
| Administrative Overhead: | $536,236 |
| **TOTAL :** | **$7,884,969** |

*(*$4,732,869 for 2009 hunting season contracts; remainder accrued for 2010 hunting season contracts)*

**Landowner Contract Payments:** Under statutory authority (87-1-267 MCA), "Benefits will be provided to offset potential impacts associated with public hunting access, including but not limited to those associated with general ranch maintenance, conservation efforts, weed control, fire protection, liability insurance, roads, fences, and parking area maintenance." The current system, articulated in 12.4.206 ARM, provides for cooperators to receive a $250 annual enrollment payment, and up to $11***** per hunter day in annual impact payments, with optional 5% additional weed management payment. Total annual payment may not exceed $12,000. ***Beginning with the 2009 hunting season, FWP increased the hunter day payment from $10/HD to $11/HD, resulting in an average increase of 9% per landowner payment.**

**Landowner/Hunter Services:**

- Approximately 45 seasonal BMA technicians are hired each hunting season to help set up, sign, patrol, and dismantle BMAs;

- Regional program coordinators negotiate contracts, produce informational materials, supervise seasonal staff, and respond to the needs of hunters and landowners.

- Program materials such as signs, sign-in boxes, rosters, permission slips, maps, and tabloids, and personal services and benefits for program staff are funded through program operations budgets. For the 2007 hunting season, nearly 150,000 maps, 34,000 regional BMA tabloids, and over 25,000 BMA signs were printed and distributed.

- Included in this category are expenditures for *Access Public Lands* projects (public land access) and Special Access projects (local projects focused on a specific species).

**Enforcement (6 FTE):**
A total of 6 full-time warden positions are funded through Hunting Access Enhancement Program sources. This 6 FTE is allocated statewide to game wardens who patrol BMAs for hunter compliance of landowner and FWP rules. Game wardens also assist with BMA contract negotiations, delivery of BMA materials, and landowner/FWP contacts.

**Administrative Overhead**
All FWP programs are assessed an administrative overhead charge, which is used to pay for various indirect costs associated with support functions primarily performed by staff in the Administration & Finance and Department Management divisions. Examples of such support functions include accounting, budgeting, property, personnel, administrative support, and data processing services. Administrative overhead charges are assessed on accounts based upon a percentage of overall expenditures.

**Weed Management Payments:** SB 326 (effective March 1, 2000) authorized FWP to offer up to 5% in additional incentive payments to Block Management Cooperators who agree to use those payments for specific weed management activities on their lands. For FY10, a total of $200,189 was paid specifically for use in weed management activities on BMAs. In past years, of landowners who elected to receive weed management payments:

34% indicated their intent to hire contractors for weed management measures;
86% indicated their intent to purchase herbicide or other chemicals;
6% indicated their intent to donate the payment to a county weed board;
3% indicated their intent to lease or rent livestock for weed control;
4% indicated their intent to implement some type of weed education;

*Some landowners indicated they intended to use the payment for multiple uses.

**ENROLLMENT STATUS**
Potential new cooperators are identified through various means, including individuals contacting FWP formally and asking to be placed on a waiting list for future enrollment consideration, individuals contacting FWP field staff and discussing possible future enrollment in the program, and FWP identifying potential candidates in high-priority areas or offering high-priority hunting opportunities and making initial contacts to identify potential interest in future enrollment. At the end of the 2009 hunting season, regional program coordinators reported 0 potential new cooperators could not be enrolled due to lack of funding.

# BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM REPORT (1996 – 2010)

- **PROGRAM STATISTICS**
- **PROGRAM EVALUATION**
- **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

## 2010 Block Management Program Statistics:

- **1,286 Cooperators; 931 (BMAs); 8,881,125 Acres;**

**REGIONAL STATISTICS**

**R1: 10 Cooperators; 15 BMAs; 827,000 acres (majority is corporate timber land);**
**R2: 126 Cooperators; 67 BMAs; 856,125 acres;**
**R3: 105 Cooperators; 89 BMAs; 765,000 acres;**
**R4: 201 Cooperators; 122 BMAs; 1,453,000 acres;**
**R5: 188 Cooperators; 159 BMAs; 800,000 acres;**
**R6: 297 Cooperators; 164 BMAs; 1,300,000 acres;**
**R7: 359 Cooperators; 315 BMAs; 2,880,000 acres;**

## 2009 Block Management Program - Season Averages

**a) average number of acres per cooperator……. 7,069**
**b) average number of hunter days per cooperator.....366**
**c) average landowner contract payment.....…..$3,680** (8.9% increase from 2008)
**d) average hunter use (resident / nonresident)…. 83% res. / 17% nonres.**

