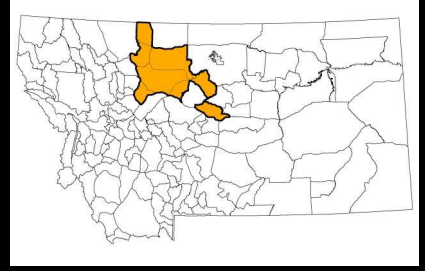


HDs 400, 403, 404, 405, 406, 419, 444 & 471

Size: 7,598 mi²
 Primary Habitat: Human Land Use
 Public Ownership: 12%



Golden Triangle Elk Management Unit

District Summary

These HDs are located in Cascade, Chouteau, Fergus, Judith Basin, Liberty, Pondera, Teton, and Toole Counties and generally encompass what is known locally as the “Golden Triangle” of small grains production. The Golden Triangle lies immediately north of Great Falls, east of US Highway 89 and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation and west of the Liberty-Hill County line and the Missouri River. Hunting Districts 405, 444 and 471 are adjacent to the Golden Triangle. Dryland grain production and cattle ranching are the major land uses. Landownership is approximately 88% private land.

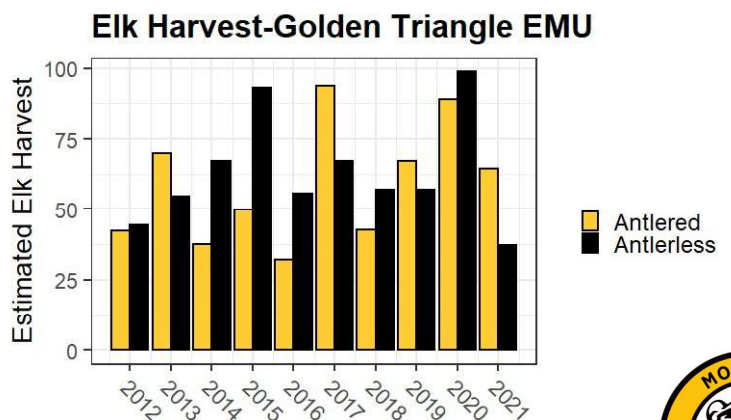
Permanent or suitable elk habitat does not exist in these HDs. Elk presence is usually limited to the occasional passage of lone animals or small groups. Elk are occasionally reported/sighted along major drainages and/or in proximity to adjacent HDs with more secure elk habitat. Elk can be occasionally found traveling through these HDs to or from other HDs. Elk historically occurred here, and it appears that if given a chance, they would reoccupy it. This is incompatible with existing agriculture practices and poses an increased threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) spreading into new areas of the state. When elk are present, generally good hunting access does exist.

Management Challenges:

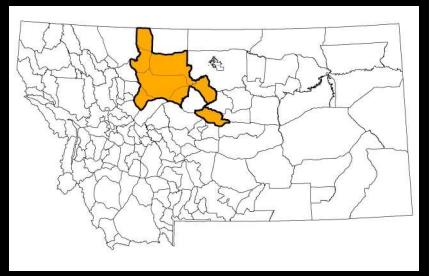
- Because the majority of these HDs are private land and devoted to intensive agricultural production, the potential for game damage is high and few elk can be tolerated.
- Some adjacent HDs provide antlered elk hunting opportunities via LE permit, which has resulted in bulls reaching older age classes. As these older bulls move into these HDs, “trophy” hunting might become a factor that results in more restricted access and fewer opportunities to manage and keep these HDs at low elk densities.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
Golden Triangle EMU	2012	626	3,004
	2014	797	3,890
	2016	807	4,375
	2018	973	4,646
	2020	1,048	5,922



HDs 400, 403, 404, 405, 406, 419, 444 & 471



Golden Triangle Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Accept the occasional transitory elk in passage across these hunting districts, but tolerate no permanent occupancy by elk	A resident elk population is not permanently established in these hunting districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year moving average of game damage complaints does not show an increasing trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly engage landowners/managers to discuss elk management

No recreation Objective; these HDs are managed for low numbers of elk.

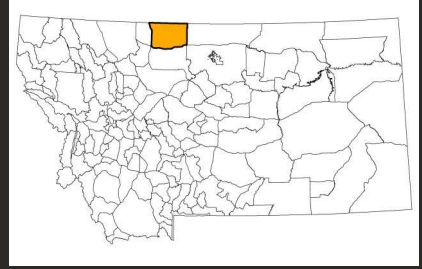


HD 401

Size: 1,810 mi²

Primary Habitat: Human Land Use

Public Ownership: 10%



Sweetgrass Hills Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

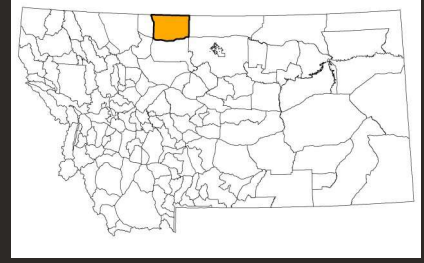
Hunting District 401 is located in north central Montana next to the Canadian Border. This HD consists of an island mountain range known as the Sweet Grass Hills in Toole and Liberty Counties with three small mountainous areas. The mountainous areas are surrounded by native grasslands. Adjacent farmlands extend south to US Highway 2. Hunting District 401 is comprised of 88% private lands with primary land uses being grazing livestock, hay lands and dryland grain farming. Elk are found predominantly on the two largest mountain areas in the Sweet Grass Hills, West Butte and East Butte, and generally occupy the same ranges yearlong. However, bull elk are known to move into and out of Canada on an irregular yet frequent basis. Elk can occasionally be found on farmlands near the mountainous areas and have been seen in most areas of the HD.

A Block Management Area, in place since the mid-1990s allows access to the majority of East Butte. Additional Block Management Areas surrounding the Sweet Grass Hills provide additional opportunity. A public land access from a seasonal road allows hunters to access connecting BLM and DNRC lands on East Butte. Access to public and private lands on West Butte is more limited and requires landowner permission. A desire to maintain lower elk numbers has resulted in reasonable public access. Hunting occurs primarily on foot or horseback.

Recently, elk numbers have increased in this HD prompting increased antlerless opportunity. Elk numbers have stabilized following season structure changes. Although elk do travel back and forth from the West and East Buttes areas, numbers are about evenly split between the two mountain complexes. Elk are known to move into and out of Alberta and Saskatchewan on a seasonal basis, but cow/calf groups are predictably found on slopes on the West and East Buttes.



HD 401



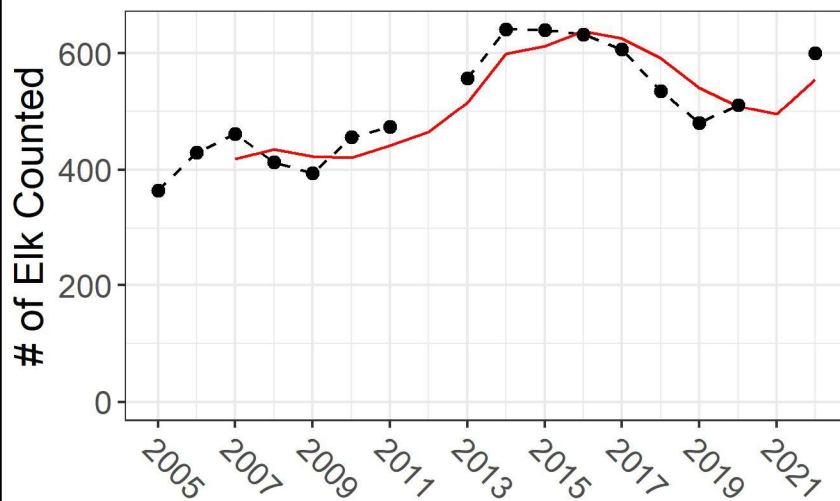
Sweetgrass Hills Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

- Access to elk can be problematic in certain areas due to landowner preferences and tolerance.
- Bull elk frequently move into and out of Canada making accurate bull:cow ratio counts problematic and do not accurately reflect ratios on a yearlong basis.
- Hunter densities on limited public access

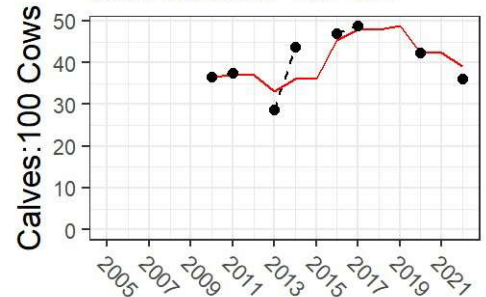
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 401

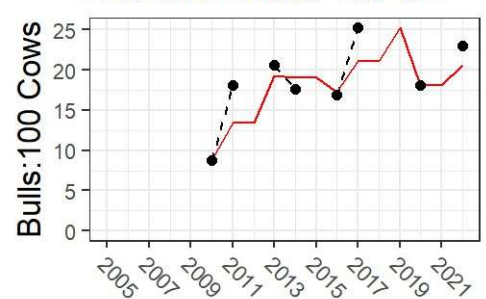


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 401



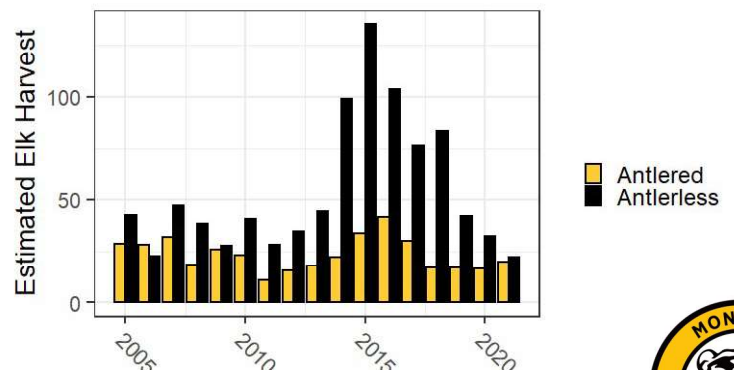
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 401



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

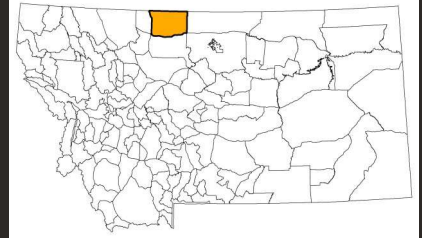
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
401	2006	226	1,067
	2008	346	1,883
	2010	285	1,479
	2012	328	1,576
	2014	460	2,208
	2016	571	3,534
	2018	525	3,395
	2020	429	2,585

Elk Harvest-HD 401



HD 401

Sweetgrass Hills Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 450-650 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 15:100$	3-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	Proportion of antlerless harvest on private land is not declining	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	No increase in elk game damage complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain communication with area landowners

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain/increase public access to elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	A minimum of 50% harvested elk are antlerless	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	$\geq 30\%$ of bulls harvested have ≥ 6 points on one antler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas Adjust quota Adjust archery and rifle seasons as necessary
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain either-sex rifle permit success rate $\geq 25\%$	
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain equitable fall archery and rifle hunting season structure	

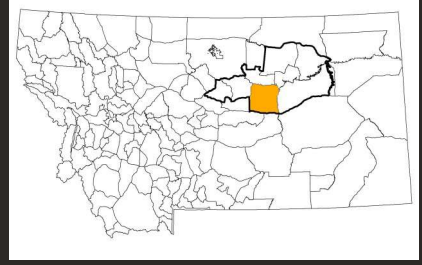


HD 410

Size: 1,593 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 47%



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

Hunting District 410 is located in Fergus and Petroleum Counties, and is bounded by the Missouri River to the north, the Musselshell River to the east, MT Highway 200 to the south, and MT Highway 19/US Highway 191 to the west. The area is a primarily sagebrush grasslands interspersed with private agricultural lands and intersected by long, steep, ponderosa pine-dominated drainages and tributaries that feed into the Missouri and Musselshell Rivers. Roughly 697,000 acres (1,089 mi² or 68%) of HD 410 is considered available elk habitat and elk occupy the majority of it; in recent years elk have started expanding in their distribution to fill some of these remaining areas. The timbered breaks and river riparian areas provide the most secure elk habitat and are also predominately public lands. Approximately 45% of the district as a whole are public lands administered by the BLM, USFWS Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge (CMR), or DNRC. Primary land uses are agricultural, including livestock grazing and dryland farming, with some irrigated hay.

Hunting access in HD 410 is generally good; with approximately 64% of the occupied elk habitat being legally accessible public lands and an additional 20% of the occupied elk habitat being private lands enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program (as of 2022) for a total of 84% of the occupied elk habitat open to public hunting. Good public road access exists throughout the district, and a travel management plan is in place across two of the major Block Management Areas that create seasonal road closures/retrieval-only rules affecting >300 miles of roads to improve elk security across almost 225,000 acres of these lands. Access to elk habitat in HD 410 is also possible by boat from the Missouri River.

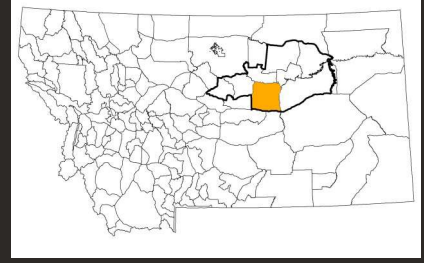
Since 2004, HD 410 has seen elk hunters and elk hunter days in combined archery and general seasons both trending upwards. Hunting District 410 sees among the highest number of applicants in the state for either-sex archery and rifle permits and antlerless licenses.

Management Challenges:

- While public hunting access to elk is generally good, similar trends towards different land management (away from agricultural and towards 'recreation' properties) have begun to affect elk numbers and distribution.
- Equitable allocation between archery and rifle hunters and balancing limited-entry archery opportunity with concerns regarding hunter crowding on public lands.
- As a long-term limited-entry permit area, there is an expectation by some hunters that HD 410 is managed for "trophy" quality and hunters are sometimes outspoken about the perceived lack of older-age class bulls observed during the hunting season. Meanwhile, landowners oftentimes complain about too many bull elk on agricultural fields and grazing lands. (Continued on next page)



HD 410



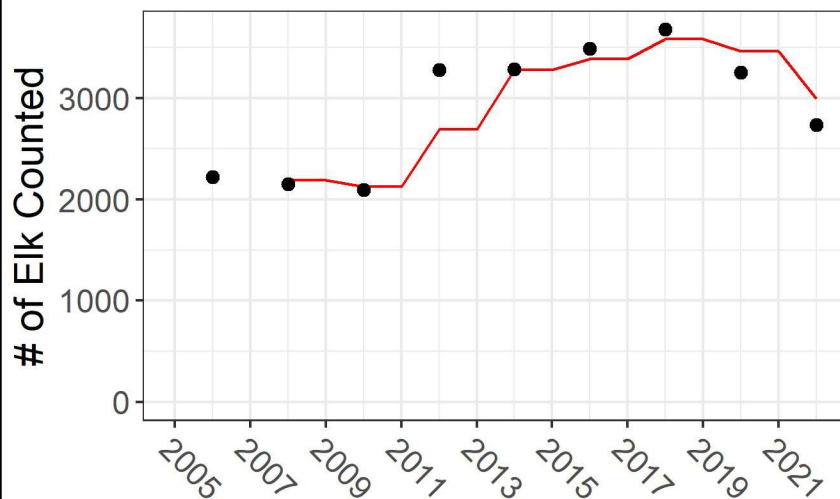
Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges Continued:

- Private landowners repeatedly express concerns related to heightened need for road maintenance and damage to roads and infrastructure caused by hunters and increased vehicular traffic during the hunting season; county tax base is insufficient to grade/maintain roads throughout the year and repair roads post-season. Road closure violations and illegal off-road use are common violations reported to area law enforcement.

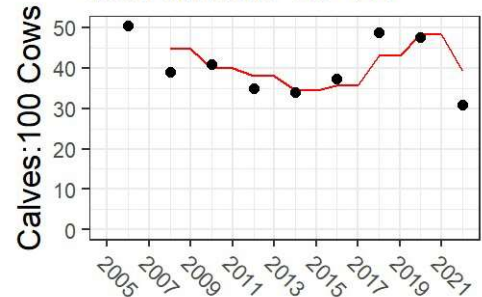
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 410

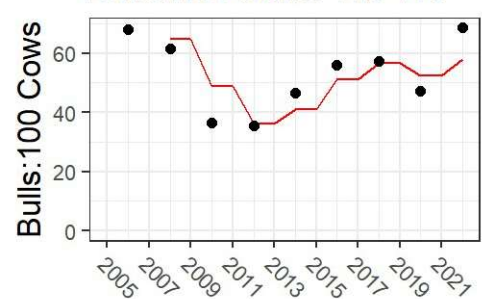


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows an average of the 2 most recent surveys.

Recruitment- HD 410



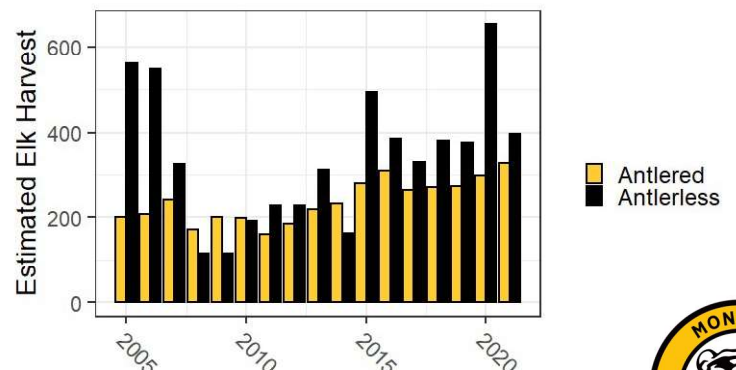
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 410



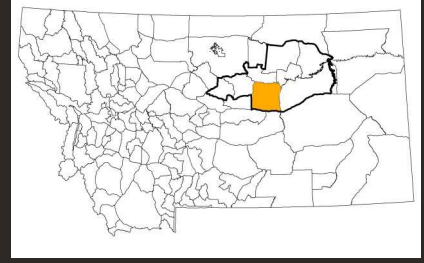
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
410	2006	2,240	13,174
	2008	1,788	12,375
	2010	1,536	10,625
	2012	1,871	13,310
	2014	2,037	14,415
	2016	2,233	16,061
	2018	2,355	17,252
	2020	2,350	18,464

Elk Harvest-HD 410



HD 410



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 2,600-3,200 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

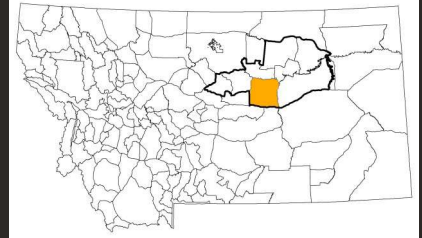
Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	≥40% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with land management agencies to maintain adequate amounts of secure habitat in publicly-accessible lands within elk distribution • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions and security for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers and Block Management cooperators to maintain and implement seasonal and/or year-round road closures on public lands/BMAs in elk habitat • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land
	Maintain public hunting access to at least 75% of private lands where elk are present	
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Factors limiting elk use of public lands are identified and addressed	
Minimize elk use of private and agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Elk harvest is increased on private lands where problematic concentrations of elk and/or chronic game damage complaints occur	

(Continued on next page)



HD 410

Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	≥ 40% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands, commensurate with hunting season elk distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands
	Communications with hunters and landowners indicate that ≥ 60% are happy with permit/license quotas and say crowding, hunt quality, etc. are not an issue or has improved	
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Free public hunting access to ≥ 75% of private lands exists where elk are present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land
	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	≥ 60% of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	≥ 75% of harvested bulls have ≥ 6 points on one antler	
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate ≥ 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust quotas • Adjust archery and rifle limited permit quotas accordingly
	Maintain either-sex rifle permit success rate ≥ 60%	
	Maintain either-sex rifle archery success rate ≥ 10%	
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain ~50% of the total bull harvest by archers and ~ 50% by rifle hunters	

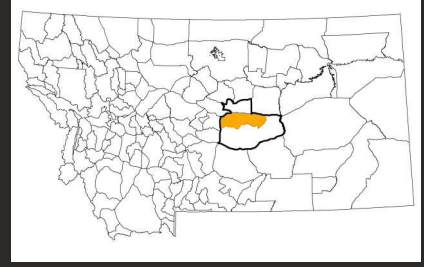


HD 411

Size: 1,179 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 21%



Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

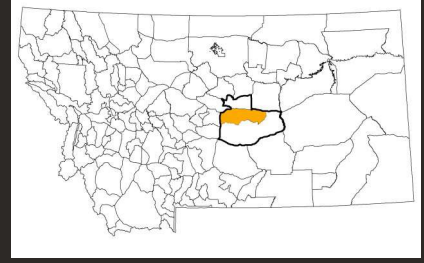
Hunting District 411 is located in Fergus and Petroleum Counties, including the “Yellow Water Triangle” (YWT) south of Winnett and the foothills and northern slopes of the Big and Little Snowy Mountains. The isolated mountain ranges in central Montana that comprise the Snowy Elk Management Unit (EMU) form an island of timber surrounded by a large expanse of prairie, sagebrush, and agricultural lands. Land use is largely agricultural, primarily livestock grazing and hay production. The majority of year-round elk habitat is privately-owned.

