

# Summary of Research



## Selected Results from a Participant Evaluation Survey Regarding the Montana Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project

HD Unit Research Summary No. 35

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**Abstract:** *The Montana Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project is a web-based information program available to anyone interested in promoting responsible hunter behavior and good hunter-landowner relations in Montana. To help review this program, FWP set up a five question evaluation that enables participants to provide program-related feedback and recommendations. Following a recent analysis of the responses to this evaluation, FWP confirmed that the program is providing helpful information regarding a number of important landowner and hunter issues. The program also appears to be helping to change the behavior of many participants. In particular, many of the hunters who have completed the program indicated they are now more aware of a variety of landowner concerns that are important to consider as part of hunting on privately owned land. Program participants also offered a diverse array of ideas regarding how the program could be further enhanced. FWP is carefully reviewing these recommendations as part of its continuing efforts to promote responsible hunting behavior and good hunter-landowner relations in Montana.*

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Established nearly two years ago, the Montana Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project is an information program for anyone interested in promoting responsible hunter behavior and good hunter-landowner relations in Montana. The program is delivered through an interactive webpage found on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) website. It is a voluntary program designed to be completed by participants at their own pace. Upon successful completion, participants are awarded a certification of completion and they can request a free cap and bumper sticker bearing the program logo from FWP.

The program was developed based on recommendations from two citizen's advisory councils, the Hunter Behavior Advisory Council and the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council, urging FWP to expand efforts to promote responsible hunter behavior and good hunter-landowner relations beyond Montana's basic hunter education program. In response, the agency convened a group of hunters and landowners to identify key issues relevant to the topic, and assist with development of information that might help effectively address those issues. Staff from FWP's Communication and Education Bureau,

Landowner/Sportsman Relations Section, Technical Services Section, and Web Content Team worked together to develop and implement the program. Goals of the program include:

- **Promoting better understanding of the common ground and different perspectives held by landowners and hunters.**
- **Promoting better understanding among landowners and hunters about what constitutes acceptable hunter behavior.**
- **Providing landowners and hunters with information and ideas about how to develop and maintain good relationships.**
- **Providing information about the shared experience of landowners and hunters in various hunting situations.**

The webpage for the Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project can be found at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov) (FWP's website). At the FWP homepage, click on these links in the following order: "Hunting", "Hunter Access", and "Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project".

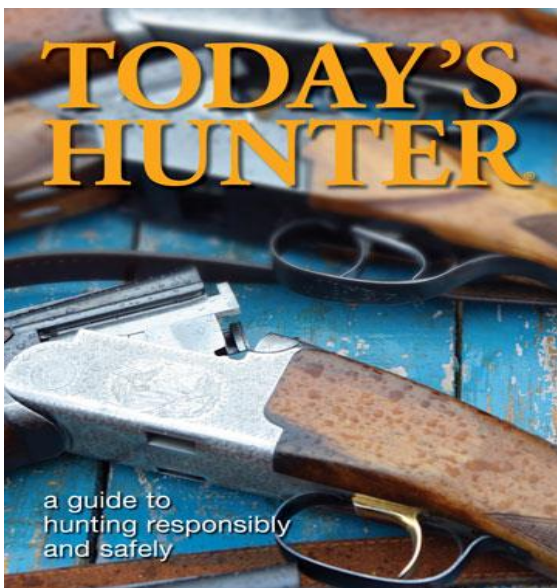


## ABOUT THE EVALUATION & RESULTS

To help review this unique program, FWP set up a five question online evaluation survey at the end of the program that enables participants to provide program-related feedback and input. The five questions in the evaluation survey are as follows:

1. In what way did participating in this program affect your view of responsible hunter behavior and/or hunter-landowners relations in Montana?
2. Are you considering doing anything different than you have in the past regarding responsible hunter behavior and/or hunter-landowner relations?
3. Would you recommend this program to anyone else and who would that be?
4. Do you have any suggestions for FWP on how the agency might improve this program?
5. Do you have any suggestions on what else could be done to promote responsible hunter behavior and good hunter-landowner relations in Montana?

This research summary provides selected results from this important program evaluation. The results presented in this summary are based upon input received from nearly 500 people who have voluntarily participated in this program since its inception in the fall of 2010. Approximately three-quarters of the evaluation surveys were completed by hunters. The remaining evaluations were primarily completed by those participants who identified themselves as being both a landowner and a hunter.