## BLOCK MANAGEMENT SUMMARY – (1996 – 2010)

| Year | Total Cooperators | Total BMAs | Total Acres | Total Hunter Days | Total Payments to Landowners |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1996** | 882 | 796 | 7,131,119 | 345,833 | $2,757,103 |
| **1997** | 937 | 744 | 7,545,606 | 364,090 | $2,571,358 |
| **1998** | 916 | 719 | 7,259,606 | 297,440 | $2,541,863 |
| **1999** | 930 | 720 | 7,147,023 | 294,784 | $2,545,761 |
| **2000** | 1004 | 766 | 7,696,500 | 326,180 | $2,792,854 |
| **2001** | 1082 | 857 | 8,653,420 | 348,524 | $3,200,561 |
| **2002** | 1150 | 921 | 8,809,758 | 378,444 | $3,556,451 |
| **2003** | 1245 | 986 | 8,761,893 | 408,093 | $3,897,189 |
| **2004** | 1262 | 981 | 8,767,387 | 410,924 | $3,943,073 |
| **2005** | 1237 | 935 | 8,528,241 | 421,636 | $3,917,848 |
| **2006** | 1244 | 939 | 8,294,611 | 436,267 | $4,091,161 |
| **2007** | 1256 | 920 | 8,106,504 | 442,258 | $4,123,583 |
| **2008** | 1256 | 924 | 8,449,162 | 455,473 | $4,221,100 |
| **2009** | 1,274 | 927 | 9,005,350 | 471,024 | $4,732,869 |
| **2010** | 1,286 | 931 | 8,881,125 | *not available | $4,935,603 |

# Summary of Research

## Block Management Landowner & Hunter Evaluations from the 2009 Montana Hunting Season

HD Unit Research Summary No. 31

**Michael S. Lewis and Alan Charles**

**June 2010**

Administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Montana's Block Management Program was established in 1985 with three main goals:

1. To maintain public hunting access to private and isolated public land.
2. To help landowners manage public hunting on lands under their control, and provide benefits to offset the impacts of those public hunting activities.
3. To help FWP accomplish its mission of managing wildlife resources. In a state where nearly 65 percent of the land is privately owned, FWP depends on public hunting to manage populations of deer, elk, and other game animals.

A total of 1,274 landowners were enrolled in the program in 2009, comprising more than nine million acres of Block Management Areas (BMAs) across the state. Approximately 85,000 people hunted a BMA in 2009 (which resulted in more than 460,000 hunter days on all BMAs combined).

To measure the success of the program, FWP periodically conducts landowner and hunter evaluations. Two separate surveys were conducted following the 2009 Montana hunting season:

- **Landowner Evaluation.** All landowners enrolled in the program in 2009 were sent a survey by mail.
- **Hunter Evaluation.** A randomly selected sample of 761 people who hunted on a BMA(s) in 2009 were sent a survey by mail.

These two surveys were nearly identical replications of similar surveys conducted following the 2003 and 1996 Montana hunting seasons (Charles & Lewis, 2004; Charles, 1997). Hence, for the most part, results obtained from the 2009 surveys are directly comparable to 2003 and 1996 survey results.

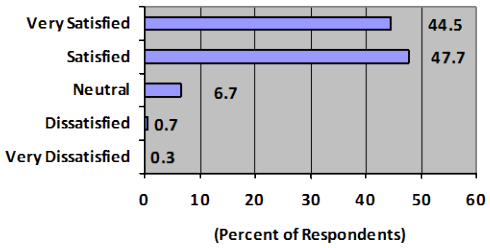
Overall, there was an excellent response to both 2009 surveys. A 66 percent response rate was achieved from the landowner survey. A 60 percent response was achieved from the hunter survey. These response rates are considered to be very high for mailback surveys of this type.

This research summary highlights the key findings from both the 2009 landowner and hunter evaluation surveys. Wherever possible, survey results obtained in 2009 are compared to those results obtained in 2003 and 1996.

## Highlights from the 2009 Landowner Evaluation

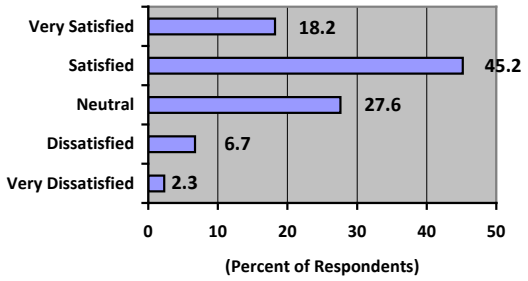
When asked how satisfied they were with the overall Block Management Program, 92 percent of the landowners who responded to the survey indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied (see Figure 1 below). This compares to 93 percent in 2003, and 80 percent in 1996.

