

**Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee
Biennial Report and Recommendations**

**Presented
to
Governor Gianforte &
the 69th Legislature
January 2025**



**PRIVATE LAND/
PUBLIC WILDLIFE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee

Overview/Purpose

87-1-269. Private land/public wildlife advisory committee -- duties -- reports. (1) There is a private land/public wildlife advisory committee composed of persons interested in issues related to hunters, anglers, landowners, and outfitters, including but not limited to hunting access programs established pursuant to **87-1-265**, the fishing access enhancement program, landowner-hunter relations, outfitting industry issues, public access land agreements, and other issues related to private lands and public wildlife. The committee must have broad representation of landowners, outfitters, and sportspersons. The department may provide administrative assistance as necessary to assist the private land/public wildlife advisory committee.

(2) The governor shall appoint the members of the private land/public wildlife advisory committee.

(3) (a) The private land/public wildlife advisory committee shall report to the governor and to each regular session of the legislature, in accordance with **5-11-210**, regarding the success of various elements of the hunting access programs, including a report of annual landowner participation, the number of acres annually enrolled in the programs, hunter harvest success on enrolled lands, the number of qualified applicants who were denied enrollment because of a shortfall in funding, and an accounting of program expenditures, and make recommendations for funding, modification, or improvement needed to achieve the objectives of the programs. The department shall provide fiscal analyses of all hunting access program funding sources to the review committee for review and recommendations.

(b) The private land/public wildlife advisory committee shall report to the governor and to each regular session of the legislature, in accordance with **5-11-210**, regarding the success of the fishing access enhancement program and make recommendations for funding, modification, or improvement needed to achieve the objectives of the program. The department shall provide fiscal analyses of all fishing access enhancement program funding sources to the review committee for review and recommendations.

(4) The private land/public wildlife advisory committee shall review public access land agreement proposals pursuant to **87-1-295** and recommend to the department whether to grant public access land agreements.

(5) The director may appoint additional advisory committees that are considered necessary to assist in the implementation of the hunting access programs, public access land agreements, and the fishing access enhancement program and to advise the commission regarding the development of rules implementing the hunting access programs, public access land agreements, and the fishing access enhancement program.



Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee Member List:

- ◇ **Ed Beall**- Helena- Chairman- representing sportsperson; term expires 8/1/2027
- ◇ **Lee Cornwell**- Glasgow- representing landowner; term expires 8/1/2027
- ◇ **Rich Roth**- Big Sandy- representing landowner; term expires 7/31/2025
- ◇ **Donna McDonald**- Alder- representing landowner; term expires 8/1/2027
- ◇ **Rod Paschke**- Jordan- representing landowner; term expires 7/31/2025
- ◇ **Drew Steinberger**- Billings- representing sportsperson; term expires 7/31/2025
- ◇ **Everett Headley**- Stevensville- representing sportsperson; term expires 7/31/2025
- ◇ **Dale Tribby**- Miles City- representing sportsperson; term expires 7/31/2025
- ◇ **Cynthia Cohan**- Butte- representing sportsperson; term expires 8/1/2027
- ◇ **Stephanie Prater**– Lewistown- representing sportsperson; term expires 8/1/2027
- ◇ **Raymond Rugg**; Superior- representing outfitter; term expires 7/31/2025
- ◇ **Eric Albus**; Hinsdale- representing outfitter; term expires 7/31/2025
- ◇ **Paul Ellis**; Bozeman- representing outfitter; term expires 8/1/2027

The current PL/PW was appointed by Governor Gianforte in November of 2023 and is comprised of 13 private citizens representing a variety of related interests. The committee met five times (2 in-person; 3-Zoom) between December 2023 and August 2024. Meeting minutes, agendas and recordings are available on the FWP website at <https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/commission-councils-committees/private-land-public-wildlife-council>.

The committee appreciates the foresight of Governor Gianforte to appoint members to longer terms with overlapping expiration dates as this will enable the committee to have a more cohesive group as well as enable greater discussions and improve the development of recommendations in the future.

PL/PW Final Recommendations and Rationale

Recommendation #1 (legislation required)

The Department update the Hunter-Landowner Stewardship online course and offer an incentive of one bonus point for one species of choice to hunters who complete the new course.

Rationale: The hunter-landowner stewardship program and corresponding online course was designed as a training tool for hunters to learn the social norms and expectations before hunting private lands. The online course was designed nearly 20 years ago and despite good content, the current course has not largely been utilized by hunters to improve hunter-landowner relations. Members are currently working with the Department on new a course to be developed which can be provided to a broader audience and designed to be more engaging for users.

The new course will be designed to improve behaviors and actions of both resident and non-resident hunters while hunting on all lands, public and private. To increase participation PL/PW recommends that upon successful completion of the new course hunters receive one bonus point. Members discussed other options such as making the course mandatory, but ultimately decided that incentivization was a better route.



Upon successful completion of the new course, licensed hunters will receive an allocation of a free (no-cost) one-time bonus point applicable toward the species of their choice. The bonus point can be added to the species of their choice from the current list of applicable bonus point options. Upon successfully drawing of the respective species, as chosen by the licensed hunter, the one-time online course bonus point will be removed in the same manner that all of previous and current purchased bonus are removed.

PL/PW Final Recommendations and Rationale

Recommendation #2

Support the Department request for funding to support the growth of the Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) program.

Rationale: The Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) program has experienced steady growth since it was created through the 2019 legislative session. This program seeks to provide or improve public access to inaccessible or under accessible public lands. The program currently has commitments in the form of signed agreements with landowners for which they do not have adequate funding. The Department is bringing a budget request before the legislature in the 2025 session to be able to fund the current agreements and any new agreements starting in FY26. The PL/PW recommends the legislature support the Department budget request to increase funding for the PALA program.



Recommendation #3

The Department focus efforts to utilize the Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) program in a proactive and cooperative manner with landowners to address public access where public land is checkerboarded or corner-locked.

Rationale: PL/PW members acknowledge that access staff resources are limited, but there are many tools currently in the tool box to address many of the access issues facing Montana. Members recommend the Department make a focused effort to use the PALA program to improve access to checkerboarded or corner-locked public lands as a way to address potential access conflicts before they arise.

Recommendation #4

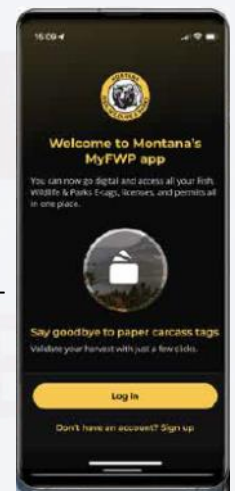
The Department review all access programs side by side and develop one menu of options for all private land hunting/fishing access programs to create efficiencies and reduce complexity for staff, landowners and hunters/anglers.

Rationale: PL/PW members appreciate the number of access tools the Department has, but they do create complexity and having multiple deadlines across programs makes it difficult for staff and landowners to understand and implement. Members would like the Department to undertake a process to review all of the access tools available and attempt to develop one menu of options with one application period for all programs. Members believe this could reduce complexity for landowners while streamlining the process and reducing the staff time necessary to develop and process multiple access program agreements for any one landowner.

Recommendation #5

The Department set, update and publicly publish a timeline for implementation of the future phases for the myFWP phone app.

Rationale: PL/PW Members acknowledge that the Department struggles to maintain technological advances for a variety of reasons, but believes the Department should increase the use of technology specifically with the myFWP app. One example could be to set and publish a date to incorporate a digital sign-in for Block Management Areas in the app. Rather than hunters trying to complete a coupon in the dark, failing to return the harvest portion of their BMA coupon stub and a labor intensive process of combing through and counting coupons, the Department should set and publicly publish a timeline to incorporate digital sign-in for BMAs through the myFWP phone app. The PL/PW recommends the Department be more directly accountable to the public and ensure that technological advances can be more readily utilized to reduce overall Department costs and improve communication with hunters/anglers.



PL/PW Final Recommendations and Rationale

Recommendation #6

The Department weigh the need of additional personnel to manage and facilitate the increase of recreation on private and public lands to improve landowner and hunter/angler experiences, relationships and better meet wildlife management goals.

Rationale: PL/PW Members acknowledge there has been a steady increase of public recreation on private and public lands in Montana over the past 5 years. In discussions with landowners, including those not participating in any FWP access programs, it has been clear there's a need for more personnel (presence) to better assist in managing the public and the resource to better achieve management goals. PL/PW, while recognizing an increasing need for FTEs throughout the Department, also suggests the Department consider alternatives for securing additional access and enforcement staff to improve hunter management and enforcement/compliance. One example could be to cooperate with local ranch managers, through direct hires or short-term contracts to facilitate public hunters and increase harvest and satisfaction on enrolled lands. PL/PW also encourages the Department to redouble their collaboration with the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, U.S. Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service, particularly where access programs create more public access on those lands.

Interesting Fact: Block Management has seen a growth of contracted hunter days from 247,784 in 1999 to 674,830 in program year 2024.



Hunters sign-in to a Block Management Area

Recommendation #7

The Department develop a simple, easy to access, online site and accompanying FAQ that should be linked to landowner forums, realtor sites and public land management agencies to address issues related to ownership of private lands in Montana.

Rationale: PL/PW believes that one of the largest losses of "opportunity for access" is due to the changing ownership of private agricultural lands in recent years. Members believe there is a need for an online FAQ for not only realtors, but also potential buyers of property in MT and people who hunt or access private and public lands. It is very evident that buyers of land as well as people who access many public lands are unaware of the differences between DNRC, FWP, BLM, or USFS lands and the associated rules of those lands. Members would like the Department develop an online site with a FAQ that links to for more information for each public land management agency as each agency has their own literature on their individual sites. Members recommend the Department, public land agencies and realtors collaborate with each other and combine the issues of land owners, potential land owners, hunters and the public to create these FAQ's and topics of discussion.

PL/PW Future Concerns:

Members acknowledge that there are many factors affecting the successful implementation of FWP access programs and ability to meet wildlife management goals. Members do not have a specific recommendation on how to address these future concerns but believe that the Department needs to work proactively to address these concerns expressed below:

1. FWP Technology for hunter communication/information is currently behind the game.

Technology is changing and demands for communication with hunters/anglers is ever growing. Members believe that the Department would benefit from many technology updates and integration. The Department could improve communication/information by streamlining and making improvements to the website, app, online licensing sign-on, harvest survey collection, etc. Members believe that the Department continues to underutilize technology and needs to do better for communication with landowners, hunters and anglers.

2. Private sector leasing companies competing with access opportunities.

The private sector has developed many “air bnb” or “vrbo” type land leasing options for landowners. While leasing lands are not new, the Department lacks the ability to compete on many levels with the private sector and members believe as these types of companies grow it directly conflicts with the Department’s goal of increasing free public access.

3. Loss of a land ethos and direct connection to the working lands of Montana.

Rationale: PL/PW Members acknowledge that the landscape and ownership of Montana is rapidly changing. Members discussed concerns over a loss of the direct connection to agricultural working lands. As the population of Montana grows and the lands continue to change ownership, members perceive a loss of the understanding of the positive impacts provided from agricultural working lands. Members believe the time may be right to consider the development of a curriculum in the public schools to educate students on this important relationship that working lands have had and continue to have on wildlife and conservation. (In the May-June 2024 issue of Montana Outdoors magazine, "A Drivers Guide to Montana's Working Lands" pretty well hit the mark.)



FWP Hunting Access Program Overview

The FWP Hunting Access Program is established through 87-1-265, MCA with the direction to develop programs of landowner assistance that encourage public access to private and public lands for purposes of hunting.

