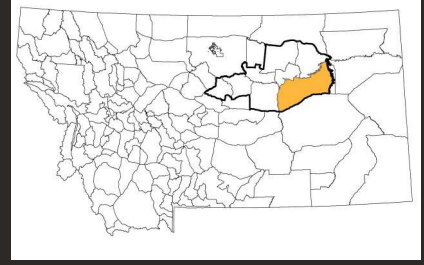


HD 700

Size: 2,786 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 49%



Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit

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

District Summary

Hunting District 700 is on the south side of Fort Peck Reservoir, bordered on the west by the Musselshell River, on the east by the Dry Arm and north of MT Highway 200. It is located in the northern half of Garfield County. The Missouri River Breaks consists primarily of sagebrush steppe and prairie grassland habitats that transition into more timbered coulees and drainages as you move north toward the Missouri River and Fort Peck Reservoir, and west toward the Musselshell River. Most of the Missouri River Breaks is public land, specifically the areas closest to the Missouri River, Fort Peck Reservoir, and the Musselshell River. The primary land use in the HD is agriculture including farming and livestock production. Half of the land ownership in the HD (51%) is private land. The elk in this district are mostly non-migratory.

Public hunting access is limited in HD 700 due to a combination of large tracts of private land and difficulty accessing public land. Due to the rugged terrain of the Missouri River Breaks and very few public roads much of the public land is difficult to access. The majority of the Block Management cooperators within this hunting district allow for elk harvest and are enrolled in order to help manage the elk population.

The elk in this hunting district are fairly new and are slowly expanding into unoccupied, but available habitat. Winter surveys first began in 2006, but reliable and repeatable surveys began in 2008. Reliable and repeatable surveys were established once biologists and pilots better understood elk behavior in the area and occurred after a large wildfire in the HD impacted a large portion of the habitat, changing elk distribution and observability. Since 2012 the total counts have remained fairly steady, with a dip in 2017 after the Lodgepole Complex Fire displaced some elk that later came back. This population is surveyed in its entirety every other year.

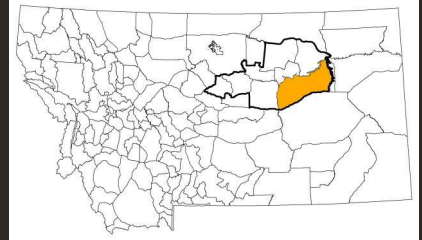
Management Challenges:

- Hunter access to elk is often a management challenge due to a large portion of private land, landlocked public land, the roughness of the terrain, and limited roads.
- This population is fairly new and expanding in distribution, causing variation in public and landowner opinion and tolerance.
- Landowner tolerance of hunter pressure and numbers is being exceeded.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has the authority to manage and set special regulations on the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge, which comprises much of the public land and elk security habitat. This could present challenges in FWP's ability to manage the elk population in this HD.



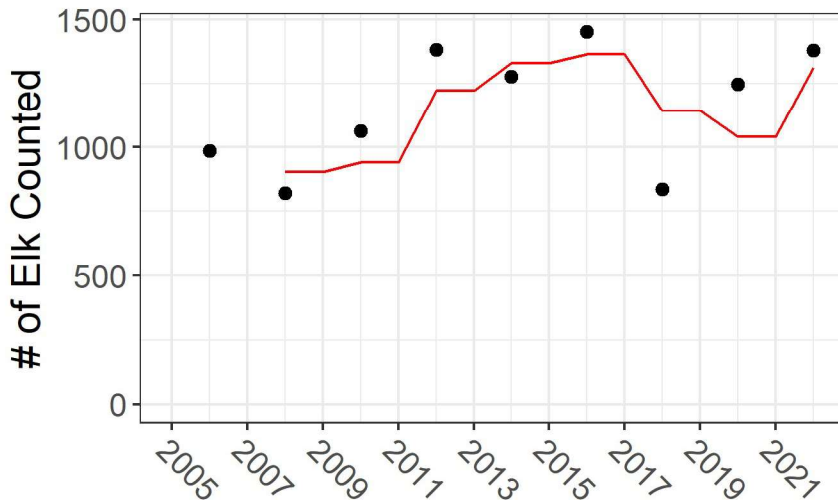
HD 700

Missouri River Breaks Elk Management Unit



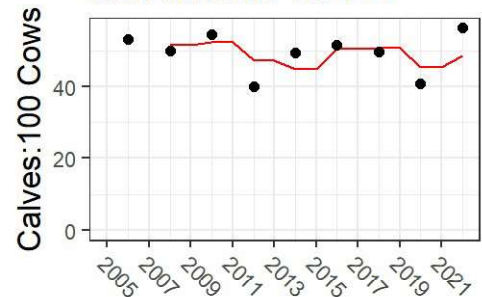
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 700

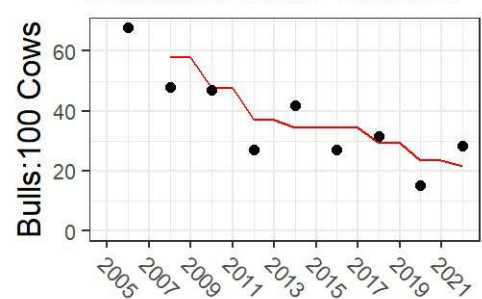


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows an average of the 2 most recent surveys.