**Figure 1.** Response to: *"How satisfied are you with the overall Block Management Program?"* (2009 Landowner Evaluation)



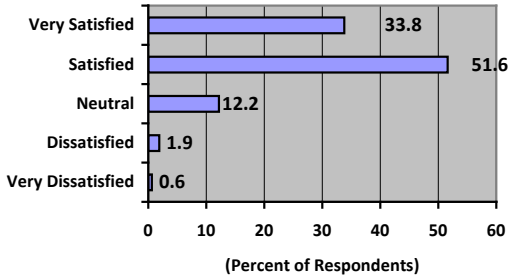

Most of the landowners (78 percent) reported the Block Management Program is an important or very important way for them to manage game numbers on their BMA(s). Related to this, 63 percent of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the results of the program in terms of managing game numbers on their BMA(s) in 2009 (see Figure 2 on the next page). This compares to 63 percent in 2003, and 60 percent in 1996.

**Figure 2.** Response to: *"How satisfied were you with the results of the Block Management Program in managing game numbers on your BMA(s)?"* (2009 Landowner Evaluation)




Almost all of the landowners (92 percent) indicated that the Block Management Program is an important or very important way for them to manage hunter activities. Related to this, 85 percent of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the results of the program in terms of managing hunter activities on their BMA(s) in 2009 (see Figure 3 below), and 79 percent were satisfied with the number of hunters who hunted on their BMA(s). Furthermore, 89 percent rated hunter behavior on their BMA(s) as being good or very good in 2009. In 2003 and 1996, 90 percent and 77 percent of the respondents respectively were satisfied or very satisfied with the program in terms of managing hunter activities.

**Figure 3.** Response to: *"How satisfied were you with the results of the Block Management Program in terms of managing hunter activities?"* (2009 Landowner Evaluation)




Of note, 80 percent of the landowners who completed and returned a survey for the 2009 season reported that they believe hunter behavior has improved or greatly improved as a result of the Block Management Program. This compares to 81 percent in 2003, and 76 percent in 1996.

Also, 65 percent of the landowners reported that their relationship with hunters has improved or greatly improved as a result of participating in the program. This compares to 64 percent in 2003, and 61 percent in 1996. Less than two percent of the landowners in 2009 reported that their relationship with hunters has deteriorated or greatly deteriorated as a result of the Block Management Program.

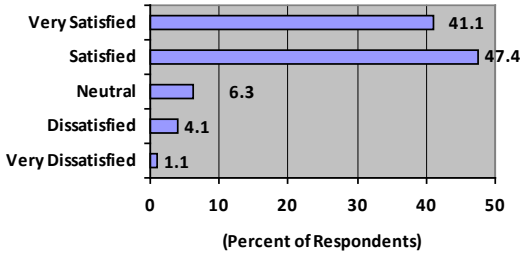
In terms of the compensation they received for enrolling in the program, 79 percent of the landowners responding to the survey reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the total compensation they received for the 2009 hunting season. Less than nine percent were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. In 2003 and 1996, 79 percent and 75 percent of the respondents respectively were satisfied or very satisfied with their total compensation.

Of the landowners enrolled in 2009 who expressed an opinion, 99 percent said they plan on continuing their participation in the Block Management Program for the 2010 hunting season.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2009 HUNTER EVALUATION

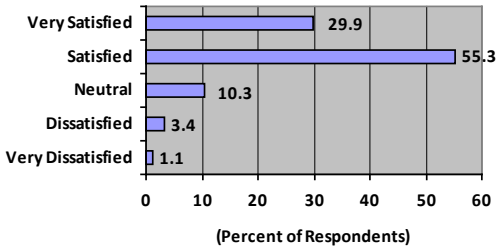
When asked how satisfied they were with the Block Management Program this past fall (2009), 89 percent of the hunters who responded to the survey reported they were satisfied or very satisfied (see Figure 4 below).

**Figure 4.** Response to: *"Overall, how satisfied were you with the Block Management Program this past fall?"* (2009 Hunter Evaluation)




Furthermore, 85 percent of the hunters reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with the hunting opportunities provided by the Block Management Program in 2009 (see Figure 5 on the following page). This compared to 86 percent in 2003, and 76 percent in 1996.

**Figure 5.** Response to: *"Overall, how satisfied were you with the hunting opportunities provided by the Block Management Program in 2009?"* (2009 Hunter Evaluation)




Of the hunters who responded to the survey in 2009, 83 percent reported they believe that the Block Management Program has improved or greatly improved landowner-hunter relations. Less than three percent believe that landowner-hunter relationships have been harmed or greatly harmed by the program. In 2003 and 1996, 84 percent and 70 percent of hunters respectively reported they believe the program has improved or greatly improved the relationship between hunters and landowners.