Programs include the very popular Block Management (BMA) Program, the Elk Hunting Access Agreement (EHA) Program (formerly known as the 454 Program), the Public Access Land Agreement (PALA) Program, Regional Access Projects (RAP) Program, Access Public Lands Program (APL/Home to Hunt), the Managed Access Project Sites (MAPs) Program, Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program, Hunter/Landowner Stewardship Course, Private Land Fishing Access (PLFA) Program and administrative assistance to Private Land/Public Wildlife (PL/PW) Advisory Committee.



BLOCK MANAGEMENT
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



UNLOCKING PUBLIC LANDS
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



**PRIVATE LAND/
PUBLIC WILDLIFE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**



Successful hunter used Block Management to access land-locked public land



Hunter signs-in at a Block Management Area



Successful hunter on a Block Management Area

Block Management Program Overview

The flagship hunting access program, administered by FWP, is the very popular Block Management Program.

Block Management provides for managed hunting access on nearly **7 million** private and isolated public land acres enrolled through cooperative agreements between FWP, private landowners, and public land management agencies. This program is available because of willing private landowners.

Originating in 1985, the Block Management Program began as the result of landowners expressing concerns about resulting impacts from allowing public hunting access on lands under their control.

Key Information about Block Management:

- Landowners do not forfeit any private property rights by enrolling land, including the right to deny access for cause and the right to enforce ranch rules.
- Hunter behavior is a large factor whether or not landowners participate in the program. Courteous, legal, and ethical behavior helps keeps gates open.

There are two types of Block Management Areas (BMAs):

TYPE 1 BMA- Area where hunters administer their own permission. This includes BMAs that use sign-in boxes, and BMAs that do not require hunters to obtain permission. Type 1 BMAs mostly do not limit hunter numbers or require reservations, although some parking areas have vehicle limits.

TYPE 2 BMA- Area where someone other than the hunter issues permission. This includes BMAs where the landowner or an FWP staff member issues permission. Type 2 BMAs often require reservations and utilize pasture assignments, hunter number limits, and other hunter management systems.

Highlights for Program (Calendar) Years 2023/2024:

Through the 2023 legislative session (SB58) the maximum payment to any one landowner was increased to \$50,000 per landowner.

In September of 2023, FWP updated the payment structure for Block Management to reflect the new maximum and updated the hunter day rate. FWP increased the enrollment payment to \$1,000 per contract and increased the daily hunter impact payment to up to \$17/hunter day (previously up to \$13/hunter day). The current daily hunter day breakdown is calculated as: basic impact of \$10.60 + \$3.20 (no season length restrictions Sept. 1– Jan. 1) + \$3.20 (no species/gender restrictions deer; elk; antelope; upland birds; waterfowl) totaling up to \$17/hunter day depending upon landowner desires.

The program also developed and implemented a new comprehensive standard operation procedure (2024) as well as conducted an update to the program administrative rules as a part of the Governor's red tape relief effort during this biennium.

New for 2024, the Department began piloting the implementation of an online reservation system for a few BMA properties with great satisfaction from hunters.



Successful hunter on a Block Management Area

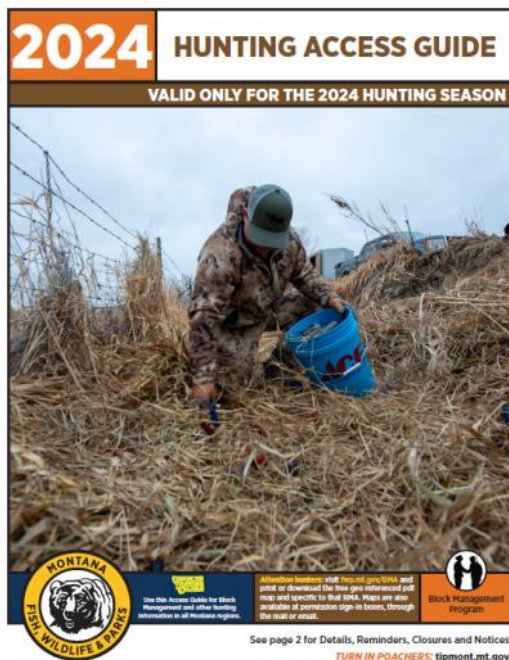
Block Management Enrollment Process:

- Landowner makes an application (new property) often with the assistance of FWP staff.
- Property is scored, then reviewed and ranked by a FWP Regional Enrollment Committee with input from local FWP staff. Regional Enrollment Committee determines whether to offer enrollment based on enrollment criteria (below).
- If approved, a contract is drafted and signed by landowner and FWP Regional Supervisor.
- Once contracts expire, cooperators go through a similar re-enrollment process to be ranked and evaluated for re-enrollment.
- Signed agreements (starting in 2024) are currently held in FWP regional offices.

Enrollment Criteria:

Criteria for inclusion in the program focuses on:

- Number of days of public hunting provided;
- Wildlife habitat provided;
- Presence of game populations;
- Number, gender, and species of animals allowed to be taken;



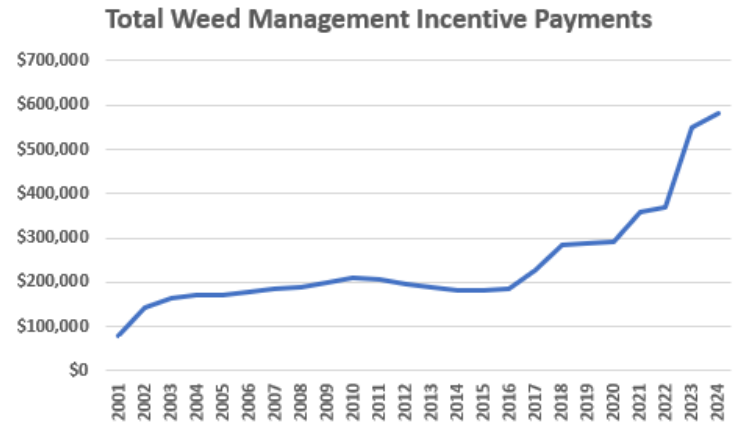
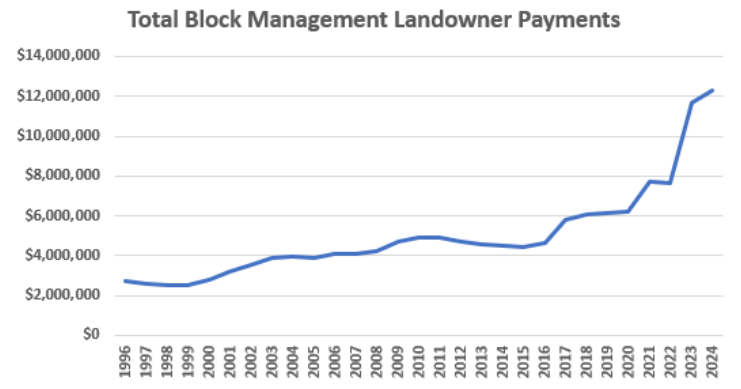
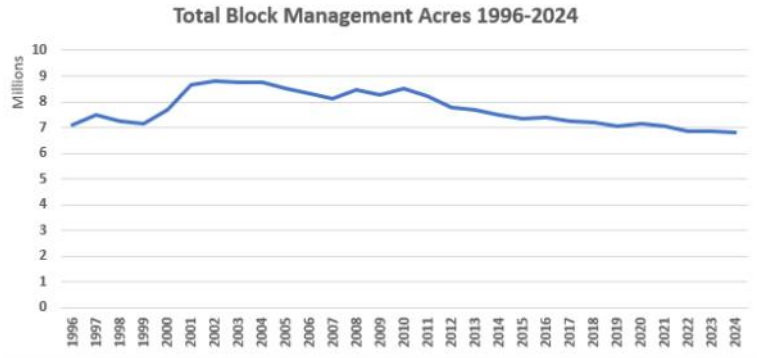
Block Management Landowner/Cooperator Benefits:

- Cooperators receive hunter management services through FWP full-time and seasonal staff positions monitoring and ensuring compliance with property rules on enrolled lands.
- Recreational liability protection is provided for landowners participating in the program through the MT Recreational Landowner Liability Law (70-16-302, MCA).
- Cooperators may receive monetary compensation for hunter impacts up to \$17 per hunter day with an annual maximum impact payment of \$50,000 annually.
 - Note: Payment is to offset impacts associated with allowing public hunting access including but not limited to general ranch maintenance, conservation efforts, weed control, fire protection, and road/parking-area maintenance.
- Cooperators may receive a unified cooperative aggregate incentive of \$1,000 per contract for working with neighboring landowners to form an “Aggregate” Block Management Area (BMA). An aggregate BMA reduces the administrative burden on staff, reduces administrative costs and is beneficial to hunters.
- Cooperators may elect to receive up to 5% in additional payment above the maximum for weed management efforts on lands enrolled in the program.
- Cooperators may elect to receive a resident Sportsman’s license (without bear) or nonresident Big Game Combination* license with required prerequisites for themselves, or designate this benefit to a full-time employee or family member.
- Cooperators receive a complimentary annual subscription to the Montana Outdoors magazine.

*Cooperator non-resident big game combo provided does not count against the non-resident big game combo cap of 17,000 licenses.

Block Management Program by the Numbers

Program Year	Cooperators	Total Acreage Enrolled	Total Paid to Landowners
1996	882	7,120,137	\$2,757,103
1997	937	7,505,606	\$2,571,358
1998	916	7,259,603	\$2,541,863
1999	930	7,147,024	\$2,542,751
2000	1,004	7,696,501	\$2,792,854
2001	1,082	8,679,097	\$3,205,870
2002	1,150	8,809,758	\$3,556,452
2003	1,245	8,761,893	\$3,897,189
2004	1,262	8,764,806	\$3,943,073
2005	1,237	8,528,242	\$3,918,611
2006	1,244	8,296,769	\$4,091,161
2007	1,258	8,106,664	\$4,118,511
2008	1,256	8,261,341	\$4,221,100
2009	1,260	8,536,538	\$4,732,869
2010	1,290	8,536,538	\$4,935,603
2011	1,297	8,223,919	\$4,916,595
2012	1,238	7,768,642	\$4,739,277
2013	1,211	7,687,446	\$4,585,095
2014	1,194	7,490,183	\$4,477,336
2015	1,187	7,358,732	\$4,466,103
2016	1,209	7,380,057	\$4,657,717
2017	1,225	7,245,756	\$5,773,799
2018	1,254	7,180,426	\$6,055,275
2019	1,270	7,067,652	\$6,113,538
2020	1,292	7,157,627	\$6,189,316
2021	1,288	7,069,108	\$7,744,014
2022	1,282	6,839,164	\$7,677,450
2023	1,300	6,877,237	\$11,691,745
2024	1,316	6,803,949	\$12,262,899



Program Note: From 1996-2023, 363,329 private land acres formerly enrolled in Block Management in Region 2 have been converted to state or federal ownership. Program year 2024 is an estimate not actuals.

Block Management Program Highlights

Program Year 2023 and 2024

For those 2023 Block Management comment or permission cards that were returned, hunters reported:

Region	Game Observed	Game Harvested	Satisfactory Experience
1	52%	8%	92%
2	52%	11%	93%
3	68%	23%	83%
4	73%	24%	96%
5	59%	18%	87%
6	71%	23%	95%
7	74%	29%	92%
Avg.	64.1%	19.4%	91.1%

“Your BMA program is the best public hunting program I have ever experienced in any of the states I have hunted.” - Sandy



Hunter “signs-in” at a Block Management Area

Program/Calendar Year 2023:

1,287 cooperators enrolled **6,847,109** acres of private and isolated public lands in Block Management.

637,823 hunter days were contracted through Block Management.

