

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
622-20 Quota Change

Hunting Districts: 622

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

This proposal is tied to the 622 Boundary change proposal. With the boundary change between 622 and 630, quotas will need to be adjusted to reflect the new boundary, opportunity and desired harvest. Historically there have been three either-sex LPT's that are directly tied to the HD 622 include the 620-21 either-sex archery permit, 620-20 either-sex rifle permit, and the 622-22 either-sex rifle permit. Due to the proposed HD expansion we propose the two quota increases (620-20 and 622-20) to corresponding with the increase in HD size and respective observed elk numbers.

- Elk 622-20 LPT: Proposed Quota 60 (increase from 50).
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2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

Overall objective is in line with the state simplification process and this LPT needs adjustment with the larger 622 boundary change proposal.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

Trends in elk populations are monitored by completing biennial post-season surveys across the Missouri River Breaks. Total number of elk observed, as well as calf and bull to cow ratios from these surveys, are measured against population objectives within the Elk Management Plan to determine population status and trend of elk across the region as well as within hunting districts. Success of this proposal will be measured by the continual monitoring of the above parameters within HD 622 and adjacent HDs. Secondly, harvest surveys provide harvest estimates across the region as well as by HD. Elk harvest estimates provide another measure of population level and availability of elk for harvest, as well as prior year removal from the population and effectiveness of B Licenses types.

4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers were 20% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 621 and 622. Calf ratios were below the long-term average (47 ca:100 cows) with a ratio of 40:100 cows. Bull ratio of 31 bulls:100 cows is below the LTA of 45 bulls:100 cows and slightly above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers (n = 405) were 16% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 631 and 632. Calf ratios were above the long-term average (52 calves:100 cows) with a ratio of 57:100 cows. Bull ratios 92 bulls:100 cows is above the LTA of 56 bulls:100 cows and is well above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

This proposal is for a permit quota change but is directly tied to the HD 622 expansion, which will allow hunters to utilize management tools that are currently available in HD 622 to pursue elk when winter weather sometimes

drives them into HD 631 (proposed portion that is described) so now they will be available for harvest to a broader group when they were not previously. This also allows hunters more freedom and a larger area to locate elk across a mixture of private and public lands throughout the larger HD.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

This proposal is supported by the Breaks Elk Working Group with the recognition that it could help elk management. Some of the large landowners in the affected areas have been asked about this proposal, and there has been very few issues. However, there are hunters that do not support the new boundary change as it will impact their hunting habits and resulting hunter redistribution. The Region 6 CAC were also contacted about the proposal and recognized its strengths of better elk herd management but questioned if the expansion was large enough and if the archery either-sex permit should also be adjusted.

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
630 Consolidation

Hunting Districts: 630

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

This proposal aims to combine Hunting District 630, the remainder of HD 631 (east of Ridge Road/Burke Ranch Road), and HD 632 into the new HD 630 (Figure 1.) Currently HD 630, 631, and 632 are all general districts for deer and have a Mule Deer B License that is valid across all three of those HDs already. There are multiple associated elk LPTs and antlerless Elk B Licenses for these HDs and they would be combined and have quota adjustments to account for the proposed consolidation of the multiple HDs. Note: Antelope and mountain lion HDs would see the corresponding changes as well.

Legal Description for the proposed consolidated HD 630 and proposed quota and quota range:

Those portions of Valley and Phillips Counties lying within the following-described boundary: Beginning at a point where the Larb Creek Road joins US Highway 2 at Saco, then south along said road to Ridge Road, then south along said road to Willow Creek Road, then southwesterly along said road to Burke Ranch Road, then south along said road to Charles M Russel National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) Boundary Road 425, then south along said road to the point where the road meets Fort Peck Reservoir, then easterly along said reservoir to Fort Peck Dam and State Route 24, then easterly along said route to the Missouri River at Fort Peck Dam, then northeasterly down said river to the Milk River, then north along said river to Porcupine Creek, then north along said Creek to US Highway 2, then northwesterly along said highway to the Larb Creek Road at Saco, the point of beginning.

Historically there have been two antlerless Elk B Licenses (631-00 and 632-00) tied to these HDs, as well as two archery either-sex permits (631-21 and 632-21) and two general season either-sex permits (631-20 and 632-20). Due to the proposed HD consolidation we propose that these two antlerless B Licenses be combined into one to cover the entire newly proposed HD and that the two archery either-sex permits and the two general season either-sex permits be respectively combined into one archery either-sex permit and one general season either-sex permit to cover the entire newly proposed HD.

- Elk antlerless B License: Range 1-200, Proposed Quota 50
- Elk archery either-sex permit: Range 100-300, Proposed Quota 200
- Elk either-sex permit: Range 25-75, Proposed Quota 25

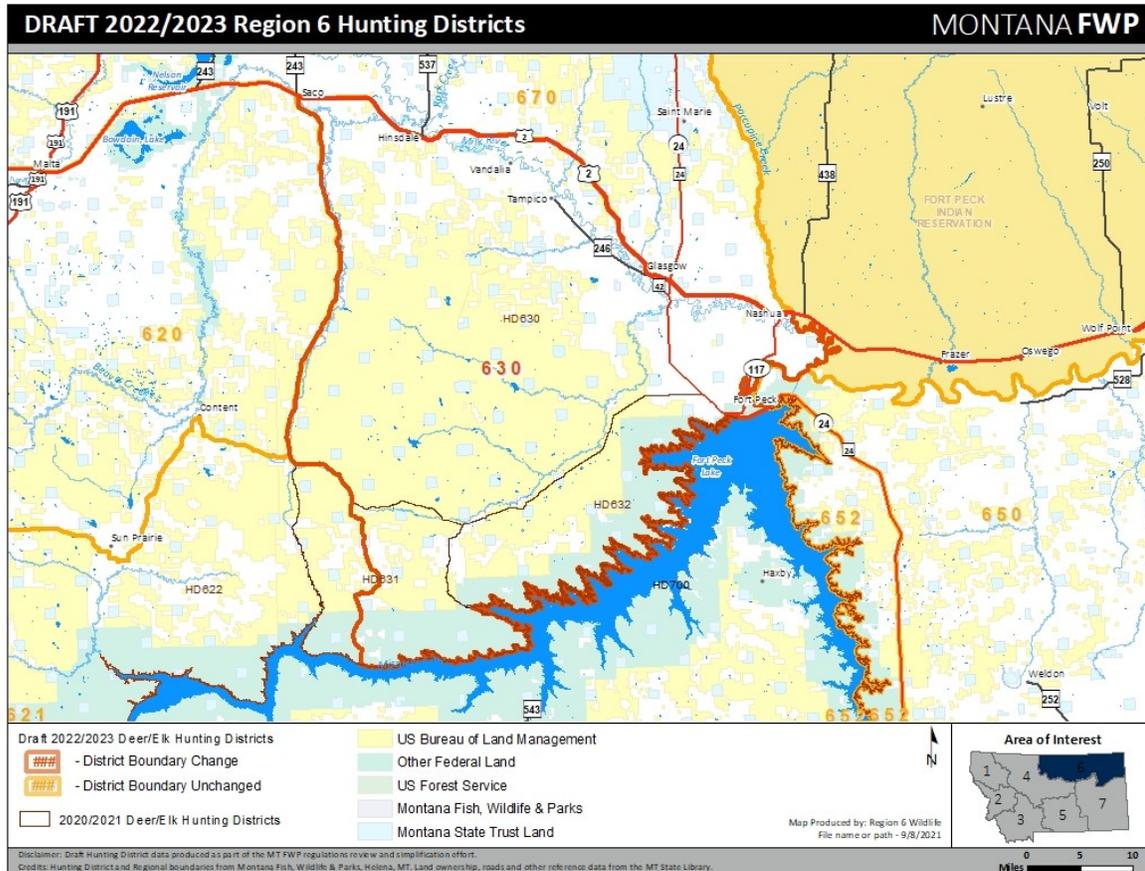


Figure 1: Figure 1. Current hunting districts relative to the proposed consolidation of HD 630, remaining portion of HD 631 based off another proposal, and HD 632 to create a new HD 630.