Approximately 18% of HD 411 is publicly accessible, but public lands containing elk during the hunting season amount to less than that. The USFS serves as the major public land management agency in the Big and Little Snowy Mountains (to include HD 535), and a sizeable portion of these lands are roadless within a Wilderness Study Area. Other public lands comprise isolated parcels of BLM and DNRC scattered across the district. Access to USFS and other public lands are limited via a few public roads. Elk use of the USFS lands is also more limited in HD 411 compared to adjacent private lands or in HD 535; few perennial water sources exist, and majority heavy-timbered, north-facing slopes accumulate heavy snow cover and provide little adequate forage. For the most part, elk reside in one large herd on the far west end, where winds bare off the west-facing slopes, and again easterly, where heavy forest becomes interspersed with grassy meadows. Agricultural activities in the foothills allow for adequate water sources and more abundant, high-quality forage. While elk are more dispersed in spring and summer, they generally begin to congregate on lower-elevation private lands during archery season and early general season.

Public access to private land is restricted, resulting in increased hunting pressure on adjacent or nearby public lands, which further redistributes or concentrates elk onto private lands. The Snowy EMU elk population has experienced near exponential growth over the last decade, and as elk populations increase, their distribution has expanded onto the prairie, resulting in game damage and concerns with disease transmission. Amenity land purchases, land use shifts towards more recreation-oriented, outfitting/leasing (including by DIY residents and non-residents), and a general decrease in public hunting opportunities are largely responsible for the growing population. Bull elk hunting has been restricted to limited entry permits for both archery and rifle seasons, although liberal archery quotas may be contributing to increased privatization as archery hunting increases in popularity and accessibility. Liberal antlerless opportunities (multiple license types, high quotas, the ability to harvest up to three elk per year, and shoulder seasons) have failed to stabilize or decrease the elk population. Most private land hunting and harvest occurs on lands not enrolled in FWP’s Block Management Program and is limited in nature.



HD 411



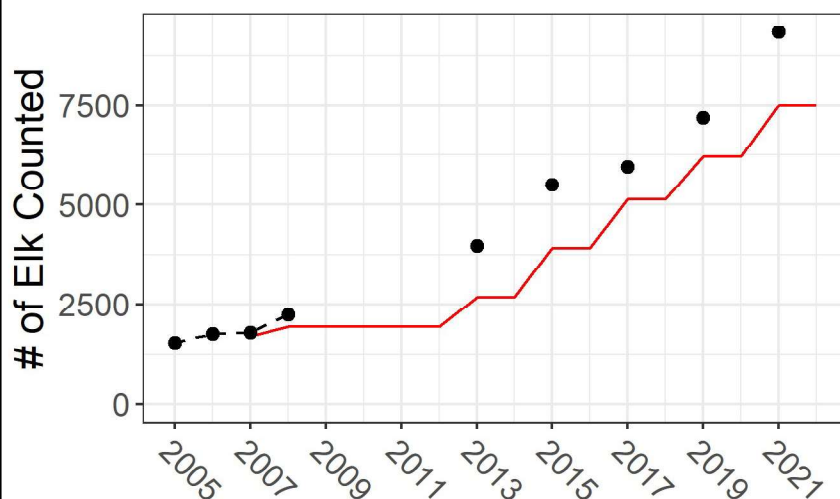
Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

- An increase in amenity or recreational landowners, leasing, and outfitting has limited hunter access and created de facto refuges for elk.
- Severely restricted access to large acreages of private land has historically resulted in failure to cap elk population growth despite extremely liberal antlerless hunting opportunities.
- Elk congregate in large herds during hunting season and throughout the winter. This increases game damage conflicts on private lands, and the potential for disease transmission including brucellosis and CWD.
- Elk distribution complaints about large concentrations of inaccessible elk are common throughout the hunting season and winter.
- Landowner tolerance for elk is mixed, creating management and access challenges in addition to balancing hunter desires for higher elk numbers.
- Habitat conditions on public lands (i.e., minimal forest disturbance due to Wilderness Study Area designation, live-stock grazing, noxious weeds), in addition to hunter crowding, contribute to poor elk distribution.
- Low density residential development in the mountain foothills limits range expansion and winter range, further concentrating elk in certain areas.
- Hunter crowding is an issue on accessible public lands during archery and rifle seasons.

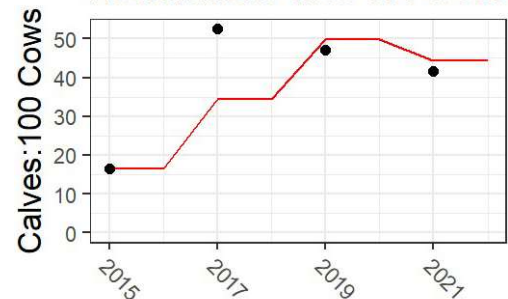
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HDs 411 & 535

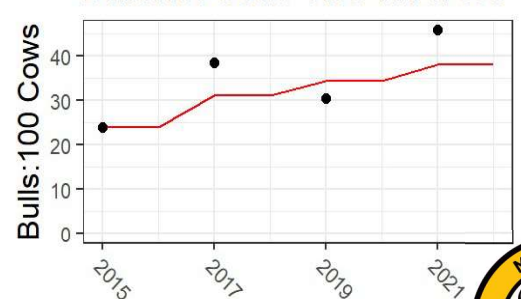


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows an average of the 2 most recent surveys.

Recruitment- HDs 411 & 535

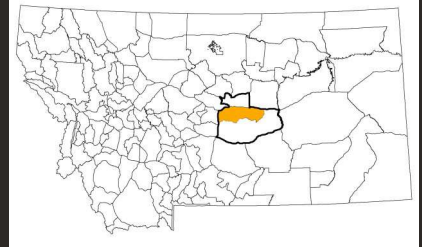


Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 411 & 535



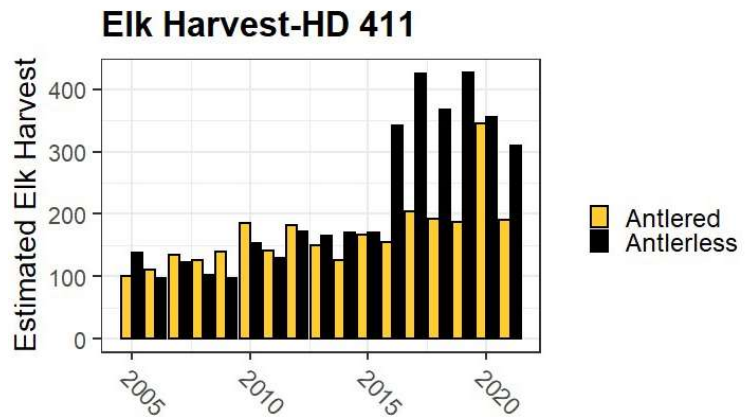
HD 411

Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
411	2006	901	5,616
	2008	1,156	7,883
	2010	1,235	9,518
	2012	1,420	9,772
	2014	1,332	7,985
	2016	1,680	10,515
	2018	1,849	12,414
	2020	1,976	13,506



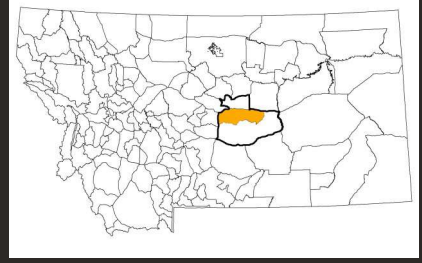
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 6,000-12,000 elk observed in HDs 411 & 535	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size</p> <p>If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,500-2,500 elk observed in HD 411	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size</p> <p>If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range</p>	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts of at least 400 elk observed west of Red Hill Road, but at a level at which elk "shootouts" do not occur near Highway 191, and elk do not regularly cross into HD 418.	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size</p> <p>If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range</p>	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	

(Continued on next page)



HD 411



Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	≥85% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Promote habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	Maintain public hunting access to at least 50% of private lands where elk are present	
Maximize elk use of public land	Factors limiting elk use of public lands are identified and addressed	
Minimize elk use of private and agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Elk harvest is increased on private lands where problematic concentrations of elk and/or chronic game damage complaints occur	

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	≥85% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands, commensurate with hunting season elk distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas • Adjust quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Free public hunting access to at least 50% of private lands where elk are present	
	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity on public lands	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	≥ 60% of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	
	≥ 75 % of bulls harvested on either-sex permits have ≥6 points on one antler	
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate ≥ 25%	
	Maintain either-sex rifle permit success rate ≥ 50%	
	Maintain either-sex archery permit success rate ≥ 30%	

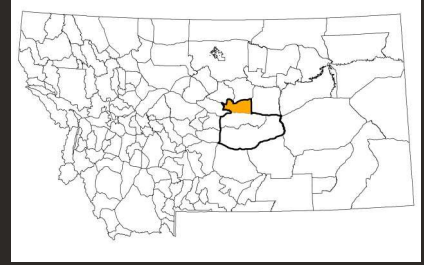


HD 412

Size: 660 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 16%



Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

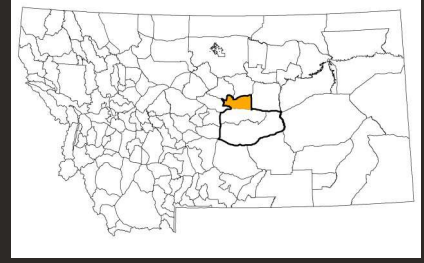
Hunting District 412 is located in Fergus County and includes the Judith and North and South Moccasin Mountains. These isolated mountain ranges form an island of timber surrounded by an expanse of prairie, sagebrush, and agricultural lands. Tributaries off the Judith River run into the foothills of the North Moccasins, and it is believed that elk regularly move back and forth between HDs 412 and 426 in this manner. Similarly, elk will travel down Armells Creek in HD 417 into the Judith Mountain foothills. This district comprises the northernmost portion of the Snowy Elk Management Unit (EMU), which also includes HDs 411 and 535. Land use is largely agricultural, primarily livestock grazing and hay production.

A large proportion of the district (59%) is considered suitable elk habitat, but elk exist in very low densities on public land. Only 15% of the suitable (albeit not always utilized) elk habitat consists of publicly accessible lands administered by the BLM and DNRC. The majority of year-round, utilized elk habitat is privately-owned, and the majority of elk hunting and harvest occurs here. While elk are more dispersed in spring and summer, they generally begin to congregate on lower-elevation private lands during archery season and early general season.

The majority of elk, and antlerless elk, generally occupy the eastern and northern foothills of the Judith Mountains as well as around Black Butte, extending into the sagebrush grasslands to the south and east. Elk presence in the Moccasins is variable due to movements to and from HD 426. Public access to private land is restricted, resulting in increased hunting pressure on adjacent or nearby public lands, which further redistributes or concentrates elk onto private lands. The Snowy EMU elk population, to include HD 412, has experienced near exponential growth over the last decade, and as elk populations increase, their distribution has expanded onto the prairie, resulting in game damage and concerns with disease transmission. Amenity land purchases, land use shifts towards more recreation-oriented, outfitting/leasing (including by DIY residents and non-residents), and a general decrease in public hunting opportunities are largely responsible for the growing population. Bull elk hunting has been restricted to limited entry permits for both archery and rifle seasons, although liberal archery quotas may be contributing to increased privatization as archery hunting increases in popularity and accessibility. Liberal antlerless opportunities (multiple license types, high quotas, the ability to harvest up to three elk per year, and shoulder seasons) have failed to stabilize or decrease the elk population. Most private land hunting and harvest occurs on lands not enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program and is limited in nature.



HD 412



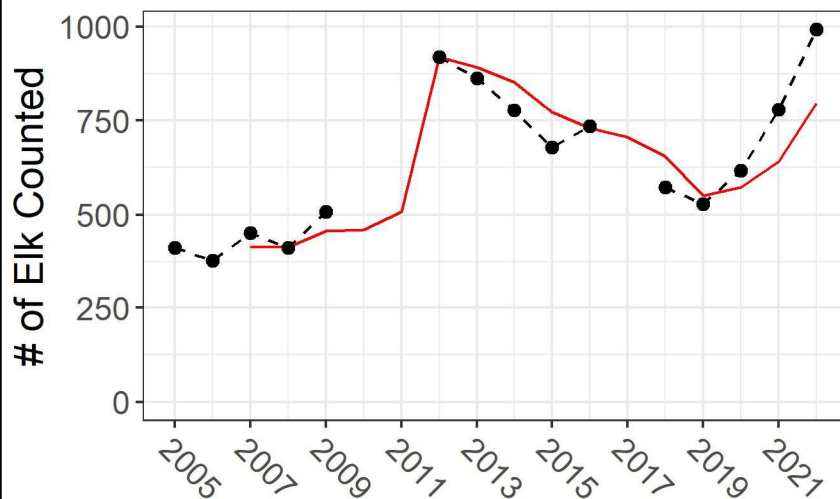
Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

- An increase in amenity or recreational landowners, leasing, and outfitting has limited hunter access and created de facto refuges for elk.
- Landowner tolerance for elk is mixed, creating management and access challenges in addition to balancing hunter desires for higher elk numbers.
- Accessible public lands are limited and hunter crowding on public lands has been an issue.
- Allocation of bull hunting opportunity and balancing the management of bull elk numbers with a limited entry permit structure to reduce further loss of access.

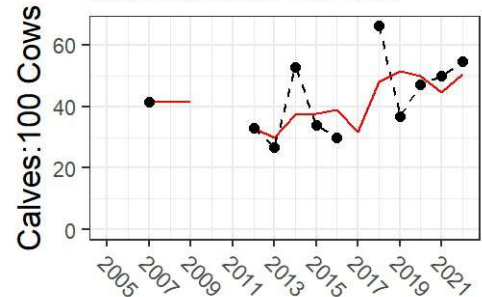
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 412

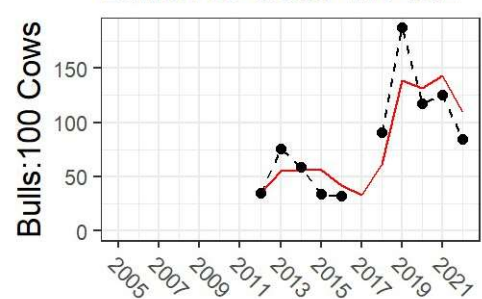


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 412



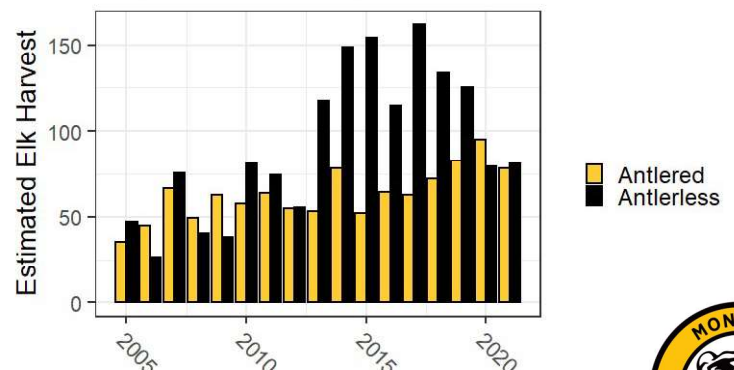
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 412



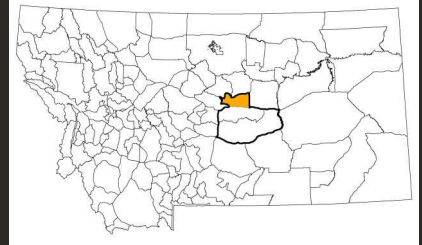
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
412	2006	269	1,412
	2008	439	2,479
	2010	363	2,241
	2012	410	2,737
	2014	607	3,563
	2016	570	3,951
	2018	667	4,351
	2020	630	4,548

Elk Harvest-HD 412



HD 412



Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 600-1,500 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	≥85% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
	Maintain public hunting access to at least 50% of private lands where elk are present	
Maximize elk use of public land	Factors limiting elk use of public lands are identified and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain and implement seasonal and/or year-round road closures on public lands in elk habitat
Minimize elk use of private and agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Elk harvest is increased on private lands where problematic concentrations of elk and/or chronic game damage complaints occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

(Continued on next page)



HD 412



Snowy Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	≥85% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands, commensurate with hunting season elk distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Adjust quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Free public hunting access to at least 50% of private lands where elk are present	
	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity on public lands	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	≥ 60% of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	
	≥ 75 % of bulls harvested on either-sex permit have ≥6 points on one antler	
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate ≥ 25%	
	Maintain either-sex rifle permit success rate ≥ 50%	
	Maintain either-sex archery permit success rate ≥ 10%	

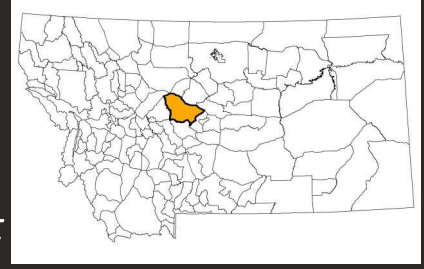


HD 413

Size: 1,371 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 39%



Northwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 413, the North Little Belt Mountains, encompasses a large portion of the Little Belt Mountains in North Central Montana. The district borders the Smith River on the west side and Dry Wolf Creek on the East. Most of the district lies north of Tenderfoot Creek and the town of Neihart. The district includes forested mountains, productive riparian areas, intermountain grasslands and cropland. Elk can be widely dispersed during summer and fall but quite concentrated when winter weather becomes severe. Winter weather tends to drive elk off USFS property and onto private land winter range.

Hunting District 413 is considered a relatively accessible hunting district. A large percentage of the district includes the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. This makes up the largest contiguous block of public lands in the district totaling 300,992 acres. There is also an impressive interior motorized and non-motorized trail system across the Little Belt Complex. Only 4% of the public land in HD 413 is considered inaccessible to the public. Relatively few private land acres are enrolled in FWP Access Programs, however several landowners still provide public elk hunting opportunities.

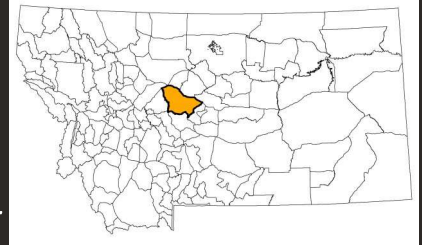
Management Challenges:

- Hunter density can be high on public lands.
- Private land public hunting opportunities are limited.
- Tolerance of elk on private land varies.
- Much of the elk winter range in HD 413 occurs on private land.



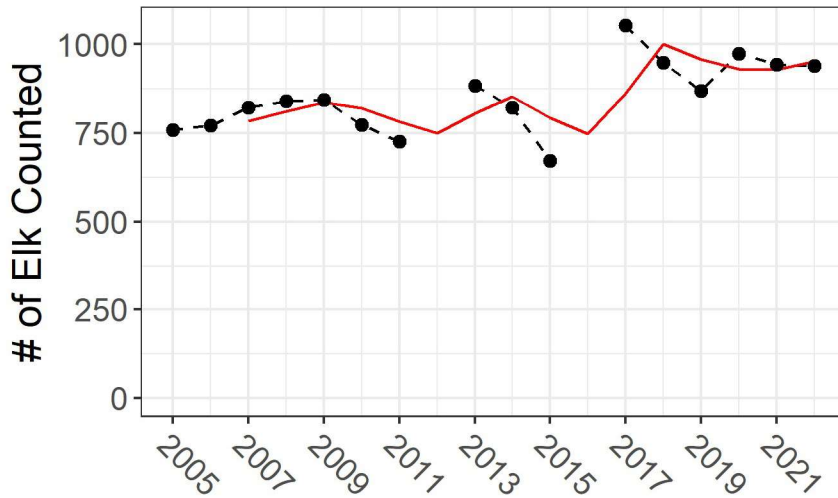
HD 413

Northwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit



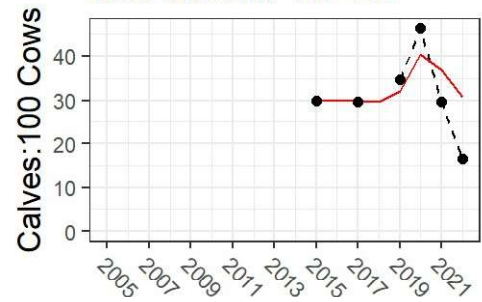
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 413

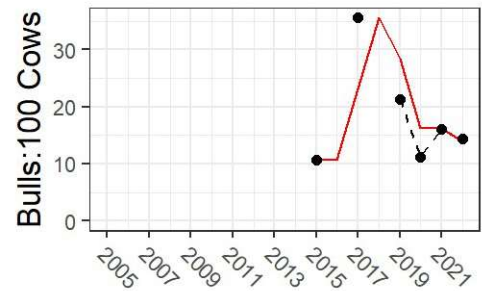


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 413



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 413

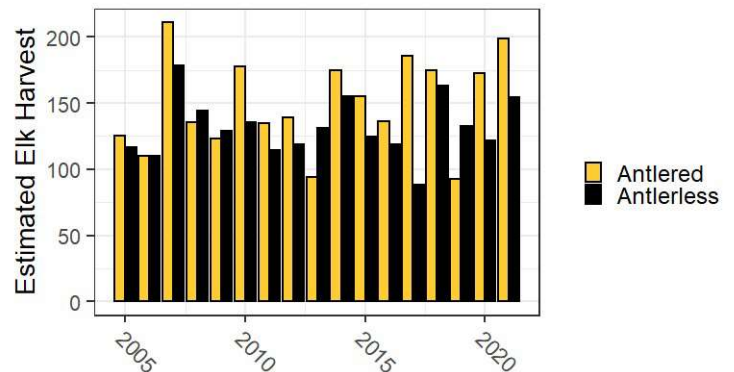


Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
413	2006	1,563	8,156
	2008	1,966	11,295
	2010	1,903	10,304
	2012	2,026	11,585
	2014	2,251	12,664
	2016	2,175	13,559
	2018	1,996	11,589
	2020	1,794	11,603

Hunter effort and harvest estimates were reconciled to current HD boundary.