Recruitment- HD 700



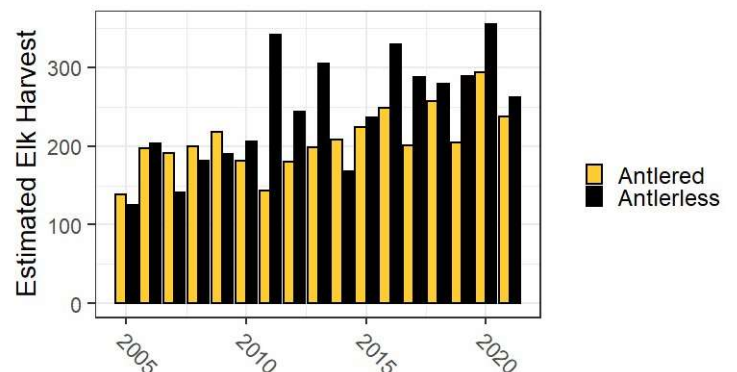
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 700



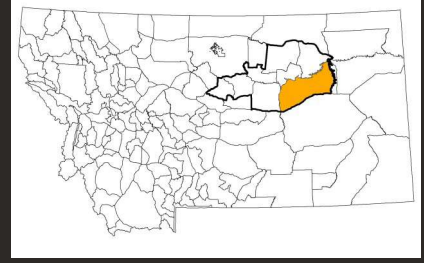
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
700	2006	953	5,513
	2008	1,324	8,929
	2010	1,088	6,584
	2012	1,172	7,533
	2014	1,283	8,244
	2016	1,724	12,374
	2018	1,633	11,076
	2020	1,817	12,721

Elk Harvest- HD 700



HD 700



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 1,600-2,400 elk observed	4-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
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	4-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	Elk harvest by landownership is within 20% of previous 3-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk GPS collar locations show use of public/private land that is proportionate (within 10%) to the amounts of public/private land within mapped elk range (over a 3-year period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Promote public land habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges

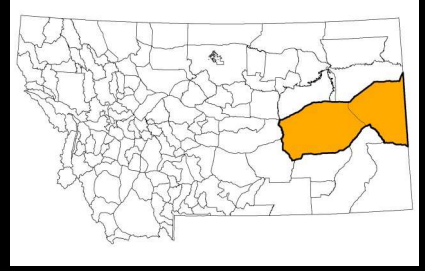
Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Most recent antlerless harvest estimate is within 20% of 3-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	≥ 60% of bull elk classified during aerial surveys are brow-tined bulls 3-year average of harvested bulls with ≥ 6 points on one antler is ≥ 50 %	<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 3-year average of 40-60% of the total bull harvest by archers and 40-60% by rifle hunters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust archery and rifle limited permit quotas accordingly



HDs 701 & 703

Size: 12,677 mi²
Primary Habitat: Shrubland & Grassland
Public Ownership: 18%



Prairie Badlands Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting Districts 701 and 703 overlap portions of Garfield, Rosebud, Treasure, Prairie, Custer, McCone, Dawson, Wibaux, Richland and Fallon Counties, in the southeast part of the state. Most (79%) of this area is prairie habitat where the primary land use is grazing. Dryland farming occurs throughout, where topography and soils allow. The combined HDs contain over 275 Yellowstone river miles, with associated riparian habitat and irrigated farmland. Over 250,000 acres in HD 701 and 480,000 acres in HD 703 have a tillage history (9% of the HDs combined). The sagebrush steppe and grassland dominated landscape is highly permeable to elk, with limited areas of security cover. Elk historically occurred in this prairie habitat, and if allowed, populations could grow exponentially. However, this is incompatible with existing agriculture practices. Elk are generally better-tolerated in the southwestern part of HD 701, where there is less farming and more security cover.

Collectively, the HDs are 83% private land (HD 701 = 82%, HD 703 = 84%). Of the public land, 40% is not publicly accessible. Access to elk will generally depend on private landowner discretion. The amount of private land enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program varies annually. For the 2022 hunting season, there were 146 Block Management Areas, as well as four conservation easements, and four Wildlife Management Areas. Elk densities in this area range from low to none, and, if present, elk are often transient and passing through. Some hunters go to HDs 701 and 703 specifically looking for an elk, but most elk hunting is opportunistic by hunters primarily looking for deer, but also possessing an elk license.

