PRIVATE LAND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PRIVATE LAND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTACT INFORMATION:
Joe Weigand
Private Land Wildlife Specialist
joweigand@mt.gov / 444-3065

Since 2009, 1,058 landowners have received Longevity Awards recognizing them for their years of participation in the Block Management Hunter Access Program. The award program was established to honor farm and ranch family legacies of providing public access to public wildlife for many years. As ownership and management of farm and ranch operations is passed from one generation to the next, it is important to recognize these families for their important contributions to Montana's hunting heritage and traditions.

The number of participating landowners that have been recognized with Longevity Awards and the number of years that they have been enrolled since 1996:

	5 - 9 Years	10 - 14 Years	15 - 18 Years
Region 1	1	4	5
Region 2		11	65
Region 3	11	27	45
Region 4	45	51	90
Region 5	31	63	55
Region 6	51	105	133
Region 7	71	68	126

Congratulations and Thank You! To private landowners across Montana who have enrolled their lands in Block Management.

Between 1985 and 1995, before the Block Management Program became the much expanded program that we recognize today, many landowners provided public hunting access through formal agreements with Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

PRIVATE LAND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FEATURED PROJECT

Location: The Nature Conservancy's Chicken Creek Property adjacent to Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area in Powell County, MT.

Purpose: The purpose of this collaborative project was to benefit wildlife by replacing and installing fences with fence of wildlife friendly design. The project also served to promote wildlife friendly fence designs as being of benefit to landowners and land managers due to reduced fence maintenance. The project lends itself to high profile and visible promotion of alternate fence designs.

Area Description: As a portion of the Blackfoot Community Project, the two parcels of land adjacent to Nevada Lake WMA were acquired by The Nature Conservancy from Plum Creek Timber in 2004. The first parcel, Section 1, was leased for many years to FWP as a portion of the agency's large "Open Space Lease" with Plum Creek. This lease has not been issued by TNC since 2009. The parcel experienced significant unauthorized grazing by cattle for many years. Because Montana is a "fence-out" state, the onus was on TNC to preclude the grazing. The section had little or no functional fence on the west, north or east and there are no interior fences. The East Fork of Chicken Creek, an intermittent stream, runs northeast to southwest through this parcel.

The second parcel, Section 11, was leased for many years to a nearby landowner, but has been voluntarily removed from the lease and has been in rest status for the past three years. It is fenced on all sides but the fence was in poor condition on the west and south sides; none of the boundary fence was wildlife friendly. Again, there are no interior fences in this parcel. Chicken Creek runs north to south through this parcel.