Access staff recorded over **10,000** landowner and hunter contacts (September-February).

Over **618,000 acres** of inaccessible public lands were opened for hunting because of private land enrolled in Block Management.

No landowners were denied enrollment in the Block Management Program due to budgetary constraints.

Zero formal complaints were filed for the 2023 hunting season. The 2024 program year results will not be finalized until March 2025. However, previous survey responses have shown similar satisfaction rates over the life of this program.

The payment structure was updated to reflect an increased hunter day payment (up to \$17/hunter day), an increased contract enrollment payment and a landowner maximum payment (SB58 2023 session).

The Administrative Rules of Montana governing the program were updated.

Program/Calendar Year 2024:

1,316 cooperators enrolled **6,803,949** acres of private and isolated public lands in Block Management.

674,830 hunter days were contracted through Block Management.

FWP developed and built a system to pilot and take online reservations for six different landowners. Feedback from online reservations was overwhelmingly positive from hunters.

A new program SOP was developed in 2024.

FWP Hunting Access Programs Funding Sources



Successful hunter on a Block Management Area

FWP hunting access programs are funded from the following sources:

- \$55 from each nonresident upland bird license;
- \$25 from each nonresident 3-day upland bird license;
- Proceeds from Super Tag Lottery;
- 28.5% from each nonresident big game combination license and each nonresident elk only license;
- 28.5% from each nonresident deer combination license and each nonresident deer only license;
- 28.5% of the fee for the Native Montanan license;
- Dedicated limited drawing refunds from unsuccessful permit drawing applicants;
- Portions of funds received for non-resident purchasing a 2nd preference point when hunting with an outfitter;
- Funds generated from the Home to Hunt License (87-2-526);
- \$2 of Resident/\$10 of Non-resident Base Hunting License;
- Any interest or income earned on the account;
- Small private donations and grants;
- Wildlife Restoration/Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds.



FWP Hunting Access Program Fiscal Analyses

Fiscal Year Program Totals	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Field Services Provided to Manage Hunting on BM	\$1,384,560.89	\$1,526,235.35	\$1,736,897.38	\$2,039,570.41	\$2,336,279.55	\$2,221,980.80	\$2,310,592.61	\$2,201,108.96	\$2,718,447.79	\$3,750,271.75
Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$4,477,376.22	\$4,466,103.11	\$4,657,716.98	\$5,773,799.16	\$6,055,275.49	\$6,113,538.00	\$6,189,316.34	\$7,744,014.01	\$7,677,449.70	\$11,691,745.44
Total	\$5,861,937.11	\$5,992,338.46	\$6,394,614.36	\$7,813,369.57	\$8,391,555.04	\$8,335,518.80	\$8,499,908.95	\$9,945,122.97	\$10,395,897.49	\$15,442,017.19

Fiscal Year Program Totals	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
State Special Funding - 02334	\$4,205,648.52	\$4,663,308.46	\$5,065,614.36	\$6,484,369.57	\$7,062,555.04	\$3,771,786.53	\$7,178,522.99	\$7,073,410.08	\$7,513,072.76	\$9,537,265.35
Federal Funding - 03097	\$1,656,288.59	\$1,329,030.00	\$1,329,000.00	\$1,329,000.00	\$1,329,000.00	\$4,563,732.27	\$1,321,385.96	\$2,871,712.89	\$2,882,824.73	\$5,395,500.00
Total	\$5,861,937.11	\$5,992,338.46	\$6,394,614.36	\$7,813,369.57	\$8,391,555.04	\$8,335,518.80	\$8,499,908.95	\$9,945,122.97	\$10,395,897.49	\$14,932,765.35

Program/Calendar Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
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Landowner Payments	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Region 1 Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$20,987.93	\$24,868.73	\$23,168.57	\$27,241.36	\$26,550.83	\$25,284.11	\$38,730.74	\$132,402.52	\$106,887.64	\$236,529.99
Region 2 Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$465,776.35	\$470,654.30	\$480,902.14	\$621,228.89	\$704,941.88	\$732,681.20	\$748,266.77	\$922,672.91	\$916,523.81	\$1,302,101.70
Region 3 Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$632,637.78	\$639,388.83	\$671,830.27	\$863,944.85	\$999,249.18	\$922,584.69	\$930,962.43	\$1,226,803.96	\$1,201,040.28	\$1,755,734.19
Region 4 Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$894,981.21	\$847,782.20	\$894,679.59	\$1,074,083.17	\$1,070,906.92	\$1,155,326.41	\$1,106,961.30	\$1,308,174.78	\$1,321,344.79	\$2,133,391.93
Region 5 Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$510,434.24	\$469,186.68	\$462,680.56	\$532,867.68	\$530,888.08	\$527,429.46	\$550,109.32	\$637,063.91	\$628,660.46	\$951,445.39
Region 6 Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$909,074.56	\$946,369.55	\$1,006,212.52	\$1,259,143.35	\$1,308,153.20	\$1,383,906.52	\$1,458,889.23	\$1,975,243.61	\$2,041,809.48	\$3,120,029.73
Region 7 Hunter Access Program Payments to Land Owners	\$1,043,484.15	\$1,067,852.82	\$1,118,243.33	\$1,395,289.86	\$1,414,585.40	\$1,366,325.61	\$1,355,396.55	\$1,541,652.32	\$1,461,183.24	\$2,192,512.51
Total	\$4,477,376.22	\$4,466,103.11	\$4,657,716.98	\$5,773,799.16	\$6,055,275.49	\$6,113,538.00	\$6,189,316.34	\$7,744,014.01	\$7,677,449.70	\$11,691,745.44

Program/Calendar Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
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Hunting Access 02334	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Beginning Fund Balance	\$6,450,835	\$6,136,128	\$9,205,707	\$9,537,125	\$10,008,878	\$11,294,296
Adj to Beginning Fund Balance	\$0					
Prior Year Revenue	(\$175,705)	(\$186,825)	(\$255,676)	(\$208,083)	(\$197,223)	\$396,166
Prior Year Expenditures	(\$1,615)	(\$279)	(\$3,076)	\$3,573	(\$505)	\$13,521
Unreserved Fund Balance	\$6,273,515	\$5,949,024	\$8,946,956	\$9,332,615	\$9,811,151	\$11,703,983
Revenue (NRBG, NRDC, HA Fees, UGB, ST)	\$7,938,554	\$7,883,880	\$8,759,236	\$9,135,091	\$9,951,274	\$11,146,873
Donations	\$8	\$6	\$8	\$93,534	\$143,899	\$343,951
Interest	\$59,832	\$69,661	\$12,890	\$6,614	\$211,504	\$362,945
Total Revenue	\$7,998,394	\$7,953,548	\$8,772,134	\$9,235,239	\$10,306,677	\$11,853,769
Expenditures:						
Overhead Assessment	(\$562,538)	(\$397,178)	(\$475,384)	(\$895,494)	(\$528,081)	(\$1,366,083)
Block Mgmt Operations	(\$2,333,047)	(\$2,219,403)	(\$2,297,592)	(\$2,325,520)	(\$2,824,212)	(\$3,241,020)
Block Mgmt Landowner Contract Payments	(\$4,726,875)	(\$1,550,806)	(\$4,877,209)	(\$4,747,890)	(\$4,919,036)	(\$6,296,245)
Enforcement	(\$513,321)	(\$529,478)	(\$531,781)	(\$590,072)	(\$552,204)	(\$381,468)
Total Expenditures	(\$8,135,781)	(\$4,696,864)	(\$8,181,965)	(\$8,558,976)	(\$8,823,532)	(\$11,284,816)
Ending Fund Balance	\$6,136,128	\$9,205,707	\$9,537,125	\$10,008,878	\$11,294,296	\$12,272,936

Program/Calendar Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
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Public Access Land Agreement Program

The **Public Access Land Agreement (PALA)** program is a creative way for landowners to provide public access to public lands for hunting and/or fishing, in exchange for a payment and other negotiated improvements to facilitate public access to public lands.

To be eligible for a Public Access Land Agreement private landowners, must be willing to provide public access to either inaccessible public lands or improve access to under-accessible public lands, or both.

Inaccessible land means public land wholly surrounded by private land by which there is no other legal access via public road, trail, right of way or easement; public waters; adjacent federal, state, county, or municipal land that is open to public use; or adjacent private land for which that landowner has not granted permission to cross.

"Under accessible public land" means public land for which there is no other legal access point within one mile via public road, trail, right of way or easement; public waters; adjacent federal, state, county, or municipal land that is open to public use. A distance of less than one mile may be eligible if the department determines that it improves public access to lands based on site specific considerations.

Access via public waters may also be considered under accessible if there are safety concerns which limit access by boat (due to rapids, boulders, log jams) and/or by foot while remaining within the high water mark (due to swift currents, deep water along banks, slippery substrate).

To be eligible for this program, landowners must also hold the lease for grazing/farming on the public land.

Applications are reviewed by Regional staff and a local PL/PW member and PL/PW works to make a recommendation to the Department. The Department makes the final decision on enrollment.

In 2023:

62 PALAs

Opened **539,492 acres** of inaccessible or under accessible public land

Performed social, print, radio, tv advertising. FWP also conducted a GIS analysis and did a direct mail campaign to landowners who were eligible to participate.

Updated the Administrative Rules of Montana governing PALA.

In 2024:

69 PALAs

Opened **446,420 acres** of inaccessible or under accessible public land.



Other Hunting Access Programs

Unlocking Public Lands is a program whereby a landowner enters into a contractual agreement with FWP to allow public access (for all activities) across a parcel of private land to reach an isolated parcel of state or federal land. If access is open for a continuous period of at least six months, the cooperators are entitled to receive a tax credit of \$750 (maximum of 4 contracts or \$3,000 total tax credits per tax year).



Year	Number of Landowners	Number of Parcels Opened
2020	4	5
2021	4	5
2022	4	5
2023	3	4
2024	3	4



**UNLOCKING
PUBLIC LANDS**
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

The **Regional Access Project** program was created to address access needs or problems that fall outside of the limitations of Block Management or other access programs. Generally, projects protect or improve existing access, create new access, or address landowner/sportsmen conflicts associated with hunting access on **private** lands. Projects eligible for funding include but are not limited to:

- Development of maps and planning documents for access availability in a defined project area;
- Development of contractual agreements for access onto or across private lands;
- Development of agreements to provide hunter management services as a condition of access onto or across private lands;
- Purchase of materials that improve existing access or serve as incentives to open access.

2023-2024 Projects Included:

- **Region 2-** MCE Enterprises, Manley Ranch, Douglas Creek, Fivemile Creek, Graveley Ranch, Buxbaum Ranch, Dry Cottonwood Ranch, Clark Fork River Ranch, H Double C Ranch, Clark Fork Islands and Sapphire PTHFV;
- **Region 3-** Matador Ranch Elk Access Area
- **Region 4-** Bird Creek, Riverdale, Chokecherry Bend, Harris Land and Cattle, Fargo Coulee, Sterling Ranch, Blackman, Willow Ranch, Sheep Creek Ranch, Meissner Elk Shoulder Season Access
- **Region 5-** Osmundson/Bangert Geraldine Trust Elk Hunting Access Area

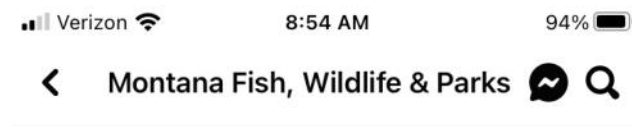
Hunter-Landowner Relations Marketing Campaign– Up to Us

As a part of the PL/PW effort to improve hunter-landowner relations, FWP improved upon and conducted an “ethical-hunting” marketing campaign during this biennium.

