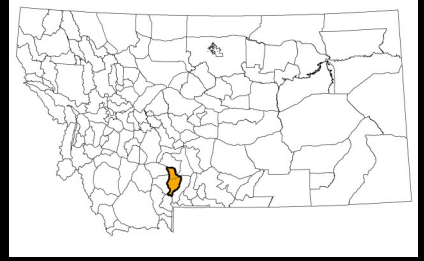


HDs 301 & 309

Size: 501 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 60%



Bozeman Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting Districts 301 and 309 appear together in this Elk Plan because the largest wintering elk herd uses the north boundary of HD 301 and the south boundary of HD 309 in the Bozeman area where forested lands meet agriculture and suburban development. Before the late 2010s, large groups of elk would spend winter across the HD 301/309 border, from Bear Canyon to Little Bear. After the late 2010s, winter elk distribution shifted to the west, with fewer elk counted in the Bear Canyon area and more elk counted in the Gallatin Gateway area. Elk frequently move between U.S. 191 toward the Gallatin River, but it is currently uncertain to what degree HD 301/309 elk mix with HD 304 (North Spanish Peaks) elk.

Hunting District 309 encompasses agricultural and suburban areas around Bozeman and Belgrade. It is predominantly private land in a Weapons Restriction Area formed by commission action in 2005, with the dual objectives of managing deer and elk liberally to prevent urban wildlife conflict while encouraging hunter safety.

Hunting District 301 extends east of the Gallatin River up to the crest of the Gallatin Mountain Range. It is predominantly public land owned by the USFS. Its north boundary is HD 309 and its south boundary is Levin-ski Ridge by Big Sky. HD 301 has high hunter access with numerous roads and trails throughout, including major recreation areas like Hyalite Canyon. Some elk that spend summer in the public lands of HD 301 may spend winter in the east side of the Gallatin Mountains in the Paradise

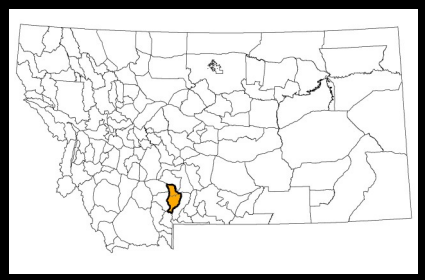
Management Challenges:

- Maintaining publicly acceptable numbers of elk in desirable locations (i.e., an increase in elk distribution on the public lands of HD 301 and decrease in HD 309).
- Achieving desired distribution given public lands of HD 301 have lower elk security and lower elk forage quality than the irrigated agricultural fields and large-acreage subdivisions in HD 309 where elk can access superior nutrition and security.
- Improving elk security on public lands given planning and interagency coordination with USFS partners who must also consider other objectives.
- Elk-vehicle collisions from elk crossing U.S. 191 to access open space along the Gallatin River.
- As subdivisions increase with the population boom of the Gallatin Valley, elk may increasingly use remaining agricultural areas, causing increased game damage.



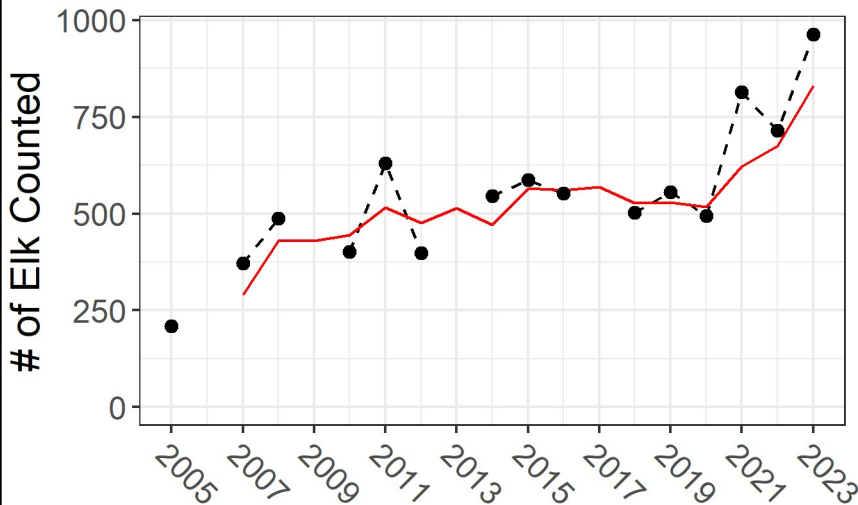
HDs 301 & 309

Bozeman Elk Management Unit



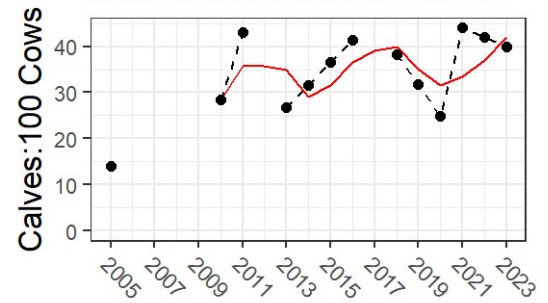
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HDs 301 & 309

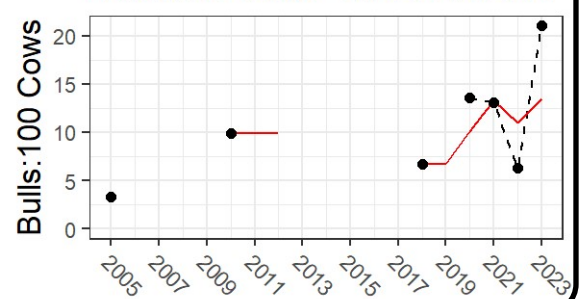


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average; classification data is difficult to obtain from the air as elk are often near/in residential areas.

