



MEMORADUM

TO: Jason Kool, Landowner Sportsmen Coordinator
FROM: Ashley Taylor, Roundup Wildlife Biologist
DATE: May 11, 2021
SUBJECT: Lee Ranch Hunting Access Agreement Assessment 2015-2020

This was the sixth year that Robert E. Lee had a hunting access agreement with FWP under the auspices of HB 454. In return for allowing access to elk hunters, Bob or a family member receives one 411-22 either-sex elk permit. Prior to 2019, FWP issued four additional 411-22 either-sex elk permits by random drawing from among unsuccessful applicants for 411-20 either-sex elk permits; the permits were valid only on the Lee property. Following a change in statute from the 2019 Legislature FWP now issues one 411-20 either-sex elk permit to Robert or a family member that is only valid on the Lee property. Then FWP contacts four 411-20 either-sex elk permit holders randomly drawn from among the successful applicants for 411-20 either-sex elk permits. These selected permit holders are informed they can use their permits on the Lee property in addition to everywhere else the permit is valid in HDs 411, 511 and 530. Mr. Lee allows holders of these permits to hunt either-sex elk throughout the general rifle season. Mr. Lee also allows holders of 411-20 either-sex elk permits, general elk licenses, or any valid antlerless elk licenses to hunt antlerless elk on his property. There are usually a few cows harvested and a few bulls on the property, and Mr. Lee allows public access for cows.

Since this hunting access agreement began in 2015, sixteen 411-22 either-sex elk permits, and eight 411-20 either-sex permits have been issued to twenty-four residents. Eleven hunters used those permits, twelve hunters did not use the permit and one hunter could not be contacted. Table 1 summarizes the Lee Ranch elk access agreement permit recipient survey completed this spring. In 2019 and 2020 none of the hunters contacted used their permit on the Lee Ranch. The three of the four hunters contacted said they would participate again if given another opportunity. In 2018 one hunter used his permit but no elk were harvested. Two hunters were in contact with Mr. Lee, but elk were not on the property when they called, however they were told they could come hunt anytime. The fourth hunter could not hunt due to his work schedule. All the hunters would participate in this program again and enjoyed having the opportunity despite not harvesting an elk.

In 2017 three hunters used their permits but no elk were harvested. One hunter was in contact with Mr. Lee, but the elk did not come on to his place during the general season. In 2016 all four hunters used their permits but no one harvested an elk. All of them enjoyed their hunting experience and most saw elk but could not connect with any. All the hunters said they would participate in this program again if they had the chance. In 2015 three hunters used their permits and one hunter harvested a bull elk. One hunter never saw elk but was not disappointed, he said that is how elk hunting goes sometimes. One hunter was unable to make it down to use her permit, but she talked to Mr. Lee several times on the phone and said she would be interested in participating in the hunt again if given the opportunity.

Table 1. Summary of the Lee Ranch Elk Access Agreement Survey, 2015-2020.

Survey Summary of Permit Recipients	Number of Permits
Successfully harvested elk	1
Hunted and did not harvest an elk	10
Not available when elk were on the property	2
Unable to use permit due to personal reasons	3
Harvested elk during archery season, unable to use permit	
Hunted other areas, did not use permit	6
Elk did not come on to Lee's property	1
No data available - unable to contact permit recipients	
Total Permits	24

One bull elk has been harvested on the Lee's property using these permits including: one-5x5 bull. The survey of permit recipients indicates that 21 hunters would participate in this hunt again, two hunters would not participate again, and one hunter could not be reached during the survey. One hunter had unrealistic expectations of what this program provided. The hunter thought he would have exclusive access to the property and have a guaranteed elk harvest. He was not satisfied with the program and would not participate again if given the opportunity.

In addition to these permits another 411-20 either-sex permit holder from Billings harvested a 6x4 bull elk on the Lee property in 2015. A few cow elk were harvested during the late shoulder season on the Lee Ranch in 2017. The Robert Lee family's elk access agreement either-sex elk permit use is summarized in Table 2. To date the Lee family has harvested five bull elk using their 411-20 either-sex elk permits.

Table 2. Summary of Mr. Lee family's 411-22 either-sex elk permit use, 2015-2020.

Year	Permit Holder	Permit Use
2015	Robert E. Lee	Bull elk
2016	Caleb Knoche (grandson)	Bull elk
2017	Walker Lee (grandson)	none
2018	Kenny Lee	Bull elk
2019	Walker Lee (grandson)	Bull elk
2020	Steve Kowalski	Bull elk

I recommend renewal of this agreement for the 2021 hunting season.