Elk populations and distribution have been slowly increasing over the past two decades, but elk densities generally remain low. Scattered herds and/or occasional sightings of elk may occur throughout, but the majority of the two HDs is not currently occupied by elk. Elk in this area are not known to be migratory but may exhibit long-distance movements seasonally or in response to hunting pressure. Given low elk numbers, and spatiotemporally variable elk use of the landscape, long-term elk trend surveys have not been established.

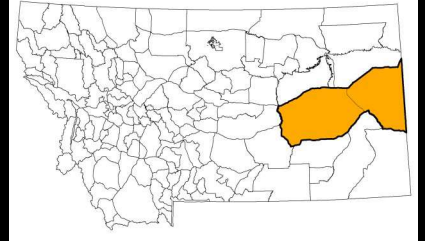
Elk from HD 590 use a portion of southwestern HD 701. Based upon the desire of landowners and the public to manage for older age class bulls in this area, as well as to practice consistent management of an elk herd that overlaps hunting districts, the management of antlered elk in the portion of HD 701 north of the Yellowstone River, south of US Highway 12, and west of the Sumatra-Hysham Road is aggregated with HD 590.

Management Challenges:

- There is a high potential for elk conflict with row crop agriculture.
- These HDs combined are 83% private land and neighboring landowners may have widely variable tolerance for elk and public hunting access, creating challenges for managing elk population growth and preventing conflict at the local and elk management unit scale.
- Public access to elk is limited, therefore achieving sufficient hunter harvest to control population growth will be difficult.



HDs 701 & 703

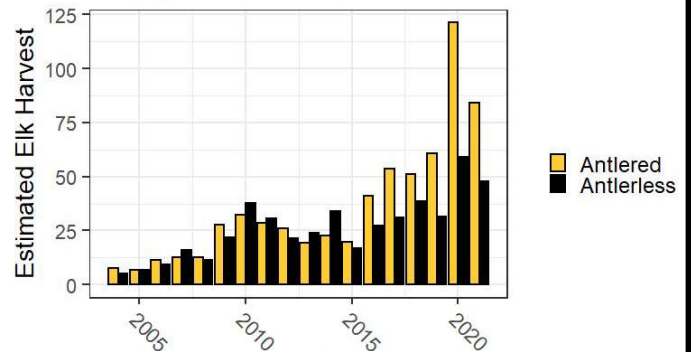


Prairie Badlands Elk Management Unit

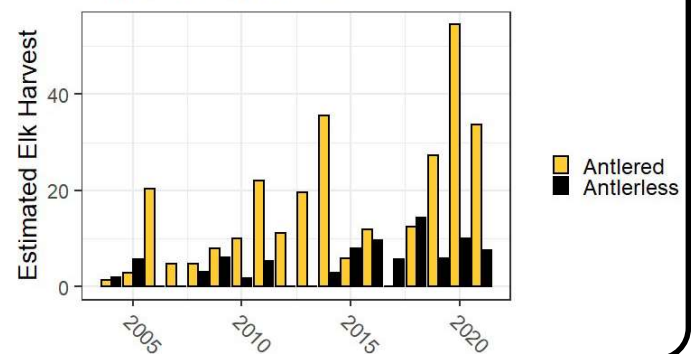
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
701	2006	128	841
	2008	204	1,028
	2010	215	1,280
	2012	300	1,450
	2014	309	1,652
	2016	401	2,482
	2018	174	967
	2020	656	3,850
703	2006	74	406
	2008	90	743
	2010	127	918
	2012	130	635
	2014	211	1,015
	2016	238	1,387
	2018	209	1,577
	2020	264	1,885

Elk Harvest- HD 701



Elk Harvest- HD 703



No population demographic objectives. Elk population surveys are not conducted in this EMU.

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide elk hunting opportunities across landownership types	License structure allows for harvest on all landownership types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest either-sex elk	Maintain harvest opportunity for either-sex elk throughout the EMU, excluding the portion of HD 701 that uses a limited either-sex permit	<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	3-year average of harvested bulls on limited permit with ≥ 6 points on one antler is $\geq 40\%$ in the portion of 701 that uses a limited either-sex permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

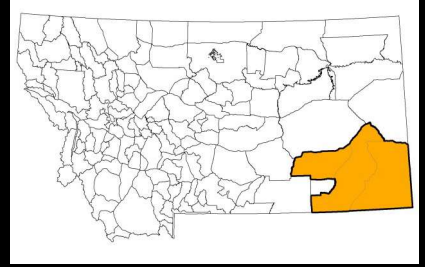


HDs 702, 704 & 705

Size: 14,358 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 27%



Southeastern Montana Elk Management Unit

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

District Summary

Hunting Districts 702, 704 and 705 encompass the southern portion of administrative Region 7 and make up the Southeastern Montana Elk Management Unit (EMU). The current elk distribution covers 5,433 mi² (38%), of which approximately 73% is on private lands.