Recruitment- HDs 301 & 309



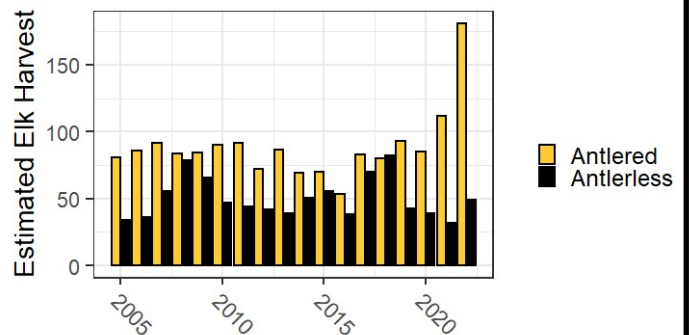
Bulls:100 Cows- HDs 301 & 309



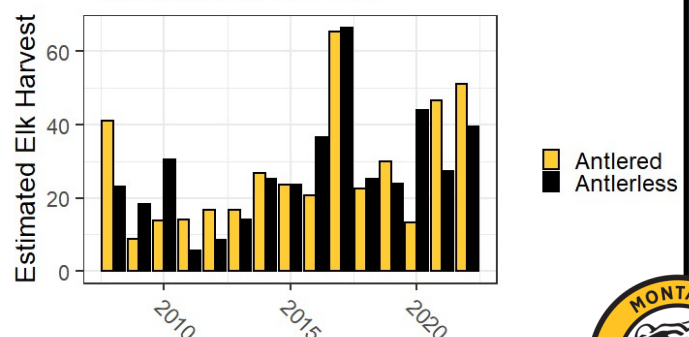
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
301	2006	916	5,208
	2008	1,015	5,800
	2010	1,221	8,504
	2012	1,231	7,239
	2014	1,192	7,895
	2016	1,069	7,695
	2018	1,087	6,630
	2020	967	6,225
	2022	1,135	7,811
309	2008	284	1,544
	2010	258	1,713
	2012	236	1,286
	2014	198	1,719
	2016	396	2,884
	2018	229	1,375
	2020	278	1,588
	2022	283	1,647

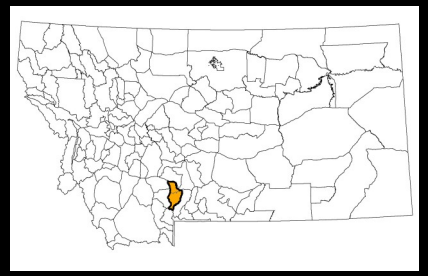
Elk Harvest- HD 301



Elk Harvest- HD 309



HDs 301 & 309



Bozeman Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 400-800 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use where tolerance is high: the public lands in HD 301	Most recent elk harvest estimate in HD 301 is within 25% of the long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with USFS land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Employ more liberal seasons in HD 309 compared to the public lands in HD 301 • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land and provides landowners with flexibility to manage to their tolerance level
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low: in all of urban HD 309 and the private land portions of HD 301	3-year moving average of game damage complaints does not show an increasing trend	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	No increase in elk game damage complaints	

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	

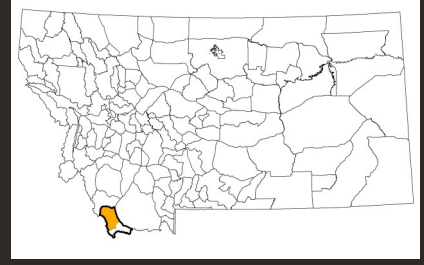


HD 302

Size: 599 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 76%



Tendoy Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 302 contains the Tendoy Mountains and Medicine Lodge area south and east of Horse Prairie Creek and west of I-15. The southern boundary follows Big Sheep Creek and Meadow Creek. The majority of the district is public lands falling under the jurisdiction of the BLM, USFS, and smaller portions of State Trust Lands. This area also contains two Wilderness Study Areas which are used by elk particularly in the winter and during hunting season. The area is characterized by steep to moderate topography with scattered timber mixed with grassland slopes at higher elevation and, at lower elevations, sagebrush and agricultural grasslands. Elk use the majority of this district at various times of the year. Some resident elk can be found scattered throughout the district, but a large portion migrate from summer range in the Beaverhead Mountains and Idaho to the Tendoy Mountains in the winter. Livestock ranching, primarily cattle, is the most common land use on private lands and much of the public land is leased to cattle grazing. Timber extraction and efforts to reduce conifer expansion in sagebrush habitat have occurred over a limited area at multiple sites on BLM, USFS, and DNRC lands. A growth in residential development is occurring in the Red Rock and Grant area and the area will likely continue to see a growth in low-density residential development.

Extensive public lands offer many recreational opportunities in this HD. Road densities are high throughout much of the area. Many of these roads are not maintained and can be extremely rough; however, the recent increase of OHVs has facilitated motorized travel and increasingly compromised elk security. The legal status of these roads is often ambiguous. There has been some recent success in implementing a motorized use plan for the Maiden Peak area. Access on private lands has become increasingly limited, in part due to the growth in private land outfitting. However, a popular conservation easement in the Maiden Creek area provides perpetual private land access as well as access to public lands during the hunting season.

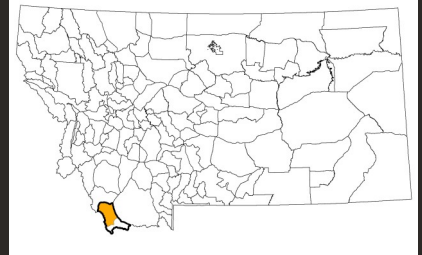
Management Challenges:

- Increasing hunter crowding.
- Increasing pressure from motorized transportation on both authorized and unauthorized routes is reducing elk security and habitat quality.
- The increase in motorized disturbance is creating conflicts between user groups, increased issues with invasive plants, and potentially displacing elk to private lands.
- An increase in private land outfitting has limited hunter access and created de facto refuges for elk.
- Large numbers of elk winter in this district and under some conditions high densities of elk overlap heavily with bighorn sheep and mule deer habitat; it is uncertain what long-term impacts this may have on other ungulates.