Elk Harvest-HD 413



HD 413



Northwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 700-1,000 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	3-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

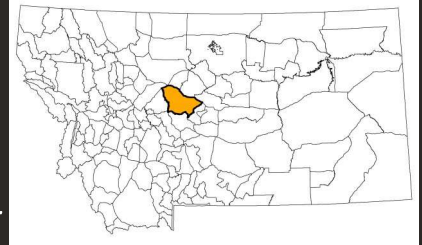
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions on public lands • Improve access to public land
	Stable trend of bull harvest on private lands	
Minimize elk use of private lands where tolerance is low.	Number and severity of elk game damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage landowners/land managers to discuss elk management • Maintain relatively equal harvest opportunities across ownership types (public vs. private) • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land • Promote habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges
Increased elk use of USFS land	Factors limiting elk use of public lands are identified and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore access and hunting opportunity modifications such as trail closures, season structure modifications, and access agreements with landowners

(Continued on next page)



HD 413



Northwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Improve access to public land • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maintain diversity of bull age classes	Percent of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Maintain antlerless hunting opportunity Harvest on B-Licenses valid on non-USFS lands is stable or increasing	

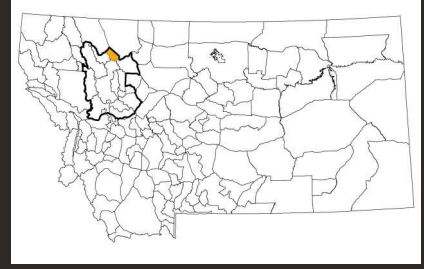


HD 415

Size: 207 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 98%



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 415 is almost entirely a backcountry mountainous area comprised of two primary drainages, the South Fork of the Two Medicine River on the north and tributaries of Badger Creek on the south. Hunting District 415 is within Glacier and Pondera Counties. It is bounded by the Continental Divide on the west, Glacier Park on the north, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation on the east and North Fork of Birch Creek on the south. USFS lands comprise almost the entirety of this HD with a few small private land inholdings on the north. Some seasonal livestock grazing occurs during the summer months at lower elevations. Within the past 25 years, much of the area has burned.

The majority of the elk in this area are a shared resource with the Blackfeet Reservation. Elk can be found throughout the HD during the growing season and into the fall. Elk move to wintering areas on the South Fork of the Two Medicine River, near Dog Gone Lake, and the western portions of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation during winter months. Occasionally, small groups of elk can be found wintering in Mowitch Basin and Badger Creek.

Public access to the USFS lands occurs mainly from three sites along US Highway 2 from East Glacier to Marias Pass. Trailheads at Birch Creek at Swift Dam and Little Badger via the Blackfeet Reservation are limited to tribal members during the hunting season. Both day hunting and extended backcountry trips are common. Elk on USFS lands in this area are available to the general public.

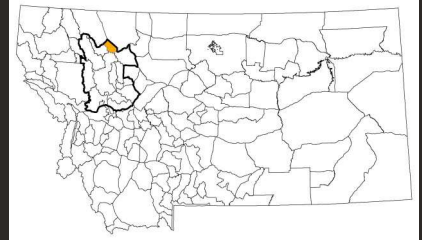
Management Challenges:

- Access during hunting season from tribal lands to USFS lands is restricted to tribal members only causing some hunter crowding on the northern access points.
- Elk in this HD are a shared resource between the State of Montana and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Each has differing traditions, regulations, and philosophies making unilateral elk management difficult and achieving management objectives problematic.



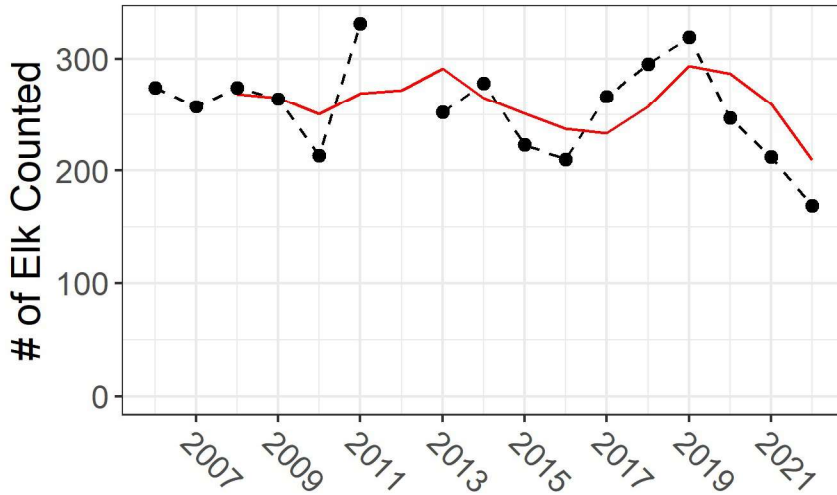
HD 415

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



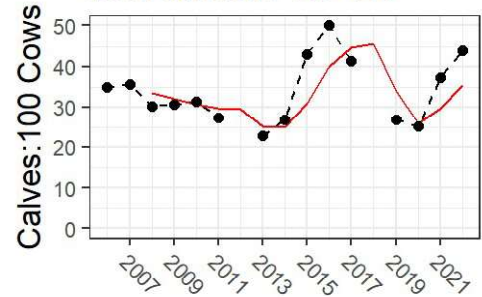
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 415

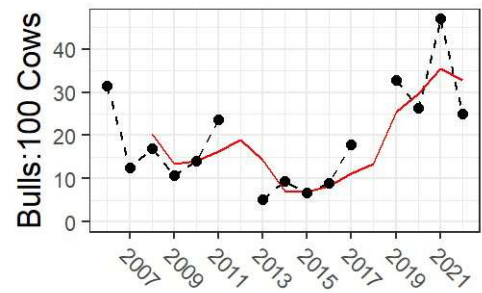


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 415



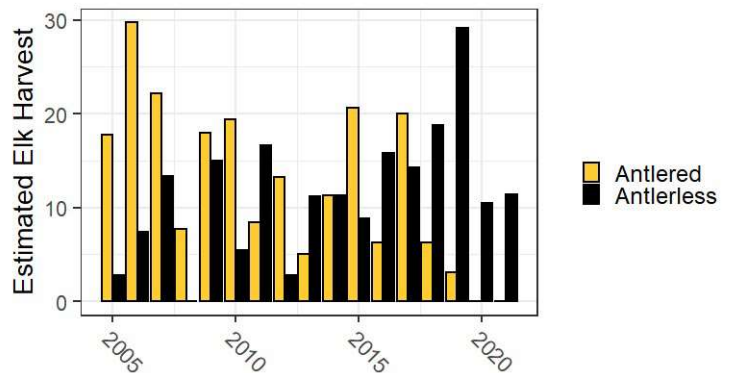
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 415



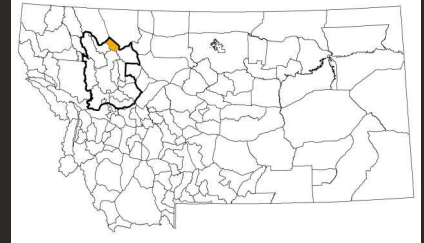
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
415	2006	175	995
	2008	199	1,470
	2010	176	1,095
	2012	195	1,395
	2014	205	1,285
	2016	254	1,727
	2018	182	1,306
	2020	162	960

Elk Harvest-HD 415



HD 415



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 150-250 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	3-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	GPS elk collar data show elk using suitable habitats between USFS lands and Blackfeet Indian Reservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data from cooperative elk research with Blackfeet Indian Reservation Monitor elk movement via surveys, public comment, and communication with tribal biologists Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
	Movement corridors remain functional for seasonal elk movement between summer and winter ranges	

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain/increase public access points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with NGOs, USFS and Blackfeet Tribal Fish and Game to increase access points
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	A minimum of 30% harvested elk are antlerless	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	$\geq 50\%$ of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas



HD 416

Size: 654 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 47%



Southwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 416 is located in the Southwest Little Belt Mountains. It includes much of the Smith River watershed east of the Smith River, south of the Tenderfoot drainage and north of US Highway 12. The 45% of the hunting district that is managed by the USFS is primarily low and mid elevation coniferous forest managed for public recreation, timber production, and livestock grazing. The remaining 55% is lower elevation private or DNRC rangeland managed for cattle and agricultural production. Although a significant proportion of elk in the HD seasonally migrate to higher elevation public land during summer and fall, nearly all elk winter range is on lower elevation private and State land. A portion of the 3,400-acre Smith River Wildlife Management Area is in HD 416 and is managed to provide big game winter range.

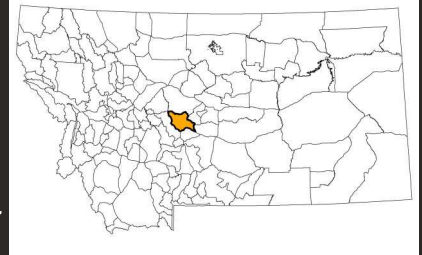
The USFS maintains an extensive road and trail system that provides access to most of the public land in the hunting district except for their “checkerboard” ownership in the Sheep and Butte Cr. drainages. Two long-time Block Management cooperators (one located just northwest of White Sulphur Springs and the other north of US Highway 12 near the N. Fork of the Smith River) provide additional public elk hunting access. Other large private landowners in the HD employ a range of elk management strategies including managed hunting access, commercial outfitting, and hunting leases.

Management Challenges:

- Achieving sufficient antlerless elk harvest on privately managed lands to maintain elk numbers within the Goal range.
- Maintaining the seasonal migration of elk from private to public land during summer and fall.
- The recent growth in elk numbers has increased the frequency and severity of game damage issues.



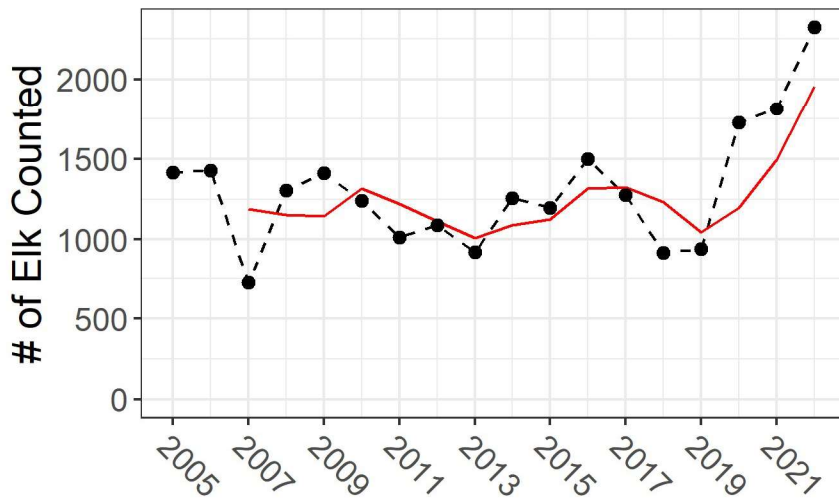
HD 416



Southwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

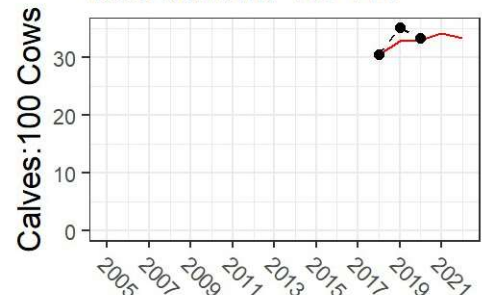
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 416

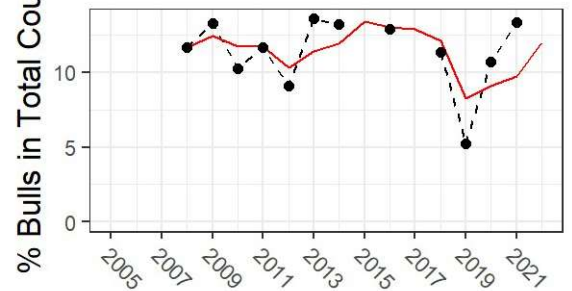


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 416



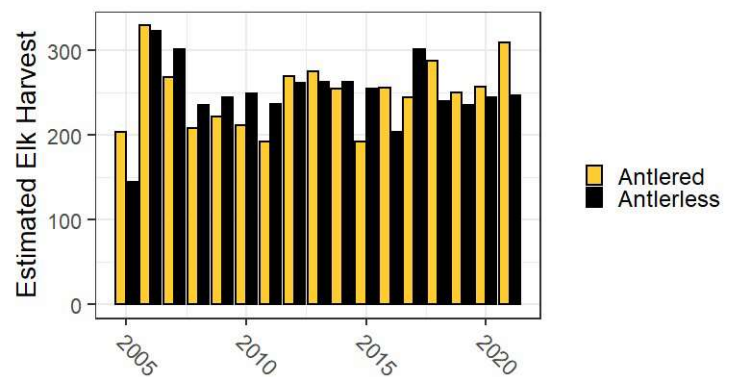
% Bulls in Total Count- HD 416



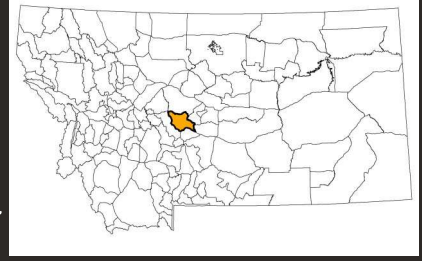
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
416	2006	1,302	6,863
	2008	1,663	8,921
	2010	1,618	9,559
	2012	1,986	12,368
	2014	1,790	10,662
	2016	2,055	13,209
	2018	2,089	12,532
	2020	1,629	10,546

Elk Harvest-HD 416



HD 416



Southwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,000-1,500 elk observed	5-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	5-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

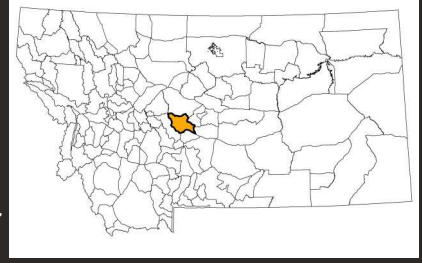
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use USFS/non-USFS land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest appropriately
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Trend in the number and severity of elk damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly engage landowners/managers to discuss elk management • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land

(Continued on next page)



HD 416



Southwest Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structures and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
	Harvest using B-Licenses valid for use on non-USFS land is stable or increasing	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	Percent of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	

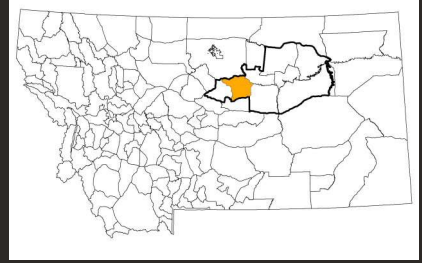


HD 417

Size: 973 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 38%



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

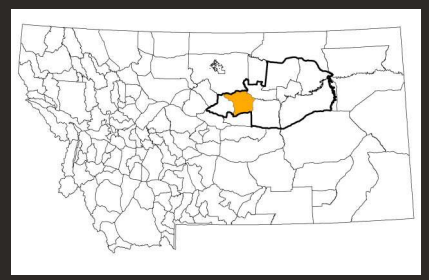
Hunting District 417 is located in Fergus County and contains a portion of the southern Missouri River Breaks. Primary land uses are agricultural, including livestock grazing and dryland farming, and some irrigated hay. The area is dominated by mild topography and sagebrush grasslands/agricultural lands in the southern portion leading towards steeper ponderosa pine-dominated “breaks” that feed into the Missouri River moving north. Armells Creek flowing from the northeast and Dog Creek from the northwest are the two main drainages bisecting this district and they along with their tributaries provide the majority of the elk habitat in HD 417.

Roughly 402,500 acres (629 mi² or 65%) of HD 417 is considered available or potential elk habitat, although the vast majority (> 90%) reside in the southern portion that is predominately private lands or largely inaccessible public lands. Publicly accessible lands make up roughly 39% of the potential elk distribution and are primarily in the northern portion of the district. These include Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument administered by the BLM, the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge (CMR; USFWS), and DNRC lands. Closer to the Missouri River the topography gets very rough and transitions into bighorn sheep habitat. Very few elk inhabit the lands within the first few miles south of the Missouri River, with most elk residing south of Knox Ridge Road in drainages spurring off Armells Creek. As elk populations expand, they have been observed crossing back and forth from US Highway 191 into the Judith Mountains in HD 412.

Three Block Management Areas (as of 2022) and their adjacent public lands provide the bulk of elk hunting opportunity in HD 417. FWP purchased the Whiskey Ridge Conservation Easement in 2020 and elk have been observed wintering in the vicinity, however elk densities are very low. The Fargo Coulee Conservation Easement, purchased in 2015 primarily for Greater sage-grouse habitat, does not yet contain elk but as elk continue to expand in their distribution, the potential exists. Elk hunting access to private lands varies; landowners allow a mix of limited to ample public hunting opportunities, but elk do not stay on those properties long enough for effective harvest management. Other properties are outfitted, have been purchased specifically for recreation, or are leased by individual hunters or groups of hunters. Limited hunting access where elk are abundant has contributed to a significant increase in the population since 2013. Hunter numbers have increased 67% during this same time period, but most of that hunting pressure occurs in the northern, public land-dominated portion of the HD, which also contributes to the shift in elk distribution from these northern public lands to majority private lands to the south. Numerous drought years have also affected habitat quality on public lands not adjacent to agricultural fields which provide supplemental forage. Bull elk hunting has been limited by permit for both archery and rifle seasons, and to reduce elk numbers on private lands in the southern portion of HD 417, antlerless harvest has been liberalized.



HD 417



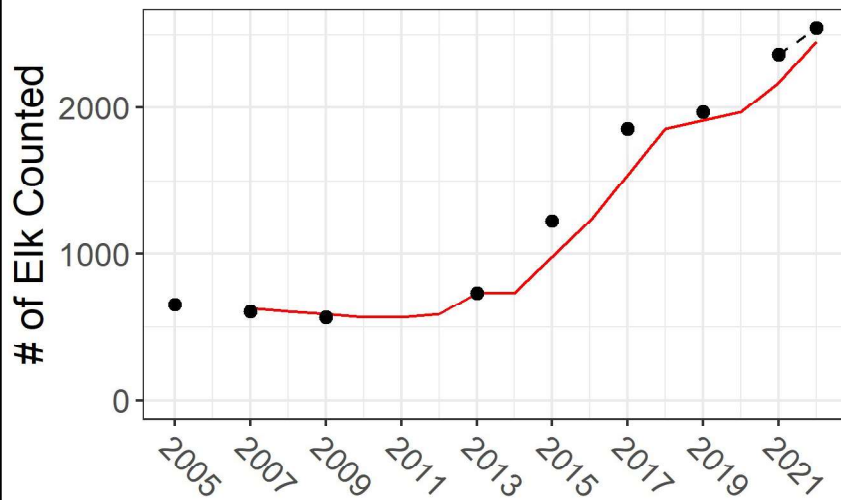
Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

- Hunting access is limited where elk are located and becoming more so with shifts in private land ownership and management towards amenity or fee hunting.
- Large numbers of elk find refuge during hunting season on private lands largely inaccessible to public hunters; the concentration of elk also impacts neighboring traditional landowners who experience game damage.
- Landowners that allow access still limit hunter numbers to improve harvest rates, which reduces opportunity.
- Hunter crowding issues on public lands and balancing hunter expectations/experiences with the need to reduce elk populations.
- Increased elk hunter numbers, particularly in the northern portion of the HD may be negatively impacting mule deer, as mule deer harvest appears to increase with the number of elk hunters. It is unclear how increasing elk populations may impact mule deer and bighorn sheep.