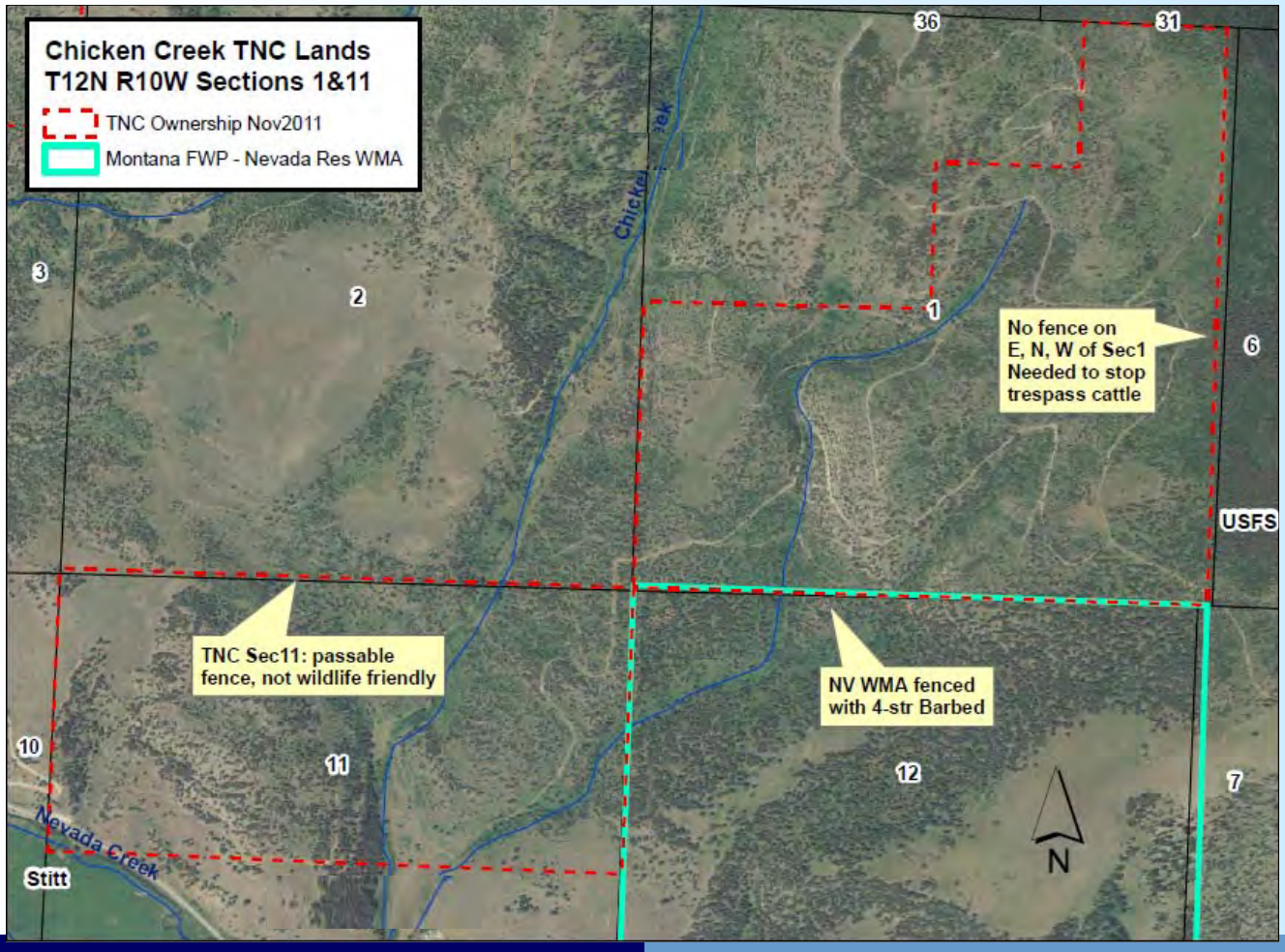
In 2010, TNC conducted aquatic restoration on these parcels by removing 6 culverts. This work was also necessitated by damage to the culverts and associated stream channels from unauthorized grazing. TNC turned crossings on the main access roads into drivable fords. On side roads, TNC barricaded and did full channel restoration on the crossings. TNC also did some barricading to stop illegal motorized vehicle access. Additional locking gates were needed to ensure the gated roads were not used illegally.

PRIVATE LAND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT - Continued

TNC had been conducting weed management and reseeding on these parcels for many years in an effort to reduce the presence of spotted knapweed and houndstongue infestations. The unauthorized grazing on Section 1 had likely been exacerbating the weedy conditions and making weed management efforts less effective and more costly.

With this project, TNC was able to stop the unauthorized grazing from occurring on Section 1, and install a wildlife friendly fence with lockable "ranch-style" gates in the process. All new fence consisted of 3-wires, all barbed, with spacing at 18", 28" and 40".

The Nature Conservancy's hope for the future is that this property will be transferred into Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks ownership to expand the Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area. If this occurs, the department will receive critical big game winter range with wildlife-friendly attributes and enhanced noxious weed control and habitat management already in place.



The Game Damage Program: What is it and how is governed?

The game damage program is a collaborative approach designed as an equitable, consistent, and cost-effective way to minimize property damage caused by game animals. Emphasis is on public hunting during the general hunting season as the primary method to accomplish long-term solutions, recognizing that game management is responsibility shared by landowners, hunters, and the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks.

DAMAGE DEFINITION: "Damage to property and crops" is defined as "damage to real property or cultivated agricultural crops." Wildlife presence on, or consumption of, non-cultivated grass or pastureland does not constitute damage qualifying for assistance under this program. In exceptional circumstances, FWP Regional Supervisor may authorize assistance in the form of hazing, dispersal devices, special hunts, kill permits, or game damage supplemental licenses when large numbers of ungulates are concentrated for extended periods on areas of pastureland reserved for future livestock consumption. Such action may be taken only if affected landowner meets all other eligibility criteria for game damage assistance."

Craig Jourdonnais

ELIGIBILITY (MCA 87-1-225)

A landowner is eligible for game damage assistance if he:

(a) allows public hunting during established hunting seasons; or

(b) does not significantly reduce public hunting through imposed restrictions.