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

The overall objective is to improve management of elk in the area as outlined by the Elk Management Plan (2005) as well as reduce the number of Hunting Districts and LPT's in Region 6 to help simplify regulations. Typically there has been some late season influx of elk from HD 622 during winter in the portion of HD 631 that was proposed to be added to HD 622, this then leaves the rest of the elk in the remainder of 631, 630, and 632 that are typically fewer in number and remain as their own standalone population. This change will help allocate those elk counted on winter surveys to the HD they are in during the fall, which in turn impacts how elk populations relate to population objectives. With this combination, elk populations within HD 620, 621, and 622 would remain over the population objective by 27% and HD 630, 631, and 632 would be 5% under the objective. Bull ratios from the 2020 elk survey would see similar alignments with the proposal. HDs 620, 621, 622 would increase from 31 bulls:100 cows to 36 bulls:100 cows. HDs 630, 631, 632 would decrease from 92 bulls:100 cows to 61 bulls:100 cows (Tables 1 & 2).

This change will also utilize harvest tools across the larger home range of these elk, which would allow LPT and B License holders the opportunity to have access to a larger area to pursue elk. This in turn could improve elk harvest of the herd.

HD	Bulls			Cows	Calves	Unclass.	Total	Ratios: 100 Cows	
	Yearlings	Adult	Total					Bulls	Calves
621	50	137	187	395	194	0	776	47	49
622	74	100	174	771	270	0	1215	23	35
Sub Total	124	237	361	1166	464	0	1991	31	40
631	30	96	126	166	87	0	379	76	52
632	1	25	26	0	0	0	26	NA	NA
Sub Total	31	121	152	166	87	0	405	92	52
Total	155	358	513	1332	551	0	2396	39	41

Figure 1: Table 1. Survey data for Hunting Districts 621, 622, 631, and 632 in the Missouri River Breaks during the winter of 2020.

HD	Bulls			Cows	Calves	Unclass.	Total	Ratios: 100 Cows	
	Yearlings	Adult	Total					Bulls	Calves
621	50	137	187	395	194	0	776	47	49
622	84	162	246	806	282	0	1334	31	35
Sub Total	134	299	433	1201	476	0	2110	36	40
631	20	34	54	131	75	0	260	41	57
632	1	25	26	0	0	0	26	NA	NA
Sub Total	21	59	80	131	75	0	286	61	57
Total	155	358	513	1332	551	0	2396	39	41

Figure 2: Table 2. Survey data that has been updated based on the proposed Hunting District boundary change to show a detailed breakdown of how the observed elk counts and ratios would look based on the data collected in the Missouri River Breaks during the winter of 2020.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

Because the goal will expand and adjust boundaries, the B License quotas, LPT's, and their respective quota ranges for the proposed HD will reflect the current portion of HD 631, HD 630, and HD 632 and quotas will also reflect what the assumed hunting pressure and harvest is in that area.

Trends in elk populations are monitored by completing biennial post-season surveys across the Missouri River Breaks. Total number of elk observed, as well as calf and bull to cow ratios from these surveys, are measured against population objectives within the Elk Management Plan to determine population status and trend of elk across the region as well as within hunting districts. Success of this proposal will be measured by the continual monitoring of the above parameters within HD 630 and adjacent HDs. Secondly, harvest surveys provide harvest estimates across the region as well as by HD. Elk harvest estimates provide another measure of population level and availability of elk for harvest, as well as prior year removal from the population and effectiveness of B License types.

4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

There are currently biennial surveys that occur in the HD 621 and 622 and then in HD 631 and 632 and their respective data are below.

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers were 20% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 621 and 622. Calf ratios were below the long-term average (47 ca:100 cows) with a ratio of 40:100 cows. Bull ratios 31 bulls:100 cows is below the LTA of 45 bulls:100 cows and slightly above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers (n = 405) were 16% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 631 and 632. Calf ratios were above the long-term average (52 calves:100 cows) with a ratio of 57:100 cows. Bull ratios 92 bulls:100 cows is above the LTA of 56 bulls:100 cows and is well above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

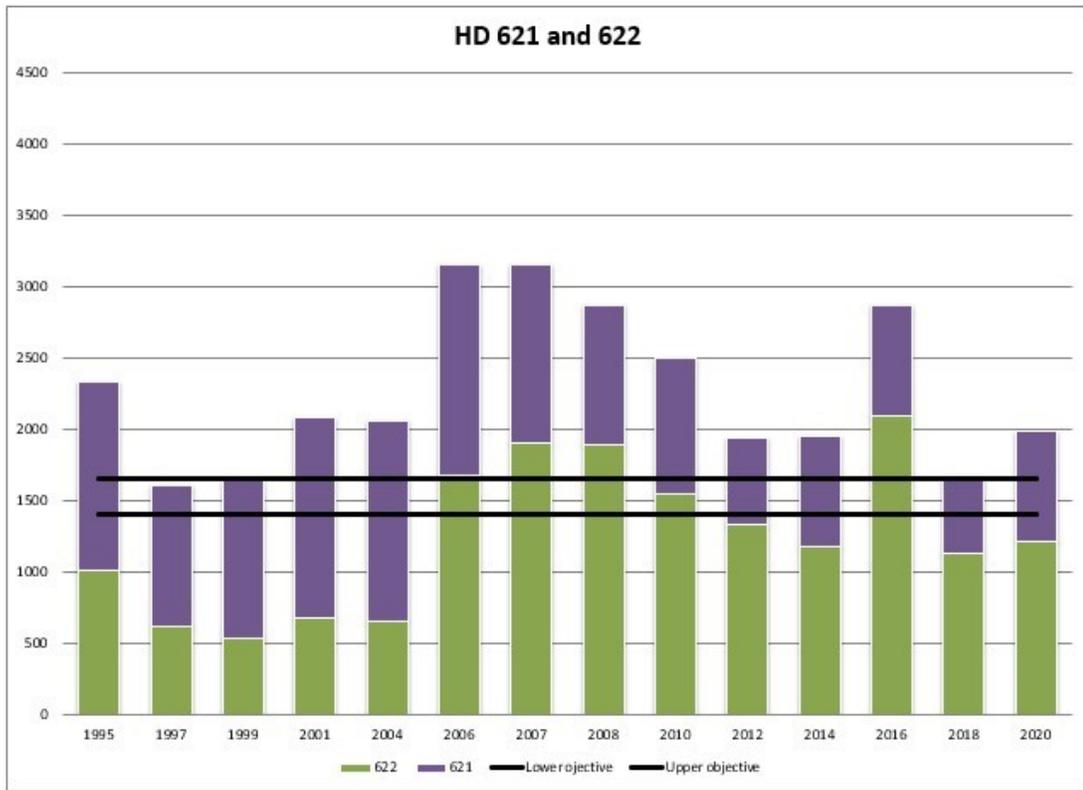


Figure 1: Figure 3. Hunting District 621 and 622 biennial elk survey data with corresponding lower and upper objective levels, 1995-2020.