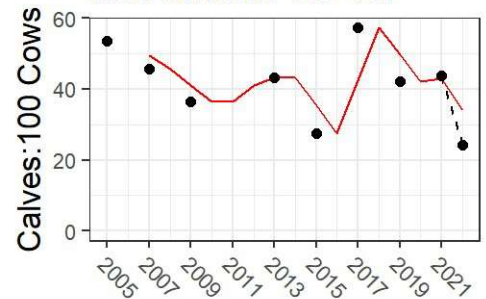
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 417

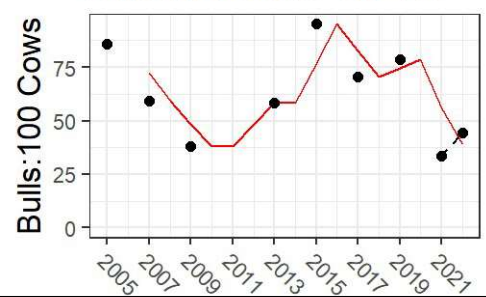


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows an average of the 2 most recent surveys.

Recruitment- HD 417



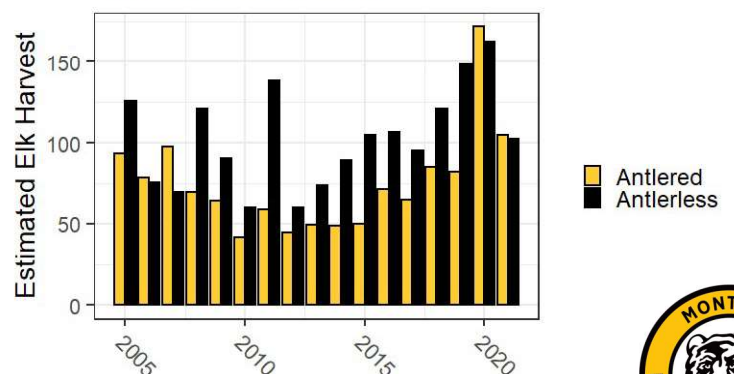
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 417



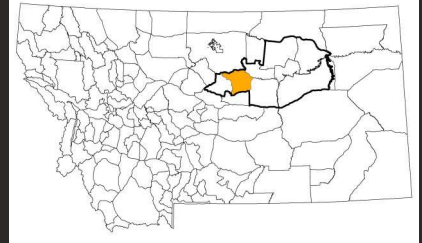
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
417	2006	588	3,388
	2008	831	4,757
	2010	508	2,939
	2012	487	2,912
	2014	674	4,015
	2016	634	3,886
	2018	626	4,131
	2020	811	5,333

Elk Harvest-HD 417



HD 417



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,500-2,500 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	

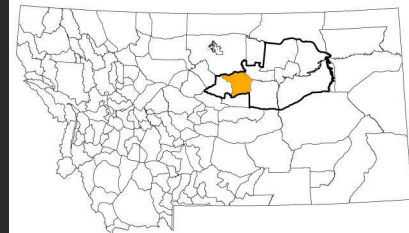
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	≥65% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions and security for elk on public lands
	Maintain public hunting access to at least 50% of private lands where elk are present	
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Factors limiting elk use of public lands are identified and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to maintain adequate amounts of secure habitat in publicly-accessible lands within elk distribution
Minimize elk use of private and agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Elk harvest is increased on private lands where problematic concentrations of elk and/or chronic game damage complaints occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers and Block Management cooperators to maintain and implement seasonal and/or year-round road closures on public lands/BMAs in elk habitat

(Continued on next page)



HD 417



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	≥65% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands, commensurate with hunting season elk distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use hunting season structure that accommodates elk harvest on private lands • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Adjust quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Free public hunting access to at least 50% of private lands where elk are present	
	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity on public lands	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	≥ 60% of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	
	≥ 75% of harvested bulls have ≥6 points on one antler	
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate ≥ 25%	
	Maintain either-sex rifle permit success rate ≥ 60%	
	Maintain either-sex archery permit success rate ≥ 10%	

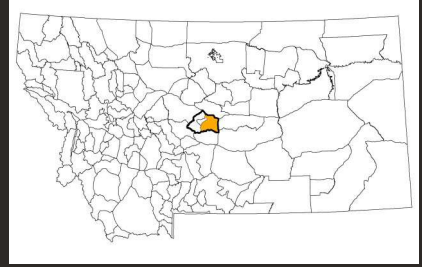


HD 418

Size: 480 mi²

Primary Habitat: Human Land Use & Grassland

Public Ownership: 21%



Northeast Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 418 is located in the northeast Little Belt Mountains generally south of the mainstem Judith River to the Musselshell watershed divide. The primary winter range in HD 418 is located on private and State lands in the Antelope Creek drainage, as well as in the southeastern portion of the HD near Oka Butte. A significant number of elk present in the HD during summer and fall likely winter in adjacent HDs 540 and 420.

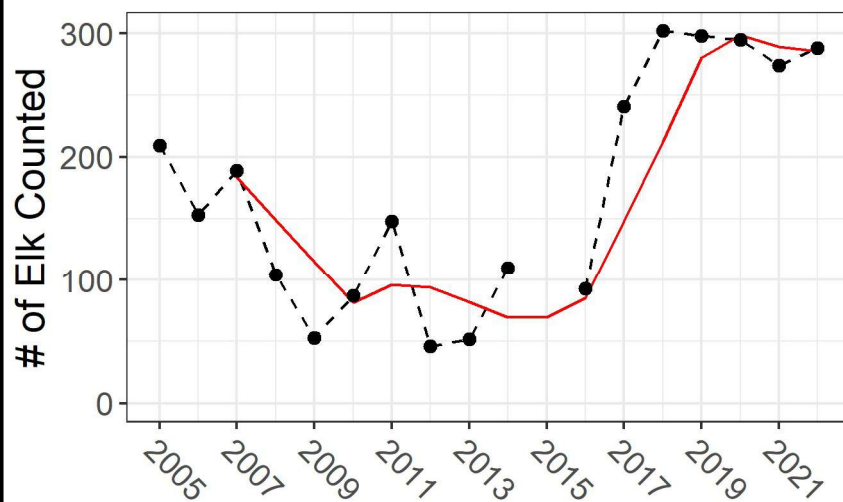
The 11% of HD 418 that is managed by the USFS has limited road and trail access, although several long time Block Management cooperators allow walk-in access to USFS lands on the south side of the HD. Much of the high quality private and State-owned fall elk habitat is either commercially outfitted or limited to hunting by landowners' friends and family.

Management Challenges:

- Game damage from elk can be periodically and locally significant.
- Most of the HD consists of privately-owned land or public land with access wholly or partially privately controlled.

Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 418

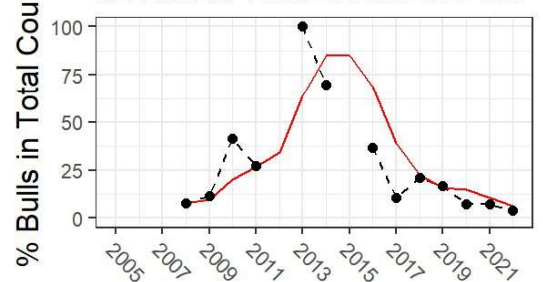


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

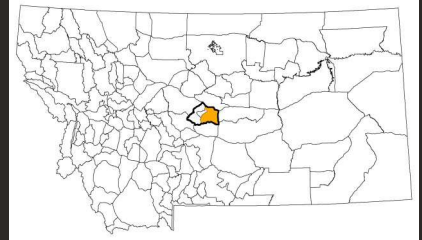
Recruitment- HD 418



% Bulls in Total Count- HD 418



HD 418

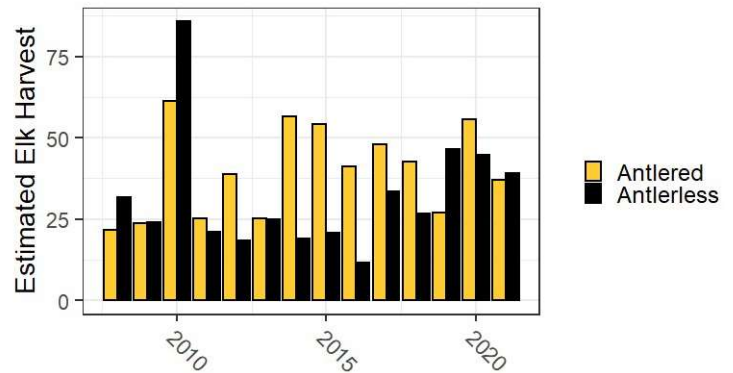


Northeast Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
418	2008	419	2,036
	2010	478	2,024
	2012	365	1,901
	2014	359	1,934
	2016	395	2,402
	2018	397	2,127
	2020	331	1,946

Elk Harvest-HD 418



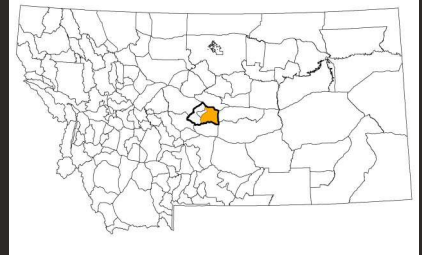
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 200-300 elk observed	5-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	5-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

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HD 418



Northeast Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Regularly engage landowners/managers to discuss elk management
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Trend in the number and severity of elk damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	Percent of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	

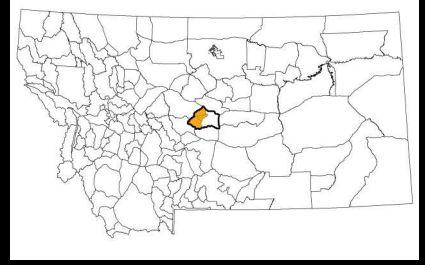


HDs 420 & 448

Size: 461 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 70%



Northeast Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting Districts 420 and 448 are located in the Judith River watershed of the eastern Little Belt Mountains. Most elk in these HDs winter on the 9,840-acre Judith River Wildlife Management Area and adjacent private lands, then disperse west into HD 448 (and beyond) during summer and fall. The number of elk present in HD 420 during the hunting season is weather dependent, therefore general season harvest has been limited by the use of special antlerless licenses and either-sex permits.

There is a well distributed road and trail system on USFS land in the north and south portions of HD 448, while the Middle and Lost Forks of the Judith River are primarily managed for non-motorized use. Two Block Management areas provide access to the Judith River Wildlife Management Area and its internal road system.

The number of elk annually counted in these HDs varies with winter severity but, in general, herd size and harvest have been relatively stable over the last 20 years. Although HD 448 elk habitually winter on the Judith River Wildlife Management Area, FWP regularly receives game damage complaints from adjacent private landowners to its north and east.

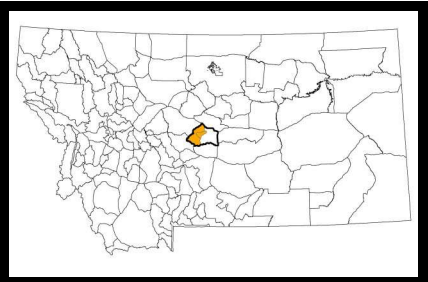
Management Challenges:

- Maintaining high quality winter habitat on the Judith River Wildlife Management Area so that elk use of adjacent private agricultural lands is limited



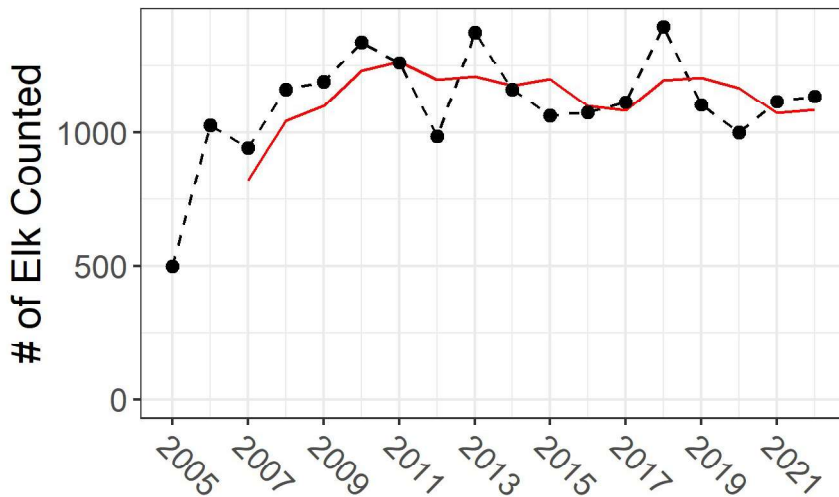
HDs 420 & 448

Northeast Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

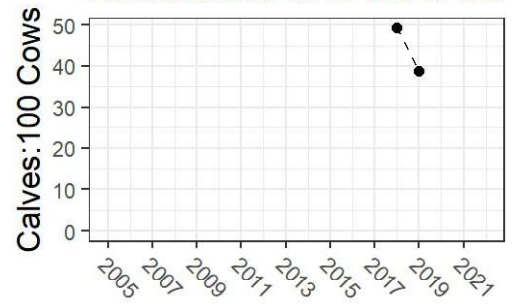


Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HDs 420 & 448

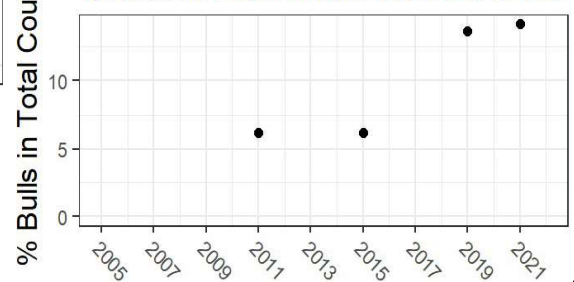


Recruitment- HDs 420 & 448



Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

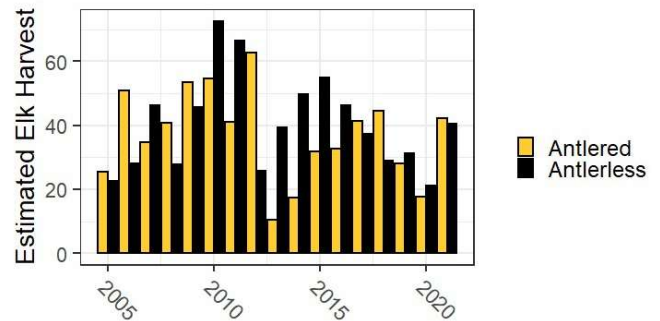
% Bulls in Total Count- HDs 420 & 448



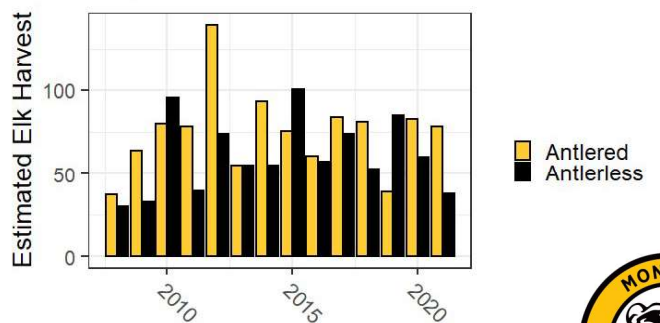
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
420	2006	264	1,492
	2008	455	3,111
	2010	452	2,722
	2012	449	2,730
	2014	332	1,817
	2016	361	2,541
	2018	365	2,371
	2020	332	2,147
448	2008	982	5,847
	2010	1,072	6,095
	2012	1,260	8,107
	2014	1,238	7,817
	2016	1,074	6,985
	2018	936	6,123
	2020	794	4,998

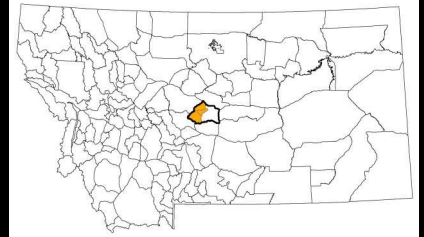
Elk Harvest-HD 420



Elk Harvest-HD 448



HDs 420 & 448



Northeast Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,000-1,500 elk observed	5-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	5-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

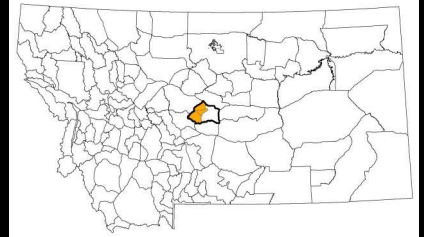
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Trend in the number and severity of elk damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly engage landowners/managers to discuss elk management • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access
Maximize elk use of Judith River WMA	Proportion of wintering elk observed on the Judith River WMA during the winter aerial surveys is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land • Maintain and improve elk winter range quality and quantity on the Judith River WMA and adjacent public lands
	>80% of elk observed during winter aerial surveys are located on the Judith River WMA or adjacent public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve fall and winter elk habitat security on the Judith River WMA and adjacent public lands through public use closures, motorized travel restrictions, and habitat improvement projects

(Continued on next page)



HDs 420 & 448



Northeast Little Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	Percent of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	

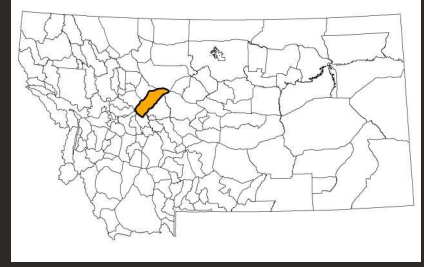


HD 421

Size: 810 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 12%



Birdtail Hills Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 421 is bound to the west by the Continental Divide as it continues south from Rogers Pass to I-15. Moving east through timbered ridges, solitary buttes, open reefs and grasslands, the rolling and timbered Birdtail Hills north of I-15 represent the easternmost extent of elk habitat in this district. Montana Highway 200 and I-15 represent the northern and southern boundaries of this HD, respectively. Historically, Birdtail Hills elk were managed cooperatively between former HDs 421 and 423. Beginning in 2022, these two HDs were formally combined. Hunting District 421 was retained for naming purposes.

Agricultural production includes grain, hay production and livestock pasture. Approximately just under 50% of this HD has habitat used variably by elk over the course of the year. Throughout the year, most elk are associated with private land which constitutes about 88% of the ownership in this HD.

Public access in this district is variable. Of the public lands, approximately one-third are considered inaccessible to the public without securing access through private land first. Some private landownerships provide strong access opportunity either at their own discretion or through FWP's Block Management Program.

Other key properties are much more limited in access. Dependent on daily distribution, a strong percentage of these elk may be unavailable to the general public hunter because of limited access. Road densities within available elk habitat is generally limited but certain public roads do provide reasonable access to public and private lands. FWP has acquired conservation easements on two properties in this HD, providing access (including elk hunting) to over 7,000 acres. Hunting opportunity in this HD has been traditionally managed for opportunity (e.g., no limited permits). A continued interest in managing towards lower elk numbers in this HD is desired. Communication with landowners in this HD is ongoing related to elk management, game damage solutions, and public access opportunities.

