

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
New Either-Sex Elk Archery-Only Permit for 702, 704, and 705

Hunting Districts: 702, 704, and 705

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

Remove hunting districts 702, 704, and 705 from the 900-20 archery-only LPT bundle. Create new archery-only, either-sex LPT (799-21) that is valid in these 3 HDs.

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.

This proposal aims to achieve multiple objectives. Archery either-sex elk hunting in HDs 702, 704, and 705 is currently managed via the 900-20 archery-only permit. This permit is valid across 22 HDs or partial HDs spanning 3 administrative regions. Over time, a steady increase (~50% increase from 2014 to 2020) in the use of these permits in these 3 HDs has occurred, and in particular for HD 704 (~88% increase from 2014 to 2020). The current Elk Management Plan lists an objective of 30-40 bulls:100 cows. Limited permits are needed to maintain this objective. By managing these 3 HDs together under their own archery-only permit FWP can better distribute harvest and hunting pressure. Finally, this change should make the regulations simpler and more consistent. The 799-20 "rifle" either-sex elk permit and 799-00 Elk B License are also valid for these same 3 HDs.

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

The department will continue to assess data from check stations, phone harvest surveys, hunter use information, and gain feedback from hunters and landowners.

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).

This population is currently over objective. However, the objective was established over 15 years ago when elk populations in the area were relatively new, numbers were much lower, and prior to FWP having established survey areas. The 2005 Elk Management Plan states that once survey areas have been established the objective for the Custer Forest EMU should be re-addressed. FWP now has established survey areas but is waiting to review the population objective during the current statewide Elk Plan update process. To manage the total number of elk in the population, FWP offers liberal opportunity to harvest antlerless elk in these HDs. In recent years bull:cow ratios have been between 30-40 bulls:100 cows, which is within the stated objective in the 2005 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).

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).

FWP received 25 official public comments regarding this proposal, with 19 in favor, 4 opposed to the proposal or had different ideas for management, and 2 in which determining their stance was uncertain. In addition to strong support from public comments, the majority of discussions with the public have been favorable of or neutral to this proposal.

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Elk 2022
Limit elk permit holders to the district on permit

Hunting Districts: All HDs with Elk Permits

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

Permits for either-sex elk or brow-tined bull-antlerless elk will limit the holder to hunting for antlered elk within the designated HD for the period identified on the permit. Antlerless elk may be pursued on any license in any open district, and antlerless elk hunting will not be limited by the permit. A general license may be used to hunt in any open district during dates outside of that identified on the permit.

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 make requirements for elk and deer permit holders consistent with one another and thus simplify regulations.

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

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).

N/A: This proposal is not intended to have an impact on elk populations, but may affect hunter crowding, hunter distribution, and regulation simplification. Seasons and quotas could still be tailored to meet harvest objectives.

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).

N/A

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 statewide proposal was included during regional virtual open houses and was open for public comment from September 21 - October 20, 2021. In total, FWP received over 400 comments on the statewide proposals. This particular proposal had some support, although certainly not unanimous support.