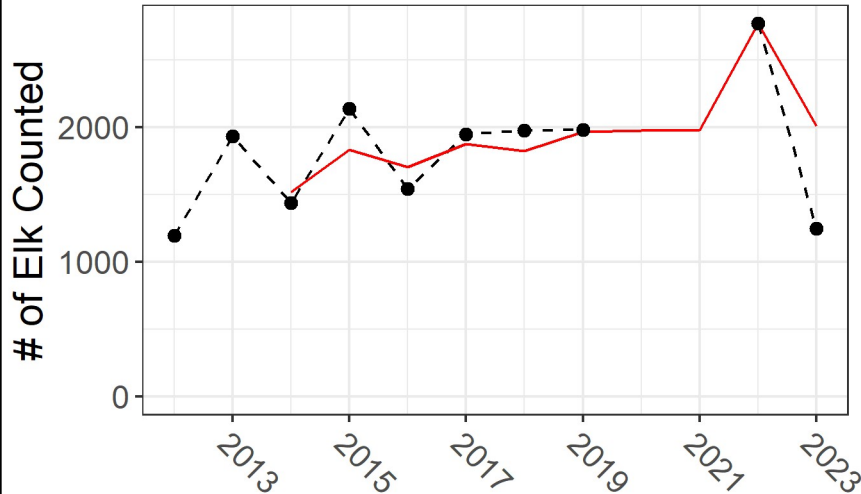
HD 302

Tendoy Elk Management Unit



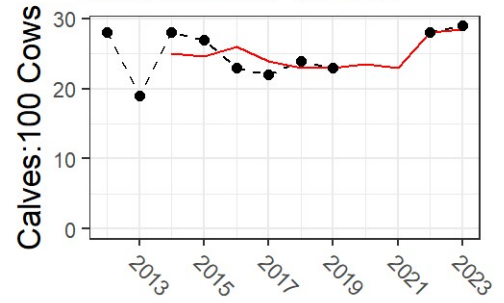
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 302

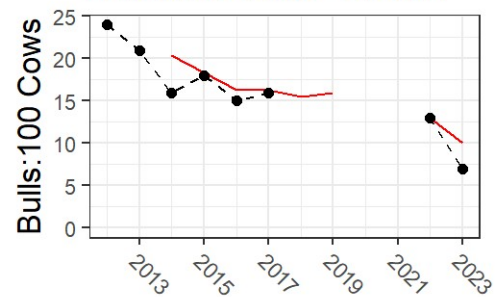


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 302



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 302



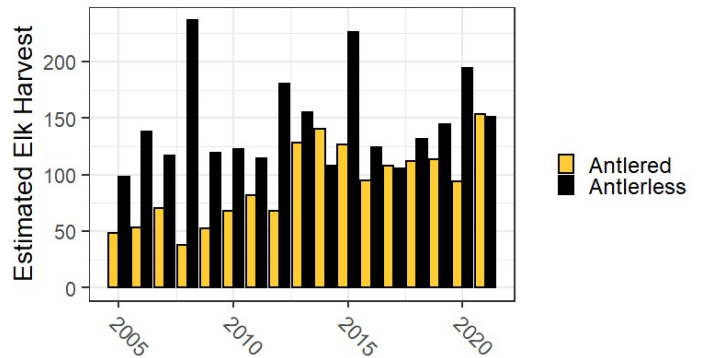
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
Former 302	2006	674	4,195
	2008	857	4,437
	2010	753	4,401
	2012	920	5,301
	2014	849	5,605
	2016	1,006	6,032
	2018	943	5,676
	2020	1,085	8,258

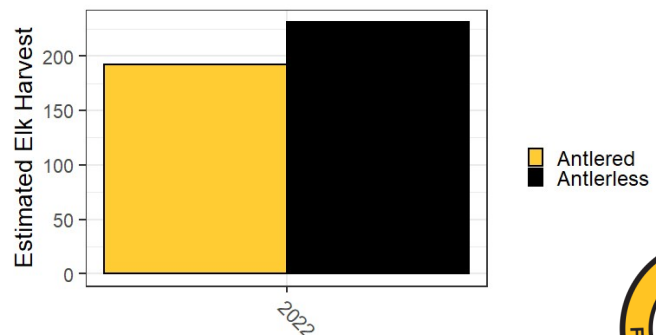
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
302	2022	1,249	7,613

Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data displayed may not be directly comparable across years.

Elk Harvest- Former HD 302

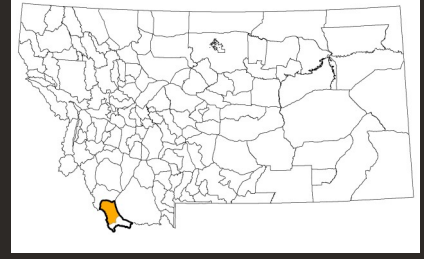


Elk Harvest- HD 302



HD 302

Tendoy Elk Management Unit



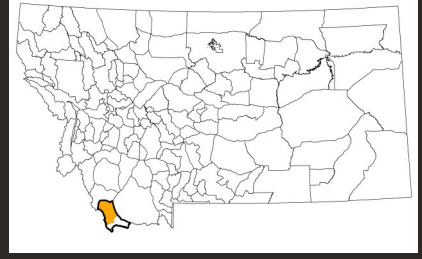
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
<p>Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,100-2,100 elk observed</p>	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size</p> <hr/> <p>If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public land
<p>Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater</p>	<p>3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HD 302

Tendoy Elk Management Unit



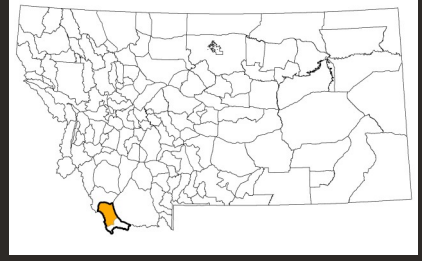
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Maintain 80% of HD as seasonally occupied elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Monitor elk distribution via annual aerial elk survey, harvest information, observations, and telemetry data when available
The landscape remains functionally permeable to elk seasonal movements	Elk are observed migrating to and from seasonal ranges through identified migration corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk while preserving open space and traditional agriculture • Use aerial surveys, harvest information, observations and telemetry data to identify and conserve migration corridors
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year average of annual game damage does not increase above long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Montana Action Plan and FWP's Terrestrial Wildlife Movement and Migration Strategy • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security on public lands • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Consider using public/private land-specific harvest regulations to minimize displacement of elk from public lands