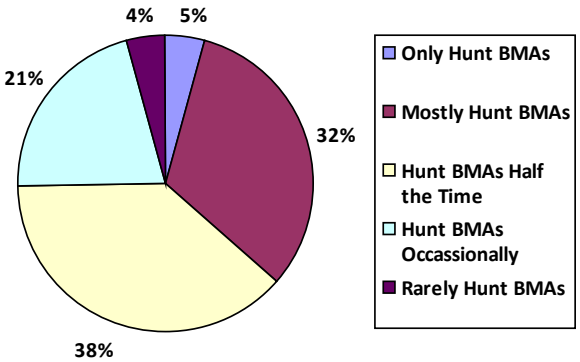
Related to hunting opportunities…

- Fifty (50) percent of the hunters who responded to the survey found game animals on BMAs hunted present in numbers meeting or exceeding their expectations in 2009.
- Sixty (60) percent were successful in harvesting game on a BMA(s) in 2009.
- Eighty-eight (88) percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the rules on BMAs hunted in 2009.
- Sixty-four (64) percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the number of other hunters encountered on BMAs hunted in 2009.

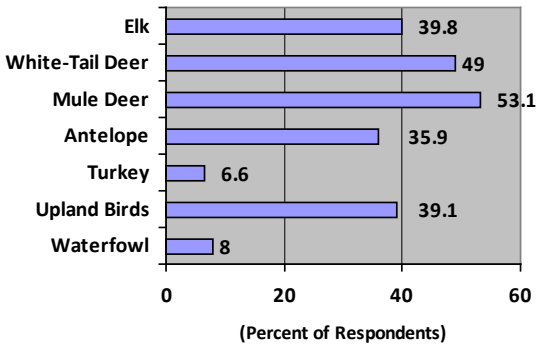
Hunter profile information (2009 season)…

- The average hunter spent nearly 10 days hunting BMAs.
- The average hunter hunted on four to five different BMAs.

Time spent hunting BMAs…




Game Hunted on BMAs…



## Discussion

The Block Management Program is designed to balance the needs of landowners, hunters, and FWP. Landowners receive assistance in managing public hunting activities and benefits to offset the impacts of allowing public hunting. Hunters receive opportunities to hunt on enrolled lands, offered either on a first-come, first-serve basis or through some other means of allocated use. FWP is able to utilize the program as a tool to help achieve wildlife management goals and objectives.

In 1995, the Block Management Program was enhanced through additional funding and authority, allowing it to grow substantially over the next fifteen years. During this time, FWP staff has explored various ways to implement the program locally to accommodate differences in regional wildlife management needs and hunter use activities.

Results of the 2010 Block Management landowner and hunter evaluations, as well as past evaluations, suggest that the program has been a success both from the perspective of landowners enrolled in the program and hunters hunting on BMAs. FWP staff has been able to use the program to effectively manage big game populations, provide diverse public hunting opportunities, and develop effective relationships among landowners, hunters, and FWP.

## References


Charles, Alan and Michael S. Lewis. 2004. *Block Management Landowner and Hunter Evaluations: Survey Highlights from 2003 and Comparisons to 1996 Surveys.* Responsive Management Unit Research Summary No. 13. Helena, MT: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Charles, Alan. 1997. *Summary of the 1996 Landowner & Hunter Evaluations.* Helena, MT: Montana, Fish, Wildlife & Parks.