This also included a “thank a landowner portal” where hunters could submit stories and/or pictures and provide a “thank you” to landowners. Hunters submitted over 300 pictures and stories through the portal which were shared with landowners in early 2024.

FWP and it’s partners produced content for billboards, social media, radio, email, and print advertising as well as produced videos in collaboration with Meat Eater, Montana State University and University of Montana. It’s Up to Us. Respect Access. Protect the Hunt.

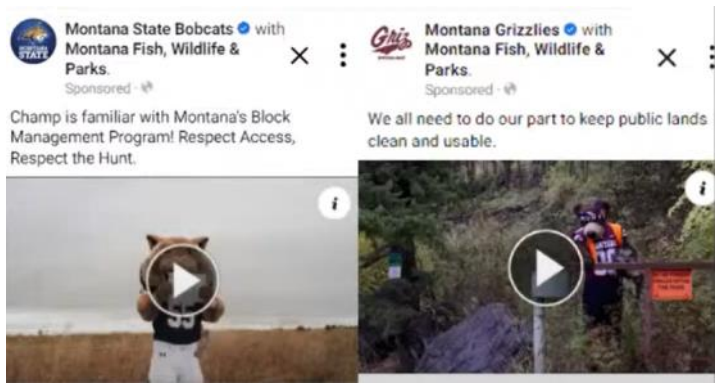
Another example of this effort was a “Don’t Block the Gate” social post that reached **1.2 million impressions with 44,834 engagements, 3,600 shares and 660 comments.**



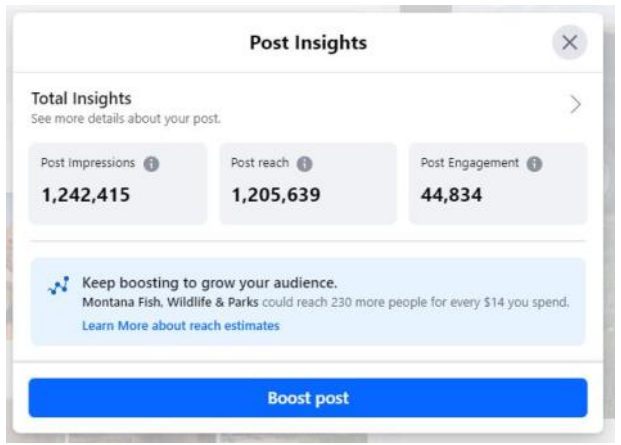
As crops are coming out and cows start coming home or getting shipped, hunters must remember to not park vehicles in a way that blocks access to the field or the gate entrance. Blocking the gate prevents farmers and ranchers from doing their work during this extremely busy time of year.

As a hunter, please respect private property. It's up to us. Respect Access. Protect the hunt.

#MyMontanaHunt



Don't Block the Gate



Private Land Fishing Access (PLFA)/Fishing Access Enhancement Program

The Private Land Fishing Access Program (PLFA) goal is “to provide incentives to landowners who provide access to or across private land for public fishing.”

The PLFA program gives practical, tangible assistance to those private landowners who allow the public access to or across their lands in order to fish streams or lakes that otherwise are not accessible.

The PLFA Program differs from the Fishing Access Site Program in three ways:

1. The funding is specifically earmarked for use on private land.
2. PLFA is not a capital program through which FWP develops facilities on private land, i.e. boat ramps, dam repairs, stream bank stabilization, etc. Compensation provided to the landowner can be used for these things at his or her discretion.
3. It is a stand-alone program that does not incorporate the FWP Lands Section in negotiating deals, the D&C Bureau to design and engineer projects, or the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division to maintain the sites.



Private Land Fishing Access (PLFA)/Fishing Access Enhancement Fiscal Analyses

Program Year		2022	2023
Cooperator Name	Site	FY2023 Payment to Landowners	FY2024 Payment to Landowners
Doug Gamma	Ashley Lake	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 4,000.00
Mark Decker	Kootenai River	\$ -	\$ 10,476.19
Flathead 4-H	Loon Lake	\$ -	\$ 5,200.00
Sterling Ranch	Missouri River	\$ 8,500.00	\$ 8,500.00
Anglers Roost LLP	Bitterroot River - Anglers Roost RV & Campground	\$ 1,610.00	\$ 1,928.25
Richard Smith	Bitterroot River - Anglers Roost RV & Campground	\$ 17,500.00	\$ -
		\$ 29,110.00	\$ 30,104.44

Private Land Fishing Access (PLFA)/Fishing Access Enhancement Program Summary of Projects

Active PLFA - Paid Annually							
Project - Site Name	Region	Agreement Start Date	Agreement Term (years)	Agreement End Date	Annual Compensation	Total Compensation	Agreement Detail
Brady Pond	4	1/1/2021	5	1/1/2026	\$ -	\$ -	Stocking in leau of payment
Cameron Lake	4	7/1/2021	5	5/1/2026	\$ -	\$ -	Stocking in leau of payment
Decker Land Co	1	3/1/2022	3	3/1/2025	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 22,500.00	Paid annually, split 50/50 w/ Idaho G & F
Haynie Pond	4	8/1/2020	5	7/1/2025	\$ -	\$ -	Stocking in leau of payment
Henry Reservoir	4	6/1/2021	5	6/1/2026	\$ -	\$ -	Stocking in leau of payment
Kelly Reservoir	4	5/1/2021	5	5/1/2026	\$ -	\$ -	Stocking in leau of payment
Perkins Pond	4	8/1/2021	5	8/1/2021	\$ -	\$ -	Stocking in leau of payment
Ruffatto Land and Cattle Company	2	5/1/2024	1	5/1/2025	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	
Schoonover Reservoir	4	7/1/2020	5	7/1/2025	\$ -	\$ -	Stocking in leau of payment
Sterling Ranch	4	Jan-24	5	6/1/2029	\$ 8,500.00	\$ 45,000.00	Current agreement has auto-renew language.
Tash T Diamond	3	6/5/2024	8 months	1/31/2025	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	
Wildcat Coulee	7	11-Jun-24	1	6/11/2025	\$ -	\$ -	No payment as the agreement is with Montana's Outdoor

Active PLFA - Paid in FULL							
Project - Site Name	Region	Agreement Start Date	Agreement Term (years)	Agreement End Date	Annual Compensation	Total Compensation	Agreement Detail
Angler's Roost	2	6/1/2022	5	6/1/2027	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 17,500.00	Paid in full
Applestem Inc (Scott Blackman)	4	9/1/2020	5	8/1/2025	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	Paid in full
Gheny Pond (Osborne)	3	1/1/2015	10	12/1/2025	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00	Paid in full
Gordon Cattle Co - South Polly	6	6/1/2022	10	6/1/2032	\$ 500.00	\$ 15,000.00	Paid in full
Gordon Cattle Co. (Brookie Pond)	6	5/1/2022	10	5/1/2032	\$ 500.00	\$ 15,000.00	Paid in full
Gordon Cattle Company (HC Kuhr Reservoir)	6	10/1/2015	15	10/1/2030	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	Paid in full
Gordon Cattle Co-North Polly	6	7/1/2022	10	7/1/2032	\$ 500.00	\$ 15,000.00	Paid in full
Grasshopper Reservoir	6	6/1/2021	15	5/1/2036	\$ 666.67	\$ 10,000.00	Paid in full
Loon Lake 4H Camp	1	9/5/2023	3	9/4/2026	\$ 1,733.33	\$ 5,200.00	Paid in full
Rorvik Ranch	6	4/1/2019	5	4/1/2024	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	Paid in full
Todd Jorgensen	6	9/1/2024	10	9/1/2024	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00	Paid in full



2023 ELK HUNTING ACCESS (EHA) AGREEMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

2023 Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Agreement Program Evaluation Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Agreement Program was created by the 2001 Legislature (House Bill 454, 87-2-513, MCA). These agreements, commonly called “454 agreements,” allow for a landowner to receive an elk license, permit, or combination of the two to hunt their own land in exchange for allowing free public elk hunting access to at least three public hunters - one of which may be selected by the landowner.

In 2023, the department received 50 complete applications with the Fish and Wildlife Commission approving 43 EHA agreements and the department issuing 70 licenses/permits to landowners or eligible designees. The license/permit type of 690-20 (rifle only in HD690) had more requests for licenses/permits available through this program and for the second year in a row all applications were sent to a post-commission random draw. The 2023 EHA program enrolled a total of 492,981 acres- some of which are also enrolled in Block Management.

To better understand the results of the 2023 EHA program, FWP staff sent a direct-mail survey to landowners and designees (if applicable) as well as the statutorily required public hunters to evaluate the landowner and public hunter harvest success and satisfaction. A replacement mailing was mailed to nonrespondents approximately 2-3 weeks after the initial mailing, and thereafter at least two phone calls were made to nonrespondents to boost the survey response rates.

Landowner satisfaction

Responses were received from landowners for all 43 agreements regarding their satisfaction with the program. Results suggest most landowners (92.8%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the experience they had being enrolled in the EHA program in 2023. Likewise, most landowners were satisfied or very satisfied (97.6%) with the behavior of the people who hunted lands enrolled in the EHA program with most landowners (69.8%) wanting to participate again in the future.

When asked if landowners provided free public elk hunting access during the archery and the general rifle season in addition to the statutorily required public hunters, 37 of 43 landowners responded to the question. For those who responded, 27 indicated they provided additional free public access above the minimum required. Overall, landowners reported providing free access to an additional 677 public hunters. However, some of these additional public hunters were identified because a landowner provided additional access through their simultaneous enrollment in Block Management.

Landowner/designee harvest

Responses were received from 67 of the 70 landowner/designee hunters regarding their days spent hunting and harvest on enrolled lands. Of the respondents, five did not hunt and nearly half (49.2%) of landowners and/or designees harvested elk on enrolled lands. Most landowners and/or designees harvested a branch antlered bull (86.7%) during the general rifle season (79.3%) hunting for an average of eight days.

Landowner-selected public hunters

Responses were received from 38 of the 52 landowner-selected public hunters regarding their satisfaction and harvest on enrolled lands. Of the respondents, most (73.7%) found it was easy or very easy to get in contact with the landowner (or ranch manager) to plan elk hunting trips to the enrolled property. Eight landowner-selected public hunters (21%) did not attempt to contact the ranch to ask for permission and two (5.3%) found it to be very difficult to get in contact with the ranch to plan an elk hunting trip.

For respondents who hunted enrolled lands (63.2%), most saw elk (91.7%) and just over half (54.2%) of the landowner-selected public hunters harvested elk hunting an average of 5.2 days each. For those who hunted, most were satisfied or very satisfied (91.6%) with their experience and for those who harvested elk, most (92.3%) harvested a branch antlered bull during the general rifle season (92.3%).

FWP selected public hunters

Responses were received from 140 of the 160 FWP-selected public hunters regarding their satisfaction and harvest on enrolled lands. Of the respondents, about two-thirds (61.9%) found it was easy or very easy to get in contact with the landowner (or ranch manager) to plan elk hunting trips to the enrolled property. Nineteen FWP-selected public hunters (13.7%) did not attempt to contact the ranch to ask for permission and eighteen (12.9%) found it to be very difficult to get in contact with the ranch to plan an elk hunting trip.

For respondents who hunted enrolled lands (50.7%), about two-thirds saw elk (64.8%) and just over one-third (33.8%) of the FWP-selected public hunters harvested an elk hunting an average of 2.6 days each. For those respondents who hunted, about two-thirds were satisfied or very satisfied (63.4%) with their experience and for those who harvested elk, most (92.3%) harvested an antlerless elk during the general rifle season (100.0%).