HD 302

Tendoy Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Hunter numbers and hunter days level off or decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	5-year average of harvested bulls with 6 points or more on one antler is 35% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider using public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute hunting pressure • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Consider implementation and evaluation of harvest regulations that allow for yearling bull harvest
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined, brow-tined with less than 6 points, 6 points or more) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

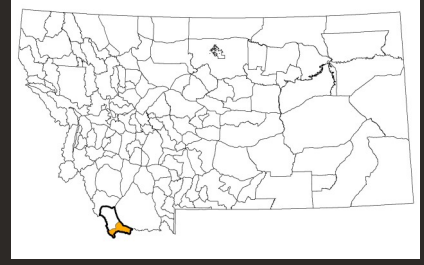


HD 303

Size: 327 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 74%



Tendoy Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 303 is in the extreme southwest corner of Montana. The northern boundary follows Big Sheep and Meadow creeks. It is bordered to the west and south by the Continental Divide and to the east by I-15. The southern portion of HD 303 contains the Lima Peaks and Big Sheep Basin; the northern end includes White Pine Ridge. Approximately half of the area is administered by USFS, with BLM and State Trust Lands making up additional public lands. Private lands lay predominantly along the I-15 corridor and in Big Sheep Basin. The primary land use is livestock ranching. Terrain varies from high-elevation mountains of the Beaverhead Range and Lima Peaks, lower hills near Big Sheep Creek and broad, flat valley bottoms. Vegetation is predominantly a mix of sagebrush and grasslands with patches of timber.

Elk using this district tend to be elevational migrants summering in the Lima Peaks and along the Continental Divide. Most elk winter in the northeastern portion of the district near private lands at low elevation and on hillsides with good solar exposure. Bachelor groups winter in more remote drainages with better cover and can be difficult to locate during surveys. This results in high interannual variation in the proportion of brow-tined bulls to cow elk in surveys. During the earlier parts of the hunting season many elk using the area along the Continental Divide can move between Montana and Idaho; in some cases this may be a response to hunting pressure. Conflicts between landowners and elk occur primarily in the eastern portion of the district, particularly during winters with heavier snow. Brucellosis has also been detected at low prevalences in this district and it currently lies within the Designated Surveillance Area.

Block management cooperators provide hunter access to sizable areas in the eastern portion of the district, which is used by elk migrating from higher elevations. However, some large portions of private land are closed to public hunting in this area. During the hunting season elk will often congregate on these de facto “refuges” and are highly visible to the public. Public land hunting opportunity is accessible to motorized vehicles, particularly OHVs. This has consequences for elk security and security issues have been exacerbated by a rapid growth in hunter numbers and hunter days. These factors have led to frustration amongst many hunters that have traditionally recreated in this district.

Management Challenges:

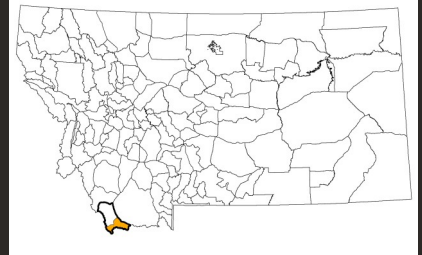
- Increasing hunter crowding.
- Increasing pressure from motorized transportation on both authorized and unauthorized routes is reducing elk security and habitat quality.
- The increase in motorized disturbance is creating conflicts between user groups, increased issues with invasive plants, and potentially displacing elk to private lands.
- Large numbers of elk find refuge during the hunting season on private ground that is inaccessible to public hunters.

(Continued on next page)



HD 303

Tendoy Elk Management Unit

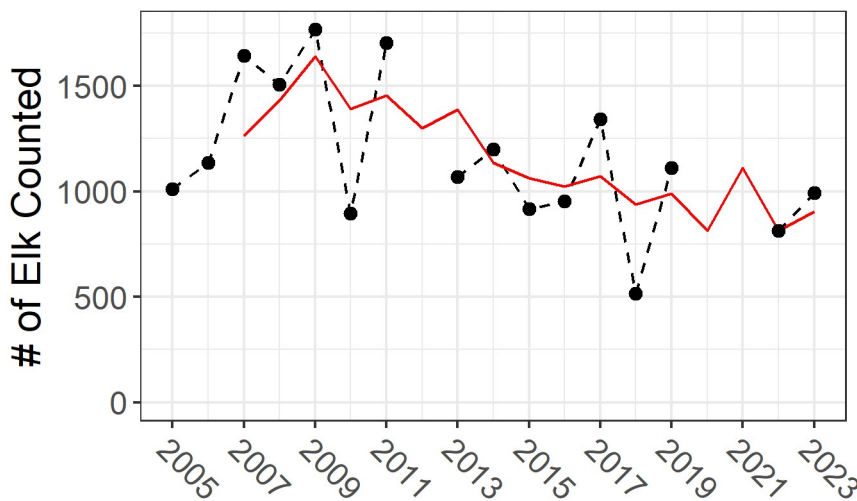


Management Challenges (continued):

- The concentration of elk also impacts neighboring traditional landowners that experience game damage.
- In 2018 a cow elk tested positive for brucellosis in this district. At this time prevalence appeared to be low. However, this area falls within the Designated Surveillance Area and requires implementation of the Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis Work Plan to minimize impacts to livestock.