## About the Authors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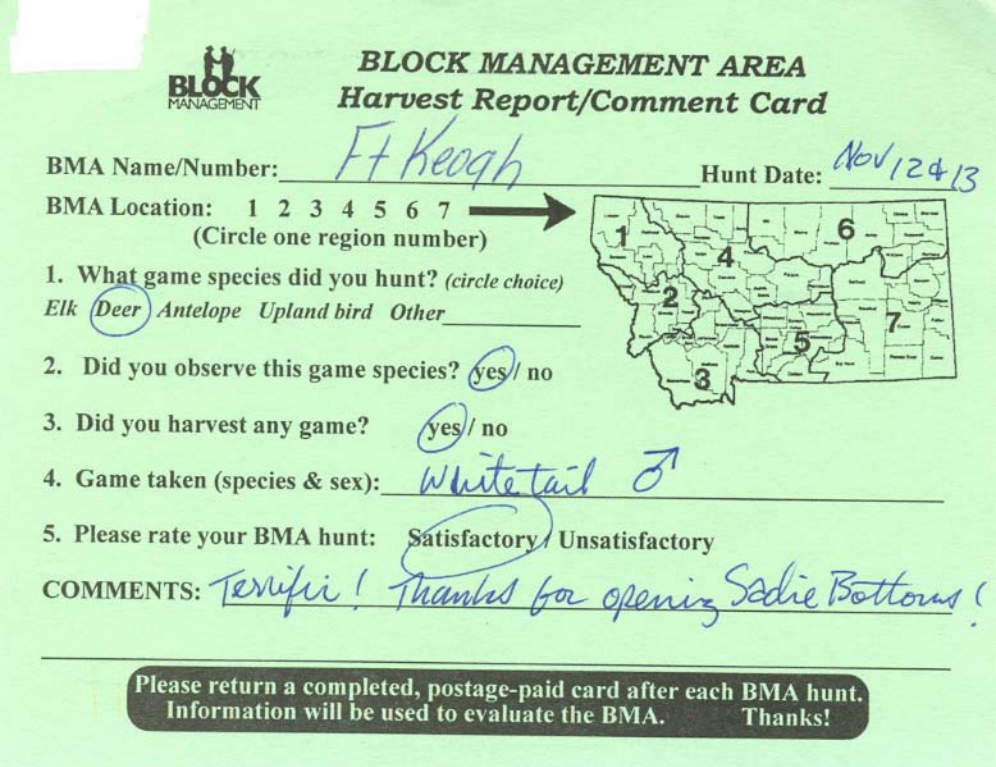
## To obtain copies of this summary

Contact the Human Dimensions Unit of FWP by phone (406) 444-4758 or visit FWP's website at http://fwp.mt.gov (and click on the following links…"Doing Business", "Reference Information", "Surveys", Social & Economic Surveys").

## 2009 Season
## Hunter Comment Cards/Daily Sign-In Coupons

**A total of <u>17,267</u> hunter comment cards were received for the 2007 hunting season.** These cards were voluntarily returned, and answered 3 specific questions.

**<u>COMMENT CARD SAMPLE</u>**



BLOCK MANAGEMENT

**BLOCK MANAGEMENT AREA**
**Harvest Report/Comment Card**

BMA Name/Number: Ft Keogh Hunt Date: Nov 12 & 13

BMA Location: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
(Circle one region number)

1. What game species did you hunt? *(circle choice)*
*Elk Deer Antelope Upland bird Other*_____

2. Did you observe this game species? yes / no

3. Did you harvest any game? yes / no

4. Game taken (species & sex): White tail ♂

5. Please rate your BMA hunt: Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory

COMMENTS: Terrific! Thanks for opening Sadie Bottoms!

Please return a completed, postage-paid card after each BMA hunt.
Information will be used to evaluate the BMA. Thanks!

## <u>SUMMARY OF RESULTS</u>

**Total received: 17,267**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Total hunters observing game they were hunting:** | **14,041** | **81%** |
| **Total hunters who bagged game:** | **4,045** | **23%** |
| **Total hunters who rated BMA experience satisfactory:** | **13,774** | **80%** |

NOTE: These cards are used to evaluate individual BMAs, monitor regional, area, and program trends, and measure general hunter satisfaction with their BMA experience. Postage-paid hunter comment cards were included in every regional tabloid distributed to hunters. Hunter comment card information is also incorporated into daily sign-in coupons used extensively in FWP regions 4, 5, and 6, at Type I BMAs where hunters administered their own permission.

## PROGRAMS FOR HUNTER MANAGEMENT AND HUNTER ACCESS

< The department may establish within the Block Management Program programs of landowner assistance that encourage public access to private and public lands for the purposes of hunting. **(87-1-265 through 87-1-269 MCA)**

< Participation is voluntary, based on agreements between the landowner and FWP.

< Recreational liability protection (as described in 70-1-201 MCA) is extended to cooperators participating in the program.

< A landowner participating in the program may receive benefits, including compensation up to $12,000 annually, for providing public hunting access to enrolled land.

< 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/parking-area maintenance.

< Enrolled resident and nonresident landowners may receive a non-transferable resident Sportsman's license or nonresident Big Game Combination license, as applicable.

< Licenses granted in this program will not affect the quota of 11,500 nonresident Big Game Combination License.

**BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**
***Mission, Goals, Enrollment Criteria & Process***

## Mission Statement

*Block Management is a cooperative, adaptable program designed to maintain Montana's hunting heritage and traditions by providing landowners with tangible benefits to encourage public hunting access to private land, promote partnerships between landowners, hunters, and FWP, and help manage wildlife resources and the impacts of public hunting.*

## Goals

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
1) Program supports state & regional wildlife program objectives.
2) Program supports other FWP wildlife programs.