New for 2024

Based on the results from the past two EHA program years, the changes made by HB596 during the 2023 legislative session, and an EHA administrative rule update, FWP developed a new application, a new agreement template and a new standard operating procedure (SOP) for the EHA program in 2024. The SOP can be found here: <https://fwp.mt.gov/hunt/landownerprograms/public-elk-access-agreements>

Important changes for program include:

- If a landowner elects to select up to one-third of the public hunters eligible to hunt lands enrolled, FWP will email a list of potential public hunters to the landowner. The landowner must make their selections known to FWP no later than three weeks prior to the agreement start date (i.e., the first hunting season the landowner/designee will utilize their license/permit). If a landowner fails to make their public hunter selections in the required timeframe, landowner public hunter selections will be forfeited and FWP will fill the spots with FWP-selected public hunters;
- Landowners must own at least 640 acres of occupied elk habitat (except smaller acreages are eligible if the department determines site conditions exist to accommodate successful public

hunting) and can enroll private land they lease from another landowner for agricultural purposes;

- For every permit/license issued to a landowner or designee, at least one of the department-selected public hunters must hold the equivalent license, permit or combination of the two that is issued to the landowner or the landowner’s designee;
- The public sign-up for all EHA opportunities will occur from July 1-July 15 through myFWP.

The reports that follow are summaries from the responses of the surveys sent to landowners (or designees) and the landowner-selected and FWP-selected public hunters. These reports were compiled by FWP’s Human Dimensions work unit and provide more data specific to each group surveyed.

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Results from the Landowner Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Program Evaluation Survey

2023 Montana Hunting Season



MONTANA **FWP**

Background Information. Following the general hunting season, a Landowner Evaluation Survey for the Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Program was mailed to each of 43 private landowners enrolled in the program for the 2023 Montana hunting season. A replacement mailing was mailed to nonrespondents approximately 2-3 weeks after the initial mailing, and thereafter at least two phone calls were made to nonrespondents to boost the survey response rate. All 43 landowners responded to the survey, resulting in a 100 percent survey response rate. However, some survey respondents did not answer all the survey questions. This document provides the results of this survey.

Response to Question 1: “As part of enrollment in the Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Program, landowners may also offer additional public elk hunting access beyond the minimum three public hunters required by statute. How many additional hunters, if any, did you provide free access to hunt elk on your lands between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season)?”

RANCH	Response
Big Spring	4
Bold	No response to this question
Brewington	0
Browning	100
Clark Fork Cattle Co.	13
Cowan	200
DePauw	1
Doering Land Co.	0
Dunn Canyon Cattle Co.	No response to this question
Elk Creek	8
Freeman Investment Properties	No response to this question
Gardner	No response to this question
Groover Bros Farms	0
Hahn	6
Heart K	0
Henderson	4
J & L River	0
Lencioni	4
Lone Tree Cattle Co.	8
N Bar	200
OW Land & Cattle Co.	1
P & L Cattle Co.	10
Parrott Creek	0
Peterson	0
Radley	4

Roat Family	8
Rocket Land & Livestock	16
Sand Creek	40
Sheehy	0
Skogen	0
Solf	4
Stange	1
Swanz	7
Swinging H Cattle Co.	No response to this question
Teigen	4
Volf Landholdings	15
Waid	1
Wapiti Mountain	0
Winderl	No response to this question
WMR	3
Wolf Prairie	1
X Hanging Diamond	9
Yaeger	5

- A total of 677 additional hunters were reportedly provided free access between September 2 and November 26, 2023.

Frequency distribution for Question 1 (includes 37 ranches who responded to this question).

Response (number of additional hunters)	Number of ranches	Percent
0	10	27.0
1	5	13.6
3	1	2.7
4	6	16.2
5	1	2.7
6	1	2.7
7	1	2.7
8	3	8.1
9	1	2.7
10	1	2.7
13	1	2.7
15	1	2.7
16	1	2.7

	40	1	2.7
	100	1	2.7
	200	2	5.4
Total		37	100.0

Response to Question 2: “On a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), how satisfied were you with the behavior of the people who hunted elk on your lands via the EHA Program this past season?”

RANCH	Response
Big Spring	4
Bold	4
Brewington	4
Browning	4
Clark Fork Cattle Co.	4
Cowan	4
DePauw	4
Doering Land Co.	No response to this question
Dunn Canyon Cattle Co.	5
Elk Creek	5
Freeman Investment Properties	5
Gardner	5
Groover Bros Farms	4
Hahn	5
Heart K	5
Henderson	5
J & L River	5
Lencioni	5
Lone Tree Cattle Co.	5
N Bar	4
OW Land & Cattle Co.	5
P & L Cattle Co.	4
Parrott Creek	5
Peterson	No response to this question
Radley	5
Roat Family	4
Rocket Land & Livestock	5

Sand Creek	4
Sheehy	5
Skogen	5
Solf	4
Stange	5
Swanz	5
Swinging H Cattle Co.	4
Teigen	4
Volf Landholdings	3
Waid	5
Wapiti Mountain	5
Winderl	5
WMR	5
Wolf Prairie	5
X Hanging Diamond	5
Yaeger	4

Frequency distribution for Question 2 (includes 41 ranches who responded to this question).

Response	Number of Ranches	Percent
1 Very Dissatisfied	0	0.0
2	0	0.0
3	1	2.4
4	16	39.0
5 Very Satisfied	24	58.6
Total	41	100.0

Comments received for Question 2.

RANCH	Big Spring	Hunters were respectful.
	Bold	It is hard to tell as we are also enrolled in Block Management. With XHD Ranch, combined, all but three of the hunters on the list called. Not all came to hunt for various reasons.
	Brewington	I think that most hunters respect your property.
	Browning	Most are very grateful.
	Clark Fork Cattle Co	Only one elk was taken legally. Two poached.

Doering Land Co	Never heard from any hunters.
Elk Creek	Didn't have to kick anyone off.
Hahn	None of them ever contacted me or came to hunt this year.
Henderson	Only Brady and Tony contacted me for hunting. The third person never did call.
J & L River	All those hunters were very courteous and respectful.
Lencioni	Great to work with the hunters!
Lone Tree Cattle Co.	We didn't have any problems with EHA hunters this year.
Peterson	No one hunted.
Radley	All the public hunters were courteous, and we received positive feedback from them.
Roat Family	I don't know if any EHA hunters fell into the "dumbshit" category or not, but we did have a few moments of stupidity on the hunter's side this year on the BMA.
Rocket Land & Livestock	EHA Program hunters were extremely good this past season. All were successful in harvesting elk. One EHA hunter declined the opportunity to hunt.
Skogen	We allowed only the EHA hunters to make sure they had a quality experience. Our family hunted only three days.
Volf Landholdings	Two of the six people were rude! Only after trophy bulls.
Wolf Prairie	We had few dealings overall. Most hunters did not come to hunt.
X Hanging Diamond	Eliminated those that came in illegal. Great!
Yaeger	They were fine.

Response to Question 3a: “Do the Montana elk hunting regulations for 2023 offer an elk shoulder season in the hunting district where your ranch is located?”

RANCH	Big Spring	YES
	Bold	YES
	Brewington	YES
	Browning	YES
	Clark Fork Cattle Co.	No response to this question
	Cowan	YES
	DePauw	YES
	Doering Land Co.	YES
	Dunn Canyon Cattle Co.	NO

Elk Creek	YES
Freeman Investment Properties	YES
Gardner	YES
Groover Bros Farms	YES
Hahn	NO
Heart K	YES
Henderson	YES
J & L River	NO
Lencioni	YES
Lone Tree Cattle Co.	YES
N Bar	YES
OW Land & Cattle Co.	YES
P & L Cattle Co.	YES
Parrott Creek	YES
Peterson	No response to this question
Radley	NO
Roat Family	YES
Rocket Land & Livestock	YES
Sand Creek	YES
Sheehy	NO
Skogen	YES
Solf	YES
Stange	YES
Swanz	YES
Swinging H Cattle Co.	YES
Teigen	YES
Volf Landholdings	YES
Waid	YES
Wapiti Mountain	NO
Winderl	YES
WMR	NO
Wolf Prairie	NO
X Hanging Diamond	YES
Yaeger	YES

Frequency distribution for Question 3a (includes 41 ranches who responded to this question).

Response	Number of Ranches	Percent
NO	8	19.5
YES	33	80.5
Total	41	100.0

Response to Question 3b: “On a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely), what is the likelihood of you allowing additional public hunting access on your ranch during the elk shoulder season?” *Only ranches that responded “YES” to Question 3a (e.g., shoulder season) are included in this analysis.*

RANCH	Response
Big Spring	4
Bold	5
Brewington	3
Browning	5
Cowan	5
DePauw	1
Doering Land Co.	5
Elk Creek	5
Freeman Investment Properties	3
Gardner	No response to this question
Groover Bros Farms	1
Heart K	3
Henderson	5
Lencioni	No response to this question
Lone Tree Cattle Co.	5
N Bar	3
OW Land & Cattle Co.	1
P & L Cattle Co.	4
Parrott Creek	1
Roat Family	5
Rocket Land & Livestock	5
Sand Creek	5
Skogen	3
Solf	2

Stange	1
Swanz	5
Swinging H Cattle Co.	5
Teigen	5
Volf Landholdings	5
Waid	2
Winderl	5
X Hanging Diamond	5
Yaeger	4

Frequency distribution for Question 3a (includes 31 ranches who responded to this question).

Response	Number of Ranches	Percent
1 (Very Unlikely)	5	16.1
2	2	6.5
3	5	16.1
4	3	9.7
5 (Very Likely)	16	51.6
Total	31	100.0

Response to Question 4: “Overall, on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), how satisfied were you with the experience you had being enrolled in the EHA Program this past season?”

RANCH	Response
Big Spring	4
Bold	4
Brewington	4
Browning	5
Clark Fork Cattle Co.	5
Cowan	5
DePauw	4
Doering Land Co.	4
Dunn Canyon Cattle Co.	5
Elk Creek	5
Freeman Investment Properties	5
Gardner	4

Groover Bros Farms	4
Hahn	5
Heart K	5
Henderson	5
J & L River	5
Lencioni	5
Lone Tree Cattle Co.	5
N Bar	4
OW Land & Cattle Co.	5
P & L Cattle Co.	3
Parrott Creek	5
Peterson	No response to this question
Radley	5
Roat Family	5
Rocket Land & Livestock	5
Sand Creek	5
Sheehy	5
Skogen	5
Solf	4
Stange	5
Swanz	5
Swinging H Cattle Co.	4
Teigen	2
Volf Landholdings	3
Waid	5
Wapiti Mountain	5
Winderl	5
WMR	4
Wolf Prairie	4
X Hanging Diamond	5
Yaeger	4

Frequency distribution for Question 4 (includes 42 ranches who responded to this question).

Response	Number of Ranches	Percent
1 (Very Dissatisfied)	0	0.0
2	1	2.4
3	2	4.8
4	13	30.9
5 (Very Satisfied)	26	61.9
Total	42	100.0

Comments received for Question 4.