According to the participants who completed the evaluation, the program has positively affected their views of responsible hunter behavior and hunter-landowner relations in a number of different ways. The most frequently received comments included:

- *It reaffirmed much of what I already knew. The program reinforced my views of responsible hunting behavior.*
- *It provided valuable insight regarding a number of legitimate landowner concerns.*
- *It helped to me to better understand the issues faced by both landowners and hunters.*
- *It showed the different perspectives of hunters and landowners so they can work together.*
- *It was a useful reminder of hunting ethics and responsibility, and the need for hunters to build good relationships and be an asset to landowners.*
- *I learned a lot from the program*
- *Good idea. Good information. Good program.*

Program participants also reported they are doing many things differently now as a direct result of completing the program. The most frequently mentioned changes in behavior that were reported by participants included:

- *I now better communicate my intentions to landowners and try to understand their expectations and act accordingly.*
- *I am now more aware of a variety of landowner concerns that are important to consider as part of hunting on privately-owned land.*
- *I will now report possible violators to appropriate authorities.*
- *This helped me to know how to talk to and ask a landowner for hunting access.*
- *I am more aware of and stay current on rules, regulations, and hunter-landowner issues.*
- *I let landowners know how much I appreciate hunting on their lands.*
- *I remind others about responsible hunter behavior and the importance of hunter-landowner relations.*

A strong majority of the program participants indicated they would recommend the program to others including friends, family members, hunting partners, other hunters, and landowners. Many participants mentioned the importance of recommending the program to new hunters (including youths), nonresident hunters, and others who have little experience hunting in Montana.

When asked if they have any suggestions for how FWP might improve the program, program participants offered a diverse number of recommendations. Some recommendations addressed the content and delivery of information, while others suggested ways to enhance the program beyond existing content and format. FWP intends to carefully review these recommendations and incorporate those ideas most useful in helping to update and improve the program. The most frequently mentioned recommendations included the following, organized under three general headings:

### **(1) Program /Information**

- *Make it mandatory for nonresidents to get a license.*
- *Make completion of this program mandatory to hunt on privately-owned land.*
- *Make it a part of the hunter education safety program.*
- *Require that all violators complete the program.*
- *Make it a book/CD and sell it. Offer the program to clubs, groups, etc.*

### **(2) Content/Design**

- *The program is too long.*
- *The download time is too slow (e.g., many users couldn't get the videos to run fast enough).*
- *There is a need for a "save" button. There is no way for a person to stop, leave the program, and return to the site and begin again where they last left off.*
- *There is a need for more videos (e.g., regarding accidents, shooting too close to a hunting partner/vehicles/buildings, etc.).*



### **(3) About the Questions**

- *Many of the questions were too easy.*
- *The easy questions are okay for beginners, but more questions are needed for advanced hunters.*
- *There is a need for less text and more focus on questions/videos.*

Last but not least, program participants offered many suggestions about what else could be done to promote responsible hunter behavior and good hunter-landowner relations in Montana. The most frequently received suggestions included:

- *This program is a good start. There is a need to continue efforts to better inform and educate both hunters and landowners. This will open the door for all sides (including landowners, hunters, and FWP) to work together.*
- *There is a need to better market and get the word out about this program.*
- *This program should be mandatory for all violators.*
- *Provide opportunities for hunters, landowners, and FWP staff to get together and meet face-to-face (e.g., community meetings, work days, social events, etc.).*

## DISCUSSION

- *Sponsor hunter work days with FWP staff and landowners so hunters can demonstrate their appreciation and willingness to help address landowner concerns.*
- *There is a need to consider evaluating the program in terms of whether or not it is actually leading to better hunter-landowner relations and increased hunting access on privately-owned lands in Montana.*
- *Consider developing a list of landowners who would consider offering access to those hunters who have completed the program.*
- *Consider spotlighting those hunters and landowners who provide good examples of hunter behavior and hunter-landowner relations.*

Promoting responsible hunting behavior and good hunter-landowner relations in Montana is an important goal for FWP. The Montana Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project is proving to be a valuable tool to aid FWP in this endeavor. Since its inception, nearly 3,000 people have completed part of the program, while over 1,160 hunters, landowners, and other citizens have successfully graduated and received lifetime program certification.

Results from the evaluation presented in this research summary will help FWP to improve and enhance this already successful program. In the future FWP intends to increase its efforts to publicize this unique program in the hopes that many more interested hunters and landowners will complete the program and benefit from the information offered through the project. 🌐



[fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov)

At the FWP website click on these links in the following order...  
"Hunting", "Hunter Access", and "Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project"

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