The department may provide game damage assistance when public hunting on a landowner's property has been denied because of unique or special circumstances that have rendered public hunting inappropriate.

Within 48 hours after receiving a request or complaint from any landholder or person in possession and having charge of any land in the state that wild animals of the state, protected by the fish and game laws and regulations, are doing damage to the property or crops thereon, the department shall investigate and arrange to study the situation with respect to damage and depredation. The department may then decide to open a special season on the game or, if the special season method be not feasible, the department may destroy the animals causing the damage. The department may authorize and grant the holders of said property permission to kill or destroy a specified number of the animals causing the damage. No wild ferocious animal damaging property or endangering life shall be covered by this section."

Montana FWP

Game Damage Program - Continued

PUBLIC HUNTING ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT (ARM 12.9.803)

To qualify for game damage assistance in accordance with 87-1-225, MCA, a landowner must allow public hunting or not significantly reduce public hunting through imposed restrictions during established hunting seasons, including the general big game season. The department shall make determinations of eligibility based on the criteria set out in this rule. For eligibility, public hunting must be allowed at levels and in ways sufficient to effectively aid in management of area game populations. Restrictions that may significantly restrict public hunting include:

(a) species or sex of animals hunters are allowed to hunt;
(b) portion of land open to hunting;
(c) time period land is open to hunting;
(d) fees charged; or
(e) other restrictions that render harvestable animals inaccessible.

Policy Note 1. Producers reporting damage who do not allow hunting for legitimate safety reasons or do not have the animals on their property during the general season may be eligible based on review by the field warden, biologist and program managers. The decision to assist and circumstances will be noted on the Game Damage Eligibility Form.

Policy Note 2. Those not eligible for assistance include:

- Producers with complaint unsubstantiated by FWP field investigation;
- Producers who do not meet public hunting criteria outlined in ARM 12.9.803;
- Homeowners in subdivisions or locations where primary land use does not involve agricultural crop or livestock production. In these instances, regional personnel will advise landowners about techniques for reducing or addressing damage situations. Literature will be made available to these landowners, but no damage materials, herders, hunters, or kill permits will be provided.