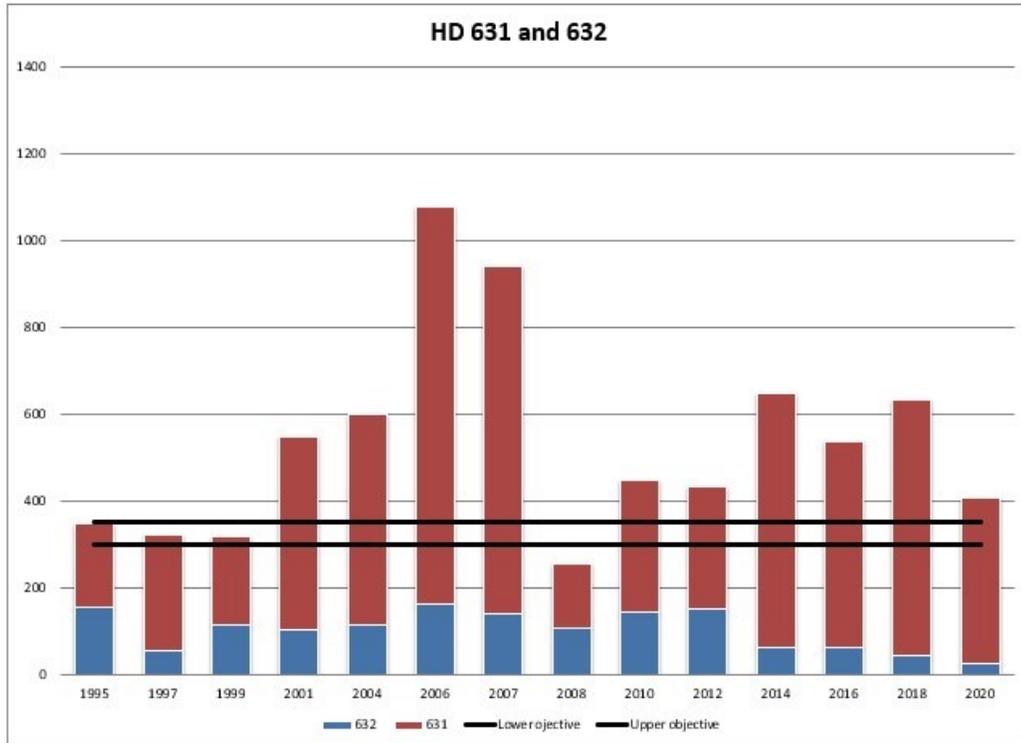


Figure 2: Figure 4. Hunting District 631 and 632 biennial elk survey data with corresponding lower and upper objective levels, 1995-2020.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

This HD expansion will allow hunters to utilize management tools across a larger, singular HD to pursue elk. This also allows hunters more freedom and a larger area to locate elk across a mixture of private and public lands throughout the larger HD.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

This proposal is supported by the Breaks Elk Working Group with the recognition that it could help elk management. Some of the large landowners in the affected areas have been asked about this proposal, and there has been very few issues. However, there are hunters that do not support the new boundary change as it will impact their hunting habits and resulting hunter redistribution. The Region 6 CAC were also contacted about the proposal and recognized its strengths of better elk herd management but questioned if the expansion was large enough and if the archery either-sex permit should also be adjusted.

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
R6 Elk Structure LPT 699-01 Modification**

Hunting Districts: 690

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

This proposed change would result in the LPT 699-01 antlerless elk youth license no longer being valid in HD 690. The license would still be valid in HDs 620, 621, 622, 630, 631, and 632. Five youth elk licenses (LPT 690-00) were first offered in HD 690 in 2006. The quota for this license was increased to 25 in 2007 and remained at that level through 2019. This license was only valid during the general season. In 2020, the three separate youth elk license types available in Region 6 were combined into one youth antlerless elk license (LPT 699-01) with a quota of 200 licenses, which was valid in HDs 620, 621, 622, 630, 631, 632, and 690. This license was valid starting two days prior to the general season. In 2020, hunting districts 680 and 690 were combined into one hunting district (690) and antlerless elk hunting was allowed with General Elk License. Resident youth hunters would still be able to hunt antlerless elk in HD 690 with their General Elk License.

Region 6 Youth Elk License Quotas 2014-2020							
LPT	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
690-01	25	25	25	25	25	25	0
621-00	100	100	100	100	100	100	0
631-01	25	25	25	25	25	25	0
Total	150	150	150	150	150	150	200

Figure 1: Region 6 Youth License Quota History.

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

The objective of this proposal is to simplify the elk regulations for Hunting District 690 through the removal of one license type.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

The success of this proposal would be fewer elk license types for HD 690 in the 2022 Deer/Elk/Antelope hunting regulations.

4. What is the current population’s status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

The most recent survey in this unit was completed in 2021 and counted 1026 elk. This is above the objective of 250 elk for the Bears Paw Elk Management Unit identified in the 2005 Elk Management Plan. Elk harvest in this district had averaged 111 total elk from 2015-2019. With the change to antlerless elk harvest on a General Elk License in 2020 total elk harvest increased to 207 elk.

Bears Paw Elk Management Unit Aerial Survey Data 2014-2021							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
Total Count	731	415	435	523	647	190	1026
Calf: Cow Ratio	37	33	49	46	43	32	31
Bull: Cow Ratio	73	33	50	22	40	29	46

HD 690 Elk Harvest 2014-2020							
LPT	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Antlerless Youth	3	6	2	0	2	8	3
General Elk License	--	--	--	--	--	--	128
690-01 Antlerless	22	84	39	33	43	46	33
690-20 (Either-sex)	23	26	30	22	21	10	30
690-21 Either-sex Archery	23	21	15	17	14	24	26
696-00 Antlerless Shoulder Season	--	--	11	8	10	13	--
697-00 Antlerless Permit	--	--	20	6	17	5	--
Total	71	137	117	86	107	106	207

Figure 1: HD 690 Aerial Survey and Harvest Data.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

Weather in this district has not had a significant impact on elk populations or harvest. Recent winters have been relatively mild without long periods of deep snow. Even in more severe winters, elk in this unit generally do not experience significant levels of winter mortality. Drought conditions this year have been more severe and may have an impact on elk recruitment or production next year. The district has a very large percentage of private land and limited public access has been one of the primary factors restricting elk harvest in this hunting district.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

During the public comment period, there was one comment submitted that was opposed to this proposal. The primary reason for their opposition to this proposal was the loss of the early hunting opportunity (two days prior to general season) provided by this license. They indicated that hunting access was easier to obtain prior to the general season and provided better elk harvest opportunities for youth hunters and the youth license has a positive effect on recruitment of youth hunters. The Region 6 Citizen Advisory Committee also noted that the loss of the early hunting opportunity as a potential drawback of this proposal. During public meetings, another potential concern raised was that elimination of this license would require youth to use their General License to harvest an elk in this HD which may reduce their ability to harvest a second elk that same year.

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
LPT 690-21 Quota Increase**

Hunting Districts: 690

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

This proposal is to increase the either-sex general season elk permit (LPT 699-20) quota from 35 permits to 50 permits and adjust the quota range from 10-50 permits to a range of 15-100 permits. There were 30 permits offered in this district from 2007-2012. This quota was increased to 35 permits from 2013-2021. There are currently 50 either-sex archery permits, 150 antlerless Elk B Licenses (valid during the general season and shoulder season), and 200 youth elk licenses in this hunting district. In addition, antlerless elk harvest is allowed with only a General Elk License during the general season.

HD 690 Either-Sex Elk Permit Quotas									
LPT	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
690-20 Either-Sex Permit Quota	30	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
690-21 Either Sex Archery Permit Quota	25	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	50

Figure 1: HD 690 Either-sex Elk Permit Quotas.

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

The objective of this change is to increase either-sex elk hunting opportunity in this district while maintaining a bull:cow ratio of at least 10 bulls per 100 cows. The expected average harvest with a quota of 50 permits would be 30-40 elk.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

The success of this proposal will be measured by monitoring bull elk harvest and hunter effort through annual hunter harvest surveys and monitoring bull elk numbers and bull:cow ratios during biennial elk trend surveys.

4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

The most recent survey in this unit was completed in 2021 and counted 1026 elk. This is above the objective of 250 elk for the Bears Paw Elk Management Unit as identified in the 2005 Elk Management Plan. There were 267 bulls counted in the most recent survey and the bull:cow ratio was 46 bulls:100 cows. The average bull:cow ratios over the last 10 years has been 44 bulls:100 cows. This is above the bull objective for this unit of 10 bulls per 100 cows.

The average harvest on the 690-20 either sex elk permit over the last 10 years has averaged 23 elk. The success rate on these licenses has been 67%. The average harvest on the 690-21 archery either-sex licenses has been 20 elk and the success rate has been 55%.