Twenty seven percent of the EMU is public land administered primarily by the USFS, BLM, and DNRC. Hunting District 702 consists of 88% private land, with most of the public land comprised of DNRC and BLM. The occupied elk habitat in HD's 704 and 705 consists of approximately 65% private land, with most of the public land comprised of USFS, BLM, and DNRC. A large percentage of public lands in the HDs (31%) is land-locked and often inaccessible to the general public.

The predominant cover types are grassland (42%), shrubland (24%), and forests (11%) (primarily Ponderosa Pine and Rocky Mountain Juniper). The primary land uses include livestock (predominantly cattle) grazing and haying, and the majority (88%) of grazing lands are native range or improved pasture with minimal cultivated cropland (4%). Since elk have recolonized this area beginning around the early 1990's, their range has continued to expand, occupying more of the available habitat.

In HD 702 most of the elk reside in the western half of the hunting district with the highest abundance around the base the Little Wolf Mountains. Other herds are established in the Sarpy Creek, Tullock Creek, and Rosebud Creek drainages. Elk occupy the majority of the southern half of HD 704, as well as the timbered habitat of the Pine Hills east of Miles City. In HD 705, elk occupy the Powder River Breaks in the southwest corner of the hunting district, the timbered areas near Belle Creek, and in the available habitat near Ekalaka. Elk in these HDs are not migratory but do exhibit localized, seasonal movements in response to habitat conditions and hunting pressure.

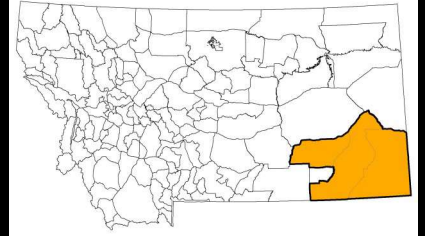
Aerial elk surveys were initiated in 2013 for HD 702, 2016 for HD 704, and 2011 for HD 705. Surveys are conducted biennially using fixed-wing aircraft. Currently, it is believed that landowner tolerance has not been met because formal game damage complaints are less than five annually. There are 15 Block Management Areas, encompassing 167,429 acres of land open to public hunting in HD 702. In HD 704 there are 5 Block Management Areas that contain 20,274 acres of public elk hunting access. In HD 705 two Block Management Areas contain 4,591 acres of public hunting access with a reasonable opportunity to harvest elk. Public hunting opportunities vary across private lands. Several ranches allow free access, while most of the private land is restricted to friends/family, fee hunting, or outfitting. Road densities are fairly high on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest, which provides ample hunting opportunity but may limit elk security.

Management Challenges:

- Approximately 30% of public lands are land-locked and inaccessible to the general public.
- Minimal public land harvest opportunity across significant portions of the EMU.
- Relatively high road density on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest reduces elk security.
- Despite a liberal hunting season structure, the annual recruitment exceeds harvest and there is limited access to harvest antlerless elk on private land.