RANCH	Comments
Big Spring	Good experience.
Brewington	Being enrolled in EHA was okay but the season should be open for bulls and cows to February because the elk don't get on my property until after general. We don't get any reduction in elk numbers until later.
Browning	It was a very fun experience for our family and ranch.
Clark Fork Cattle Co	Things went well.
Doering Land Co	Need hunters chosen by FWP to contact us.
Elk Creek	Stills needs tweaking, step in right direction. Large amount of contiguous acres should equal additional tags.
Freeman Investment Properties	Thank you for this opportunity.
J & L River	Both of our years in the EHA Program have gone very well.
Peterson	No one asked to hunt land--weather and ranch conditions were bad.
Radley	The EHA Program has worked very well for us.
Rocket Land & Livestock	EHA Program worked well for us.
Teigen	Very limited area to hunt compared to other hunters.
Volf Landholdings	I would like to choose more from the list, people I know in the area that are likely to show up.
Winderl	Didn't get an opportunity this year. Even with this tag, personal reasons.
Wolf Prairie	We were somewhat frustrated with "some" hunters asking for extra access by vehicle to more remote areas. We also asked hunters where they would like to hunt (as a starting point) one then seemed unhappy with not seeing sign (recent sign) while another was instead very gracious for the opportunity.
X Hanging Diamond	Tags them all (<i>non-legible text</i>), lots of elk and that affects them financially.
Yaeger	It was fine, problem was elk were scarce this year.

Response to Question 5: “Are you interested in being enrolled in the EHA Program in the future?”

RANCH	Response
Big Spring	YES
Bold	YES
Brewington	UNSURE
Browning	YES
Clark Fork Cattle Co.	YES
Cowan	YES
DePauw	YES
Doering Land Co.	YES
Dunn Canyon Cattle Co.	YES
Elk Creek	YES
Freeman Investment Properties	YES
Gardner	UNSURE
Groover Bros Farms	UNSURE
Hahn	YES
Heart K	UNSURE
Henderson	YES
J & L River	YES
Lencioni	YES
Lone Tree Cattle Co.	YES
N Bar	YES
OW Land & Cattle Co.	UNSURE
P & L Cattle Co.	UNSURE
Parrott Creek	YES
Peterson	YES
Radley	YES
Roat Family	YES
Rocket Land & Livestock	YES
Sand Creek	YES
Sheehy	YES
Skogen	YES
Solf	UNSURE
Stange	YES
Swanz	YES
Swinging H Cattle Co.	YES
Teigen	UNSURE

Volf Landholdings	NO
Waid	YES
Wapiti Mountain	UNSURE
Winderl	YES
WMR	UNSURE
Wolf Prairie	UNSURE
X Hanging Diamond	YES
Yaeger	UNSURE

Frequency distribution for Question 5 (includes 43 ranches who responded to this question).

Response	Number of Ranches	Percent
NO	1	2.3
UNSURE	12	27.9
YES	30	69.8
Total	43	100.0

Response to Question 6: “What suggestions do you have about how to improve the EHA Program?”

RANCH Browning	Maybe be more specific about the rules to people that get drawn. We had one that was very positive his 410-21 archery tag would convert to a 410-20 tag when the season changed.
Cowan	Make the tags for landowners be guaranteed instead of put in a pool for drawing.
Elk Creek	New statute--if you have 2,500 as owner you get one tag. Would also like to participate in that if that is correct. Large amount of contiguous acreage should equal additional tags.
Groover Bros Farms	Allow landowners to pick cow hunters and provide the option to take local families instead of one person at a time which usually ends up being a weekend. Causing the cow hunting process take up to eight weeks to complete.
Henderson	Could we modify the program to include letting a friend use the landowner tag. I have friends that help me fence here.
Lencioni	Get the landowners the hunters phone numbers.
Roat Family	Being a BMA type II. The successful hunters in the EHA Program need to call early to reserve a spot. The Roat Ranch BMA starts filling up in August.
Sand Creek	Give the landowners the tag and not go through a drawing!
Skogen	We would consider allowing bow hunters as credit against our EHA Program.

Teigen	I feel we should be able to hunt all land we control access to and neighboring property with permission. We opened up land locked public land but were unable to hunt it and elk relocate with pressure to neighbors.
Winderl	Let me shoot my bull in the shoulder season.
Wolf Prairie	It should be made clear that these opportunities are for cow elk (of course obvious with B license) still had requests regarding bulls.
X Hanging Diamond	Hunters calling in advance to set up a time to hunt helped in coordination.

Results from the Landowner/Designee Hunter Harvest Survey for the Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Program

2023 Montana Hunting Season



MONTANA **FWP**

Background Information. Following the general hunting season, a Landowner/Designee Hunter Harvest Survey for the Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Program was mailed to each of 70 landowner/designee hunters for the 43 ranches enrolled in the program. A replacement mailing was mailed to nonrespondents approximately 2-3 weeks after the initial mailing, and thereafter at least two phone calls were made to nonrespondents to boost the survey response rate. A total of 67 landowner/designee hunters responded to the survey, resulting in a 96 percent survey response rate. This document provides the results of this survey.

Response to Question 1: “About how many total DAYS did you hunt elk on this ranch between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season), as allowed by the terms of the landowner’s agreement?”

Response (number of days)	N	Percent
0	5	7.6
1	6	9.1
2	6	9.1
3	7	10.6
4	7	10.6
5	8	12.1
6	1	1.5
7	9	13.6
8	1	1.5
9	1	1.5
10	1	1.5
11	1	1.5
14	3	4.6
15	1	1.5
18	1	1.5
20	4	6.1
29	1	1.5
30	2	3.1
38	1	1.5
Total	66	100.0

Note: One landowner/designee hunter did not respond to this question.

The median number of days hunted for those who hunted was 5 days; the average was 8 days.

Response to Question 2: “Did you harvest an elk on this ranch during this timeframe*?” *Only landowner/designee hunters who reported they hunted as least one day are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
NO	31	50.8
YES	30	49.2
Total	61	100.0

*Timeframe was between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season).

Response to Question 3: “What was the elk you harvested on this ranch?” *Only landowner/designee hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
Calf	0	0.0
Antlerless elk	4	13.3
Spike bull	0	0.0
Branch antlered bull*	26	86.7
Total	30	100.0

*Branch antlered bulls harvested: 5 x 5 (n=4), 5 x 6 (n=2), 6 x 6 (n=17), 6 x 7 (n=2), 7 x 8 (n=1).

Response to Question 4: “Did you harvest this elk during the archery season or during the general rifle season?” *Only landowner/designee hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
Archery Season*	6	20.7
General rifle season**	23	79.3
Total	29	100.0

*The following elk were harvested during the archery season: 6 x 6 bull (n=6).

** The following elk were harvested during the general rifle season: antlerless elk (n=4), 5 x 5 bull (n=4), 5 x 6 bull (n=2), 6 x 6 bull (n=10), 6 x 7 bull (n=2), 7 x 8 bull (n=1).

Note: One landowner/designee hunter did not respond to this question.

**Results from a
Survey of Landowner Selected Public Hunters
for the Elk Hunting Access
(EHA) Program**

2023 Montana Hunting Season



MONTANA FWP

Background Information. Following the general hunting season, a survey was mailed to each of 52 landowner selected public hunters for 43 ranches enrolled in the Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Program. A replacement mailing was mailed to nonrespondents approximately 2-3 weeks after the initial mailing, and thereafter at least two phone calls were made to nonrespondents to boost the survey response rate. A total of 38 landowner selected public hunters responded to the survey, resulting in a 73 percent survey response rate. This document provides the results of this survey.

Response to Question 1: “On a scale from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy), how difficult or easy was it for you to get in contact with the landowner (or ranch manager) to plan elk hunting trips to this ranch?”

Response	N	Percent
1 (Very difficult)	2	5.3
2	0	0.0
3	0	0.0
4	3	7.9
5 (Very easy)	25	65.8
Did not attempt to contact ranch	8	21.0
Total	38	100.0

Response to Question 2: “Did you hunt elk on this ranch between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season), as allowed by the terms of the landowner’s agreement?”

Response	N	Percent
NO	14	36.8
YES	24	63.2
Total	38	100.0

Reasons reported for not hunting.

Response	N	Percent
Illness, injury, health reason	2	7.7
Heard or was told there were not elk on the ranch	1	7.7
Hunted and/or harvested an elk at another location	5	38.5
Other reason*	6	46.2

Note: Percentages add up to greater than 100 percent because respondents could select more than one reason.

*Other reasons listed for not hunting (verbatim responses):

- Did not attempt to contact ranch.
- Moved to North Dakota.
- Don't hunt this area.
- Because you over-allocated hunters and said I didn't get to hunt.
- Too busy with school.
- They assumed I had a "B" license, which I did not and did not want me to harvest a bull. They also would not return calls so I could archery hunt. Very uncooperative.

Response to Question 3: “About how many total DAYS did you hunt elk on this ranch between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season), as allowed by the terms of the landowner’s agreement?” *Only landowner selected public hunters who reported they hunted are included in this analysis.*

Response (number of total days)	N	Percent
1	7	29.1
2	5	20.8
3	3	12.5
4	1	4.2
5	3	12.5
8	1	4.2
16	2	8.3
19	1	4.2
20	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

The median number of days hunted was 2.5 days; the average was 5.2 days.

Response to Question 4: “Did you see any elk while hunting elk on this ranch during this timeframe?” *Only landowner selected public hunters who reported they hunted are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
NO	2	8.3
YES	22	91.7
Total	24	100.0

*Timeframe was between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season).

Response to Question 5: “Did you harvest an elk on this ranch during this timeframe*?” *Only landowner selected public hunters who reported they hunted are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
NO	11	45.8
YES	13	54.2
Total	24	100.0

*Timeframe was between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season).

Response to Question 6: “What license did you use to harvest this elk?” *Only landowner selected public hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
General elk hunting license	1	7.7
Special elk hunting permit	11	84.6
Elk B license	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

Response to Question 7: “What was the elk you harvested on this ranch?” *Only landowner selected public hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
Calf	0	0.0
Antlerless elk	1	7.7
Spike bull	0	0.0
Branch antlered bull*	12	92.3
Total	13	100.0

*Branch antlered bulls harvested: 3 x 5 (n=1), 5 x 5 (n=1), 6 x 6 (n=7), 6 x 7 (n=1), 7 x 7 (n=1), 7 x 8 (n=1).

Response to Question 8: “Did you harvest this elk during the archery season or during the general rifle season?” *Only landowner selected public hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
Archery Season*	1	7.7
General rifle season**	12	92.3
Total	13	100.0

*The following elk were harvested during the archery season: 7 x 8 bull (n=1).

** The following elk were harvested during the general rifle season: antlerless elk (n=1), 3 x 5 bull (n=1), 5 x 5 bull (n=1), 6 x 6 bull (n=7), 6 x 7 bull (n=1), 7 x 7 bull (n=1).

Response to Question 9: “Overall, on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), how satisfied were you with the elk hunting experience you had on this ranch via the EHA program?” *Only landowner selected public hunters who reported they hunted were asked this question.*

Response	N	Percent
1 Very Dissatisfied	1	4.2
2	0	0.0
3	1	4.2
4	4	16.6
5 Very Satisfied	18	75.0
Total	24	100.0

Comments received (verbatim responses):

- I had a great experience and would love an opportunity to hunt other bull elk on this ranch.
- Landowner allowed me one morning. Told me not to shoot the bull we got on with promise to get me a bigger one. Several texts/phone calls later, no permission because younger brother had a tag to fill.
- I harvested a bull on December 15th muzzleloader heritage season. 5x6 bull elk.
- There were tons of elk and it made it easy.
- The ranch and its representatives were first class.
- Very good experience.
- Great to be able to hunt an area with mature animals.
- The landowner was fantastic to work with. Landowner very accommodating.
- Not only did they let myself and my boys hunt, but allowed a couple of buddies also hunt.
- No elk there, but not the landowners fault.

Response to Question 10: “On a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely), what is the likelihood of you hunting elk on this ranch during the elk shoulder season this year, as allowed by the terms of the landowner’s agreement?”

Response	N	Percent
1 (Very unlikely)	16	45.7
2	1	2.9
3	4	11.4
4	3	8.6
5 (Very likely)	11	31.4
Total	35	100.0

Note: Three landowner selected public hunters did not respond to this question.