Bears Paw Elk Management Unit Aerial Survey Data 2014-2021							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
Total Count	731	415	435	523	647	190	1026
Calf: Cow Ratio	37	33	49	46	43	32	31
Bull: Cow Ratio	73	33	50	22	40	29	46

HD 690 Either-Sex Elk Harvest							
LPT	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
690-20 Harvest	23	26	30	22	21	10	30
Quota	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Management Success	66%	74%	86%	63%	60%	29%	86%
690-21 Archery Harvest	23	21	15	17	14	24	26
Quota	35	35	35	35	35	35	50
Management Success	66%	60%	43%	49%	40%	69%	52%

Figure 1: HD 690 Population Survey and Harvest Data.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

Weather in this district has not historically had a significant impact on elk population levels or harvest. Recent winters have been relatively mild without long periods of deep snow. Even in more severe winters, elk in this unit generally do not experience significant levels of winter mortality. Weather conditions also are not usually a significant factor affecting the distribution or availability of elk during the hunting season. Drought conditions this year have been more severe and may have an impact on elk recruitment or production next year. The district has a large percentage of private land and limited public access has been one of the primary factors restricting elk harvest in this elk management unit.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

During the season setting process in 2019, the archery permit quota was increased and at that time we did hear several comments that some landowners and hunters in this district would also like to see the either-sex rifle permit quota increased. We did also receive a comment during the most recent public comment period that indicated a preference for more either-sex rifle permits in HD 690. The primary concerns expressed in the past with increasing the either-sex rifle permit quota is the possibility for overcrowding due to the limited public access opportunities in this area and the potential impacts to the quality of bull elk harvested in the district.

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
690-01 Late Season Modification**

Hunting Districts: 690

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

This proposal is to adjust the dates that the LPT 699-01 would be valid during the late season antlerless elk hunt. This license is currently valid during the general season and during the shoulder season from December 15th-February 15th. This proposal would still allow hunting during the general season, but the late season dates would be from December 19th -January 8th.

A shoulder season was first implemented in this hunting district in 2016. There were 100 antlerless elk licenses (696-00) valid from Dec 15th-December 31st. The length of this late season was extended in 2018 and ran from Dec 15th-January 15th. In 2020, antlerless elk hunting in this district was allowed on a General Elk License during the general season. This year there were 150 Elk B Licenses (690-01) valid during both the general season and the shoulder season which was extended and ran from Dec 15th-February 15th.

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

The objective of this proposal is to simplify the regulations by having consistent season dates with late season antlerless elk seasons in other districts in the state.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

The primary success of the proposal will be measured through the simplification of the 2022 regulations. Success of this season change will also be measured through annual hunter harvest surveys and biennial aerial elk surveys to determine the amount of harvest occurring during this season and the effect on elk population growth in this elk management unit.

4. What is the current population’s status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

The most recent survey in this unit was completed in 2021 and counted 1026 elk. This is above the objective of 250 elk for the Bears Paw Elk Management Unit identified in the 2005 Elk Management Plan. Elk harvest in this district had averaged 111 total elk from 2015-2019. With the change to antlerless elk harvest on a General Elk License in 2020 total elk harvest increased to 207 elk.

Bears Paw Elk Management Unit Aerial Survey Data 2014-2021							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
Total Count	731	415	435	523	647	190	1026
Calf: Cow Ratio	37	33	49	46	43	32	31
Bull:Cow Ratio	73	33	50	22	40	29	46

Figure 1: Bears Paw HD 690 Elk Survey Data.

<i>HD 690 Elk Harvest 2014-2020</i>							
<i>LPT</i>	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<i>General Elk License</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--	128
<i>690-01 Antlerless</i>	22	84	39	33	43	46	33
<i>696-00 Shoulder Season</i>	--	--	11	8	10	13	--
<i>697-00 Antlerless Elk Permit</i>	--	--	20	6	17	5	--
<i>690-20 Either-Sex</i>	23	26	30	22	21	10	30
<i>690-21 Either-Sex Archery</i>	23	21	15	17	14	24	26
<i>Youth Elk License</i>	3	6	2	0	2	8	3

Figure 2: HD 690 Elk Harvest.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

Weather in this district has not historically had a significant impact on elk population levels or harvest. Recent winters have been relatively mild without long periods of deep snow. Even in more severe winters, elk in this unit generally do not experience significant levels of winter mortality. Weather conditions also are not usually a significant factor affecting the distribution or availability of elk during the hunting season. Drought conditions this year have been more severe and may have an impact on elk recruitment or production next year. The district has a large percentage of private land and limited public access has been one of the primary factors restricting elk harvest in this elk management unit.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

This proposal has not been vetted with sportsmen groups or landowner at this time.

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
622 Boundary Change

Hunting Districts: 622

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

This proposal aims to expand HD 622 to now include a portion east of Timber Creek (currently a portion of HD 631). More specifically, the proposal is to add the portion of land that is between Timber Creek and Burke Ranch Road and Ridge Road. Currently HD 622 is a general district for deer, but has multiple associated LPT's for elk, and is part of the current 620 Antelope HD. Note: Antelope and mountain lion HDs would see corresponding changes as well.

Legal Description for the proposed expanded HD 622 and proposed quota and quota range:

Those portions of Valley and Phillips Counties lying within the following-described boundary: Beginning where the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) Road 425 meets Fort Peck Reservoir, then north said road until Burke Ranch Road, then north on said road until Willow Creek Road, then northeasterly on said road to Ridge Road, then north along said road to Larb Creek Road, then west along said road to Larb Creek-Content Road, then northwesterly along said road to Content Road, then southerly along said road to Sun Prairie Road, then southerly along said road to First Creek Hall Road, then northwesterly along said road to First Creek Hall, then westerly along said road to the Midale Road, then southerly along said road to the CMR Boundary Road 212, then easterly along said road to CMR Road 201, then southeasterly along said road to CMR Road 219, then southwestwesterly along said road to Fort Peck Reservoir, then easterly along said reservoir to where CMR Road 425 meets the reservoir, the point of beginning.

Historically there have been three either-sex LPT's that are directly tied to the HD 622 include the 620-21 either-sex archery permit, 620-20 either-sex rifle permit, and the 622-22 either-sex rifle permit. Due to the proposed HD expansion we propose the two quota increases to corresponding with the increase in HD size and respective observed elk numbers.