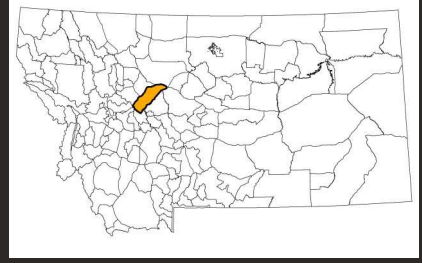
Management Challenges:

- Limited public hunting access to areas where high densities of elk can be during hunting seasons, resulting in limiting elk harvest
- Lack of more variable elk distribution
- Hunter densities in publicly accessible areas



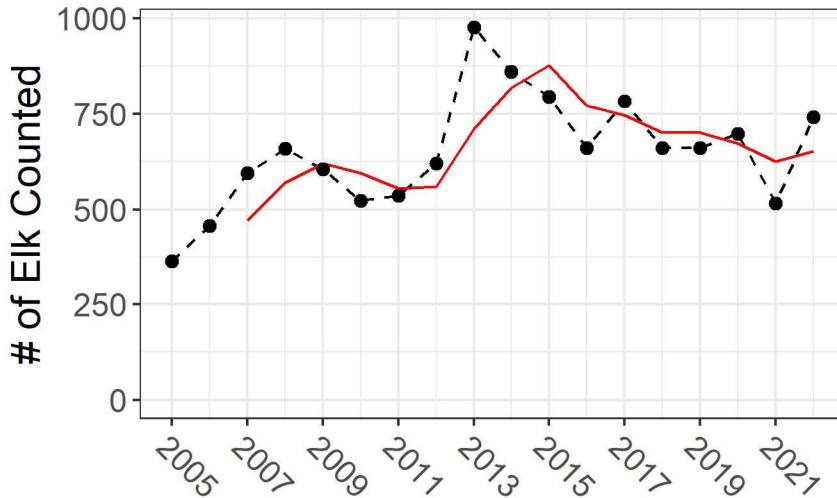
HD 421

Birdtail Hills Elk Management Unit



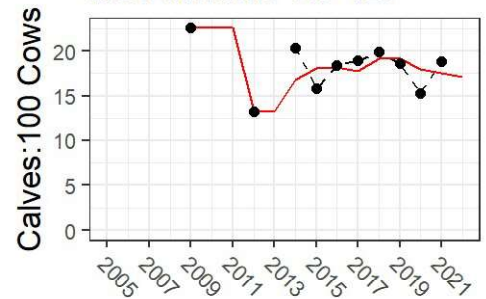
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 421

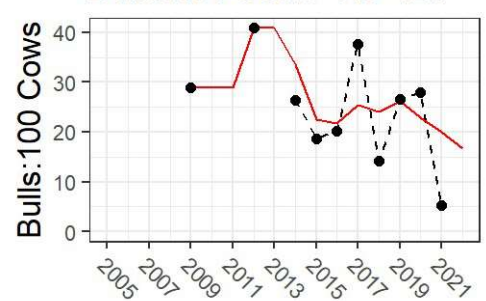


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 421



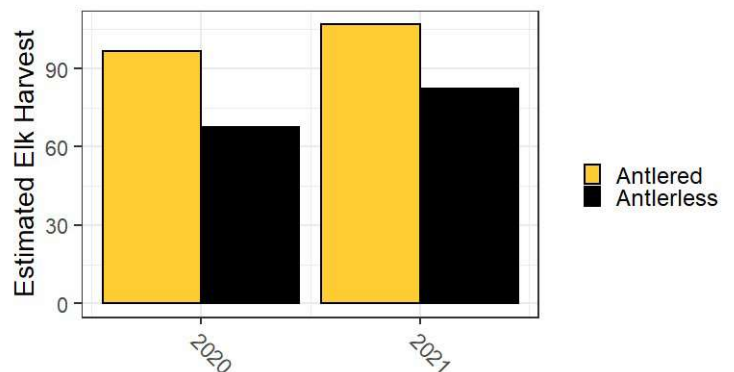
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 421



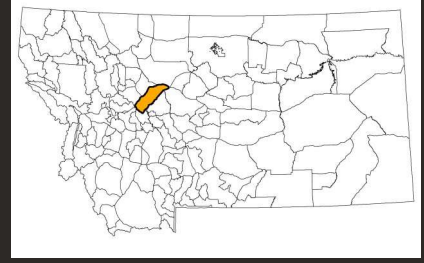
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Elk Harvest-HD 421

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
421	2020	684	4,256



HD 421



Birdtail Hills Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 400-600 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	3-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

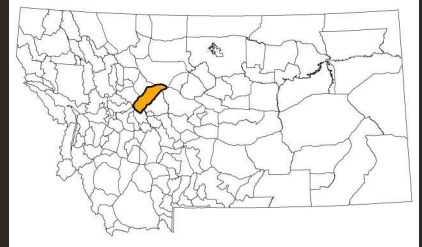
Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use fence modification
	Proportion of antlerless harvest on private land is not declining	
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Movement corridors remain functional for seasonal elk movement between summer and winter ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue FWP Conservation Easement/Lease options
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	No increase in elk game damage complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Maintain communication with area landowners

(Continued on next page)



HD 421

Birdtail Hills Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain or improve equitable harvest/opportunity on public and private landownerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Improve landowner/sportsperson relations through open communication
Provide opportunity to harvest either-sex elk	Annual total harvest is comprised of ~50% antlerless and ~50% antlered harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate $\geq 20\%$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to increase hunting access • Monitor harvest through Augusta check station as well as FWP harvest survey
Maintain equitable bull elk harvest opportunity between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain equitable fall archery and rifle hunting season structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust quotas • Adjust archery and rifle seasons as necessary

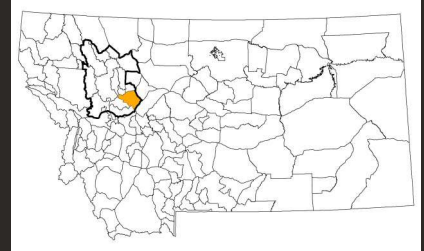


HD 422

Size: 485 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 45%



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

District Summary

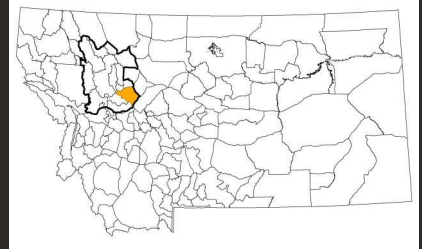
Hunting District 422 provides a combination of public and private lands inhabited by elk throughout the course of the year. The western boundary of this HD is the Continental Divide as it begins at Rogers Pass and extends northward through the Scapegoat Wilderness to the southern tip of the Sun River Game Preserve. The western half of this HD includes rugged, mountainous terrain transitioning to mountain foothills. The eastern half of this HD is defined more as open, rolling hill grassland habitat with some component of agriculture production (grains, hay and livestock pasture). Variable elk densities inhabit roughly a 50/50 split between both public and private lands throughout this HD. Approximately 70% of this HD has habitat used variably by elk over the course of the year with an estimated 80% of elk winter range falling on private lands, depending on the year. Elk within this HD reside in two distinct herds, one north and one south of the Dearborn River, each representing approximately half the elk in this HD. Elk located in the southern portion of this HD have migratory patterns that place them on, near or west of the Continental Divide during the summer period/fall period, thereby ensuing shared elk management responsibility with FWP Region 2.

Of the public lands in this HD, over 90% are considered accessible to the public. Access to USFS lands consists of primarily five access points (Falls creek, Upper Dearborn River, Elk Creek, Smith Creek and Benchmark [south]). Some private landownerships provide reasonable access opportunity at their own discretion and some formal public access agreements (e.g., Block Management Areas) have been used in the past but typically has been limited. Other key properties are much more restrictive for access. Dependent on daily distribution, a strong percentage of elk may be unavailable to the general public hunter because of limited access. Road densities within available elk habitat is generally limited but certain public roads do provide reasonable access to public and private lands. Through multiple partnerships, access to the Falls Creek area was secured in 2019 thereby significantly improving public access to well over 20,000 acres of USFS land variably inhabited by elk. Hunting opportunity in this HD has been traditionally managed for opportunity (e.g., no limited permits). A continued interest in managing towards lower elk numbers in this HD is desired. Communication with landowners in this HD is ongoing related to elk management, game damage solutions, and public access opportunities.



HD 422

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

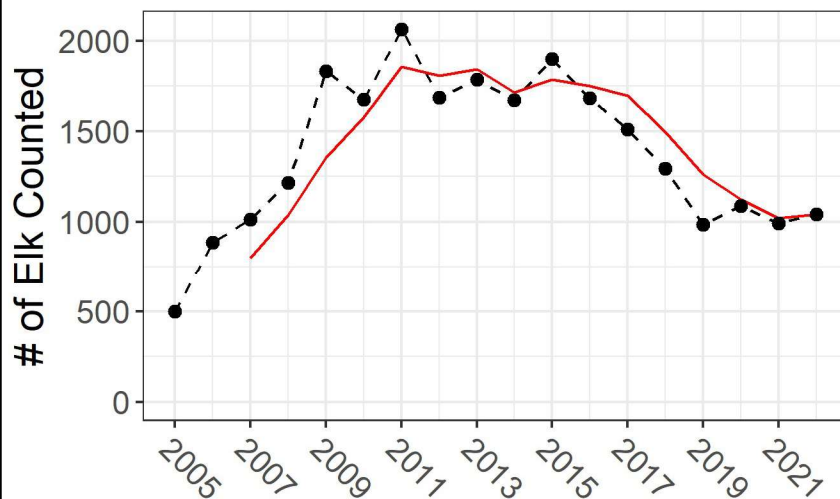


Management Challenges:

- Limited public hunting access to areas where high densities of elk can be during hunting seasons, resulting in limiting elk harvest
- Achieving increased antlerless elk harvest, especially on private land winter range
- Lack of more variable elk distribution
- Hunter densities in publicly accessible areas

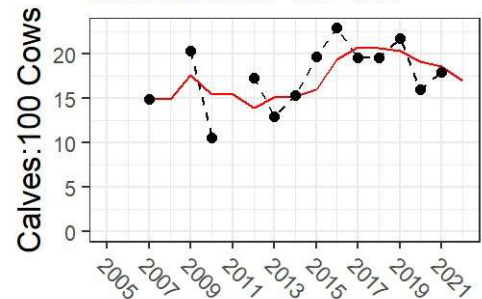
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 422

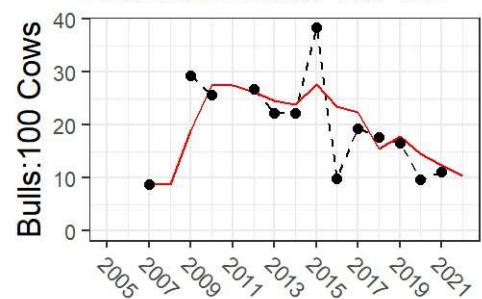


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 422



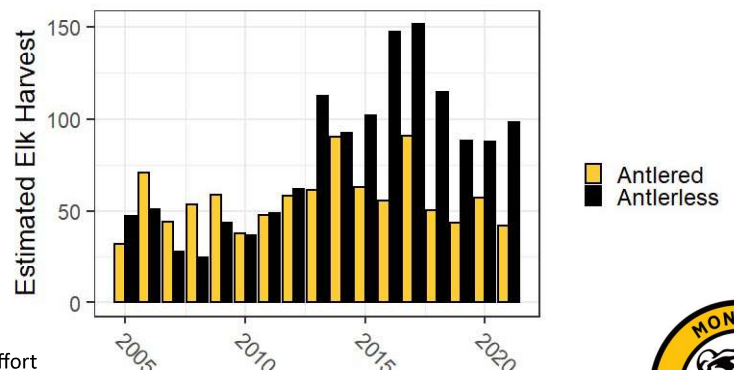
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 422



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
422	2006	342	1,765
	2008	490	3,037
	2010	422	2,523
	2012	686	3,526
	2014	722	4,599
	2016	700	4,994
	2018	670	4,192
	2020	517	3,108

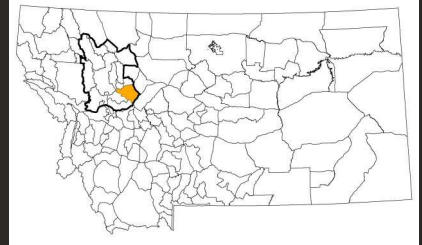
Elk Harvest-Former HD 422



Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data displayed may not be directly comparable to data obtained after 2021.



HD 422



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 600-800 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 300-400 elk observed North of the Dearborn River	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 300-400 elk observed South of the Dearborn River	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	3-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

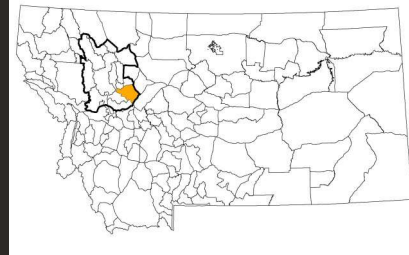
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Maintain communication with area landowners
	Proportion of antlerless harvest on private land is not declining	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	No increase in elk game damage complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

(Continued on next page)



HD 422



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain or improve equitable harvest/opportunity on public and private landownerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands
Provide opportunity to harvest either-sex elk	Annual total harvest is comprised of $\geq 60\%$ antlerless and $\leq 40\%$ antlered harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Improve landowner/sportsperson relations through communication
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate $\geq 20\%$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land • Monitor harvest through Augusta check station as well as FWP harvest survey
Maintain equitable bull elk harvest opportunity between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain equitable fall archery and rifle hunting season structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust quotas • Adjust archery and rifle seasons as necessary

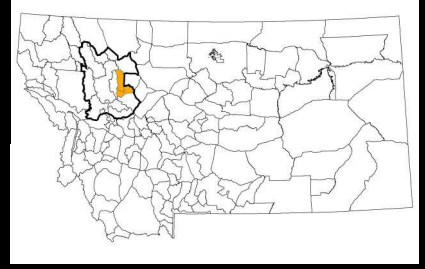


HDs 424, 425 & 442

Size: 536 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 83%



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

****Special Management Districts for Bull Elk****

District Summary

These combined HDs are managed cooperatively for the Sun River elk herd. This migratory elk herd has strong ties to public lands, including the Sun River Wildlife Management Area (SRWMA) winter range in HD 425 and USFS land summer range in HDs 424 and 442, including the Sun River Game Preserve (SRGP) and Bob Marshall Wilderness. Over 90% of this herd can be found on the SRWMA during the winter period and similarly on USFS lands to the west during the summer/early fall period. The western boundary of HDs 424 and 442 are the South and North Forks of the Sun River (east boundary of the SRGP) with most of these HDs comprised of back country alpine/subalpine mountain habitat types intermixed with numerous stream/river corridors and mountain valleys. Eastern boundaries of HDs 424 and 442 lie along the eastern USFS boundary along the Rocky Mountain Front. Hunting District 425 lies just east of this USFS boundary along the mountain foothills and includes the SRWMA giving way to open grasslands to the east with some component of agriculture production (hay and open range livestock pasture). Public land constitutes approximately 90% of land used by elk over the course of the year in these HDs, with approximately 80% of winter range falling on public land.

Of the public lands in these HDs, over 95% are considered accessible to the public, albeit some areas are remote and are difficult to access without considerable effort on foot or horseback. Within HDs 424 and 442, primary access points include Benchmark, Sun Canyon and the South Fork Teton River. Hunting opportunity during the general fall rifle season in HDs 424 and 442 has historically been managed through a quota system managed through the Augusta check station. The primary public land access in HD 425 is the SRWMA, where limited licenses/permits have been offered (general fall rifle season). Of the limited private landownerships where elk reside (primarily HD 425), access is limited. A strong percentage of these elk are available to the general public hunter, however, the SRGP does inhibit access to elk during the fall period. Road densities within available elk habitat is limited but certain public roads do provide good access to locations where elk inhabit. Maintaining elk distribution on public lands is paramount to include opportunities on the SRWMA. Communication with landowners adjacent to the SRWMA is also important to limit elk distribution off the Wildlife Management Area during the late fall to early spring period given low tolerance levels on private land.

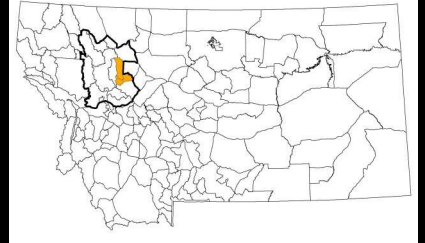
Management Challenges:

- Chronic low calf recruitment and general elk population maintenance related to overall population goals and hunter/recreational viewing opportunity
- Habitat maintenance on the Sun River Wildlife Management Area to provide consistent and adequate winter range habitat
- Ongoing considerations and correlations between elk distribution, management, and the Sun River Game Preserve
- Maintaining good bull age structure and subsequent reasonable older age bull harvest opportunity



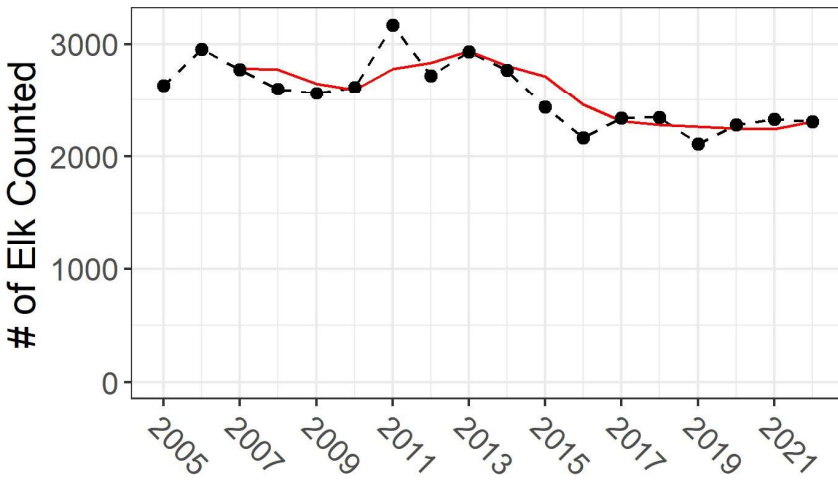
HDs 424, 425 & 442

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

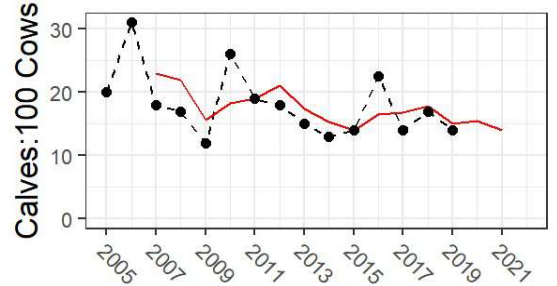


Current Population Status & Trend

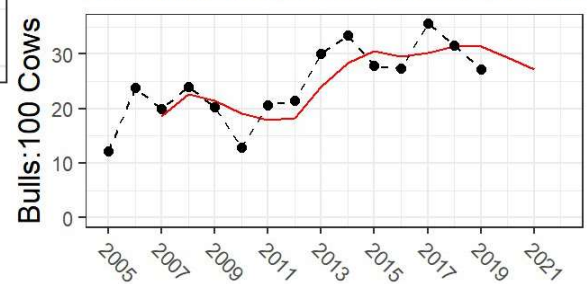
Total Elk Counted- HDs 424, 425 & 442



Recruitment- HDs 424, 425 & 442



Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 424, 425 & 442

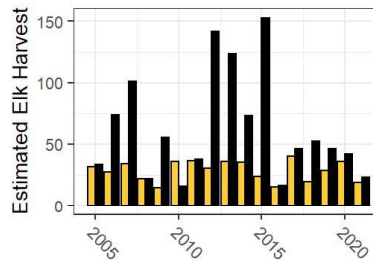


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

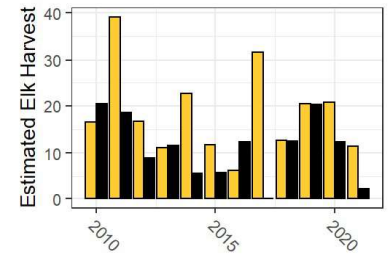
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

HD	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
424	2010	360	1,974
	2012	355	2,131
	2014	393	2,327
	2016	311	2,030
	2018	296	1,796
	2020	228	1,703
425	2006	475	2,212
	2008	569	2,490
	2010	509	2,398
	2012	640	3,242
	2014	501	2,397
	2016	513	2,869
	2018	483	2,521
2020	505	3,156	
442	2006	693	3,945
	2008	933	6,204
	2010	883	4,875
	2012	1,037	6,036
	2014	1,036	6,417
	2016	802	4,846
	2018	732	5,243
	2020	690	4,055

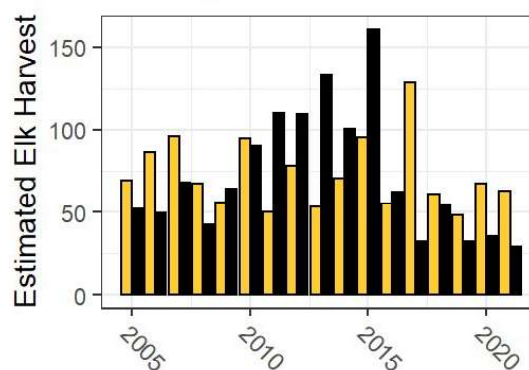
Elk Harvest-HD 425



Elk Harvest-HD 424



Elk Harvest-Former HD 442

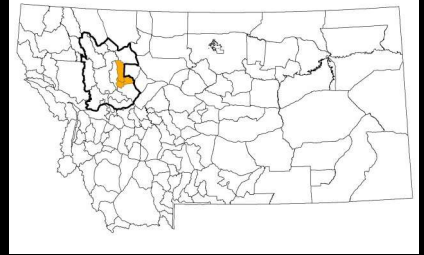


Antlered
Antlerless

Disclaimer: HD 442 had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data displayed may not be directly comparable to data obtained after 2021.