Game Damage Program - Continued

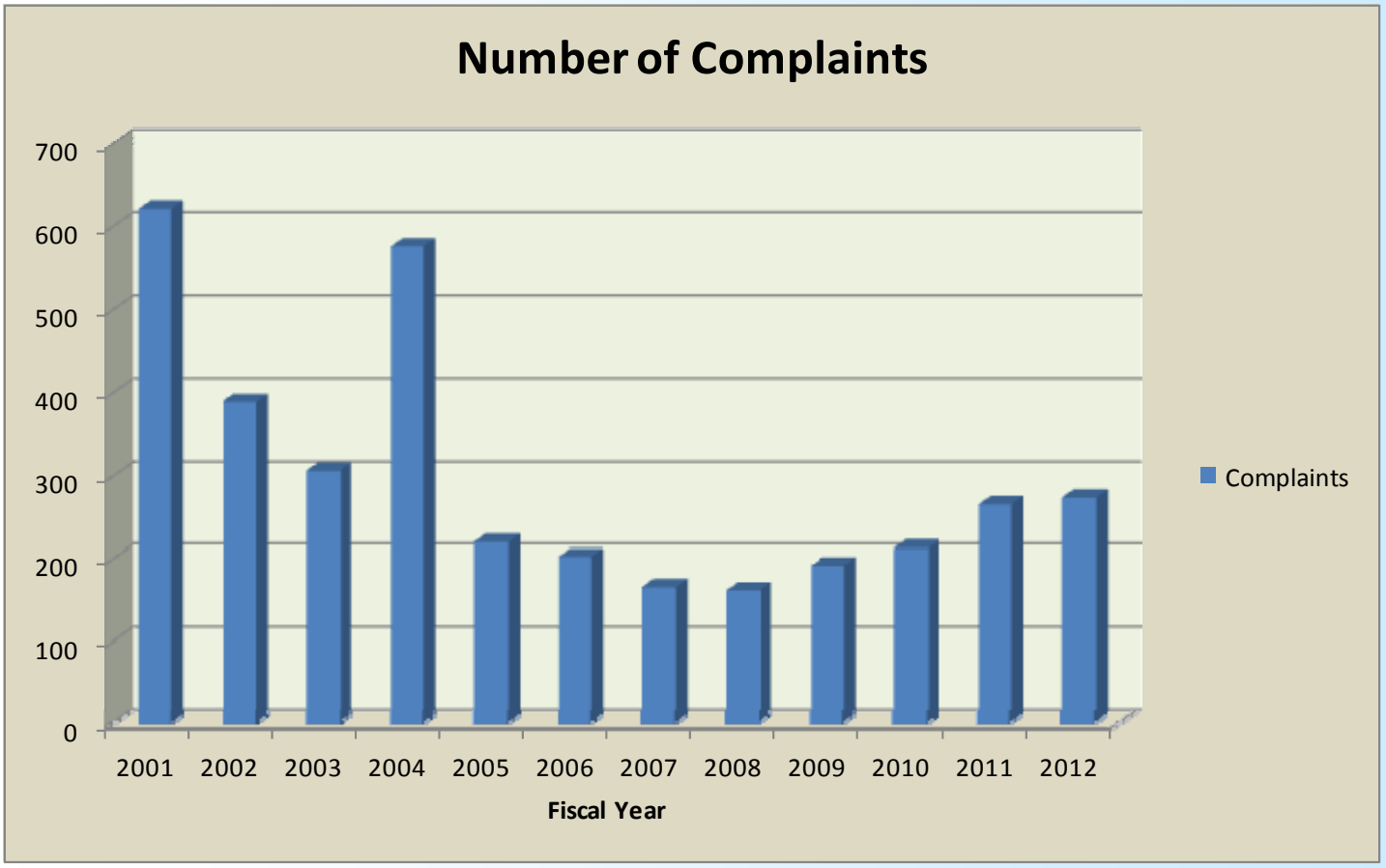
Methods of Assistance Field personnel should respond quickly and effectively to game damage situations, employing game damage abatement activities on a progressive scale of intensity, from the least dangerous or harmful to the wildlife doing damage up to and including lethal methods such as damage hunts and kill permits. There may be times when it is necessary or appropriate to escalate damage actions immediately to hunts or kill permits. Whenever animals need to be taken, it is preferable to use hunters under provisions of a damage hunt. However, damage hunts may not always be an option. Generally speaking, the progressive steps for the use of game damage techniques are:

(1) Repellants;
(2) Dispersal through the use of noisemakers and repellants, or other activities agreed upon which would serve to haze animals away from an area;
(3) Physical barriers such as snow fence, mesh wire, panels, permanent stackyards or electric fence used to protect harvested, stored crops; fence barriers will not be provided for protection of unharvested crops standing in the field;
(4) Damage hunts during the periods of August 15th to the opening of fall Commission-established seasons and from the close of fall Commission-established season through February 15th;
(5) Kill permits used by landowners or, in rare instances, department person.