- Elk 620-20 LPT: Proposed Quota 70
- Elk 622-20 LPT: Proposed Quota 60

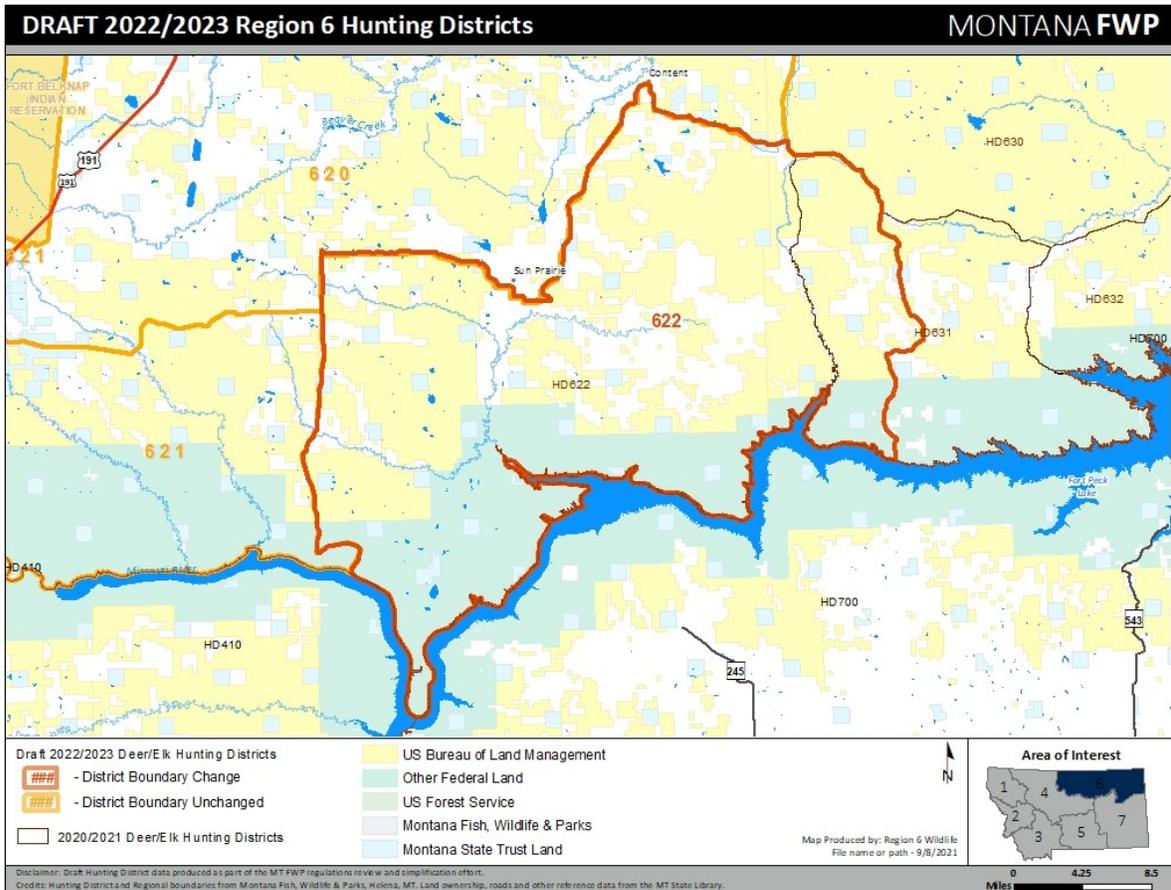


Figure 1: Figure 1. Current hunting districts relative to the proposed HD 622 expansion.

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

The overall objective is to improve management of elk in the area as outlined by the Elk Management Plan (2005). Elk from HD 622 typically winter in the portion of HD 631 being added to HD 622. This has been documented through aerial survey data and previous research that involved collared elk locations (Figure 2). This change will help allocate those elk counted on winter surveys to the HD they are in during the fall, which in turn impacts how elk populations relate to population objectives. With this combination, elk populations within HD 620, 621, and 622 would remain over the population objective by 27% and HD 630, 631, and 632 would be 5% under the objective. Bull ratios from the 2020 elk survey would see similar alignments with the proposal. HDs 620, 621, 622 would increase from 31 bulls:100 cows to 36 bulls:100 cows. HDs 630, 631, 632 would decrease from 92 bulls:100 cows to 61 bulls:100 cows (Tables 1 & 2).

This change will also utilize the harvest tools currently available for HD 622 across the home range of these elk, including more liberal elk licenses and elk shoulder seasons. This in turn could improve elk harvest of the herd.

HD	Bulls			Cows	Calves	Unclass.	Total	Ratios:100 Cows	
	Yearlings	Adult	Total					Bulls	Calves
621	50	137	187	395	194	0	776	47	49
622	74	100	174	771	270	0	1215	23	35
Sub Total	124	237	361	1166	464	0	1991	31	40
631	30	96	126	166	87	0	379	76	52
632	1	25	26	0	0	0	26	NA	NA
Sub Total	31	121	152	166	87	0	405	92	52
Total	155	358	513	1332	551	0	2396	39	41

Figure 1: Table 1. Survey data for Hunting Districts 621, 622, 631, and 632 in the Missouri River Breaks during the winter of 2020.

HD	Bulls			Cows	Calves	Unclass.	Total	Ratios:100 Cows	
	Yearlings	Adult	Total					Bulls	Calves
621	50	137	187	395	194	0	776	47	49
622	84	162	246	806	282	0	1334	31	35
Sub Total	134	299	433	1201	476	0	2110	36	40
631	20	34	54	131	75	0	260	41	57
632	1	25	26	0	0	0	26	NA	NA
Sub Total	21	59	80	131	75	0	286	61	57
Total	155	358	513	1332	551	0	2396	39	41

Figure 2: Table 2. Survey data that has been updated based on the proposed Hunting District expansion of HD 622 to show a detailed breakdown of how the observed elk counts and ratios would look based on the data collected in the Missouri River Breaks during the winter of 2020.

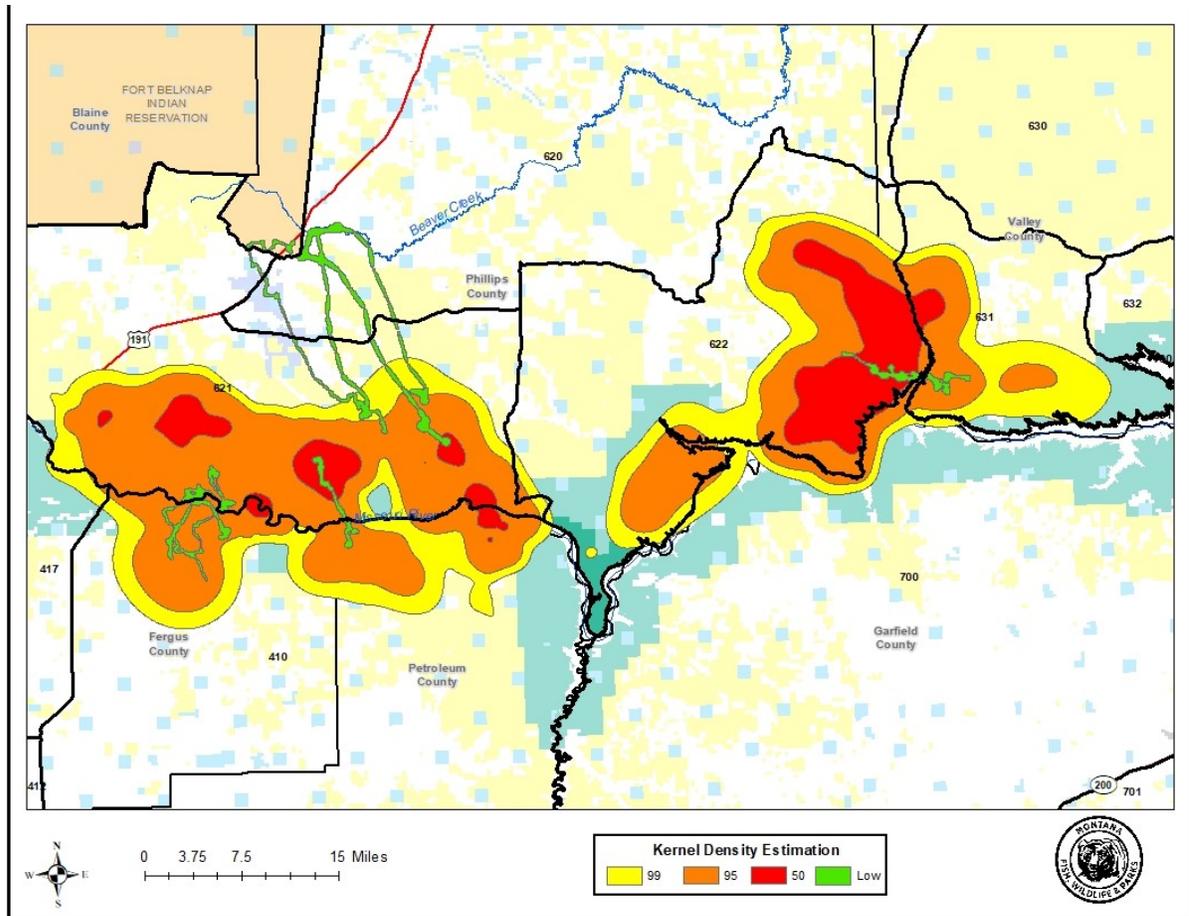


Figure 3: Figure 2. Kernel density estimate contours from location data from elk collared from 2013-2015 that represent the smallest areas where the probability of relocating an individual from the herd is equal to 50, 95, and 99 percent, respectively.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

Because the goal will expand and adjust boundaries, the B License quotas and quota ranges for the proposed HD will reflect the current HD 622 and portion of HD 631 and quotas will also reflect what the assumed hunting pressure and harvest is in that area.