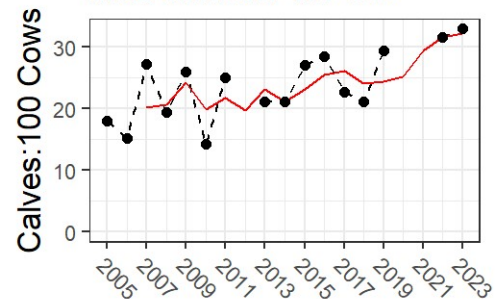
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 303

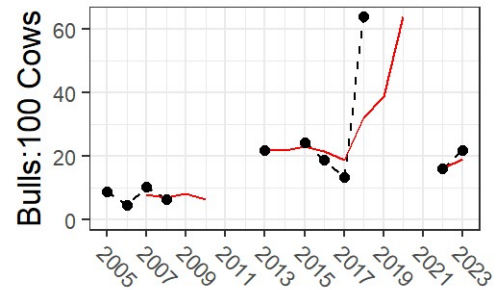


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 303



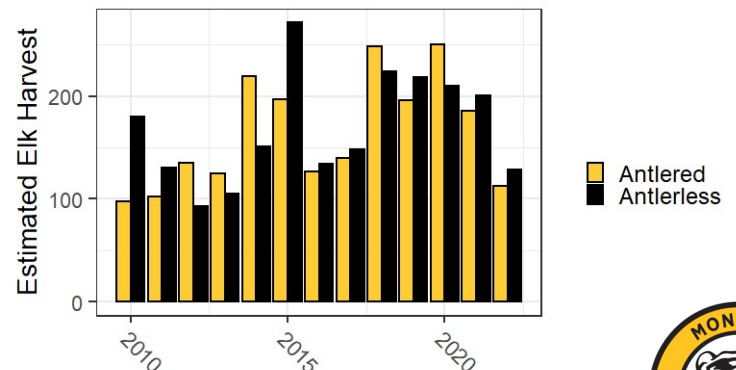
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 303



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

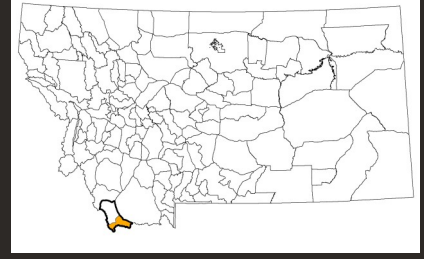
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
303	2010	1,178	6,627
	2012	981	5,460
	2014	1,300	7,026
	2016	1,475	8,893
	2018	1,567	9,148
	2020	1,817	11,491
	2022	928	5,448

Elk Harvest- HD 303



HD 303

Tendoy Elk Management Unit



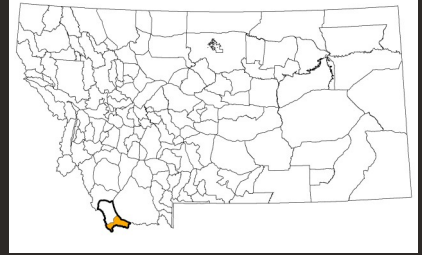
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 650-1,100 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public land
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HD 303

Tendoy Elk Management Unit



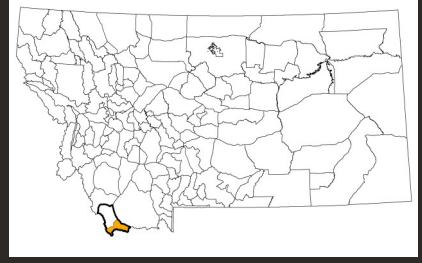
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Maintain 80% of HD as seasonally occupied elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Monitor elk distribution via annual aerial elk survey, harvest information, observations, and telemetry data when available • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
The landscape remains functionally permeable to elk seasonal movements	Elk are observed migrating to and from seasonal ranges through identified migration corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk while preserving open space and traditional agriculture • Use aerial surveys, harvest information, observations and telemetry data to identify and conserve migration corridors
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year average of annual game damage does not increase above long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Montana Action Plan and FWP's Terrestrial Wildlife Movement and Migration Strategy • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Consider using public/private land-specific harvest regulations to minimize displacement of elk from public lands
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	



HD 303

Tendoy Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Hunter numbers and hunter days level off or decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider using public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute hunting pressure • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Consider implementation and evaluation of harvest regulations that allow for yearling bull harvest
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	5-year average of harvested bulls with 6 points or more on one antler is 30% or greater	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined, brow-tined with less than 6 points, 6 points or more) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

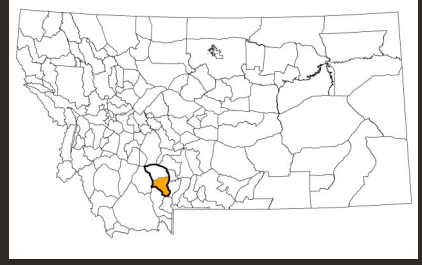


HD 304

Size: 439 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland

Public Ownership: 45%



Lower Madison Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 304 lies southwest of Bozeman and north of Big Sky between U.S. 287 and the Gallatin River and south of Montana Highway 84, the Norris to Four Corners Road. HD 304 encompasses the Spanish Peaks Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness at the tip of the Madison Mountain Range and large private land ownerships of mountain foothills, sagebrush, and grassland native prairie that represent significant elk wintering habitat.

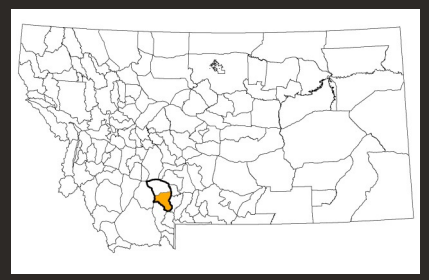
The main herd in HD 304 is the North Spanish Peaks elk herd, which predominantly winters on private lands north of the Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area. In severe winters, this herd may move north of Montana Highway 84 into HD 311 and private land agricultural environments where game damage can be rampant but where liberal harvest tools exist to assist landowners. The North Spanish Peaks elk herd also moves to the Gallatin River to the east, and it is currently unknown to what degree they may cross the Gallatin River and interface with elk in Bozeman HDs 301/309. Elk capture and collaring efforts in the Black's Ford area in 2013 to 2017 indicated the herd is positive for brucellosis and that some North Spanish Peaks elk may comele with the Red Mountain resident herd of HD 311. The North Spanish Peaks herd also occasionally struggles with mange infections, particularly in bull elk. An anthrax outbreak occurred in North Spanish Peaks elk in 2010.