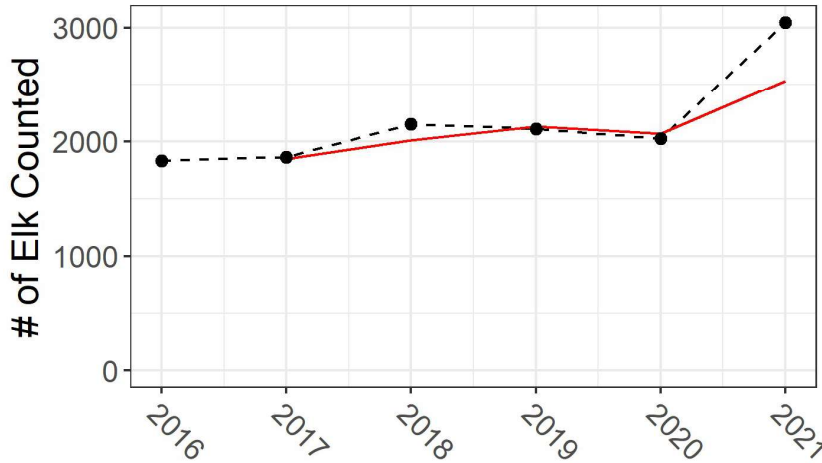
HDs 702, 704 & 705



Southeastern Montana Elk Management Unit

Current Population Status & Trend

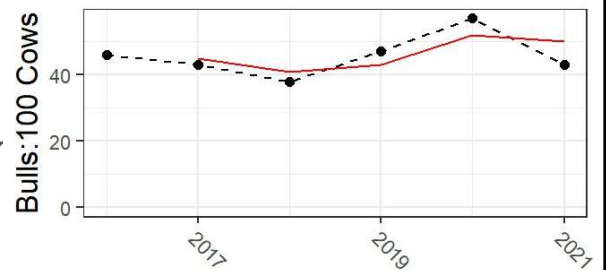
Total Elk Counted- HDs 702, 704 & 705



Recruitment- HD 702, 704 & 705



Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 702, 704 & 705

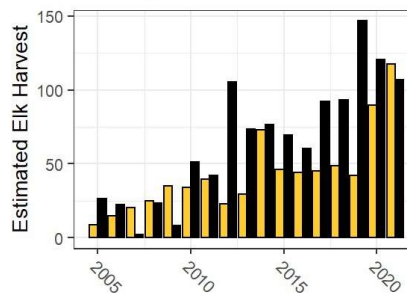


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows an average of the 2 most recent surveys.

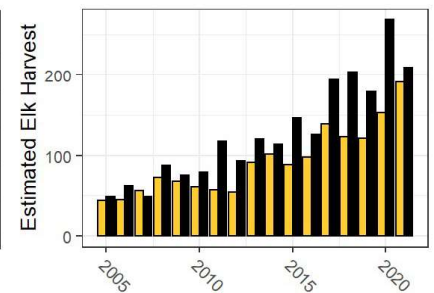
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

HD	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
702	2006	180	913
	2008	254	1,602
	2010	326	1,904
	2012	523	3,140
	2014	617	3,494
	2016	555	4,068
	2018	609	4,107
	2020	661	4,537
704	2006	458	3,041
	2008	678	5,063
	2010	745	5,590
	2012	719	5,448
	2014	907	6,130
	2016	1,119	8,384
	2018	1,409	10,525
	2020	1,492	11,973
705	2006	206	1,223
	2008	186	1,161
	2010	239	1,348
	2012	277	1,743
	2014	351	2,451
	2016	416	2,923
	2018	602	3,834
	2020	529	3,535

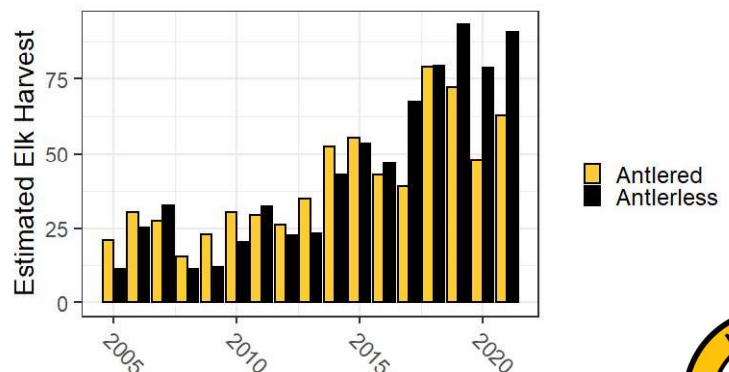
Elk Harvest- HD 702



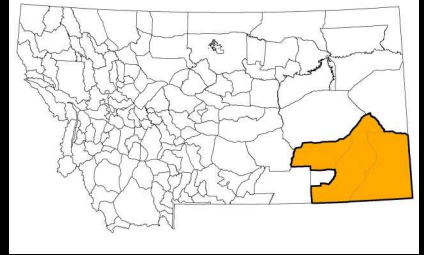
Elk Harvest- HD 704



Elk Harvest- HD 705



HDs 702, 704 & 705



Southeastern Montana Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 3,240-4,860 elk observed	4-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
Maintain bull:cow ratio at 30-45:100	4-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
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk are observed across different landownerships during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Distribute elk harvest among access types	Elk harvest by access type is within 10 percentage points of previous 3-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Increase elk use of USFS land	4-year average proportion of elk counted on USFS land is similar to or greater than the proportion of USFS land in the HD 704 elk trend area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote public land habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges
	3-year average of hunters that observed elk on USFS land is > 20% (data obtained via Ashland check station)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use USFS/non-USFS land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest towards landownerships where harvest is most needed

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
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	3-year average of bulls harvested on either-sex permit with ≥ 6 points on one antler is $\geq 50\%$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	The average percentage of bulls harvested on either-sex permits is 40-60% for both archery and general seasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust archery and rifle limited permit quotas accordingly



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Appendix A. Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group Information

Background

The Elk Management Plan that currently guides elk management for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) was adopted in 2005. Since adoption, elk population changes, detection of chronic wasting disease in free-ranging populations, increased prevalence and distribution of brucellosis in elk, increased information on elk migrations, changes in predator populations, changes in conflicts with humans, and several other considerations demand development of an updated plan. In April 2020, the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed FWP beginning the process to develop a new Elk Management Plan. The first step was to assemble a citizens group to provide initial guidance to identify relevant issues and identify durable principles to be used in the plan development. The citizens group was to be diverse and independent yet represent multiple stakeholder perspectives.