Trends in elk populations are monitored by completing biennial post-season surveys across the Missouri River Breaks. Total number of elk observed, as well as calf and bull to cow ratios from these surveys, are measured against population objectives within the Elk Management Plan to determine population status and trend of elk across the region as well as within hunting districts. Success of this proposal will be measured by the continual monitoring of the above parameters within HD 622 and adjacent HDs. Secondly, harvest surveys provide harvest estimates across the region as well as by HD. Elk harvest estimates provide another measure of population level and availability of elk for harvest, as well as prior year removal from the population and effectiveness of B License types.

4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

There are currently biennial surveys that occur in the HD 621 and 622 and then in HD 631 and 632 and their respective data are below.

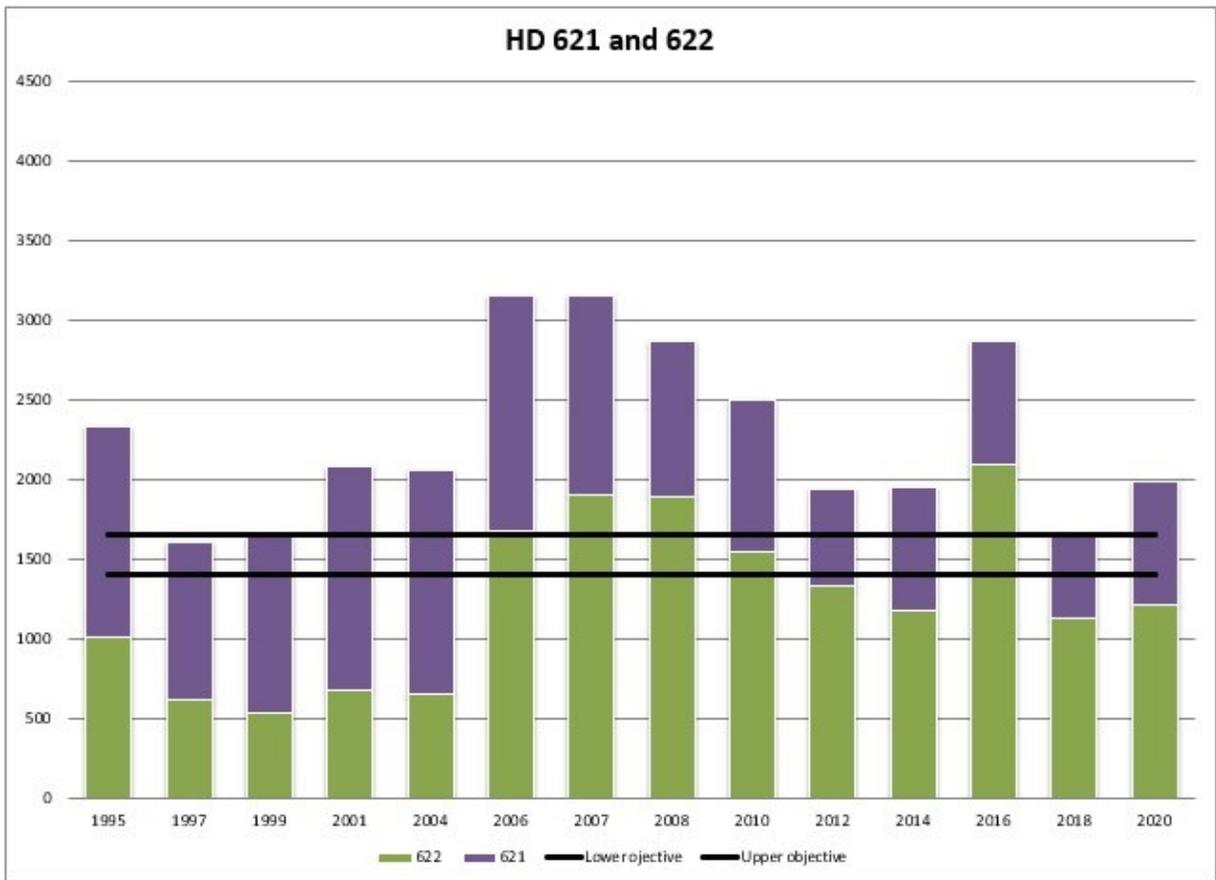


Figure 1: Figure 3. Hunting District 621 and 622 biennial elk survey data with corresponding lower and upper objective levels, 1995-2020.

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers were 20% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 621 and 622. Calf ratios were below the long-term average (47 ca:100 cows) with a ratio of 40:100 cows. Bull ratios 31 bulls:100 cows is below the LTA of 45 bulls:100 cows and slightly above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

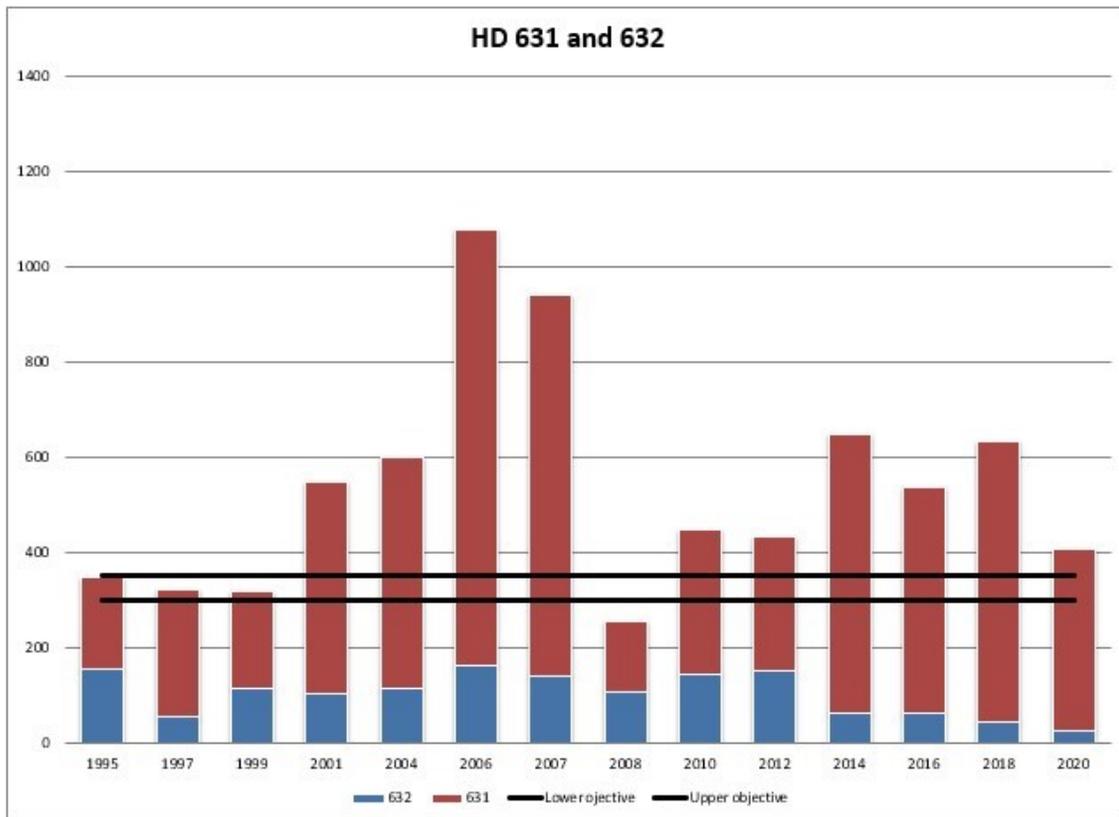


Figure 2: Figure 4. Hunting District 631 and 632 biennial elk survey data with corresponding lower and upper objective levels, 1995-2020.