Another small herd of elk winters just north of Big Sky in the Karst Stage area. This herd numbers between 100 and 200 elk. Due to its small size, it is not deliberately surveyed but elk presence is noted anecdotally to bighorn sheep flights or while surveying HD 310 elk. The Karst Stage elk overlap a key bighorn sheep winter range.

The Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area affords many hunting opportunities whether from the Beartrap Canyon to the west, the Gallatin Canyon access points to the east, or the Big Sky accesses to the south. The wilderness designation makes this area available to foot or horseback hunters but increasing recreation in the wilderness has created some user conflicts. During hunting season, elk may be more available on private land where hunting access may be challenging.



HD 304



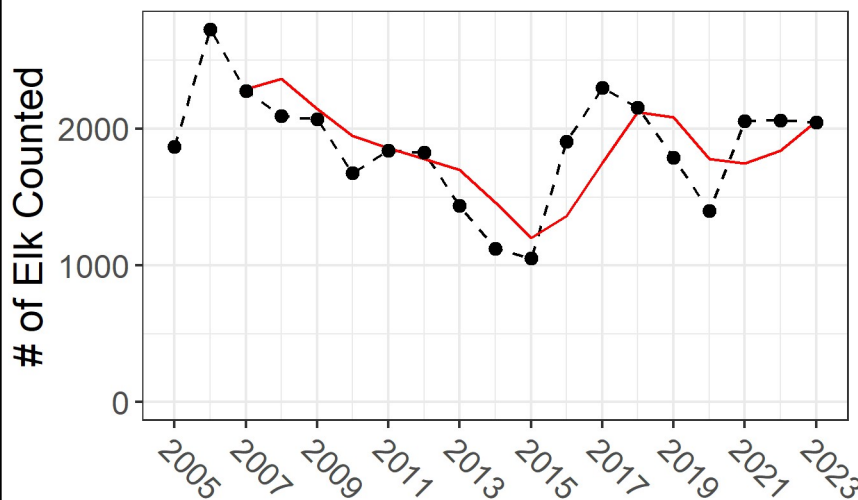
Lower Madison Elk Management Unit

Management Challenges:

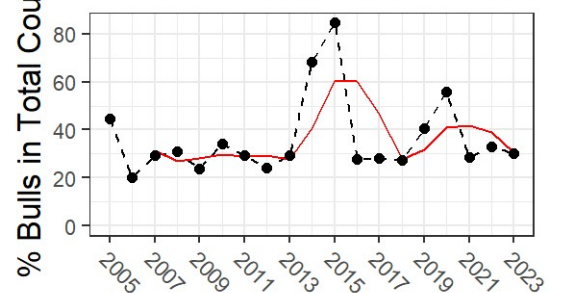
- Maintaining sufficient elk availability on public lands to meet hunter demands.
- Private lands have superior elk habitat (lower-elevation grasslands and sagebrush as compared to higher-elevation timber), and the public lands are wilderness where management actions may be restricted and where recreation pressures can be immense.
- During severe winters, the North Spanish Peaks elk herd may move into the agricultural lands of HD 311 and may be heavily harvested because management is more liberal there.
- Monitoring and managing disease, possibly including the need to manage the HD 304 herd if/when it moves into agricultural areas of HD 311.

Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 304



% Bulls in Total Count- HD 304



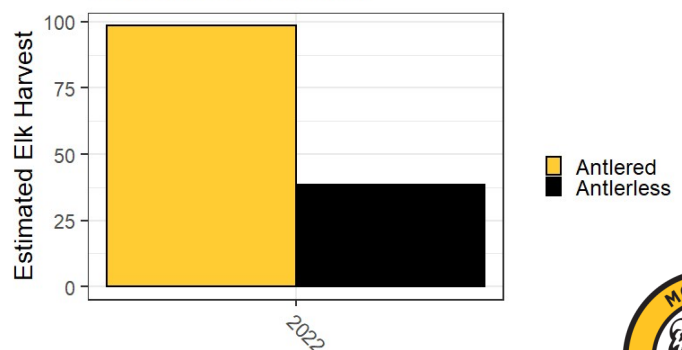
Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. Recruitment data not collected in this HD.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

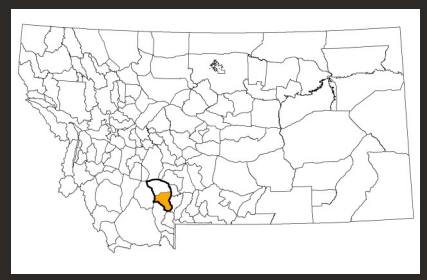
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
304	2022	489	2,399

Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data displayed may not be directly comparable to previous years.

Elk Harvest- HD 304



HD 304



Lower Madison Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,500-3,000 elk observed in HD 304 North Spanish Peaks	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest on public and private lands is within 25% of 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust structure and/or quotas
	Harvest on public land is not declining	
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected at hunter check stations and/or in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

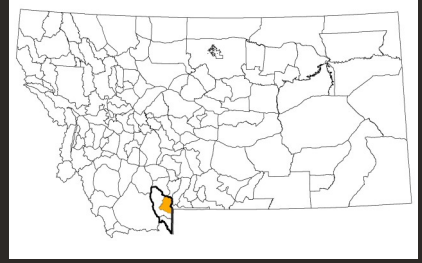


HD 310

Size: 314 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 91%



Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 310 encompasses the historic Gallatin elk herd south of Big Sky and along tributaries of the upper Gallatin River. Elk winter ranges include the Porcupine, Buffalo Horn, and Taylor Fork areas. HD 310 is accessible USFS land with mixed motorized and nonmotorized access points. FWP owns the 8,611-acre Gallatin WMA, spread into four units throughout HD 310.