HUNTER OPPORTUNITY
1) Program maintains current opportunities and expands new opportunities.
2) Hunter pressure is managed at levels satisfactory to landowners and hunters.

LANDOWNER RELATIONS
1) Program recognizes landowner contributions to maintaining wildlife resource.
2) Program establishes long-term positive relationships with hunters/landowners/FWP.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY
1) Program is fiscally responsible and accountable.
2) Program maintains a measurable, acceptable level of satisfaction among participants.
3) Ongoing structured program review maintains program adaptability.

PARTICIPANT EDUCATION/OWNERSHIP
1) Program fosters ownership among program participants.
2) Program fosters responsible hunter behavior.
3) Program increases hunter respect for private property and landowner concerns.

## Regional Block Management Program Enrollment Process

1) Existing cooperators in each region will be evaluated through criteria and a process that:
    a) Identifies them as ineligible for re-enrollment;
    b) Identifies them as eligible for re-evaluation and equal consideration with new enrollment and other re-evaluated re-enrollment candidates;
    c) Identifies them as eligible for automatic re-enrollment;

2) The regional block management coordinator shall use a BMA Property RE-ENROLLMENT WORKSHEET to circulate a list of cooperators who were enrolled during the previous year to the appropriate field warden and field biologist for input. If applicable staff, including the program coordinator, agree that a cooperator should be automatically enrolled, no further action is required beyond having the regional coordinator maintain copies of the completed Automatic RE-ENROLLMENT Review Report in the current file for documentation of the re-enrollment decision.

3) Each Regional Supervisor will appoint a committee (which includes, at a minimum, the regional block management coordinator and at least one member each from the Wildlife and Enforcement divisions) to make annual Block Management Program regional enrollment and re-enrollment (if not identified for automatic re-enrollment) recommendations, which the Regional Supervisor will ultimately approve or disapprove in writing.

4) All new enrollment and re-evaluated re-enrollment candidates will be evaluated and ranked through a process which utilizes the ENROLLMENT Evaluation Form and BMA Property Application Form to document criteria and related information.

5) The Regional Block Management Enrollment Committee shall evaluate all previous BMA properties designated for "re-evaluation and ranking with new properties" and any new properties offered for enrollment utilizing these forms:
    - BMA Property RE-ENROLLMENT Worksheets
    - BMA Property ENROLLMENT Application Forms
    - BMA Property ENROLLMENT Evaluation Forms
    - ENROLLMENT Decision Report

6) All evaluations will be recorded on the appropriate form, including the names of FWP staff who provided input relevant to the evaluation and recommendations. Completed Decision Reports will be approved and signed by the Regional Supervisor. Original copies of signed forms and related materials will be maintained by the regional Block Management Coordinator, with copies of the signed ENROLLMENT Decision Reports sent to the Field Services office in Helena, care of the Coordinator of Landowner/Sportsman Relations.

Region _____ BMA Property

**ENROLLMENT Evaluation Form**

**Instructions***: This form is to be used to evaluate all new properties offered for enrollment AND any existing BMA properties which have been designated for re-evaluation and ranking with new enrollment candidates. Scores and comments developed in completion of this form will be used by the Regional Block Management Enrollment Committee to determine which properties will be enrolled, and in what order of priority.*

Landowner Name: _____BMA acreage (private & isolated public)_____

BMA/Ranch Name: _____General Location: _____

1. Is this new property offered for enrollment _____ (OR) existing BMA property being re-evaluated _____?

2. What is/are the PRIMARY hunting opportunity(ies) available on this property:

   ELK M/WTDEER ANT UGBD PHST TRKY WTRFWL BEAR OTHER:_____

| **Criteria to be considered is making enrollment decisions** | **Low Med High** |
|---|---|
| What is the level of public demand in the hunting district or general area for the type of hunter opportunity offered with this property? *Explain:* | 1 2 3 |
| What is the level of FWP need for the type of hunter opportunity offered with this property, as it relates to regional management objectives or regional access strategies? *Explain:* | 1 2 3 |
| How does this property rank in terms of size, land composition, and habitat type/quality necessary to provide the primary hunter opportunity offered with this property? *Explain:* | 1 2 3 |
| *What is the potential for high levels of hunter satisfaction, based on opportunity offered, proposed levels of hunter use, and proposed methods of hunter management?* *Explain:* | 1 2 3 |
| **Additive Criteria** | **NO YES** |
| Can enrollment of this property potentially address an existing game damage problem? *Explain:* | 0 1 |
| Will enrollment provide access to adjacent public land with limited/no public access? *Explain:* | 0 1 |
| Will enrollment provide access to private land previously closed to free public access? *Explain:* | 0 1 |
| Will enrollment of this property add acreage to an existing BMA? *Explain:* | 0 1 |
| Will enrollment provide some kind of special opportunity that is in high demand? *Explain:* | 0 1 |
| Will property be enrolled without any restriction on season length or sex/species of game? *Explain:* | 0 1 |
| **TOTAL SCORE** | |