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers (n = 405) were 16% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 631 and 632. Calf ratios were above the long-term average (52 calves:100 cows) with a ratio of 57:100 cows. Bull ratios 92 bulls:100 cows is above the LTA of 56 bulls:100 cows and is well above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

This HD expansion will allow hunters to utilize management tools that are currently available in HD 622 to pursue elk when winter weather sometimes drives them into HD 631 (proposed portion that is described) so now they will be available for harvest to a broader group when they were not previously. This also allows hunters more freedom and a larger area to locate elk across a mixture of private and public lands throughout the larger HD.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

This proposal is supported by the Breaks Elk Working Group with the recognition that it could help elk management. Some of the large landowners in the affected areas have been asked about this proposal, and there has been very few issues. However, there are hunters that do not support the new boundary change as it will impact their hunting habits and resulting hunter redistribution. The Region 6 CAC were also contacted about the proposal and recognized its strengths of better elk herd management but questioned if the expansion was large enough and if the archery either-sex permit should also be adjusted.

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
620-20 Quota Change

Hunting Districts: 620, 621 and 622 Not valid on CMR

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

This proposal is tied to the 622 Boundary change proposal. With the boundary change between 622 and 630, quotas will need to be adjusted to reflect the new boundary, opportunity and desired harvest. Historically there have been three either-sex LPT's that are directly tied to the HD 622 include the 620-21 either-sex archery permit, 620-20 either-sex rifle permit, and the 622-22 either-sex rifle permit. Due to the proposed HD expansion we propose the two quota increases (620-20 and 622-20) to corresponding with the increase in HD size and respective observed elk numbers.

- Elk 620-20 LPT: Proposed Quota 70 (increase from 60).

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

Overall objective is in line the state regulations simplification process and this permit needs adjustment with the larger 622 boundary change proposal.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

Trends in elk populations are monitored by completing biennial post-season surveys across the Missouri River Breaks. Total number of elk observed, as well as calf and bull to cow ratios from these surveys, are measured against population objectives within the Elk Management Plan to determine population status and trend of elk across the region as well as within hunting districts. Success of this proposal will be measured by the continual monitoring of the above parameters within HD 622 and adjacent HDs. Secondly, harvest surveys provide harvest estimates across the region as well as by HD. Elk harvest estimates provide another measure of population level and availability of elk for harvest, as well as prior year removal from the population and effectiveness of B Licenses types.

4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers were 20% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 621 and 622. Calf ratios were below the long-term average (47 ca:100 cows) with a ratio of 40:100 cows. Bull ratios 31 bulls:100 cows is below the LTA of 45 bulls:100 cows and slightly above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

During the biennial survey in February 2020, total elk numbers (n = 405) were 16% above the upper objective outlined in the elk management plan for HD 631 and 632. Calf ratios were above the long-term average (52 calves:100 cows) with a ratio of 57:100 cows. Bull ratios 92 bulls:100 cows is above the LTA of 56 bulls:100 cows and is well above the objective of 30 bulls:100 cows as outlined in the Elk Management Plan.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

This proposal is for a permit quota change but is directly tied to the HD 622 expansion, which will allow hunters to utilize management tools that are currently available in HD 622 to pursue elk when winter weather sometimes

drives them into HD 631 (proposed portion that is described) so now they will be available for harvest to a broader group when they were not previously. This also allows hunters more freedom and a larger area to locate elk across a mixture of private and public lands throughout the larger HD.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

This proposal is supported by the Breaks Elk Working Group with the recognition that it could help elk management. Some of the large landowners in the affected areas have been asked about this proposal, and there has been very few issues. However, there are hunters that do not support the new boundary change as it will impact their hunting habits and resulting hunter redistribution. The Region 6 CAC were also contacted about the proposal and recognized its strengths of better elk herd management but questioned if the expansion was large enough and if the archery either-sex permit should also be adjusted.

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
698-00 Adjustment**

Hunting Districts: 620, 621 and 622

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

Region 6 proposes to change the 698-00 antlerless Elk Permit to 698-00 antlerless Elk B License. This permit was initiated during the 2016 hunting season. Originally the permit was valid in HDs 620, 621, 622, 630, 631, and 632 and is only valid on land outside the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) for antlerless elk. After working with the Breaks Elk Working Group in 2019 it was removed from HDs 630, 631, and 632 to help with elk distribution and focus efforts on the HDs with higher elk populations. Starting in 2020, the permit was valid in Region 6 Breaks EMU HDs 620, 621, and 622 off the CMR. The current quota is 300 and the quota range for these licenses is from 100-500 permits.

The number of permits that would be converted to licenses and include licenses from the proposed 699-00 license removal will be adjusted to 500 (currently 300 for each 698-00 and 699-00). This final 698-00 antlerless license will be valid in 620, 621 and 622 and not valid on the CMR Refuge.

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

The main objective of this proposal is to contribute to the simplification of the hunting regulations and licensing, by eliminating an antlerless elk permit and eliminating an antlerless elk license while retaining that opportunity as antlerless B Licenses valid in the same area with an increased quota.

3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

The success of this proposal will be primarily measured using annual harvest surveys, aerial trend surveys, and hunter and landowner reports.

4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

The population objective identified in the elk management plan is for 1700-2000 total observed elk for the Region 6 portion of the Missouri Breaks Elk Management Unit (EMU), with a sub-objective of 1400-1650 elk in hunting districts 620, 621, and 622. The Region 6 Breaks EMU is currently surveyed biennially. Recent elk survey data is provided in Table 1. Annual harvest estimates for the 698-00 antlerless permit are provided in Table 2. Harvest information for antlerless licenses and antlerless LPTs as a whole as well as for the 698-00 permit are provided in Figures 1-3.

	2006	2007	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Elk Observed HDs 620-621-622	3149	3148	2868	2493	1935	1950	2869	1662	1991
Elk Observed HDs 630-631-632	1076	939	256	446	443	646	535	632	405
R6 Breaks Total	4225	4087	3124	2939	2378	2596	3404	2294	2396
<i>% over objective</i>	106%	99%	52%	43%	16%	27%	70%	15%	20%

Figure 1: Table1. Elk Aerial Survey data in Region 6 Missouri River Breaks Hunting District 2006-2018

LPT	Year	Quota	Harvest
698-00	2016	300	57
698-00	2017	300	47
698-00	2018	300	41
698-00	2019	300	39
698-00*	2020	300	65

Figure 2: Table 2. Region 6 698-00 Permit Harvest in 2016-2020. Note: From 2016-2019 the 698-00 permit was valid in HD 620, 621, 622, 630, 631, and 632 and starting in 2020 it was only valid in HD 620, 621, and 622. At all times it was only valid on land off the Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge.

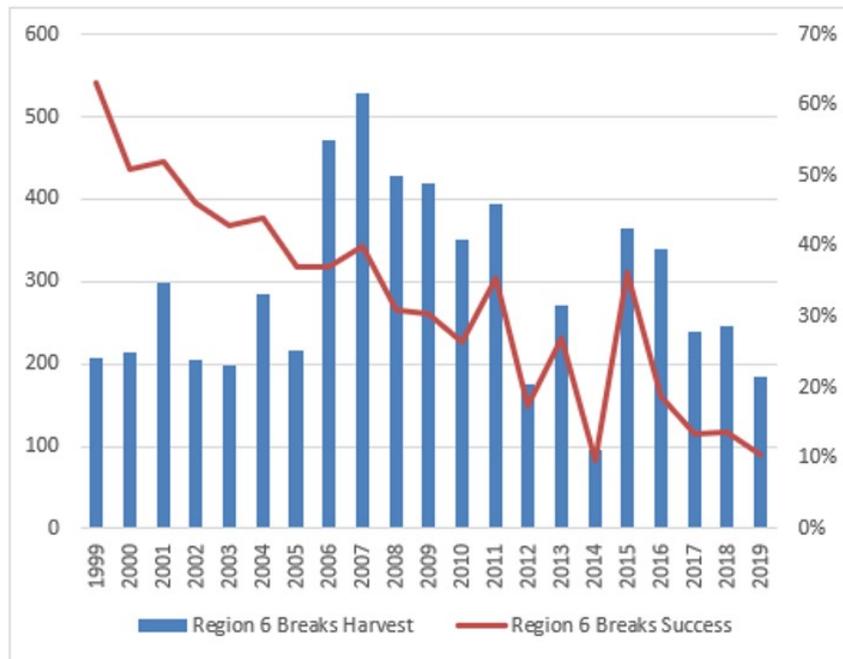


Figure 3: Figure 1. Trends of antlerless elk harvest during the general season for the Missouri River Breaks Hunting Districts 620, 621, 622, 630, 631, and 632 from 1999-2019.