There is more than a century of data on this herd. The high elevation, rugged terrain, thick cover, and heavy snows of the canyon protected the elk during the market hunting era. The Gallatin Game Preserve (today, the Gallatin Special Management Area, a.k.a. “the Buffer Zone”) was created by Montana’s State Legislature in 1911. Thereafter and until 1997, management of the Gallatin elk herd generally involved how to *reduce* numbers. From the 1920s through the 1980s USFS and FWP biologists established wildlife exclosures, performed experimental habitat treatments, and performed scores of range and habitat measurements. Biologists wanted to reduce the herd to 1,000 or fewer to prevent starvation losses during severe winters, but the public resisted attempts at instituting antlerless harvest. Meanwhile, the Montana State Legislature directed FWP to feed elk to prevent die-offs through the 1970s. This resulted in more elk wintering in the Gallatin than native vegetation alone could support and accustomed people to an abundance of elk that was not sustainable.

During the 1990s, a combination of things changed. Logging had long been a part of the Gallatin ecosystem, but timber companies sold their land and large efforts consolidated some land into public ownership while other land was subdivided and developed. Lacking logging or fire disturbance, conifer density increased, reducing winter range quality. Meanwhile, grizzly bear numbers increased, and wolves entered the system from the Yellowstone Park reintroduction. In the adjacent Madison Valley, major landownership changes occurred drawing elk out of the Gallatin: Hunter access became restricted, which created a refuge for migratory elk with good forage, less snow, and fewer predators. Numbers of elk wintering in the Gallatin decreased, declining both from low calf and cow survival rates as well as declining due to immigration to the Madison. Opportunities for late season hunting in HD 310 ceased in 2004, and all antlerless harvest ceased by 2010.

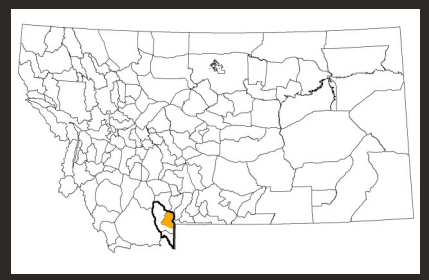
Today, elk numbers show signs of small increases, but remain well below historic levels. Winter forage remains limiting with upland exclosures continuing to show signs of browse pressure. The 2005 Elk Plan objective of 1,500 elk was created from older counts taken when elk were over-abundant and supplementally fed. The 2023 Elk Plan objective was adjusted downward to reflect realistic winter range conditions and biological carrying capacity. If winter range conditions improved through fires or other habitat treatments, the objective could be adjusted upward as this public-land winter range is a desirable location for wintering elk.

Maintaining elk winter range and winter security on public land is more important now than ever. Current controversies include carnivore management, preventing outmigration, and promoting elk habitat and elk security within HD 310. The main elk management issue in the Gallatin is maintaining public elk and public hunting opportunities on public lands. Public feedback has suggested hunter crowding is an increasing concern.



HD 310

Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit

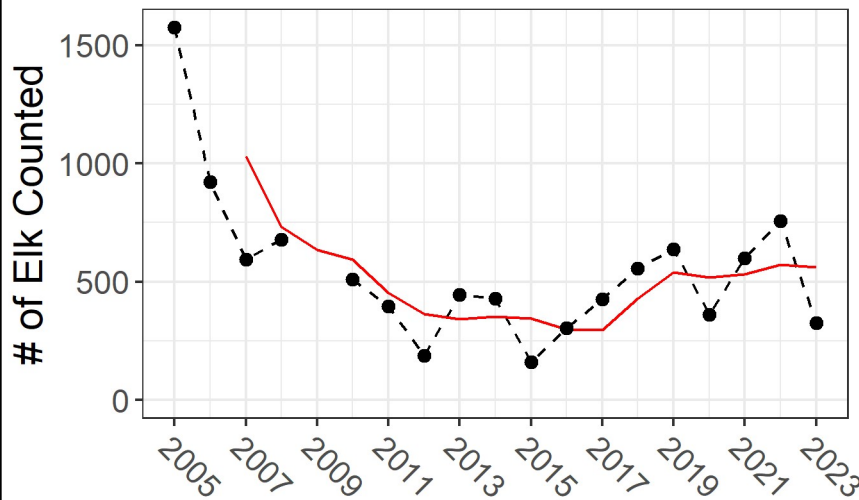


Management Challenges Continued:

- Elk habitat may not support winter counts increasing to the levels desired by hunters without substantial habitat improvement and travel planning to promote elk security.
- Implementing habitat improvement and travel planning requires coordination through the USFS, which also may need to balance elk habitat with other objectives including increased demand for recreation.
- This population is influenced by extreme weather events and predation, particularly from wolves and grizzly bears.
- Public values on this elk herd may differ; some hunters value maintaining an opportunity to hunt bulls on the General Elk License, whereas others would like to see limited opportunity to reduce hunter crowding and/or increase opportunity for mature bulls.
- Recreation on public lands may displace elk from historic summer or winter ranges.

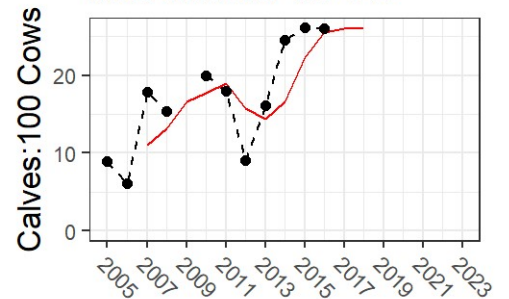
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 310