**1. Where does this property rank in terms of enrollment priority?** **Low Med High**

**2. Based on regional budget and enrollment process, is this property assigned a sequential number (optional) to identify where, in order of priority, it ranks?** **Yes / No #_____**

ROAD
CLOSED

# *ACCESS PUBLIC LANDS* REPORT

**Program Title:**
*Access Public Lands* (formerly called Access Montana)

**Program Coordinator**:
Alan Charles

**Program Authorizing Statute:**
**MCA 87-1-265 Hunter management and hunting access enhancement program created.** The department may establish…programs of landowner assistance that encourage public access to private and public lands for purposes of hunting and may adopt rules to carry out program purposes.

**Program Funding:**

**Source:** Portions of license fees funding the Hunting Access Enhancement Program
Come Home to Hunt license revenue (*new in 2010 (FY11) – 4-year sunset*

**FY10 Program Allocation**: $25,000

**Program Mission:** *Access Public Lands* coordinates FWP agency activities related to hunting access on public lands. The program works to negotiate and maintain legal public hunting access to public lands, resolve landowner/sportsman conflicts, assist in marking public land boundaries, and disseminate information about hunting access on public lands. *Access Public Lands* utilizes a cooperative inter-agency approach for the resolution of landowner/sportsman conflicts related to hunting access on public lands.

**Program Goals:**

- Coordinate efforts to identify public lands where public hunting access currently exists.
- Coordinate efforts to identify public lands hunting access needs and, where necessary, establish legal public hunting access to public lands either where such access does not currently exist or where current access is threatened.
- Reduce landowner/sportsman conflicts related to hunting access on public lands.

**Program Objectives:**

- Work with regional staff and state and federal land managers to implement boundary marking projects in targeted areas to reduce conflicts and improve hunter dispersion.
- Solicit input from landowners, sportsman, and department staff to identify areas of historic conflict and develop appropriate solutions wherever possible.
- Develop and disseminate directories, maps, and informational brochures to assist the public with information about hunting access to public lands.
- Identify/prioritize areas where public land hunting access is needed, but either not available or threatened.
- Participate in state and federal land management agency planning and decision-making processes that affect public land access.
- Work to develop partnerships with local and regional state and federal land management agency personnel responsible for implementing public land access projects.

## PROJECT SYNOPSIS – STATUS REPORT

- Munson Creek Access (Thompson Falls) – Joint FWP / USFS trailhead development. Provides critical access for sheep hunting. – Completed - Project Cost: $46,000 – FWP cost share: $23,000.

- Ninepipe Area Recreation Map – Reprint – identifies FWP, USFWS, and Tribal Lands available for hunting and other recreational use in the Ninepipe area. – Completed– Total Project Cost: $1,500 for 5,000 copies – FWP cost share: $1000.

- McCarty Creek Access (Boulder) – Joint FWP / Jefferson County / USFS / DNRC project. Road development and parking area that provides access to large block of Beaverhead Deerlodge Forest. – Completed – Total Project Cost: $11,800 – FWP cost share: $3,000.

- North Hills Access Project (Helena) – Joint FWP / BLM easement and road development. Development of alternative route that provides access to southern end of Sieben BMA, BLM and DNRC lands. Route will provide year-round access to public lands – Completed – Estimated Total Project Cost: $40,000 – FWP cost share: $16,500.

- Quartz Creek Access to Helena National Forest (Clancy) – Long-term agreement whereby FWP provided two cattle guards in exchange for a 5-year agreement to provide access to the Helena National Forest – Completed – Total Project Cost: $2,300.

- Hay Draw Recreational Access Corridor (Broadus) – Joint FWP/BLM project provided drive in access across DNRC land to access multiple sections of BLM lands. Project involves development of an access road, parking areas, marking of approximately 30 miles of perimeter boundary lines, and agreement to provide patrolling through the hunting season - – Completed –Total project cost: $41,000 – Estimated FWP cost share: $20,500.

- Private Land Ownership Maps – Joint FWP/NRIS project to produce accurate, updated electronic map information, using USGS 100,000 quad map series, that identifies ownership of private land throughout the state – Completed – Total Cost to FWP: $0, other than staff time.

- Smith 6-S Ranch Access in the East Pioneer Range – project provided for a 1+ mile long access corridor road across private land to USFS land, with perpetual public access easement purchased by FWP and new road built to reduce damage to riparian caused by location of previous road. Project was a joint effort between private landowner, USFS, BLM, DNRC, local sportsman's groups, and FWP. Completed. Total project cost: $70,000.