Group Charter

The Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group will provide initial guidance for the revision of the Elk Management Plan drafted in 2005. Specifically, the group is tasked with identifying and articulating issues with current elk management and defining durable and overarching principles regarding the future of elk management in Montana.

Group Member Selection

FWP solicited applications for the Elk Management Plan Initial Guidance Citizens Group over a 30-day period and received 59 applications. FWP deliberated extensively before recommending a subset that could provide a diversity of perspectives including that of landowners, hunters, outfitters and guides, backcountry users, wildlife enthusiasts, and interested members of the public. Membership was selected from various regions across Montana with differing elk management challenges. Members were chosen to serve based on demonstrated ability to respectfully express an important perspective, to respectfully listen to and consider other perspectives, and to think independently. Of the 59 applicants, FWP Director Martha Williams selected the following 14 individuals to serve on the citizens group:

Karie Decker, Missoula
Ed Fryer, Melstone
Ren Gardner, Miles City
Casey Hackathorn, Missoula
Everett Headley, Stevensville
Druska Kinkie, Pray
Kevin Koss, Malta
Joel LaLiberty, Belgrade
Ali Morgan, Choteau
Patrick Roth, Rexburg
Justin Schaaf, Fort Peck
Mark Schwomeyer, Lewiston

Marcus Strange, Helena
Dan Vermillion, Livingston

Meetings

The group met using a virtual platform for five days (November 19, December 2, 3, 16, and 17). Meetings were facilitated by Mike Mitchell and Sarah Sells from the University of Montana. Members participated virtually during each day's 7-8 hours of discussion then worked independently after hours to develop and review products. Meetings were live streamed to the FWP webpage, and recordings were available on the FWP YouTube channel after the meetings. Based on the number of YouTube views, meetings were viewed by 100–300 people. Real-time public comment opportunities were offered during two meetings. FWP received three public comments during these opportunities.

The entire first meeting and the beginning of the second meeting were devoted to providing information regarding elk and elk management. Informational presentations included:

- Social Science Related to Elk in Montana (presented by Mike Lewis; FWP)
- Elk Harvest Surveys and Trends (presented by Kevin Podruzny; FWP)
- Elk Population Surveys and Trends (presented by Dave Messmer; FWP)
- Elk Competition with Mule Deer and Other Ungulates (presented by Chad Bishop; University of Montana)
- Brucellosis in Elk; Livestock Impacts (presented by Eric Liska; Montana Dept. of Livestock)
- Elk Habitat, Access and Distribution (presented by Kelly Proffitt; FWP)
- Carnivore Impacts on Elk and Integrated Carnivore-Elk Management (presented by Justin Gude; FWP)
- Elk Management in Idaho (presented by Rick Ward; Idaho Fish and Game)
- Elk Management in Wyoming (presented by Doug Brimeyer; Wyoming Game and Fish)
- Current Laws and Policies Influencing Elk Management in Montana (presented by Lindsey Parsons; FWP)

In subsequent meetings, the group used a structured, facilitated process to develop an Issue Statement *and* Guiding Principles regarding elk management.

FWP Staff Involved in Meetings

Staff that provided technical advice to the group included; Justin Gude, Lindsey Parsons, Ken McDonald, and Brian Wakeling. Occasionally, Director Martha Williams and Chief of Staff Quentin Kujala attended meetings. Administrative assistants that helped with taking public comment and recording breakout sessions included; Kammi McClain and Emily Moran. Technology support was provided by Pat Lucchetti and Missy Erving.

Structured Process

The structured process began by identifying and defining problems with current elk management. Specifically, the group was asked to consider what about these issues makes it

difficult to manage elk. The group spent most of their time incorporating the identified issues into an Issue Statement (see **Products: Issue Statement**).

Next, the group developed Guiding Principles. Each Guiding Principle states how a single problem in the Issue Statement can be successfully addressed or resolved. In other words, each Guiding Principle states what success would look like if the issue was resolved perfectly. The group developed 19 Guiding Principles to address the six categories of issues from the Issue Statement (see **Products: Guiding Principles**). Additionally, the group identified several overarching principles categorized as Strategic Principles. These principles do not refer to any individual elk management issue, but rather refer to “things that FWP should do, no matter what.” These overarching Strategic Principles can be found at the end of the Guiding Principles document.

Products: Issue Statement

Elk are an iconic species that are part of Montana’s cultural history which are managed by the FWP as a Public Trust for the benefit of all Montanans. FWP is accountable to all Montanans for responsibly managing sustainable elk populations and maintaining Montana’s hunting heritage.

The Montana Elk Management Plan has not been updated since 2005. Given the changes that have occurred in Montana since then, updating the plan is necessary to provide a framework for FWP to effectively manage elk populations on a changing landscape. Management challenges are different throughout the state and the plan needs to provide the flexibility for wildlife managers to address site specific challenges.