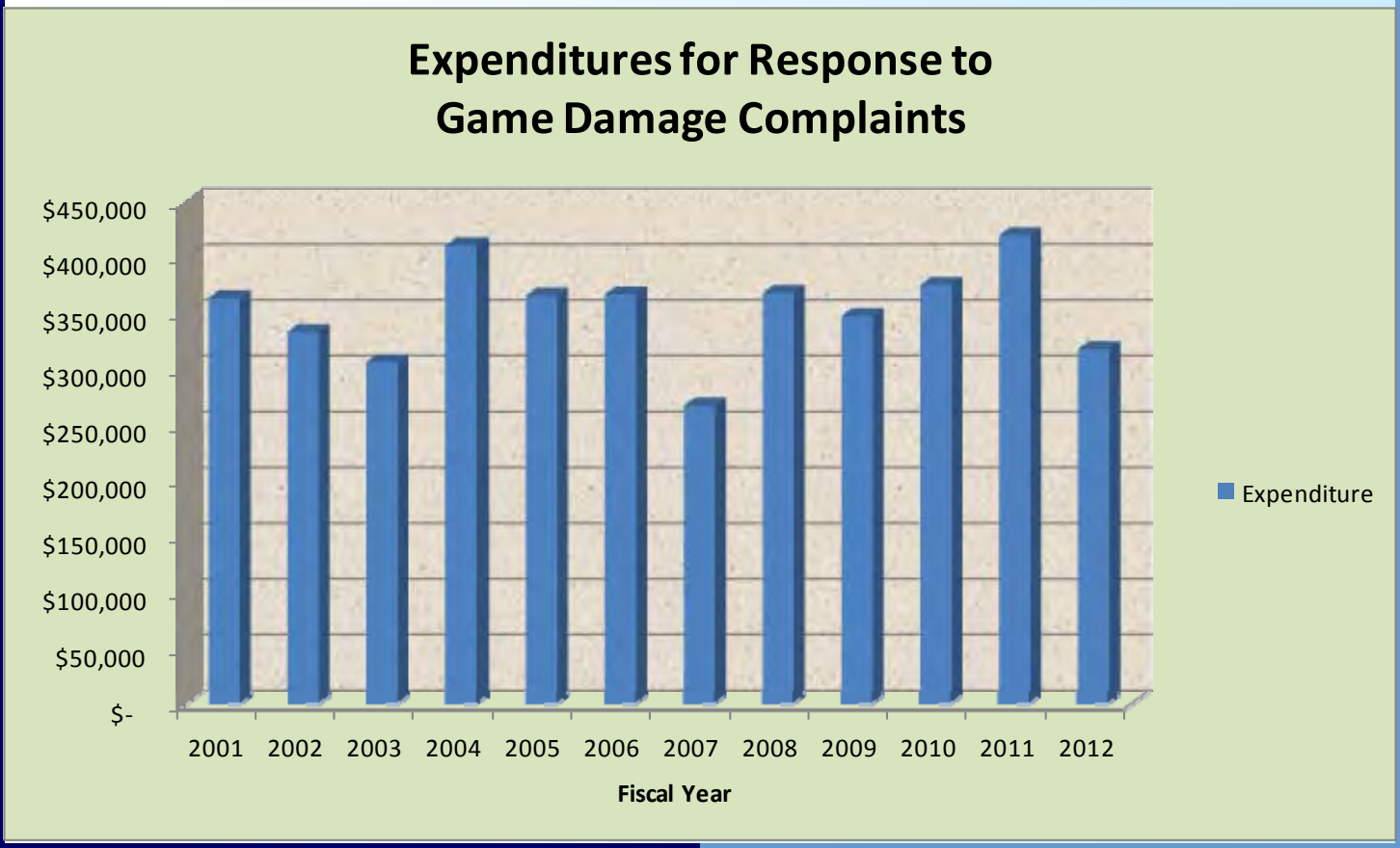
Some wildlife including deer and elk can starve to death with bellies full of hay because they may lack the bacteria in their gut to break down the forage type.

From 2001 through 2012, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks spent $4,250,506 responding to 3,559 documented game damage complaints.

Non-game Wildlife Furbearers, including but not limited to beavers and muskrats, and non-managed wildlife, including but not limited to such animals as badgers, skunks, and raccoons, often generate complaints from landowners. While these animals can, in some cases, cause property damage, more often their presence represents a nuisance to property owners who request removal of the animal. While the department can offer technical assistance, including literature describing methods for removal or relocation, department responsibility does not include providing staff or material to address animal nuisance problems. Property owners will be responsible for the removal of such animals themselves. The department may furnish names of individuals or firms providing such services, or, in some cases, regional staff may provide live traps on an equipment-loan basis to homeowners, but any such activity shall include involvement of the regional wildlife manager to ensure that objectives of the wildlife program are maintained. Regional policy may incorporate cooperative agreements with other agencies or individuals to facilitate a clearly-identified response process for nuisance animal complaints.



In years of fewer game damage complaints, MFWP is sometimes able to purchase and stockpile game damage materials to use in years of extreme winter conditions and increased game damage complaints. This helps to balance budgets yet meet critical needs during difficult times.



Kill Permits: Policy and Guidance

Kill permits will be reviewed, signed and issued by the Regional Supervisor or designee. Kill permits will not be used if public hunting is a viable option.

Kill permits will be delivered to the landowners to whom they are issued.

The individual authorized by the kill permit to dispatch animals shall be responsible for field-dressing and providing proper care of animal carcasses prior to FWP staff taking possession of dead animals.

Responsibility for the disposition of animals taken by kill permits will be shared by both biologists and wardens, who will also be responsible for ensuring that any animals taken are given proper care and delivered to the appropriate social service organization.