HDs 424, 425 & 442



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 2,250-2,750 elk observed	Most recent elk count is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	

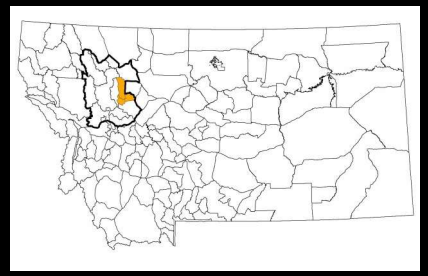
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	≥90% archery and general season elk harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	≥ 90% year-round elk presence and distribution on public lands (Sun River WMA/USFS) as indicated through surveys and landowner comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Maintain wilderness character of elk • Use fence modification • Maintain good communication with Sun River WMA neighbors to sustain corridors • Minimize disturbance to wintering elk in backcountry areas • Maintain USFS public travel plan stipulations
	≥ 95% of the Sun River elk herd distribution on USFS land early May - Oct	
	Movement corridors remain functional for seasonal elk movement between summer and winter ranges	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	No increase in elk game damage complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maximize elk use of the Sun River WMA during winter	≥ 90% of wintering elk in front country areas are on the Sun River WMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain strategic vegetative monitoring work on the Sun River WMA • Implement habitat improvement projects on the Sun River WMA
Minimize elk use of the Sun River WMA during summer	≤ 5% of the Sun River elk herd found on the WMA during mid-May through September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain westerly elk migration during spring

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HDs 424, 425 & 442



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	A minimum of 250 brow-tined bulls observed during aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue operation of Augusta check station • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Continue use of quota based harvest commensurate with elk population status
	≥ 15% of bulls harvested are ≥ 6.5 years old as measured through the Augusta check station	
	Annual brow-tined bull harvest is < 50% of brow-tined bulls observed during aerial surveys	
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	3-year average B-License success rate in HD 425 is ≥ 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support current USFS public travel plan stipulations during the fall period
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain public access to 90% of elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain balance of back country and front country hunting opportunities
Maintain equitable bull elk harvest opportunity between rifle and archery hunters	3-year average archery bull harvest comprises ≥ 10% of total bull harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust quota • Adjust archery and rifle seasons as necessary
Provide elk viewing opportunities in areas that the public can reasonably access	Retain elk viewing overlook locations around the perimeter of the Sun River WMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain viewing overlooks and access to them
Maintain shed hunting opportunity on the Sun River WMA beginning May 15	Sun River WMA opens for public use on May 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize, to the extent possible, excessive elk presence on the Sun River WMA by May 15
	Public attendance on May 15 (vehicle counts & communication with shed hunters) indicate continued interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce/limit early entry antler hunting

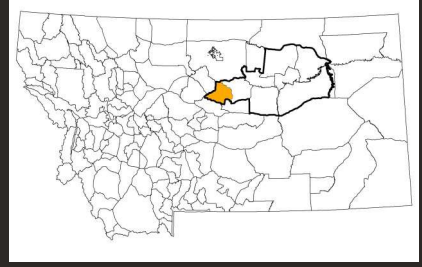


HD 426

Size: 730 mi²

Primary Habitat: Human Land Use

Public Ownership: 17%



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

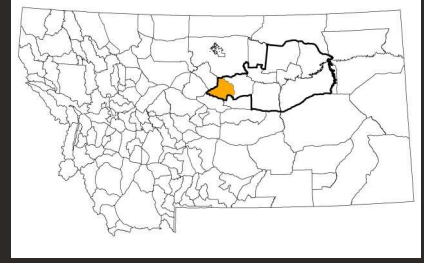
Hunting District 426 is located in Fergus County and includes a portion of the Missouri River to the north and Arrow Creek to the west. Primary land uses are agricultural, largely dryland farming, irrigated hay, and live-stock grazing. Flat benches consisting of farm ground abut steep sagebrush-grassland or ponderosa pine “breaks” of the Judith River, Wolf Creek, Arrow Creek, Coffee Creek, and their numerous tributaries. Hunting District 426 is primarily private land, and due to the propensity of farming, landowner tolerance for elk is very low. Nevertheless, elk have been expanding in number and distribution. Only 13% of potential elk habitat in the district is publicly accessible land.

The Beckman Wildlife Management Area and adjacent Roe Ranch (which allows free public hunting in a live-stock grazing exchange-of-use), in addition to BLM and DNRC lands along the Judith River and Arrow Creek provide the bulk of elk hunting opportunity. Public lands in general are accessed via few crossings and inter-sections with main county roads, and rough topography limits the feasibility of access beyond a couple miles from these points. The Beckman Wildlife Management Area was purchased in 1999 primarily as a mule deer habitat acquisition, however as elk populations increase, they are beginning to use Wildlife Management Area lands more often. In 2020, FWP purchased the Everson Bench Conservation Easement, which now provides access to 9,000 acres of Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument lands and adjacent DNRC. Elk are not present here in large numbers but nevertheless the area provides some public hunting opportunity.

Elk are just beginning to colonize HD 426 in larger numbers; prior to 2016 there were very few antlerless elk observed during winter surveys. While their numbers are increasing, the bulk of elk in HD 426 are bulls and this significantly inflates the bull:cow ratio. Antlerless elk range widely in the district; radio-tagged elk calves have been observed travelling from the Beckman Wildlife Management Area into the North Moccasins of HD 412. It is also presumed that elk in Arrow Creek may venture up into Square Butte in HD 471. Otherwise elk range widely across the district via its numerous drainages. A significant burn in 2021 may affect elk habitat use along the Judith River in coming years.



HD 426



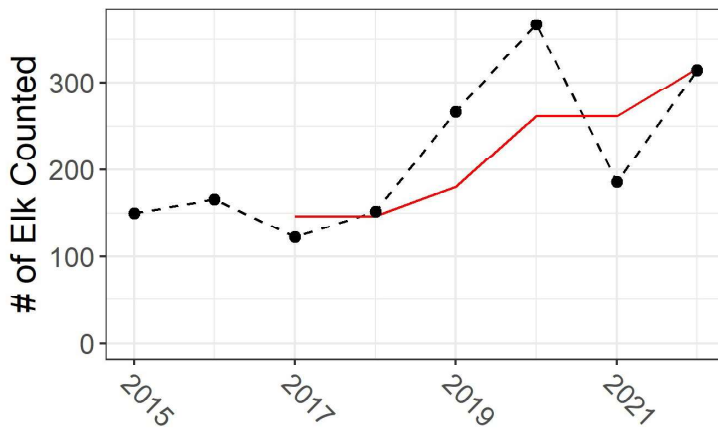
Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

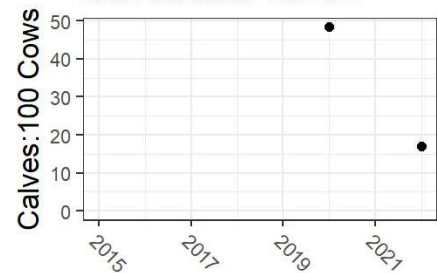
- While numerous landowners allow public hunting, access is trending towards being more restrictive. Several of the larger properties have sold to non-traditional landowners and elk use these properties as a refuge during the hunting season. Outfitting and leasing have also increased in the district in line with the increasing elk population.
- The high number of bulls leads to game damage issues; implementation of game damage hunts and management seasons specific to bulls is controversial and generally not favored by sportsmen.
- Accessible public lands are limited and hunter crowding on public lands has been an issue.
- The benches, with agricultural fields and a wide field of view, adjacent to steep, oftentimes timbered breaks, provide elk ample opportunity to utilize nutritious supplemental feed in the form of crops, then quickly find security cover in rough topography.
- Elk can quickly move from landowner to landowner and access logistics even on private land among landowners

Current Population Status & Trend

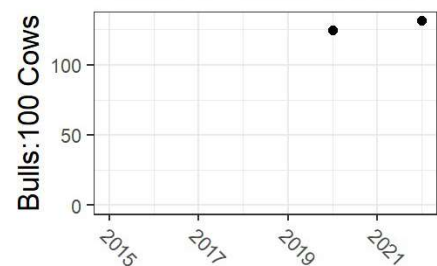
Total Elk Counted- HD 426



Recruitment- HD 426



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 426

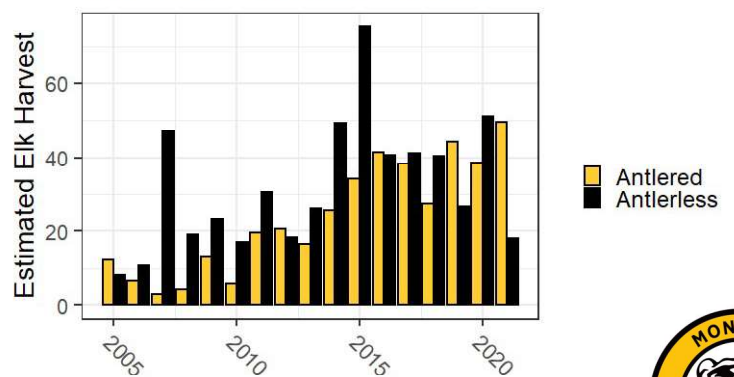


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. In surveys prior to 2020, less than 100 cows were classified, potentially skewing ratios; thus those years were omitted from recruitment and bull:cow figures.

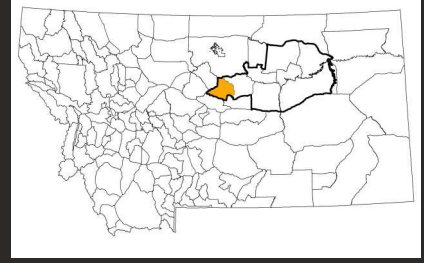
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
426	2006	68	321
	2008	148	541
	2010	112	489
	2012	156	873
	2014	317	2,003
	2016	392	2,426
	2018	390	2,627
	2020	377	2,737

Elk Harvest-Former HD 426



HD 426



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 150-350 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

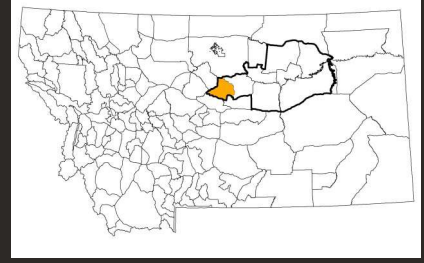
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	≥80% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use season types that accommodate elk harvest on private land
	Maintain public hunting access to at least 75% of private lands where elk are present	
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Factors limiting elk use of public lands are identified and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Minimize elk use of private and agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Elk harvest is increased on private lands where problematic concentrations of elk and/or chronic game damage complaints occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Maximize elk use of Beckman WMA	Elk are regularly observed on the Beckman WMA throughout the year and during annual winter elk surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat improvement projects on Beckman WMA to increase elk use

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HD 426



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	≥80% of elk hunter effort and harvest occurs on private lands, commensurate with hunting season elk distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use hunting season structure that accommodates elk harvest on private lands • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Adjust quotas
	Communications with hunters and landowners indicate that ≥60% are satisfied with permit/license quotas and say crowding, hunt quality, etc. are not an issue or has improved	
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Free public hunting access to at least 75% of private lands where elk are present	
	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity on public lands	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	≥ 60% of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	
	≥ 75% of harvested bulls have ≥6 points on one antler	
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate ≥ 25%	
	Maintain either-sex rifle permit success rate ≥ 50%	
	Maintain either-sex archery permit success rate ≥ 10%	

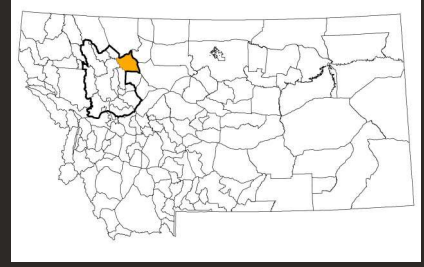


HD 441

Size: 595 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 37%



Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

Hunting District 441 is comprised of mountain-foothill and prairie agriculture areas. The unit includes about 60% private lands east of the Continental Divide stretching eastward to MT Highway 289. It is bordered by the North Fork Birch Creek on the north and the Teton Canyon Road on the south. The private land portion of the area is mostly cattle and hay operations, with a smaller amounts of dry land grain on the eastern perimeter. Much of the western portion is comprised of the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wilderness Areas. Birch Creek, Dupuyer Creek, Blackleaf Creek and the Teton River drain eastward through the area from the mountain front and the Continental Divide.

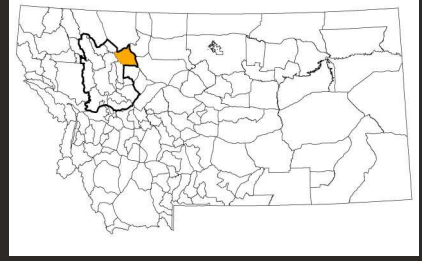
Hunting access to public lands occurs from trailheads along the Teton River, Blackleaf Canyon, and Birch Creek at Swift Dam. Very little of the Lewis and Clark National Forest and adjacent BLM lands are authorized for motorized use, however, both day trips and extended backcountry trips on foot or horseback are common from these trailheads. Access to private lands for hunting varies from limited to severely limited, with varying amounts of public use. Hunting that does occur on private property is mainly day use. Only one Block Management Area routinely has elk presence. The Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area lies adjacent to USFS lands.

Elk primarily exist in the western portion of the HD and can often be found in two separate herds. One herd inhabits the area from the Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area south to the Teton River, often crossing into HD 450. Winter use of the Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area by this group is sporadic, but bull groups of up to 70 or more are observed on the Wildlife Management Area. The other herd is found to the north in the Dupuyer Creek and Birch Creek areas. Hunter access to private land is often difficult, resulting in less than desirable harvest levels. In addition, elk can be scattered and move to differing landownerships during the hunting season. Severe winter conditions tend to increase elk herd size and push them eastward several miles from more traditional wintering areas. Mild winter conditions allow bull groups to winter in higher elevation areas and can be difficult to detect.



HD 441

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit

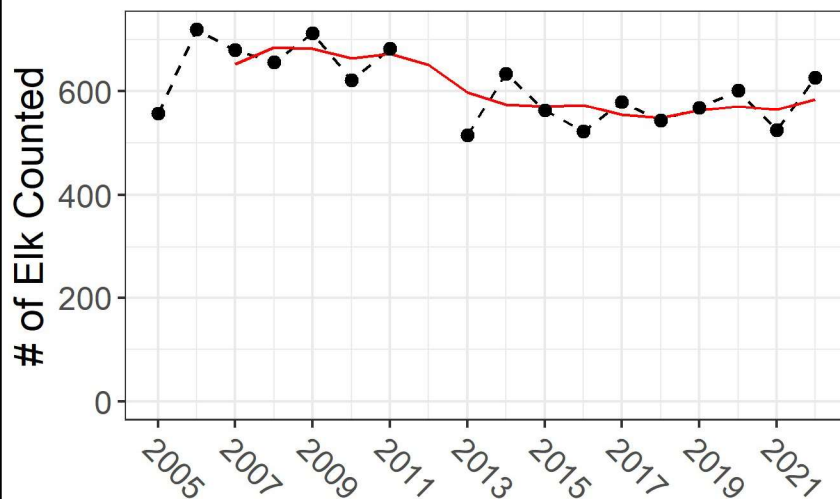


Management Challenges:

- Bull:cow ratios during mild winters may not be accurate due to problematic bull elk distribution
- Access to elk in certain areas is difficult give some landowner preferences and tolerances.
- Limited public access to private lands can create hunter crowding.

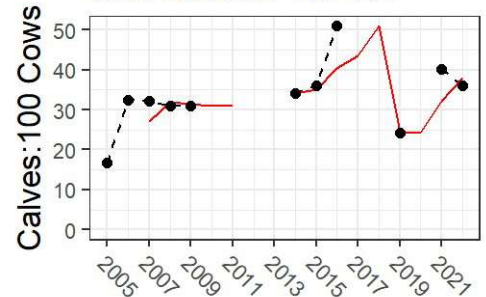
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 441

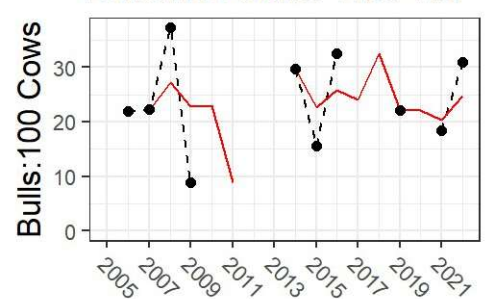


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 441



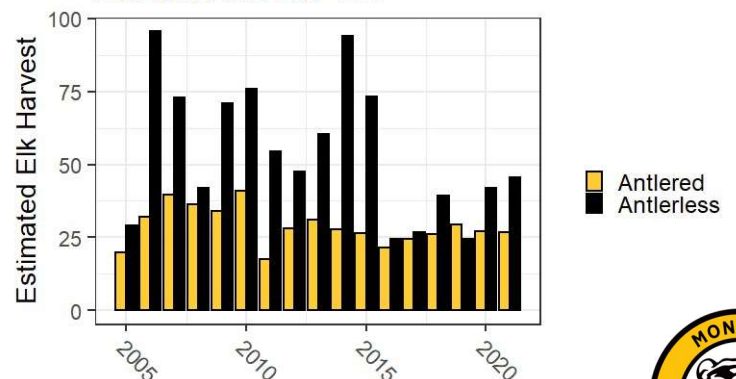
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 441



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

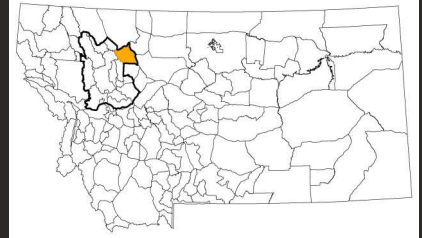
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
441	2006	440	2,282
	2008	588	3,847
	2010	481	2,756
	2012	494	2,955
	2014	641	4,342
	2016	439	2,999
	2018	459	3,336
	2020	451	3,300

Elk Harvest-HD 441



HD 441

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 500-700 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

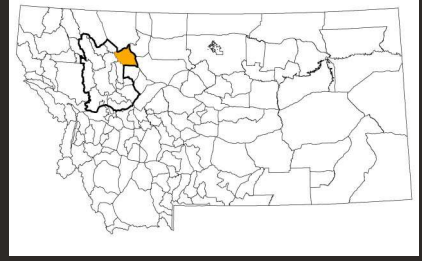
Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
	Proportion of antlerless harvest on private land is not declining	
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Movement corridors remain functional for seasonal elk movement between summer and winter ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use fence modification on public and private lands • Maintain vegetative transects on the WMA to monitor range condition and vegetative trend in response to livestock grazing management
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	No increase in elk game damage complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement habitat improvement projects on the Blackleaf WMA including reducing conifer encroachment
Maximize elk use of Blackleaf WMA	Elk are present year-round on the WMA	

(Continued on next page)



HD 441

Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain public access to elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Maintain hunting season structure that provides opportunity across majority of HD • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Adjust archery and rifle seasons as necessary • Adjust quota
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	A minimum of 50% harvested elk are antlerless	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	≥ 60% of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain 5-year average harvest success rate of at least 35% on either-sex permits	
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain equitable fall archery and rifle season structure	
Provide opportunity to harvest either-sex elk	Either-sex harvest occurs in the Wilderness portion of the HD	

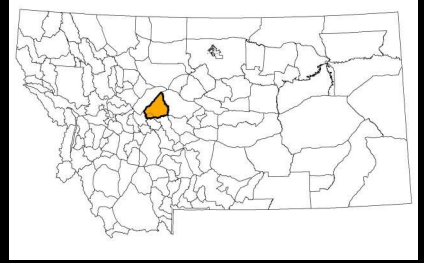


HDs 445 & 455

Size: 761 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 20%



Devil's Kitchen Elk Management Unit

****Special Management Districts for Bull Elk****

District Summary

Hunting District 445 (Hound Creek) and Hunting District 455 (Beartooth Wildlife Management Area) together make up the Devil's Kitchen Elk Management Unit (EMU). The EMU spans portions of Cascade, Meagher and Lewis & Clark Counties on the northeast side of the Big Belt Mountains. HD 455 lies along Holter Lake and includes portions of the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Hunting District 445 lies adjacent to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area and is bound by the Missouri and Smith Rivers to the north and east. Both districts include forested mountains, productive riparian areas, and intermountain grasslands. Elk spend most of the time near forested portions of the districts but can be observed in more open areas. Weather and elk hunting pressure influence migratory movements throughout the winter. Summertime moisture and rangeland productivity influence movements in late summer and fall. Landownership in HD 455 is 100% public; 20% of the land in HD 445 is public but only 57% is considered accessible. Hunting access on the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area has been limited in recent years to encourage greater elk use of the property.

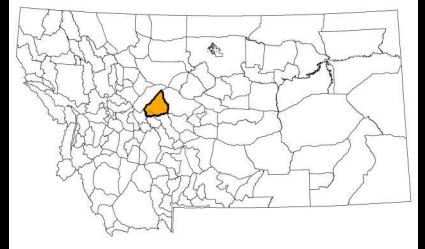
Management Challenges:

- Tolerance of elk on private land varies.
- Varying levels of hunting pressure across seasons and landownerships influence elk movements, as does weather.
- New and unique methods for deterring elk game damage are in high demand.
- The terrain and habitat is notoriously difficult to hunt.
- Elk frequently migrate to HD 445 and HD 455 from neighboring HDs.
- The Beartooth Wildlife Management Area is managed to provide big game winter range and can provide sanctuary when extended seasons are in place in HD 445.