To succeed in developing and implementing the Montana Elk Management Plan, FWP must collaborate with the diverse stakeholders of elk management in Montana. There are many commonalities among stakeholders regarding:

- The value of elk somewhere on the landscape
- The need to work across landownerships (federal, state, tribal, and private)
- The recognition that elk are a natural resource held in public trust
- The need to update the management plan regularly to adapt to changing conditions on the landscape
- The emotions elk can incite
- The concerns about disease, including CWD, bovine TB, and brucellosis

There are conflicts among stakeholders regarding management prescriptions to sustainably manage elk on Montana’s landscape, including:

1. Disagreement about population objectives and how they are set and implemented
2. Conflict concentrations, distributions, and behavior of elk, such as:
 - a) Separation from livestock during the critical abortive time period
 - b) Poor distribution of elk on public lands
 - c) Elk impact on agricultural production

- d) Inaccessible elk to hunters (elk on private land without public access, and on landlocked public lands)
- e) Role commercial use potentially plays in elk distribution
- f) Differing landowner interests regarding distributions and concentrations of elk
- g) Disagreement about how predators are managed with respect to elk populations
- 3. Implementing measures to mitigate disease risk between wildlife, livestock, and people, including:
 - a) CWD and its impact on the health of hunters and wildlife herds
 - b) Brucellosis and its impact on the health of people, livestock, and wildlife herds
 - c) Others, including bovine TB, elk hoof rot, and anthrax
- 4. Season length and structure (tradeoffs between hunting opportunity and quality):
 - a) Widespread opportunities to hunt
 - b) Quality hunts (trophy bulls, number of encounters, lack of crowding, etc.)
 - c) Use of shoulder seasons and resulting stress on elk from long hunting seasons
 - d) Impacts of changing technology available to hunters
- 5. Recognizing landowners for providing elk habitat, such as:
 - a) The potential for private sale of landowner tags
 - b) The potential for direct compensation
- 6. Hunter behaviors (good or bad) have a significant impact on the effectiveness of FWP elk management on the landscape.

Stakeholders are eager to work with MFWP on addressing these challenges.

Products: Guiding Principles

Each Guiding Principle states how a single problem in the Issue Statement can be successfully addressed or resolved. In other words, each Guiding Principle states what success would look like if the issue was resolved perfectly. Guiding Principles are structured with the issue listed, followed by successful resolutions.

Guiding principles:

- #1: Disagreement about population objectives and how they are set and implemented
 - Maximize public input in setting elk objectives
 - Maximize local grassroot input
- #2: Conflicts in concentrations, distributions, and behavior of elk
 - Maintain hunting as a primary tool for elk population management
 - Maximize partnerships between private landowners, land management agencies, and FWP
 - Maximize hunter access to elk
 - Maximize satisfaction with elk distribution in Montana for:
 - Hunters
 - Landowners
 - Wildlife enthusiasts
 - Outfitters

- Agricultural producers
 - Minimize prevalence and spread of CWD in Montana

3: Impact on agriculture

- Minimize impacts on agricultural production, private rangeland, and infrastructure
- Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock

#4: Season Length and Structure (tradeoffs between hunting opportunity and quality)

- Maintain over-the-counter opportunity to hunt elk
- Minimize impacts of crowding on hunter experience
- Maintain limited-draw permit areas for hunting mature bulls
- Maximize the use of the general rifle season as a primary management tool, reducing the need for additional hunts
- Maintain the availability of a variety of hunting tools for addressing elk conflicts

#5: Recognizing landowners for providing elk habitat

- Incentivize collaboration among stakeholders
- Maximize landowner-hunter cooperation with elements of the Elk Management Plan
- Maximize opportunity for FWP to improve hunter-landowner relations

#6: Hunter behaviors (good or bad) have a significant impact on the effectiveness of MFWP elk management on the landscape

- Maximize internal and external programs that promote ethical hunter behaviors
- Maintain the fair chase principles in the management of hunting and regulation of hunting technology

Strategic principles: not in reference to any individual elk management issue, but rather to “things that FWP should do, no matter what.”

- Maximize collaborative opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process both in transparently formulating and implementing the Elk Management Plan
- Maximize the integration of the best available peer-reviewed scientific data into the elk management decision-making processes
- Maximize coordination between predator and elk management plans
- Maintain public trust management of elk
- Maintain FWP’s primary role in the management of elk
- Ensure regular review and update of management and population objectives

Appendix B. Elk Management Citizen Advisory Group Information

Background

In light of some elk populations being chronically over objective, new disease concerns, continuing calls for more access, reports of crowded public lands, and more people than ever coming to the state, Montana needs new ways to manage elk, and the people most directly affected must be involved in developing solutions. The advisory group represents a variety of stakeholders who are interested in moving past old debates that have not significantly improved elk circumstances for hunters or landowners, and revisiting old issues with fresh eyes to identify new solutions.