In situations involving haystack damage, kill permits or damage hunts may be utilized only if the use of fencing or other barriers is not an option. The landowner must also be informed that the department may require that a stackyard or other structure must be installed in the future to address the damage problems in order for the department to continue offering assistance.

Landowners who are issued kill permits may be instructed to dispatch a certain number of animals per day in order to facilitate effective control measures. In all cases, the specified total number of animals to be taken, gender (if specified), and total number of animals taken daily will appear in writing on the kill permit.

Except in unusual circumstances, kill permits shall be used only by the landowner to whom the permit is issued, a department-approved agent, family member or employee of the landowner.

Department personnel will take animals under authority of a kill permit only under special circumstances, such as the landowner's physical inability to dispatch the animals himself or when department personnel can more effectively accomplish the task.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, and only by the approval of the Regional Supervisor, kill permits for elk, antelope and deer will not be issued between **April 1 through July 31**.

Kristi DuBois

WILDLIFE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH AIRPORTS

Adequate fencing that provides a game-proof barrier is the only permanent solution to ungulate wildlife problems associated with airports. While FWP may be able to provide technical assistance related to fencing systems, responsibility for erecting a suitable fence, including cost, materials, and labor, lies with the municipality owning the property.

General hunting seasons, with hunters regulating wildlife populations at tolerable levels, is the preferred method for regulating wildlife populations. This usually is not a viable solution to problems associated with airports in populated areas.

Special hunting seasons may be used under the following conditions:

a) during the period from August 15th through February 15th;
b) when reasonable hunter access is available to allow for adequate harvest;
c) when enough animals are involved to justify public hunting;
d) when damage, or wildlife presence, is a recurring problem and animals are normally unavailable during the general hunting season.

Repellents do not provide a permanent solution, but may work as a temporary solution if animals are focusing on a very specific food source found on airport property. FWP may provide repellent material, but will not assume the cost of these materials if used over a long period of time as an alternative to more effective control measures.

Dispersal, by use of various pyrotechnics such as cracker shells and scare-guns, can be effective as a temporary measure. Effectiveness increases if devices are moved regularly and employed at irregular intervals. FWP may provide dispersal devices, but will not assume the cost of these materials if used over a long period of time as an alternative to more effective control measures. *(ATF restrictions on pyrotechnics are currently in effect)*

Herding, as a temporary measure, may also be effective. Herders must be hired by the municipality and paid for by the municipality.

Kill permits may provide a short-term solution. They will not be provided on a regular basis in cases where crops attractive to wildlife are planted on airport property and where ungulate-proof fencing has not been erected. Kill permits may be activated by the region if a decision is made that kill permits are the most practical method of addressing the problem or if previously-mentioned methods have proven to be unsuccessful or are not possible. Kill permits must be approved by the Regional Supervisor or designee and are issued, on a case-by-case basis, for a specified time period or for a specified number of animals. The person or entity to whom the kill permit is issued will be responsible for killing and field-dressing the appropriate number of animals. FWP personnel will be responsible, upon being contacted, for delivery of the field-dressed animals to the appropriate public or charitable institution.

GAME DAMAGE HUNTS VERSUS MANAGEMENT SEASONS

Game Damage Hunts

A game damage hunt is only one response to evident game damage. Typically these hunts are small in geographic scale and on one landownership with a relatively small number of hunters recruited from the Hunt Roster. The primary intent of a damage hunt is to reduce crop and property damage by re-distributing game animals with only minimal harvest.

Management Seasons

A management season hunt is a proactive measure to prevent or reduce potential damage caused by large concentrations of game animals resulting from seasonal migrations, extreme weather conditions, restrictive public hunting access on adjacent or nearby properties, or other factors. Management season hunts typically occur on a larger scale than game damage hunts and may take place across multiple ownerships. There may be relatively large numbers of hunters recruited from the Hunt Roster for a longer period of time with the potential for a significant harvest.

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To be eligible for a game damage hunt or a management season a landowner must meet the public hunting access eligibility requirements under ARM 12.9.803.

There is no guarantee that hunts will occur in the same hunting district in subsequent years as game animals, weather, natural causes such as fire and drought, human pressure, etc., are all factors for population distribution and the occurrence of game damage.

The Hunt Roster

There is only one Hunt Roster and hunters from this roster may be selected for Game Damage Hunts or Management Seasons. Depending upon their randomized order on the list, hunters registered on the hunt roster may be contacted by the FWP regional offices if there is a hunt planned for the species and hunting district they signed-up for. These hunts often evolve quickly and cannot be predicted.