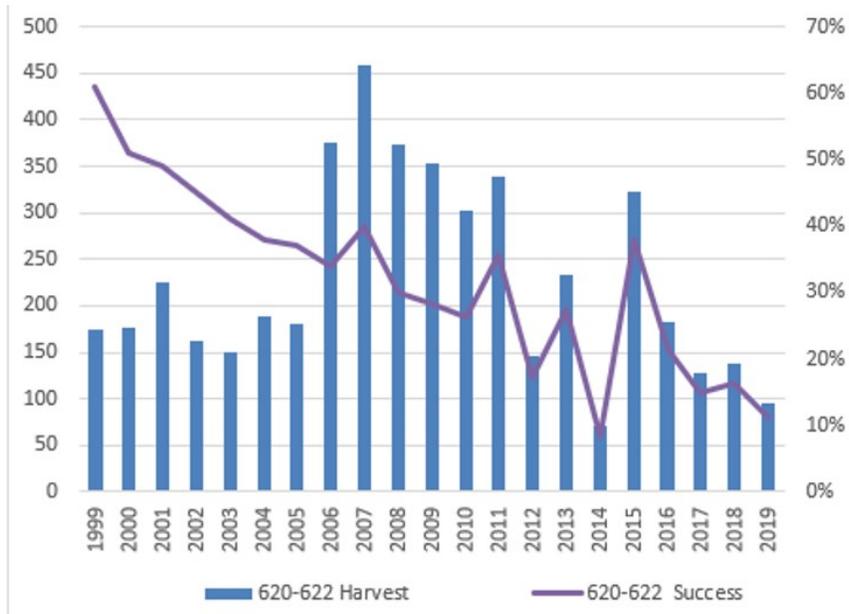


Figure 4: Figure 2. Trends of antlerless elk harvest during the general season for the Missouri River Breaks Hunting Districts 620, 621, and 622 from 1999-2019.

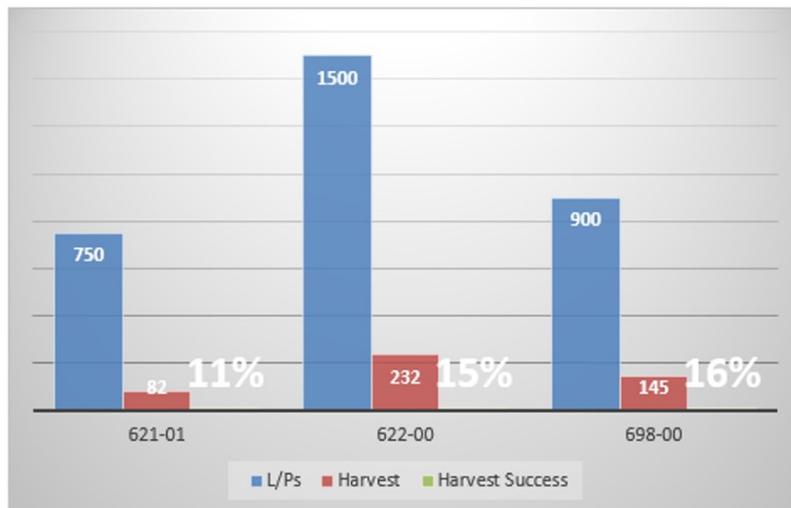


Figure 5: Figure 3. Total number of licenses provided by type from 2018-2020 for antlerless elk harvest during the general season for the Missouri River Breaks in Hunting Districts 620, 621, and 622 and associated total harvest for each respective license or LPT over that time and the management percent associated with those respective licenses and LPT.

5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

Hunter access across the 698-00 LPT area of coverage is good, but there are some areas, especially in HD 622, that are private land areas where little to no public access is provided and there is some larger concentration of elk there. Due to the permit being valid across three HDs (off the CMR though) hunters have the opportunity to move across the landscape to find elk. This can be, in part, attributed to the higher harvest success observed with this antlerless elk permit compared to B Licenses.

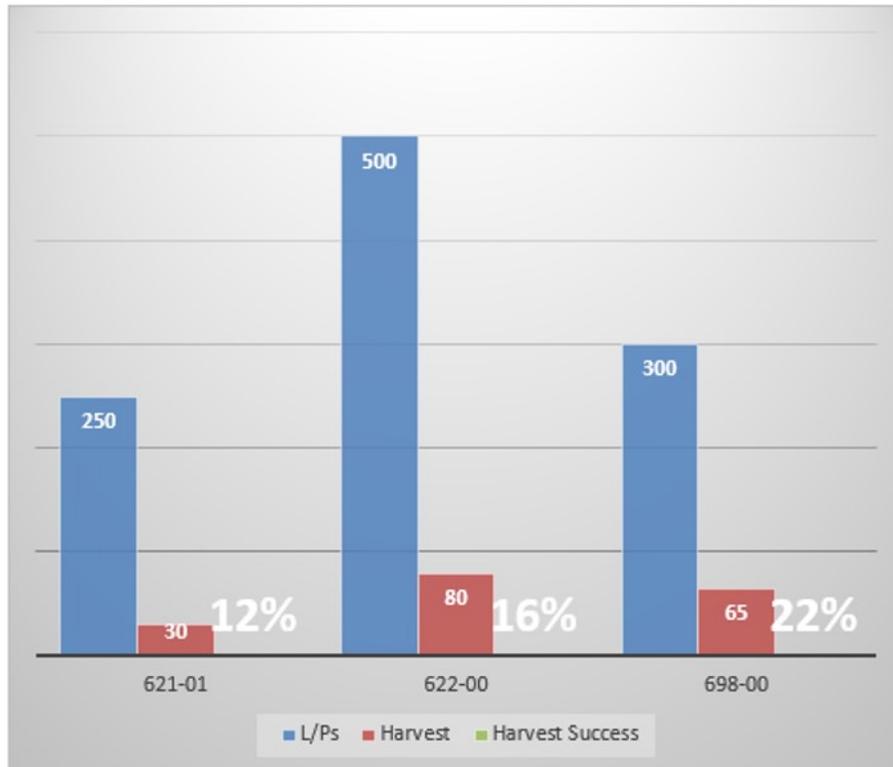


Figure 1: Figure 4. Total number of licenses provided by type in 2020 for antlerless elk harvest during the general season for the Missouri River Breaks in Hunting Districts 620, 621, and 622 and associated total harvest for each respective license or LPT over that time and the management percent associated with those respective licenses and LPT.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

A discussion about the 698-00 LPT in the Missouri River Breaks was had with the Breaks Elk Working Group in 2019 and again in 2021. During the 2019 season setting process, FWP proposed eliminating this antlerless permit, but, due to public comment favoring the tool and recognition of its value for elk management, we recommended to the commission to keep the antlerless permit.

Hunters favor the tool because it provides an LPT (for those that are only interested in harvesting a cow) to obtain an antlerless elk permit annually. Antlerless Elk B Licenses are more sought after and have lower drawing odds and show a lower harvest success. The availability of the antlerless permit also facilitates some hunters in holding two antlerless elk licenses and addresses overcrowding concerns. In 2020, 22% of the permit holders held two antlerless elk licenses/permits.

The Region 6 CAC recognizes that eliminating 698-00 clears up confusion in the regulations, but also adds to possible hunter congestions issues on the CMR by reallocating those hunters to existing B Licenses (which are valid district-wide to include the CMR).

An original proposal (to allocate these permits to existing B Licenses) went out for 30 day public scoping. We heard public support to retain the antlerless permit for various reasons, but one particular reason we could effect was over-crowding on the CMR if we added these 300 licenses to existing B Licenses valid district-wide. Therefore, we adjusted this proposal by converting this antlerless permit to a B License valid across HDs 620, 621, 622- OFF the CMR, which mirrors where the current antlerless permit is valid.