Response to Question 11: “Would you want to be a participating or selected elk hunter again for this ranch if it is enrolled in the EHA Program in the future?”

Response	N	Percent
NO	3	8.1
UNSURE	5	13.5
YES	29	78.4
Total	37	100.0

Note: One landowner selected public hunter did not respond to this question.

Response to Question 12: “What suggestion do you have about how to improve the EHA Program?”

Verbatim suggestions received:

- FWP seems to be having issues with either giving the right amount of permits or counting how many get to hunt via the EHA Program. The worst part is FWP told me I would be gaining access to another property and I never heard from FWP again. Terrible customer service!
- When emails go out to hunters notifying them of their selection as a public hunter in the EHA Program, my suggestion is to make sure your email comes from FWP. When I look at my emails and didn't recognize "FWP" as the sender of the email, I immediately sent it to my trash. I only knew I had been selected because the ranch manager reached out to me! Also, a suggestion would be to put something on our "MyFWP Page" online notifying us of our selection as well.
- There needs to be a minimum amount of days they have to let you on the ranch. It is more than frustrating that as a kid, born and raised in Lewistown can't harvest a bull in is own backyard. This ranch should not be allowed to use my name and half a day's hunting towards their EHA Program. They should also be penalized for not allowing me to shoot a bull when given the opportunity and then refusing me access the rest of the season. Everyone wants to be a Wilks.
- The notification process was not until very late. I had already been set up with my own camp on National Forest.
- Include heritage season dates in the EHA survey.
- Further incentivize the Program so more hunters have opportunities.
- Area 690 is unique in that there are few permits given for a large geographic area. It would be nice if hunters had access to more than a single ranch. I found access to other ranches difficult.
- No good program.
- Remove landowner from the Program. They have blocked access to State and Federal lands.
- Ranch? Not a nice landowner, was not agreeable...stated "I am going to fill my family's tags before I let anyone else on". This was his response both times landowner called.

**Results from a
Survey of FWP Selected Public Hunters
for the Elk Hunting Access
(EHA) Program**

2023 Montana Hunting Season



MONTANA FWP

Background Information. Following the general hunting season, a survey was mailed to each of 160 FWP selected public hunters for 43 ranches enrolled in the Elk Hunting Access (EHA) Program. A replacement mailing was mailed to nonrespondents approximately 2-3 weeks after the initial mailing, and thereafter at least two phone calls were made to nonrespondents to boost the survey response rate. A total of 140 FWP selected public hunters responded to the survey, resulting in an 88 percent survey response rate. This document provides the results of this survey.

Response to Question 1: “On a scale from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy), how difficult or easy was it for you to get in contact with the landowner (or ranch manager) to plan elk hunting trips to this ranch?”

Response	N	Percent
1 (Very difficult)	13	9.3
2	5	3.6
3	16	11.5
4	19	13.7
5 (Very easy)	67	48.2
Did not attempt to contact ranch	19	13.7
Total	139	100.0

Note: One FWP selected public hunter did not respond to this question.

Response to Question 2: “Did you hunt elk on this ranch between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season), as allowed by the terms of the landowner’s agreement?”

Response	N	Percent
NO	69	49.3
YES	71	50.7
Total	140	100.0

Reasons reported for not hunting.

Response	N	Percent
Couldn't get in contact with the ranch	14	20.3
Illness, injury, health issue	1	1.4
Family or work related issue	6	8.7
Heard or was told there were not elk on the ranch	5	7.2
Hunted and/or harvested an elk at another location	28	40.6
Didn't think it was worth the time to hunt elk there	2	2.9
Other reason*	26	37.7

Note: Percentages add up to greater than 100 percent because respondents could select more than one reason.

*Other reasons listed for not hunting (verbatim responses):

- The ranch owner never returned my phone call/message.
- Bow hunters harvested the good bulls.
- Traveled overseas; was gone during the season.
- Too long of a drive.
- Was not told they had been selected.
- I was told the hunt will be in the shoulder season after the general rifle season.
- Was told hunt will not take place until the shoulder season.
- Was not contacted until 11-29-23.
- Waiting for the end of season to hear from landowner for late season.
- Wasn't sure he was selected.
- Bad experience with landowners/ranch.
- I did not get notified until December. Hunted late season.
- FWP sent me the wrong information and wasn't able to schedule any days in the regular season.
- Was called by ranch to shoulder hunt. Hunted late season.
- Landowner never let me know whether or not there were elk there, and a time to go hunting.
- Rescheduled for Elk B.
- Didn't know he was selected.
- Landowner finally texted me after several attempts of calling and leaving messages and said I could hunt the last few days of the rifle season only.
- Disappointed that the area was a Block Management and not a special hunting area...therefore did not go.
- Landowner wanted me to hunt state land nearby. Because they shot elk the night before.
- Ownership maps initially sent did not align with hunting unit.
- Scheduled to hunt during shoulder season (Jan/Early Feb 2024).
- I found the two-day window for hunting to be somewhat challenging. Unfortunately, due to being out of town, I was unable to take advantage of the last-minute opportunity presented on those specific days.
- Ranch halted all communication.

Response to Question 3: “About how many total DAYS did you hunt elk on this ranch between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season), as allowed by the terms of the landowner’s agreement?” *Only FWP selected public hunters who reported they hunted are included in this analysis.*

Response (number of total days)	N	Percent
1	31	43.7
2	13	18.3
3	11	15.5
4	7	9.9
5	4	5.6
6	2	2.8
7	1	1.4
14	1	1.4
15	1	1.4
Total	71	100.0

The median number days hunted was 2 days; the average was 2.6 days.

Response to Question 4: “Did you see any elk while hunting elk on this ranch during this timeframe?” *Only FWP selected public hunters who reported they hunted are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
NO	25	35.2
YES	46	64.8
Total	71	100.0

*Timeframe was between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season).

Response to Question 5: “Did you harvest an elk on this ranch during this timeframe*?” *Only FWP selected public hunters who reported they hunted are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
NO	47	66.2
YES	24	33.8
Total	71	100.0

*Timeframe was between September 2 (e.g., the start of the archery season) and November 26 (e.g., the end of the general rifle season).

Response to Question 6: “What license did you use to harvest this elk?” *Only FWP selected public hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
General elk hunting license	3	12.5
Special elk hunting permit	9	37.5
Elk B license	12	50.0
Total	24	100.0

Response to Question 7: “What was the elk you harvested on this ranch?” *Only FWP selected public hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
Calf	1	4.2
Antlerless elk	15	62.5
Spike bull	0	0.0
Branch antlered bull*	8	33.3
Total	24	100.0

*Branch antlered bulls harvested: 5 x 5 (n=1), 5 x 6 (n=2), 6 x 6 (n=3), 6 x 7 (n=2).

Response to Question 8: “Did you harvest this elk during the archery season or during the general rifle season?” *Only FWP selected public hunters who reported they harvested an elk are included in this analysis.*

Response	N	Percent
Archery Season*	0	0.0
General rifle season**	24	100.0
Total	24	100.0

*No elk were harvested during the archery season.

** The following elk were harvested during the general rifle season: calf (n=1), antlerless elk (n=15), 5 x 5 bull (n=1), 5 x 6 bull (n=2), 6 x 6 bull (n=3), 6 x 7 bull (n=2).

Response to Question 9: “Overall, on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), how satisfied were you with the elk hunting experience you had on this ranch via the EHA program?” *Only FWP selected public hunters who reported they hunted were asked this question.*

Response	N	Percent
1 Very Dissatisfied	4	5.6
2	7	9.9
3	15	21.1
4	9	12.7
5 Very Satisfied	36	50.7
Total	71	100.0

Comments received (verbatim responses):

- Hard hunting.
- Appreciate the chance.
- This was a great experience. I would have hunted the property for the three-day period granted, if I had not filled the tag elsewhere.
- It's already Block Management, unlimited hunters can access this property without contacting the landowner. Just a sign in box!
- Contacted landowner and was told there was no difference between me and any other hunter. Just sign into the Block Management box and hunt.
- Didn't hunt enough to be happy or sad.
- I did not observe elk on this ranch.
- Nice, easy access, lots of land.
- I was only allowed to hunt in a certain area of the 620 acres, it seems that a lot of area was not available for me. I didn't realize how easy it was to go on the ranch, called one day, hunted the next. It would have been nice to know that I could have hunted more than one day though. This was new to me and I opted to participate at the end of the season.
- To walk in from the road, shoot a cow elk and walk out packing it for a total of 8-10 miles--not worth it! I would do it for a bull elk--packing out with a horse, would have been nice.
- Great hunt, just didn't see any cow elk, only bulls.
- Not a lot of elk sign. Hit or miss.
- EHA provided nothing for this particular ranch. Only could hunt designated BMA area which is already open to the public.
- Most property is a BMA that already provides access and EHA did not open any new opportunity.
- I thought it would be a good hunt, however the weather was very warm and no snow made it difficult to find any elk.
- Landowners were very nice helpful people.
- This is my first EHA experience so it is hard to determine what my expectations were. Sounds like there's often elk on the property. They just didn't happen to be there on the day I could get on.
- Landowners were very polite, easy to work with. Would do it again!!
- The rancher was great and accommodating. There were plenty of elk. Just couldn't get close enough.

- The landowner was an excellent individual to work with. Excellent numbers of elk, excellent experience. Being 100% disabled vet I am so grateful for a hunt like this!
- Great program.
- Not much for elk sign.
- It felt a bit too "guided". Would have preferred just doing it alone, but in the end, appreciated the help.
- The landowner was wonderful. But the property is small and the elk are only likely there during snow events or early season. They had elk but shot three bulls opening weekend. When we came over after that the herd had pushed off.
- Seen lots of elk. Couldn't get closer than 400 yards. They called me back to go second time but my driver got the flu. Couldn't get back on again to go back.
- I had a great experience. I was originally offered to hunt on the ranch but was later told I cannot hunt the ranch--just another nearby location. It was still a great experience, but I was disappointed I couldn't hunt the ranch.
- FWP messed up the drawing so I actually got to only hunt land locked public land. I'm very dissatisfied in that aspect. I think I should have got to hunt the ranch or gotten an equally as good opportunity, which I did not feel I got.
- The landowner only allowed a very small section of his EHA property to be hunted or the maps published in the program are not accurate. Additionally, the ranch property went on the market at the end of November.
- Experience was fine, people/country fine. But no animals.
- Felt like the owner did not want to disclose information and that the window to hunt was very limited and favored the landowner's friends and family.
- Landowners were awesome.
- Ranch and their personnel were great.
- The ranch fulfilled their end of the deal. They were very accommodating.
- This property was already part of Block Management and was heavily hunted throughout archery and first part of rifle. Called as soon as I was emailed and could not get on till end of October.
- It's very small, therefore very hit/miss. Elk have to be passing through to more desirable bedding areas. Low odds therefore more adjacent lands are needed.
- We did see one elk for a second, the ranch gets very high hunting pressure.
- The ranch manager I hunted with was very polite and knowledgeable, as it rained hard the night before he did not want to drive where he would tear up the roads. Safety was his main concern which I liked. I hope more people get to experience this.
- Knew the pastures I have hunted them in the past so didn't feel the need to contact ranch owner when he emailed me the permission slip.
- It was difficult to hunt only one pasture for three straight days that's only 951 acres.
- Great place to hunt! Ranch was huge in helping me to retrieve my elk.
- I was never allowed to hunt on one side of the county road. Hunted hard for three days. Saw spikes and cows day one, cows day two, on cow day three.
- The ranch was great. A lot of land however didn't get to walk much, mainly used side by side to try and spot elk. Didn't get a full day, owner was tired by 2 pm.
- The weather was very mild and the elk just weren't there at the time. The owner was very accommodating.