The Hunt Roster is used by the FWP regional offices as an efficient and effective means of responding to landowners in the prevention or reduction of damage caused by game animals, basically deer, elk and antelope. Landowners may be eligible for these types of hunts if they allow public hunting during established hunting seasons. Assistance may include hazing, repellents, temporary or permanent stack-yard fencing, kill permits or supplemental game damage licenses.

Dates to Remember

- June 15 through July 15: Hunt Roster registration for deer, elk and antelope for anticipated hunting districts.
- July 16: FWP will conduct a computerized random drawing process that will award placement of all prospective hunters on the roster in the order in which they are drawn.
- August 1: Hunt Roster results are available to hunters through MY FWP or through a link on the Hunt Roster page.
- August 15: Game Damage Hunts and Management Seasons could take place anytime from August 15 through February 15; Brucellosis Dispersal hunts may extend for a longer period of time in the spring.

To Register: **The Hunt Roster is open for sign-up June 15 (at 8 AM) through July 15 each year. Register at:** http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/seasons/huntRoster.html

Note: The Hunt Roster process is currently under review and could potentially experience some changes in 2014. Be sure to check this website periodically during spring 2014.

Hunt Roster Status: On August 1, hunters are able to check their status on the Hunt Roster for each species they are signed up for.

FWP Regional offices are the point of contact for hunt roster opportunities. FWP Regional offices may attempt to contact eligible hunters by mail, telephone and/or email, often due to the short time-frame to recruit hunters for a hunt, respondents will be selected and those not responding in a timely manner after three attempted contacts by FWP will go to the end of the list.

Management Season January 2011

Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife:

Revisiting the Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society's 1999 Findings

*The following text was taken and further summarized from the **Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife: Summary of the September 1999 Review for Montana**. All credit is due the original authors.*


Montana FWP

Few recreationists think about how recreational activities pose threats to wildlife or to wildlife habitats. The increasing number of recreationists, combined with the growing array of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities taking place on the state's public and private lands, has led to a number of scientific search studies that examine how wildlife responds to recreational activity.

Wildlife responses to disturbance may be behavioral (e.g., avoidance, habituation, attraction) or physiological (stress). Short-term responses to disturbances are often presumed to be of little consequence to wildlife. But, over time, the stress of repeated disturbances to individual animals by interrupting feeding or breeding behavior, reducing vigor, reducing productivity, and causing death have all been documented. In the long-term, negative consequences to individual animals may result in lower population levels, changes in the composition of wildlife communities, and conflict between wildlife species.

Overall, our wildlife's future depends on thoughtful planning of recreational activities that includes consideration for wildlife as well as other natural resources.

Amphibians and Reptiles Road traffic and off-road use directly kill amphibians and reptiles, destroy habitat, create barriers to migration, and increase soil runoff and chemical contamination of waterways. Development of recreational facilities and reservoirs may result in the loss of key breeding, feeding, and overwintering habitats. The introduction of non-native species has had severe impacts on amphibian and reptile populations.

Birds Although the response to disturbances varies from habituation to habitat abandonment, published literature notes that breeding birds and young are most vulnerable. Effects on breeding birds during incubation include short-term exposure of the eggs to temperature extremes and predators. Disturbance during brood-rearing can result in trampling of eggs or young, young jumping or falling from nests before they are able to fly, and/or separation of young from parents. Colony nesters (like herons or pelicans) are particularly susceptible to direct disturbance, while upland game birds and cavity nesters (like woodpeckers) are more often influenced by habitat disturbance. Outside of the breeding season, disturbance by humans may cause birds to change their feeding habits, thereby reducing normal food intake.


Christine Paige

Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife

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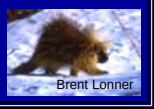

Small Mammals During winter, small mammals that are subnivian (live under snow) can be significantly affected by snowmobiles because the machines compact their surrounding snow environment. Death may increase directly through crushing or indirectly once the insulating value of snow is lost after it has been compacted. Additionally, packed snowmobile tracks create unnatural routs to high-elevation, deep-snow country that was not previously available to predators that normally cannot hunt these areas. These new predators can reduce numbers of small mammals, such as snowshoe hares, that are a staple food source for lynx and other species that live in these severe habitats. Bats are another small mammal particularly sensitive to human disturbance, especially during the period when young are being reared or during critical energy conservation periods (hibernation).