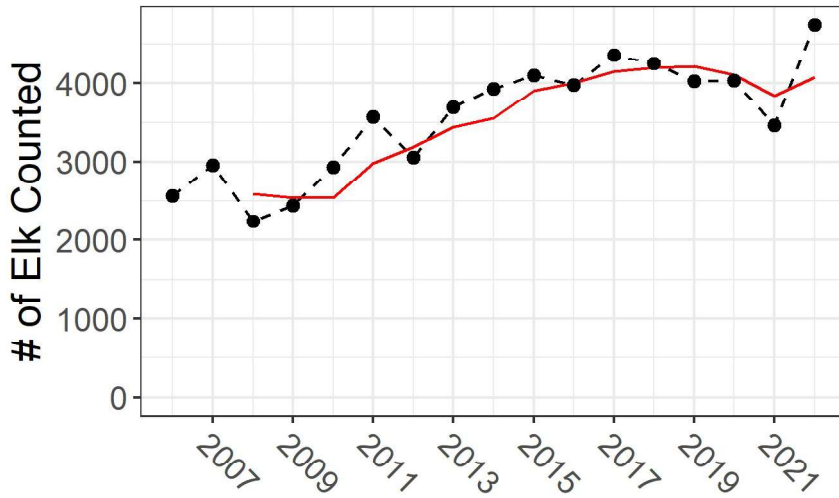
HDs 445 & 455

Devil's Kitchen Elk Management Unit

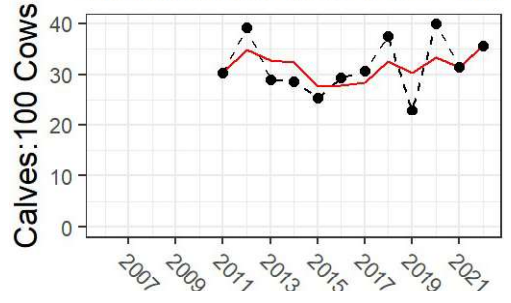


Current Population Status & Trend

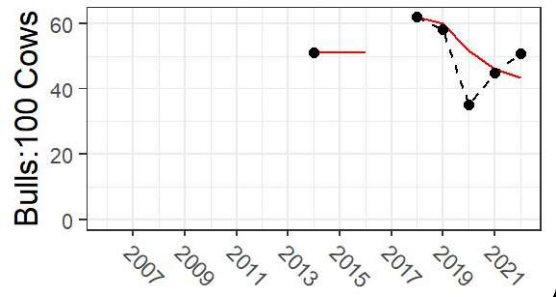
Total Elk Counted- HDs 445 & 455



Recruitment- HDs 445 & 455



Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 445 & 455

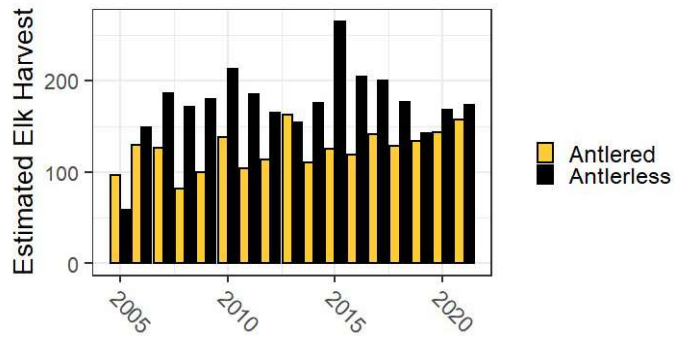


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

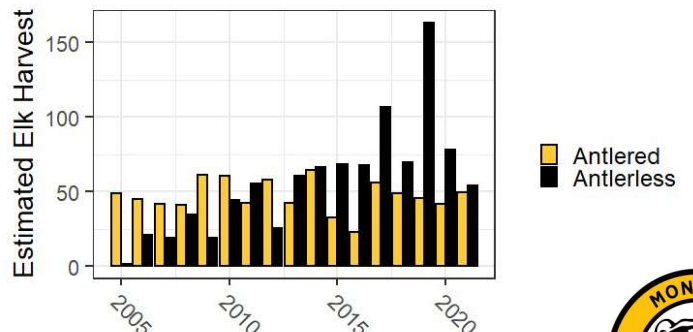
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
445	2006	682	2,841
	2008	748	3,781
	2010	836	3,654
	2012	885	4,975
	2014	701	3,344
	2016	930	4,631
	2018	740	3,803
	2020	794	4,632
455	2006	145	782
	2008	272	1,331
	2010	203	1,208
	2012	223	1,295
	2014	317	1,860
	2016	240	1,770
	2018	330	2,247
	2020	244	1,524

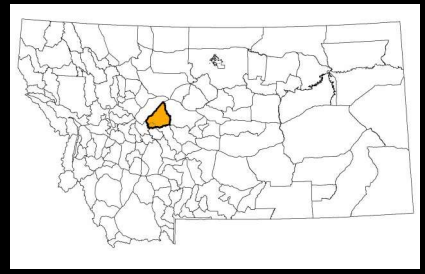
Elk Harvest-HD 445



Elk Harvest-HD 455



HDs 445 & 455



Devil's Kitchen Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 2,500-3,500 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within goal range for bull:cow ratio	

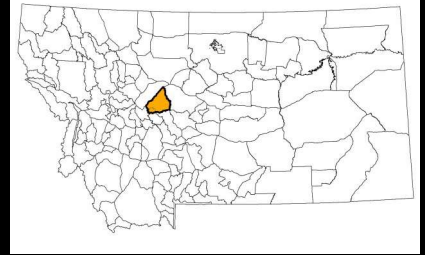
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of elk harvest on private land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize regular-occurring public meetings to discuss elk management • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access • Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types • Regularly engage landowners/land managers to discuss elk management
	Bull elk harvest on public and private lands is stable to increasing	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Trend in number and severity of elk damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-yr period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates increased elk harvest on private land • Continue to enhance elk habitat on the Beartooth WMA, USFS and adjoining lands via grazing and timber management, fencing modifications and exotic grass conversion projects
Maximize elk use of Beartooth WMA	High presence of elk use observed during winter surveys on the Beartooth WMA during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	Maintain elk migration corridors to and from the Beartooth WMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore access and hunting opportunity modifications on Beartooth WMA and adjoining lands such as seasonal road closures or summer recreation public use management

(Continued on next page)



HDs 445 & 455



Devil's Kitchen Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain either-sex rifle permit success rates $\geq 50\%$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access • Adjust quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	$\geq 75\%$ of harvested bulls have ≥ 6 points on one antler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harvest opportunities across landownership types
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	3-year average Beartooth WMA B-License success rate is at or above the 5-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement season type that allows for maximum antlerless harvest opportunities on private lands
	Harvest on B-licenses valid for use on non-USFS lands is stable to increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Maintain/improve elk security on public land

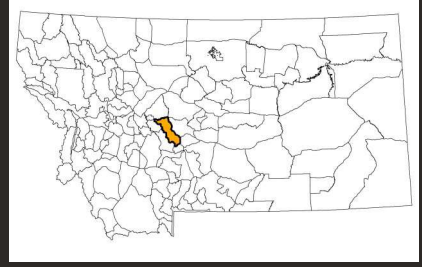


HD 446

Size: 593 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 23%



East Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 446 is located on the east side of the Big Belt Mountains west of White Sulphur Springs. This hunting district is approximately 85% private and state land with a relatively narrow strip of USFS managed property along its western boundary. Nearly all elk winter range in HD 446 is on private or DNRC lands. Elk in HD 446 may also seasonally move north to HDs 445/455, west into HDs 391/392 or east into HD 416. Although some elk seasonally move to higher elevation public land during summer and fall, large numbers of elk use privately managed lands year-round. A small portion of the Smith River Wildlife Management Area lies in HD 446.

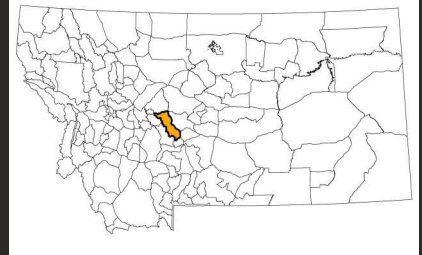
Private landowners employ a variety of elk management strategies including managed hunting access, hunting by friends and family only, commercial outfitting, and hunting leases. Efforts to achieve effective elk harvest in HD 446 (especially for antlerless elk on privately managed lands) have been ongoing for many years. Currently, seven landowners within the HD enroll a total of 40,000 acres in FWP's Block Management Program. FWP annually hires a hunt coordinator to assist HD 446 landowners and hunters. Despite improved public hunting access and liberal seasons, antlerless harvest remains insufficient to reduce the number of elk in the hunting district. Since implementing shoulder seasons in 2015, the number of complaints regarding damage to standing crops in fall and winter has dropped significantly, although complaints about damage during other seasons and to stacked hay are more common.

Management Challenges:

- Achieving sufficient antlerless elk harvest on privately managed lands to maintain elk numbers within the Goal range.
- Maintaining the seasonal migration of elk from privately managed lands to USFS land during summer and fall
- Damage to crops and range lands by elk can be periodically and locally significant.



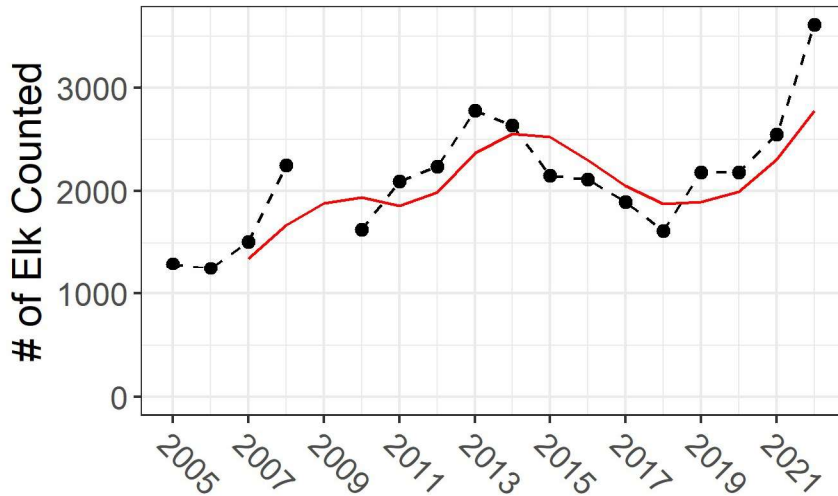
HD 446



East Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

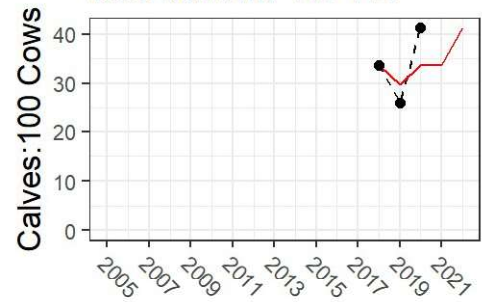
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 446

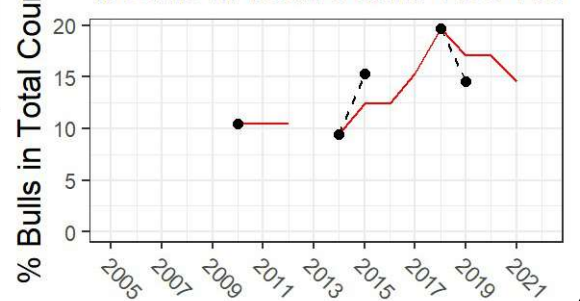


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 446



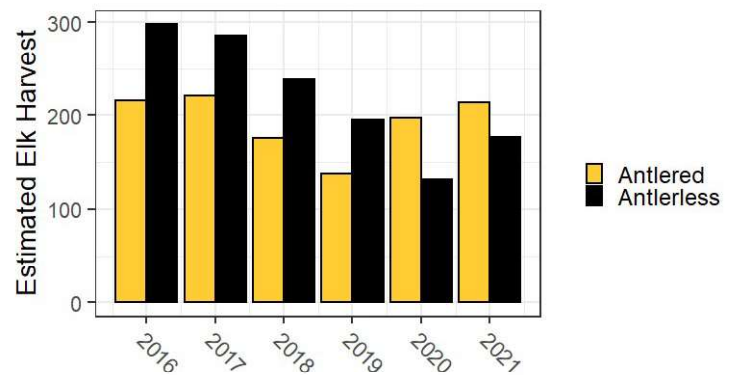
% Bulls in Total Count- HDs 446



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

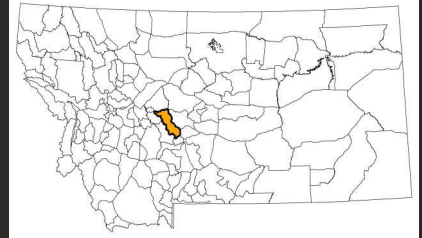
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
446	2016	2,183	12,752
	2018	1,457	7,950
	2020	1,223	7,447

Elk Harvest-HD 446



HD 446

East Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,500-2,000 elk observed	5-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	5-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

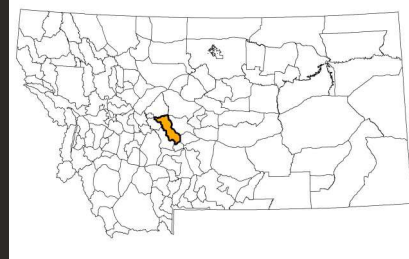
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Regularly engage landowners/managers to discuss elk management
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Trend in the number and severity of elk damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land • Use USFS/non-USFS land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest

(Continued on next page)



HD 446



East Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	Harvest on B-licenses valid for use on non-U. S. Forest Service land is stable or increasing	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance to the U. S. Forest Service to implement big game habitat improvement projects • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	Percent of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	

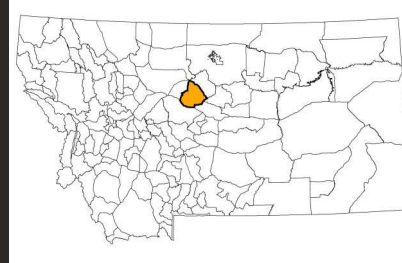


HD 447

Size: 884 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 21%



Highwood Elk Management Unit

****Special Management District for Bull Elk****

District Summary

Hunting District 447, Belt-Square Butte, is centered on the Highwood Mountains of Cascade, Chouteau and Judith Basin Counties in North Central Montana. The district includes forested mountains, productive riparian areas, intermountain grasslands and cropland. Elk are commonly observed near forested portions of the district but can also be observed out in the open near Square Butte and Arrow Creek. Weather and elk hunting pressure influence migratory movements throughout the winter. Summertime moisture and range-land productivity influence movements during late summer and fall.

Hunting District 447 is considered a relatively accessible hunting district. Most public lands where elk can be found are accessible from a road. The Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest makes up the largest contiguous block of public lands in the district totaling 42,323 acres. Adjacent State and BLM lands (approximately 3,270 acres) provide additional opportunity. Relatively few private land acres are enrolled in FWP Access Programs however several landowners still provide public elk hunting opportunities.

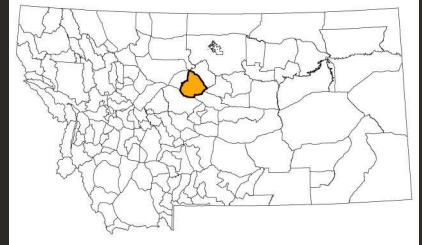
Management Challenges:

- Tolerance of elk on private land varies.
- Varying levels of hunting pressure across seasons and landownerships influence elk movements.
- The Highwoods are an isolated mountain range and public lands are surrounded by private lands.
- Much of the elk winter range in HD 447 occurs on private land.
- Game damage on private lands can be severe following dry summers and harsh winter weather.



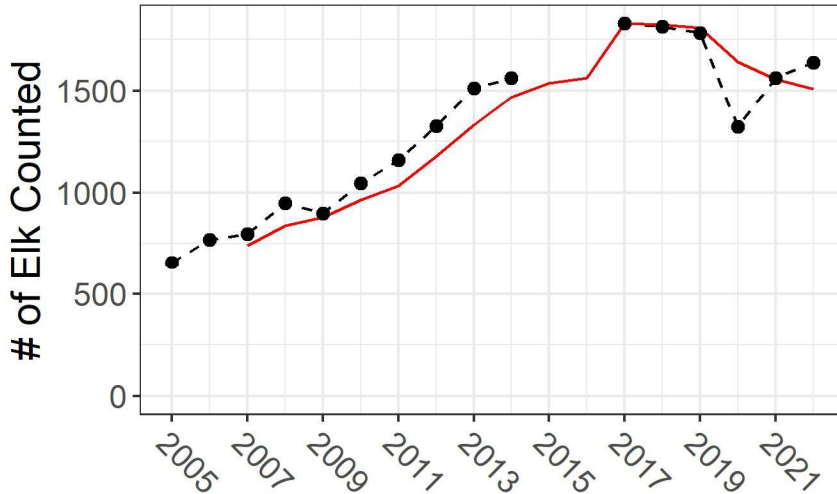
HD 447

Highwood Elk Management Unit



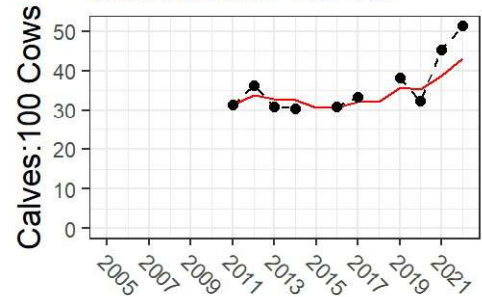
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 447

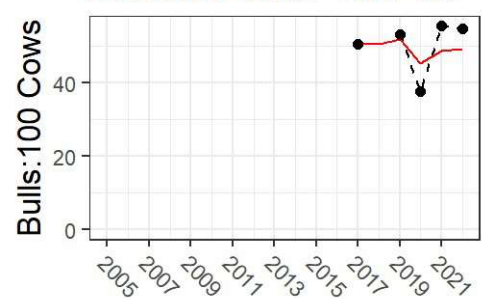


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 447



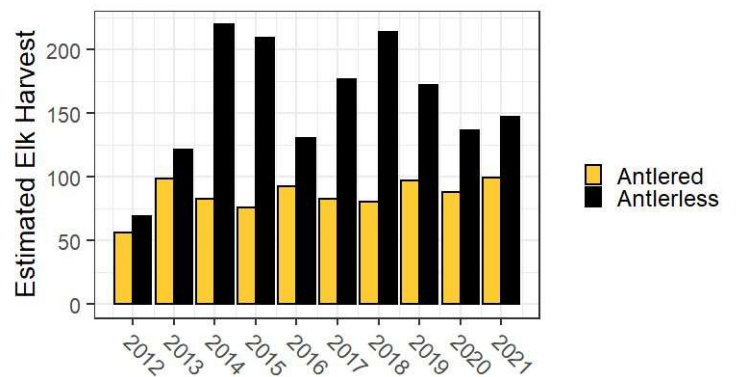
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 447



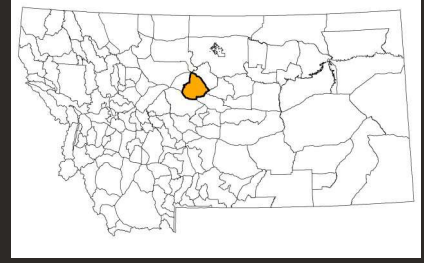
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
447	2012	662	3,700
	2014	1,105	6,193
	2016	1,110	7,441
	2018	1,015	6,404
	2020	928	6,104

Elk Harvest-HD 447



HD 447



Highwood Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 800-1,200 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	3-year average bull:cow ratio is within Goal range for bull:cow ratio	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

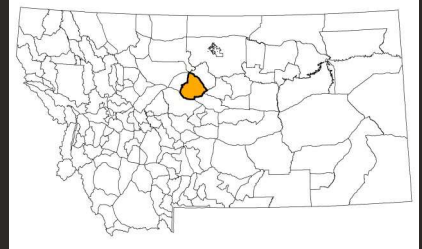
Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable to increasing bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and/or improve access to public lands • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access • Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types
	Elk harvest on private and public lands is within 20% of previous 3-year average	
Minimize elk use of private lands where tolerance is low	3-year trend of game damage complaints shows no increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly engage landowners and agencies to discuss elk management • Implement season type that allows for antlerless harvest on private lands • Promote habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges, especially on public lands • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	Elk harvest is increased on private lands where problematic concentrations of elk and/or chronic game damage complaints occur	
Increase elk use of USFS lands	Factors limiting elk use of public lands are identified and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore access and hunting opportunity modifications such as trail closures, season structure modifications, and access agreements with private landowners • Work with land management agencies to improve/maintain security for elk on public lands

(Continued on next page)



HD 447

Highwood Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Harvest on B-licenses valid for use on non-U. S. Forest Service land is stable or increasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harvest opportunities across landownership types and implement season type that allows for antlerless harvest opportunities on private lands • Adjust archery and rifle limited permit quotas accordingly
	Maintain either sex rifle permit success $\geq 50\%$	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	$\geq 75\%$ of harvested bulls have ≥ 6 points on one antler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain $\sim 50\%$ of the total bull harvest by archers and $\sim 50\%$ by rifle hunters	

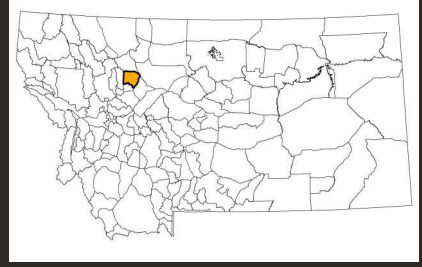


HD 450

Size: 407 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 23%



Teton River Elk Management Unit

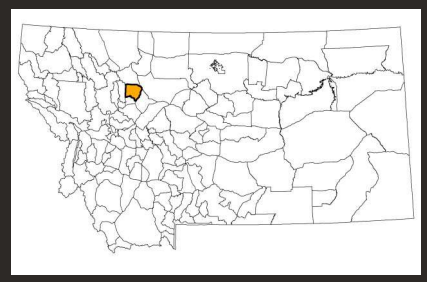
District Summary

Hunting District 450 provides a combination of both public and private lands inhabited by elk throughout the course of the year, however, approximately 75% of this HD constitutes private ownership. The western boundary includes mountain foothill habitat along the Rocky Mountain Front transitioning into grassland habitat to the east. The Sun and Teton Rivers define the south and north boundary of this HD, respectively. The Ear Mountain Wildlife Management Area lies in the northwest corner of this HD. A strong component of the private lands in this HD are comprised by agriculture production (hay and livestock pasture). Variable elk densities inhabit roughly a 70/30 split between private and public lands throughout this HD, respectively. Approximately one-third of this HD has habitat used variably by elk over the course of the year with an estimated two-thirds of elk winter range falling on private lands, depending on the year. The primary cow/calf herds are split between two groups, one group residing primarily along the Teton River corridor and the other residing in the general Deep Creek area. Other than perhaps bull movements, these herds maintain this separate distribution throughout the year. Teton river corridor elk do move back and forth between this HD and HD 441 to the north, thereby ensuing some shared elk management responsibility. A continued interest in managing towards lower elk numbers in this HD is desired while maintaining reasonable bull age structure.