- It was awesome. The ranch has great people, they even brought tractor out and helped me field dress my elk. Great times. Thank you.
- I followed ranch instructions on how to hunt his property and was successful the first morning. Ranch loaded it up on his truck in the field after gutting and then front end loader so I could get it out and then put it in my pick-up!! The biggest (329 3/8") and easiest elk I ever got! Landowner is a PRINCE!
- I only hunted a small area and ran into one group with one person having a valid tag. No one leaves the roads.
- Very polite and helpful landowner.
- Landowner was very professional and accommodating to our schedule. He is a class act!
- Ranch hand was awesome...very helpful.
- I was treated like an old friend by these people. Provided lodging, transportation and guiding. Manager dressed my elk and put it in my truck.
- It was a great experience. The landowner was very active in helping find elk. They went out of their way to try to make hunt successful. Great time!!!
- I put in for 10 days and was going to come back for second day and had some things come up. I never called back or heard from them. They seemed to not like the other days I asked for.
- No elk and lots of wolf sign.
- It would be better to stack 2-3 consecutive days to hunt. The first day on new land is a learning day.

Response to Question 10: “On a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely), what is the likelihood of you hunting elk on this ranch during the elk shoulder season this year, as allowed by the terms of the landowner’s agreement?”

Response	N	Percent
1 (Very unlikely)	58	46.0
2	9	7.1
3	16	12.7
4	9	7.1
5 (Very likely)	34	27.1
Total	126	100.0

Note: Fourteen FWP selected public hunters did not respond to this question.

Response to Question 11: “Would you want to be a participating or selected elk hunter again for this ranch if it is enrolled in the EHA Program in the future?”

Response	N	Percent
NO	19	14.0
UNSURE	33	24.3
YES	84	61.7
Total	136	100.0

Note: Four FWP selected public hunters did not respond to this question.

Response to Question 12: “What suggestion do you have about how to improve the EHA Program?”

Suggestions received (verbatim responses):

- Other ranches were participants, difficult to get a hold of people, specifically during the shoulder season.
- Clearer communication from FWP about process and don't burden landowner with calls or emails.
- Ranch owner needs to communicate with the hunter and allow access. This appears to be a scam from the landowner. They received extra tags but did not participate with granting me access and/or communications.
- These ranches are overrun with elk, needs to be more tags issued!
- EHA should not be included in a current Block Management Program. Especially with a landowner that don't care how many hunters are hunting at a time.
- The EHA for the ranch was not really EHA. There was no difference that any other hunter.
- When I contacted this ranch I was informed that this was not a special opportunity--they are a Block Management and anyone can sign in using the sign-in box. This was all very confusing and not at all a rare opportunity.
- A return call from the rancher! Couldn't get in contact with ranch.
- To walk in from the road, shoot a cow elk and walk out packing it for a total of 8-10 miles--not worth it! I would do it for a bull elk--packing out with a horse, would have been nice.
- Maybe offer more dates, especially the late season. Offer deer hunting and elk hunting on certain pastures.
- I would still like to hunt but cannot get in contact with the landowner. Landowner should be charged with license if they were already given license off of my ability to access.
- Not satisfied with program. Need to clean up your act. Department failed to give any information to contact the ranch or that he had been selected.
- Provide special access to people who draw EHA. I didn't gain any special access to property even being one of the three drawing winners. When calling to ask for permission to hunt during the first week of rifle season, was told they were full. That was a few hours after they were open to taking calls.
- Couldn't get a hold of landowner and only referred to BMA property. Thought the whole point of program was for giving landowner tags. They should be opening more access than the property already being paid for by Block Management.
- There were dozens of names on the sign-up sheets on gate posts. Couldn't understand how this was an exclusive privilege. No explanation and landowner did not return phone call. Would like to be told

what the parameters of the hunt are. Was initially told I was one of four who were selected. When I went over there for a look, there were dozens of hunters names on the sign-up sheet. No return call from the ranch. Led me to wonder if FWP and the Montana public really gained any benefit from giving the landowner free tags?

- More than a total of five days allow for hunting should be provided--plus time during the archery and shoulder season.
- Our main difficulty was finding days that worked for both myself and the landowner. I was mainly only able to hunt on weekends and the ranch preference was weekdays. Not sure that the EHA Program could have done anything different.
- Maps to the area to be hunted...BMA type maps.
- Verified success of hunters invited on to the ranch prior to issuing of bull tags to landowners.
- Better communication. I am not sure if I will have the opportunity to hunt on the ranch even though I was drawn for a hunt and contacted.
- Not sure why I was contacted during regular season. No elk living on this property, only pass through.
- I very much appreciate the program. If I was the ranch owners, however, I would ask for more officer patrol. I personally saw a lot of violations. And what a shock it was all out of state folks.
- Since the EHA Program is new it would be helpful if there were printed info on how the process goes. FWP not well informed.
- Offer elk and deer to harvest.
- Let the Regions handle the program as they have the on-the-ground knowledge and contact with the landowners. Helena does not possess the intimate knowledge to do so.
- Wasn't clear how many days or how flexible the dates were when. I chatted with the landowner. Lack of cell service, working with manager made it a bit challenging.
- I think the EHA Program has some good intentions, but it is being taken advantage of. From my perspective (and it's only been via one terrible experience) the good that comes from the program for hunters like me is far less than what it rewards rich landowners with. In summary: (1) do not allow landowners who are given these tags to also be allowed to apply for them. Why should landowners get to "win" a tag as well as be given one that they can then give to whomever they want. Not to mention, they are using landowner preference applications already. The odds of landowners getting multiple tags like the owners of this ranch is too much. (2) Another thing to consider/talk about is that I think there needs to be a buffer period for who can apply. I think that people should have to own their ranches for an actual working period of time before they are awarded free permits. The amount of times I was told these owners bought the ranch in part because they wanted tags is astonishing.
- Less bull tag to cow elk tag ratios. More cow elk hunters to bull tags. Min land size, min days per agreement. My experience was good but it's very clear that without a min land/property size and min number of days guaranteed to hunt that this program is ripe for abuse. Cow hunters should get guaranteed opportunity through the entire season. Or perhaps they need to have cow hunters be successful before they get a bull tag.
- Better contact and contact information (with ranchers and FWP).
- Better communication.
- Better management of FWP side of it. Never heard back on it because email was sent out wrong. The ranch guide worked hard trying to get me close. Said it would have been better earlier (handicap).
- As previously stated, I was offered to hunt the ranch, but 2-3 weeks later I was told (by FWP) that option was no longer available (due to landowner selection of a hunter at a later time). That communication could be improved. I would loved to have the opportunity to hunt the ranch.
- Improve whatever drawing system FWP has so what happened to me doesn't happen to someone else. I honestly think I deserve the opportunity to hunt the ranch next year rather than just public land.

What happened was inexcusable and shouldn't be overlooked!

- Ensure that accurate properties eligible to be hunted are clearly identified in the application phase so hunters can hunt all eligible properties.
- If owners get a tag, needs to be open access. Very limited access. Felt the owner was difficult until the end of the season.
- Readability of property map could be improved--property boundaries hard to discern.
- I am very impressed and thankful for the opportunity! Ranch was phenomenal. They did everything they could to provide the best opportunity for me to get an elk!
- Vet the landowners better for their intentions. Seems like the landowner had no real intention of letting public hunters go hunt.
- This property was already part of Block Management and didn't need to go through special selection to hunt. Property was approx. 2 mile square and allows up to 10 hunters per day.
- Get more landowners on board.
- Ranch is not large enough to have multiple hunting parties every day.
- Don't include Block Management Areas in EHA. The BMA was already almost full when I got the email.
- Landowner didn't get contact information of hunter until halfway through the general rifle season.
- Knowledge from landowner on if elk are actually on the property so not going in blind and more than 951 acres to hunt.
- Better communication.
- I wish I could have had access during the archery season. Lots of elk camp on this ranch. I hope someone else was able to take my spot since I filled my tag earlier. I did notify FWP and the ranch. Not sure if four days of ranch access is normal but that is what I would have been allowed to hunt. Seemed short but I was happy to be chosen either way. Thanks!
- Letting hunters hunt the land without being accompanied by the landowner. Or if they are accompanying, guarantee a full day of hunting at least.
- Get more ranches involved. I saw over a hundred bulls on another ranch and they were so fat and happy there that it made the rest of the place worthless! Very frustrating!
- I suppose the landowner shouldn't be eligible for a bull tag if he doesn't hold up to their of the bargain. I talked to landowners twice which I initiated and both times was told landowner would be in touch to tell me when I could come hunt. Ranch did seem thankful FWP "upgraded landowner to a bull tag". Maybe landowner lost my number, I am willing to give the ranch the benefit of the doubt but perhaps there needs to be more oversight to ensure hunters are truly given access during the season rather than after.
- My first time participating in this so I didn't understand how it worked. Maybe you could inform the person how many other drew this opportunity and what order they may hunt in?
- Selected landowners that will answer calls and are interested in allowing people to hunt and honoring the EHA Program requirements. I feel that this landowner had not intentions of allowing my son to hunt in 2023.
- Separate EHA's from BMA's. There was no additional opportunity being selected to hunt here as everyone can just sign into the BMA.
- I was excited when I found out I had been chosen to hunt a ranch but the landowner made it clear that it was not a unique hunting experience. Instead, it was a Block Management Area that any hunter can utilize with the proper sign-in procedure. This was very confusing as a hunter.
- This ranch is already included as a regular Block Management Area (BMA). It is not clear what benefit/difference there is between the BMA and EHA?
- I think it needs clarified how the Program works. You take a hunt. You aren't eligible for good ranches. I was 78 on list for this ranch, and number 3 on a list for a good ranch. Made me not eligible. I thought

when number is up you get to hunt. I also don't think should allow ranchers to dictate days of hunts. So they can shoot the best animals. Maybe need random drawing for day to hunt if ranchers or anyone have a tag. Then there are days. This ranch made sure they shot their animals first. Don't work for them. Then don't take the free tags. There is a lot I think should be done differently. But this is the main stuff.

- Maps initially sent were very confusing.
- Better map when selected. Was unable to easily find the location of the ranch.
- Allow "party" hunt application. Regulate the "trespass fee" system evolving with "landtrust.com". Paying to play is becoming the norm with all the new people moving here.
- Send updated maps and rules for contact, such as calling on specific dates and times. Also, limit BMA 2 access to special antlerless elk permit holders.
- The ranch contact had an "@" address to contact them. Never got a reply. I called and texted the phone numbers and finally got a very polite answer which stated the name of another persons that would I would be forwarded to, this never happened.
- Have a better way of contacting the landowner.
- This program is just another scam to allow wealthy landowners access to hunting tags that no one else gets. They get tags, do not allow hunting as agreed, no repercussions. Require landowners to allow hunting one year in order to get tags the following year. I called the contact and left message. I also emailed the contact not a whisper of a response.
- I would like to suggest extending the timeframe for hunting opportunities or providing more advanced notice whenever possible. This adjustment would not only allow for better planning on the part of participants but also increase the likelihood of a successful and fulfilling hunting experience.
- They asked for all the dates when enrolling. Seemed to have excuse for most dates I asked for. Would have liked a little more opportunity for more days. Partially my fault. I could have contacted them again and did not. Thought she would contact me.
- I would like to be a part of the program in the future, but not on this ranch. It took a while to get the correct number for the ranch manager from FWP.
- No suggestions for FWP, they did all they could. Ranch failed to hold up their end of the agreement.

