

Establish (where possible) Localized Elk Working Groups

Intent: This recommendation encourage communication between landowners, hunters, outfitters, and the local FWP biologist. Citizen science would be heard concerning elk movement, and together the group would address redistribution of elk, objectives, access, and other related issues. Season structure and number of permits where and when could also be topics. This forum could would also address significant legislative or regulatory changes. The intent of this recommendation is to be modeled after Sweet Grass County Wildlife Working Group.

Justification: Too many times problems exist between the parties that must work together in order to effect change in elk distribution, hunter distribution, access, and hunt quality. These problems, if not addressed, can fester and harm relationships. When you hear long time landowners indicating they have never met their biologist, that becomes a red flag indicating dysfunction in the agency.

Description:

Biologists may need some training in communication skills, or in tougher arenas a facilitator may be needed. These Working Groups are different from the season setting meetings routinely held in a biologist's area. These meetings would not take place during hunting season but in the late spring or early summer. Questions such as "What do we know" and "What do we need" and "What has changed" What worked, and what did not" would drive this group discussion. Emphasis on the "we", and modeled after Sweet Grass County Wildlife Working Group

People/Organizations:

- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks biologist
- Hunters
- Landowners
- Outfitters

Timeline:

This could begin in 2023.

FWP Authority to Take Action:

FWP has the authority to do this.

Limitations/Unintended Consequences:

It may be hard to get people to the table. If so, some creativity on incentives would be needed. Also, if a facilitator is needed there would be added expense. There may be additional staff and/or expanding current staff duties to implement this recommendation.

Feasibility of Implementation:

Not identified by the Elk Management Citizen Advisory Group members.