Group Charter

To forge new relationships among stakeholders and collaboratively develop new and creative ideas and recommendations for issues surrounding elk management in Montana to balance hunter and landowner interests.

Group Member Selection

After reviewing 243 applications, FWP selected 12 individuals to serve on a citizens advisory group to address the future of elk management. The 12-member group will help craft a new future for elk management and elk hunting in Montana. This group represents a broad range of viewpoints and experience and will use that diversity to focus on two broad tasks – developing a set of recommendations to address elk management issues and improving relationships between stakeholders. The members were selected for the diversity of viewpoints they represent and their expressed eagerness to make progress on the complex challenges facing elk management in Montana. The members were selected irrespective of group affiliation. Group members were:

Aaron Iverson, Conrad
Heath Hansen, Whitehall
Staci Ketchum, Miles City
Race King, Dillon
Druska Kinkie, Pray
Stephanie Prater, Lewistown
Brent Race D.M.V, Corvallis
Chuck Rein, Big Timber
Scott Tinklenburg, Highwood
Scott Van Dyken, Great Falls
Ian Wargo, Kalispell
Matt Wickens, Winifred

Meetings

The Elk Management Citizen Advisory Group met 10 times to develop a suite of recommendations on improving elk management in Montana (15 recommendation total).

Recommendations:

Access Plus Program: The intent of the program would be to incentivize landowners to allow public hunting by addressing major concerns regarding allowing public access. This program would produce a pool of hunters that have an elevated skill set and intimate knowledge of landowner operations and concerns through required training.

Choose Your Weapon/Season: The intent of the recommendation is to reduce pressure on elk on public land by easing the crowding on public land. This proposal would make hunters choose which weapon they want to hunt with, therefore limiting the number of people in the field at any given time.

Collaboration between FWP, USFS, BLM & DNRC and Any Other Pertinent Local, State, or Federal Land Management Agencies: The intent of this recommendation is to reaffirm the relationships FWP has with these organizations/agencies including communicating their collaborations to the public.

Create an A9 Tag Bundle: The intent of this recommendation is to increase harvest and lower populations in hunting districts that are over objective. The reduction of elk populations in over-objective districts will also reduce disease risk associated with overpopulation.

Develop User Friendly and Effective Methods to Collect Data: The intent of this recommendation is to demonstrate transparency on the part of the agency as to data collection methods. It would create ways for the general public to receive, contribute to and find data. This improves stakeholder relationships as everyone feels part of the process.

Establish (where possible) Localized Elk Working Groups: This recommendation encourages communication between landowners, hunters, outfitters, and local FWP biologists. Citizen science would be heard concerning elk movement, and together the group would address redistribution of elk, objectives, access and other related issues. Season structure and number of permits could also be topics.

Expanded Hunter Education: The intent of this recommendation is to improve hunter/landowner relationships with programs similar to the Master Hunter Program. This would improve hunter quality and, with certification possibilities, a potential way for program graduates to access private land to hunt.

Promote Focused Damage Hunts: This recommendation would allow landowners and biologists to have a list of willing, local participants to choose from. This is a harvest tool to help landowners strategically redistribute elk, mitigate disease and improve stakeholder relationships.

Improve Accessibility to the FWP Videos, Programs, PSAs, etc. that Promote the Desired Behaviors between Landowners and Hunters: This recommendation would make existing communication pieces readily available or easy to find.

FWP Landowner Liaison: This recommendation creates a liaison position to work with landowners and creates a communication pathway between community partners. This could improve stakeholder relationships and mitigate disease.

We have to Manage Elk Where They Are Not: The intent of this recommendation is to restore historic elk numbers in northwest Montana to alleviate the excessive elk hunting pressure that is experienced in the rest of the state. This proposal also is intended to strategically redistribute hunters, improve quality access to harvest and encourage better data collection by the department.

Understand and Mitigate the Disease of Brucellosis in Elk: This recommendation recognizes the impacts on livestock producers within the designated surveillance area who deal with the risk of disease transmission from elk to cattle and improve stakeholder relationships.

Use of Shoulder Seasons: The intent would be to assess the benefits of shoulder seasons, redistribute elk, and reduce landowner hunting fatigue, thereby improving relationships between landowners and hunters.

Stakeholder Meetings: This recommendation fulfills one of the key components of the group's intended purpose – "to forge new relationships among stakeholders."

Enforce Stricter Penalties for Trespassing and Other Bad Behaviors by Hunters and Landowners: The intent of tougher laws is to discourage trespassing and other unethical behaviors that occur, including landowners illegally blocking or detouring access to public lands. The intent is to improve stakeholder relationships and address quality access to harvest.