- Larb Hills Public Cooperative Access Project (R6) – Joint efforts between FWP and BLM to install boundary signs on more than 4,000 acres of BLM land in Phillips County. Established two parking areas with information kiosks, and installed metal posts/signs along boundary. Completed. Total project cost: $4,500

- Three Buttes Cooperative Access Project (R6) – Cooperative signing effort between BLM, DNRC, private landowners, and FWP to install BLM and DNRC boundary signs and one information kiosk on more than 4,000 acres of BLM and DNRC land located 16 miles south of Culbertson along the Missouri River (Richland County). Completed. Total project cost: $4,500

- In 2010, four public access right-of-way projects were given tentative approval by FWP Commission, resulting in appraisals being contracted for a total cost of $23,000.

# SPECIAL ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT

**Program Title:**
Special Access Projects

**Program Coordinator:**
Alan Charles

**Program Authorizing Statute:**
**87-1-265 MCA. Hunter management and hunting access enhancement program created.**
(1) The department may establish…programs of landowner assistance that encourage public access to private and public lands for purposes of hunting…
(3) The department may also develop similar efforts outside the scope of the block management program that are designed to promote public access to private lands for hunting purposes."

**Program Funding:**
**Source:** Portions of license fees funding for the Hunting Access Enhancement Program
**FY 10 Program Allocation:** $10,000

**Program Mission:**
The department may initiate Special Access Projects that address species-specific, regional needs that may not lend themselves to involvement either in Block Management or Access Montana. Special Access Projects may also be used to develop pilot projects to address species-specific, regional hunting access issues.

**Program Goals:**
- Address localized, species-specific hunting access needs in innovative ways;
- Explore new methods for developing hunting access/hunter management agreements;
- Develop pilot projects that may lead to future enrollment in conventional programs;
- Involve localized communities of landowners, hunters, and FWP staff in projects;

**Program Objectives:**
- Provide regional staff with enough flexibility to develop local projects that can address regional species-specific hunter management/hunter opportunity needs;
- Utilize available funding to develop pilot projects that will aid in the future development and structure of the Hunting Access Enhancement Program;
- Utilize Special Access Projects to meet needs that cannot otherwise be met through existing administrative frameworks of the Block Management and Access Montana programs;
- Develop a wide array of hunting access options from which landowners, hunters, and FWP can choose when developing hunting access agreements or selecting hunting access opportunities;

## PROJECT SYNOPSIS – STATUS REPORT

- Northeast Montana (Glasgow) – Individual hired under personal services contract, assigned duties to provide area landowners with information about FWP hunting access programs and discuss potential hunting access agreements focused on upland bird hunting opportunities - Completed - Project Cost: $4,800.

- Southwest Montana (Madison Valley) – Elk Hunt Coordinator hired to assist hunters and landowners in the southern portion of the Madison Valley by coordinating public elk hunting activities – Completed - Project Cost: $3,000/annually.

- Central Montana (Bear Paw Mountains – Big Sandy) – Elk Hunt Coordinator hired to assist hunters and landowners in the Bear Paw Mountains area by coordinating public elk hunting activities – Completed - Project Cost: $5,000/annually.

- North Central Montana (Sweet Grass Hills – Shelby) – Elk Hunt Coordinator hired to assist hunters and landowners in the Sweet Grass Hills area by coordinating public elk hunting activities – Completed - Total Project Cost: $3,500/annually.

- West Central Montana (Helena) – Elkhorn Working Group formed to study issues related to management of elk in the Elkhorn Mountains and make recommendations to the department regarding their efforts - Completed. Project Cost: $4,500.

- Southwest Montana (Madison Valley) – Madison Valley Working Group formed to study issues related to management of elk in the Madison Valley, along with other wildlife and habitat management issues in that area – ongoing – Project Cost: $4,000.

- West Central Montana (White Sulphur Springs) – Elk Hunt Coordinator hired to assist hunters and landowners in the East Big Belts area during late season hunt by coordinating public elk hunting activities – Completed – Project Cost: $5,171.

- Eastern Montana (Miles City) – Hunters Against Weeds Car Wash – FWP/Custer Rod & Gun Club joint project offering a free car wash and decal to hunters who produced a valid hunting license during a three-day period including opening day of antelope season – Completed – Project Cost: $2,419.

- Western Montana (Avon/Ovando) – Elk Hunt Coordinator hired to assist hunters and landowners in this area during late season hunt by coordinating public elk hunting activities – ongoing – Project cost: $3,500.