Of the public lands in this HD, approximately 75% are considered accessible to the public. Access to traditional elk distribution/habitat includes the Teton Canyon Road, Ear Mountain Wildlife Management Area, Deep Creek and the Pishkun Canal road. Some private lands provide reasonable access opportunity at their own discretion and other key properties are much more limited in access. Dependent on daily distribution, a strong percentage of these elk may be unavailable to the general public hunter because of limited access. Road densities within available elk habitat is generally limited but certain public roads do provide reasonable access to public and private lands. A continued interest in managing towards lower elk numbers in this HD is desired. Communication with some landowners in this HD is ongoing related to elk management, game damage solutions, and public access opportunities.



HD 450



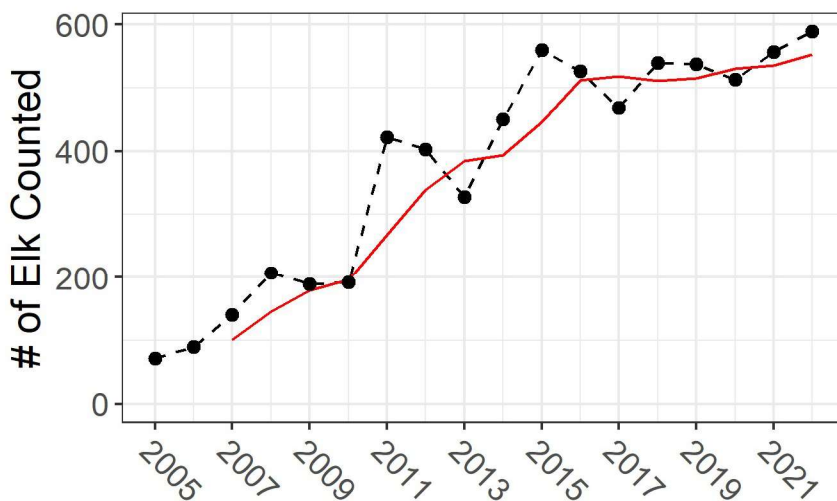
Teton River Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

- Limited public hunting access to areas where high densities of elk can be during hunting seasons limiting elk harvest and limiting the ability to manage the population within goal range
- Increasing antlerless elk harvest while maintaining desired bull age structure
- Lack of more variable elk distribution
- Hunter densities in publicly accessible areas

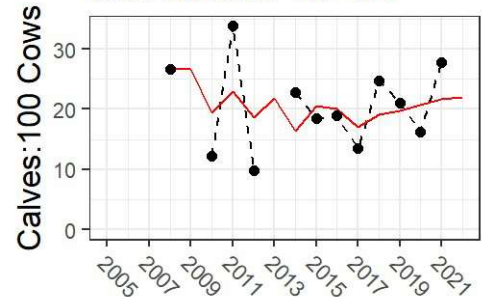
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 450

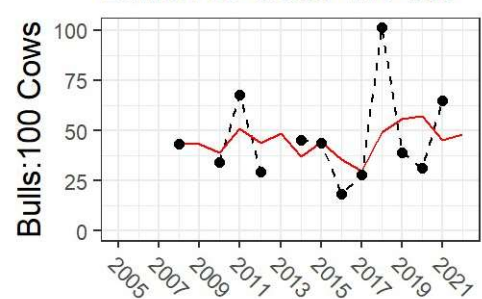


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 450



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 450

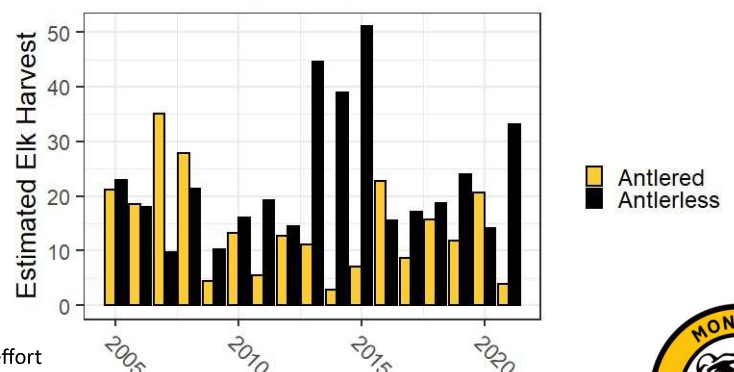


Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

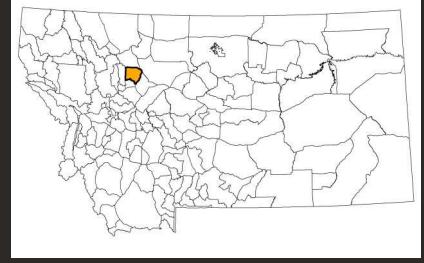
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
450	2006	133	683
	2008	193	988
	2010	140	1,036
	2012	194	1,163
	2014	253	1,262
	2016	243	1,636
	2018	188	1,078
	2020	184	1,329

Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data displayed may not be directly comparable to data obtained after 2021.

Elk Harvest-Former HD 450



HD 450



Teton River Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 300-400 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 75-100 elk observed in the Teton River Corridor	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 200-300 elk observed in the Lower Deep Creek area	3-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

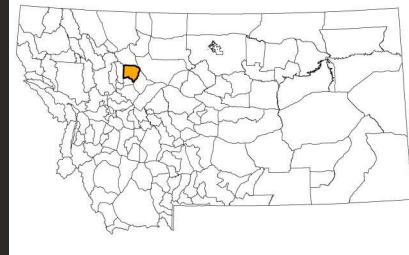
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use fence modification
	Proportion of antlerless harvest on private land is not declining	
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Movement corridors remain functional for seasonal elk movement between summer and winter ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	No increase in elk game damage complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain communication with area landowners

(Continued on next page)



HD 450



Teton River Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Maintain or improve equitable harvest/opportunity on public and private landownerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	≥ 50% of bull elk observed during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	Annual brow-tined bull harvest does not exceed 50% of the brow-tined bulls observed during aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve landowner/sportsperson relations through communication
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain B-License success rate ≥ 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain equitable bull elk harvest opportunity between rifle and archery hunters	Maintain equitable archery and rifle hunting season structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust quotas • Adjust archery and rifle seasons as necessary

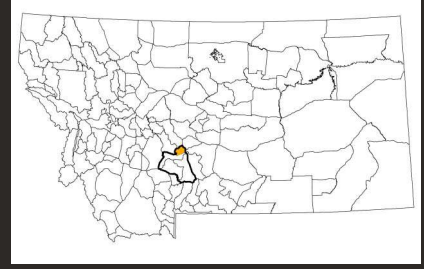


HD 451

Size: 142 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 17%



Bridger Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 451 lies on the east side of the southern Big Belt Mountains between Sixteenmile Creek and US Highway 12. This hunting district is nearly 90% private or privately managed land with only 6% of it's area managed by the USFS. Elk numbers during hunting season and during the winter survey period are highly variable depending on weather, hunting pressure, and because elk readily move between HDs 451, 580, 390, 393, 315, and 452.

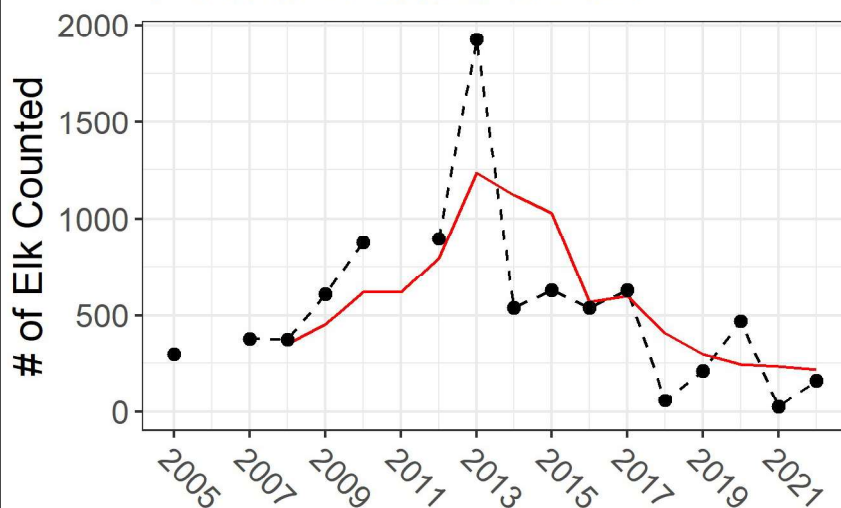
HD 451 has a single 3,500-acre Block Management Area and several sections of state DNRC land that are accessible to public hunters. Most of the remaining privately managed lands are either commercially outfitted or leased for hunting during the archery-only and general hunting seasons. Some landowners have allowed liberal access for public hunters to pursue antlerless elk during the shoulder seasons in HD 451, though harvest varies with elk availability and has decreased in recent years.

Management Challenges:

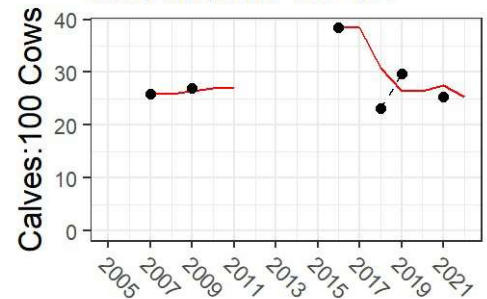
- Winter elk counts are extremely variable in this hunting district, depending on winter severity, hunting pressure, and the movement of large groups of elk to and from adjacent hunting districts. Winter counts may not reflect the number of elk present during summer or fall.
- Damage to crops and rangelands by elk can be periodically and locally significant.

Current Population Status & Trend

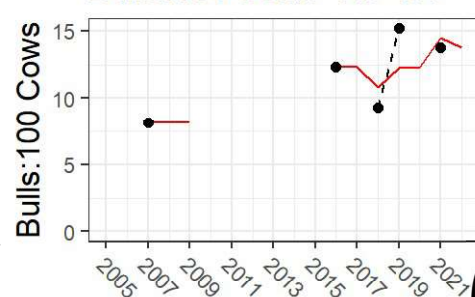
Total Elk Counted- HD 451



Recruitment- HD 451



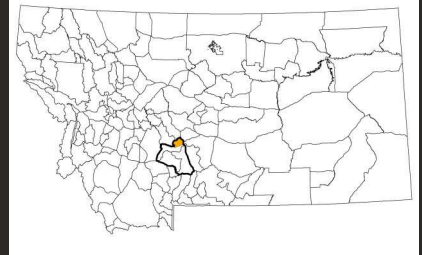
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 451



Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3 year moving average.



HD 451

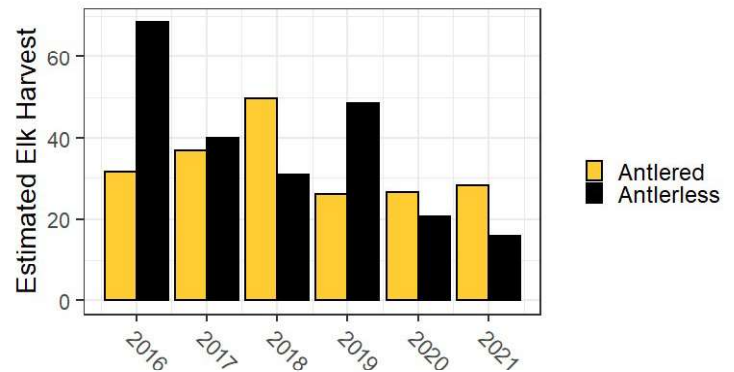


Bridger Elk Management Unit

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
451	2016	330	1,678
	2018	282	1,531
	2020	234	1,321

Elk Harvest-HD 451



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 200-800 elk observed	5-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	5-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

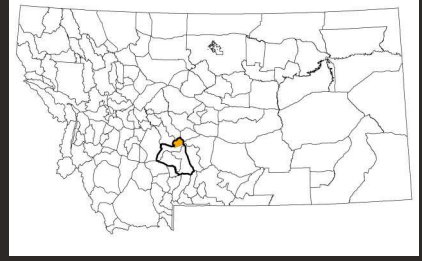
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Number and severity of elk game damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly engage landowners/managers to discuss elk management Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest off of USFS land

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HD 451



Bridger Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	Harvest on B-Licenses valid for use on non-U. S. Forest Service land is stable or increasing	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	Percent of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

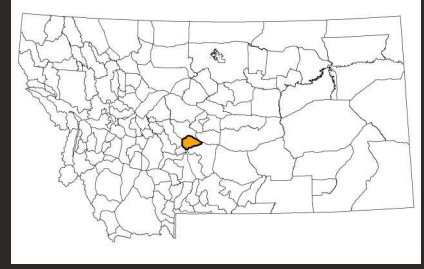


HD 452

Size: 338 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 39%



Castle Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 452 encompasses the Castle Mountains and surrounding private lands. Thirty-two percent of the hunting district is managed by the USFS. The USFS land on the west side of the hunting district is almost completely mid to high elevation coniferous forest managed primarily for non-motorized uses. The central and eastern portions of the USFS ownership are more sparsely timbered and have more open roads which provides less uniform fall elk habitat security.

Several private landowners are enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program which provides public access to approximately 7,500 acres of fall elk habitat. Private landowners employ a variety of elk management strategies including managed hunting access, hunting by friends and family only, commercial outfitting, and hunting leases. Some landowners have allowed liberal access for public hunters to pursue antlerless elk during the shoulder seasons and FWP annually hires a hunt coordinator to assist HD 452 landowners and hunters.

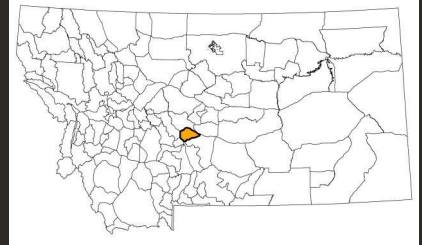
Management Challenges:

- Maintaining the seasonal migration of elk from private to public land during summer and fall
- Achieving sufficient antlerless elk harvest on privately managed lands to maintain elk numbers within the Goal range.
- Damage to crops and rangelands by elk can be periodically and locally significant.



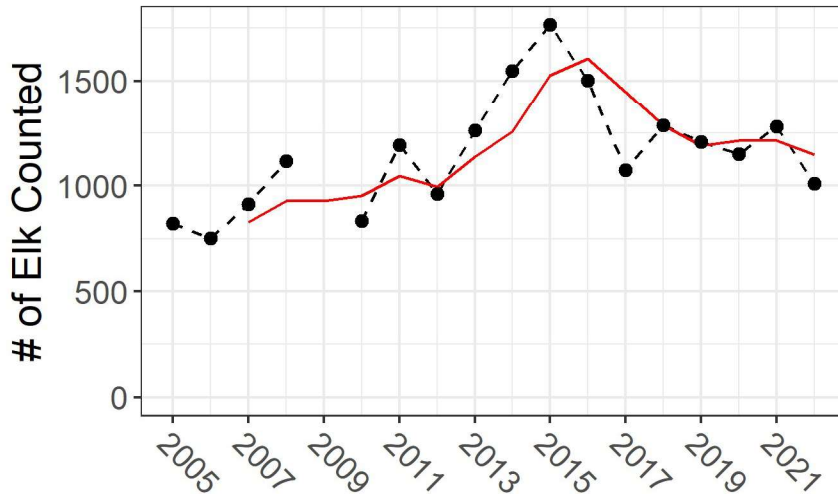
HD 452

Castle Mountain Elk Management Unit

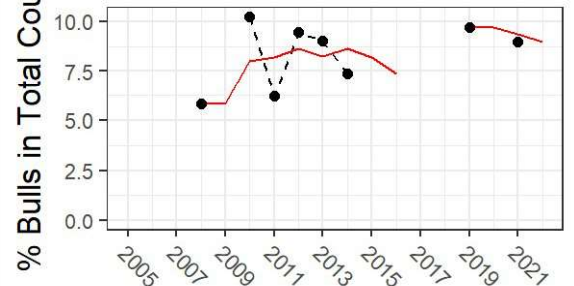


Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 452



% Bulls in Total Count- HD 452

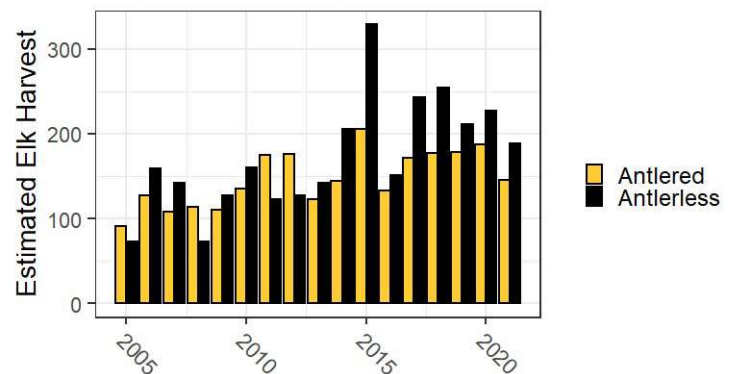


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

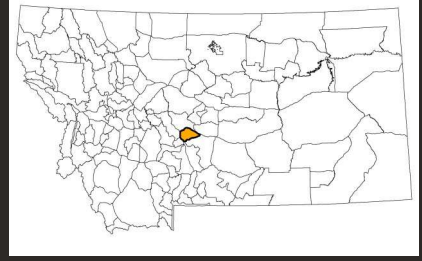
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
452	2006	1,106	4,836
	2008	1,085	5,287
	2010	1,176	5,891
	2012	1,522	7,867
	2014	1,386	7,529
	2016	1,727	9,901
	2018	1,615	8,116
	2020	1,498	8,386

Elk Harvest-HD 452



HD 452



Castle Mountain Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 800-1,200 elk observed	5-year average of elk counts is within Goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside Goal range, population is trending toward Goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is $\geq 10:100$	5-year average bull: cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

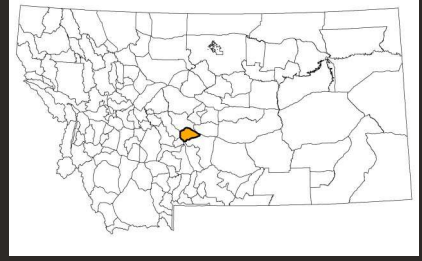
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use USFS/non-USFS land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Number and severity of elk game damage complaints is stable or decreasing over a 5-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly engage landowners/managers to discuss elk management • Assist landowners in coordinating public hunting access • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use a season type that accommodates antlerless elk harvest on private land

(Continued on next page)



HD 452



Castle Mountain Elk Management Unit

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	Harvest using B licenses valid for use on non-U. S. Forest Service land is stable or increasing	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	Percent of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is stable or increasing over a 5-year period	