Semi-Aquatic Mammals Semi-aquatic animals (beaver, muskrat, and otter) require both water and adjacent shoreline. The closer recreational activity is to the shoreline, the greater the potential is to disturb semi-aquatic animals. Impacts of motorized watercraft include shoreline erosion from boat wakes, pollution from boat engines, stirring up of toxins from the bottom, increased turbidity, and damage to aquatic vegetation by propellers. Wakes may also erode den entrances and muskrat canals, swamp river otter marking sites, and compromise the structural integrity of bank dens, beaver lodges, beaver caches, muskrat houses, and muskrat feeding platforms. Finally, the removal of riparian habitat and artificial bank stabilization done in order to develop public recreational facilities, private docks, and home-sites pose serious threats to semi-aquatic mammals and their habitats.

Ungulates During winter, many ungulate populations are confined to restricted geographic areas with limited forage. The predictability of human activity is important in order to minimize stress. Winter recreational activities should, therefore, be confined to designated routes and designated areas, distant from winter ranges. During summer, ungulates must restore their winter-depleted body condition and accumulate new fat reserves. High levels of recreational use of ungulate summering areas reduce their options for acquiring high-quality nutrition and negatively affect their health, productivity, and survival. Big game hunting has immediate effects on population densities and structures. These effects on populations are generally short-term if there is adequate habitat security. If habitat security is compromised, however, fewer bull elk and buck deer may survive from year to year. Reproduction then declines, and fewer young are born. Security includes not only important vegetative cover, but also travel management restrictions, which provide protection from disturbance.

Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife - *Continued*


Jenny Sika


Mountain Lion tracks

Carnivores Some species like skunks, raccoons and coyotes tend to thrive in association with humans. For other carnivores, impacts from human disturbance at den sites, habitat fragmentation by roads and trails, and the consequences of becoming accustomed to humans are growing and can be significant. Year-round use of recreational vehicles into remote habitats is now common. These areas previously were isolated due to distance, season of year, and lack of trails and roads, Now, there is no season when these areas are "quiet" (from human use). Several carnivore species that seek secluded areas for production and rearing of young have been known to abandon den sites when disturbed.

Dogs A little recognized consequence of human recreation on wildlife habitats is the effect domestic dogs may have on wildlife, even in the company of their owners. Most domestic dogs still retain instincts to hunt and/or chase other animals. Even if dogs are controlled and not allowed to chase wildlife, their very presence has been shown to be disruptive to many wildlife species. Especially during winter, harassment by dogs results in excessive energy expenditures by wildlife. During spring and summer, pregnant wildlife and newborns can be particularly vulnerable to harassment or attacks by domestic dogs, Dogs are noted for their "incidental" predation upon birds and small mammals during all seasons. Domestic dogs can potentially introduce disease and transport parasites into wildlife habitats. While impacts of domestic dogs are most notable for their effects on individual animals, the cumulative effects from dogs may have important implications for wildlife populations.

Vegetation Vegetation, soil and water are the components of the environment that constitute wildlife habitat. Healthy habitat, in large part, determines the well-being of wildlife populations. Recreational traffic, from intensive-use hiking to even light off-highway vehicle use, has serious consequences for wildlife habitat. Soil compaction from even moderate vehicle use increases runoff, soil displacement, and funneling of water that increases erosion. Trail systems across public lands provide expeditious avenues for weed dispersal. During winter, compaction of snow by snowmobiles can double the snow-melting times and reduce the water-holding capacity of snow. During spring melt, these effects could significantly reduce the ability of snow to slow runoff and to moderate the effects of thawing. Additionally, shrubs and young trees are particularly vulnerable to physical damage by snowmobiles.


Wall Creek WMA

To request a copy of the 254 page report plus appendices contact Joe Weigand at 444-3065 or joweigand@mt.gov.

Or visit The Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society website: http://joomla.wildlife.org/Montana

Day in and day out, 365 days per year, FWP Private Land Technical Assistance and Hunter Access Projects are on the ground providing much needed wildlife conflict prevention and recreational access solutions on private and public lands.

To request hard copies of this Private Land Technical Assistance Bulletin or previous bulletins contact Joe Weigand at 444-3065 or joweigand@mt,gov.