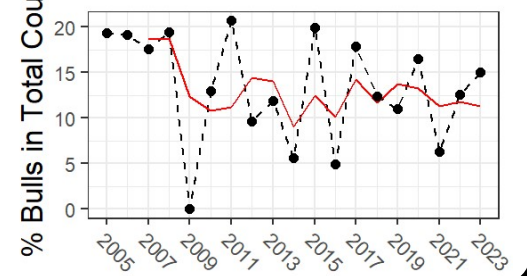


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 310

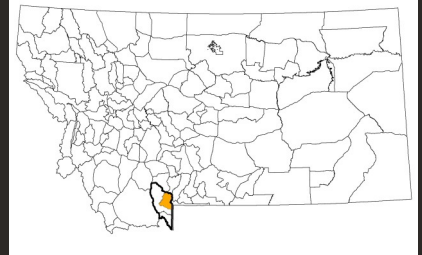


% Bulls in Total Count- HD 310



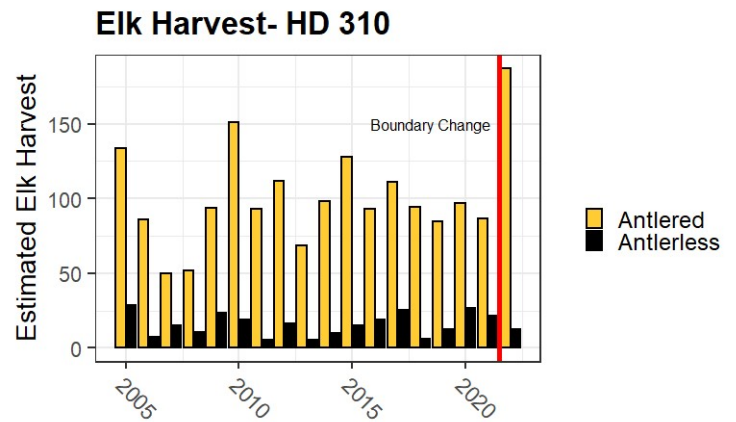
HD 310

Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
Former 310	2006	723	4,649
	2008	489	3,565
	2010	742	5,064
	2012	882	6,161
	2014	756	5,497
	2016	995	7,229
	2018	752	5,685
	2020	746	5,745
	2022*	873	6,855



*Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022.

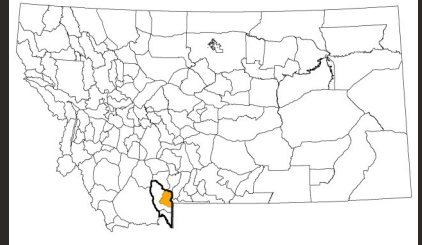
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 600- 1,000 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Maintain liberal carnivore harvest opportunities
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas



HD 310

Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit



Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	More than 50% of elk observed during winter aerial surveys are using public-land wintering areas (Taylor Fork, Buffalo Horn, and Porcupine drainages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Outreach to Big Sky area residents about not feeding wildlife and about allowing hunting to manage populations
	Less than 50% of elk observed during winter aerial surveys are in Big Sky subdivisions	
Maximize use of Gallatin WMA	Elk are consistently observed on and around the Gallatin WMA during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gallatin WMA habitat improvements to include: weed spraying, habitat restoration, hazard removals, aspen regeneration, forestry • Enforce Gallatin WMA habitat security through signage and communication • Manage recreation on Gallatin WMA

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	Maintain bull harvest on General License success rate of 15% or greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with MDT and USFS to create viewing opportunity
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected at hunter check stations and/or in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined bulls) are observed during winter aerial surveys	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	Gallatin Special Management Area harvest results in 80% harvested elk have 6 points or more on at least one side	
Provide elk viewing opportunities in areas that the public can reasonably access	Attempt to create an elk viewing area on existing MDT pullout along U.S. Highway 191 by Ophir School	

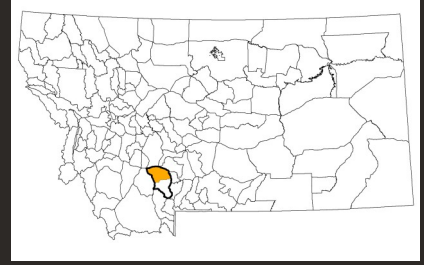


HD 311

Size: 530 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland & Human Use

Public Ownership: 15%



Lower Madison Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 311 exists west of Bozeman, south of I-90, east of Cardwell and Harrison (along Montana Highway 359 and U.S. 287), and north of Montana Highway 84 (Norris to Four Corners). The district is predominantly private land in agricultural development including tilled agricultural land, dryland farming, or land devoted to cattle production. State lands are interspersed through the unit allowing for some public access opportunity, and as of 2023, there are two units enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program.

There are two elk herds in HD 311 that were not described in the 2005 Elk Plan, and knowledge of these herds has been refined through research and GPS collaring of elk from 2013 through 2022. The Red Mountain Herd exists west of the Madison River and generally south and east of Willow Creek. It was first described in 2009 and has been growing since. The North Tobacco Roots herd was first described in 1990 but began at low numbers with increases more pronounced after 2008. Both the Red Mountain and North Tobacco Roots herds are nonmigratory. In some winters, elk from HD 304 (the North Spanish Peaks elk herd) may cross into HD 311 by Black's Ford, and even comele with the Red Mountain herd. The North Spanish Peaks herd and the Red Mountain herd have tested positive for exposure to brucellosis. Brucellosis has not been detected in the North Tobacco Roots herd.

Given the complex matrix of private landownerships with different values and goals, elk management strategies in HD 311 are intended to provide landowners with tools to use hunting to manage elk toward tolerable distributions and numbers given brucellosis risk and agricultural damage. This structure has proven effective in managing elk by reducing game damage complaints almost completely. During 2014 to 2016 game damage complaints were extreme. After shoulder seasons were implemented, damage complaints have been few to none annually.

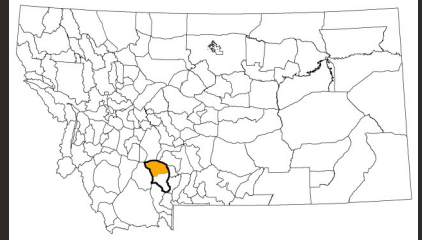
Management Challenges:

- FWP has limited control on elk numbers through regulation because the HD is primarily private land (i.e., FWP can provide harvest tools, but individual landowners decide to use hunters to harvest elk or not).
- Agricultural damage can become intense; if elk numbers are high going into a severe winter, they may move to different places in the HD where landowners may not be prepared to defend stackyards or feed lines.
- In severe winters, elk from HD 304 may move into HD 311 causing game damage.
- Some elk in this district have brucellosis, therefore this area requires implementation of the Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis Work Plan to minimize impacts to livestock.



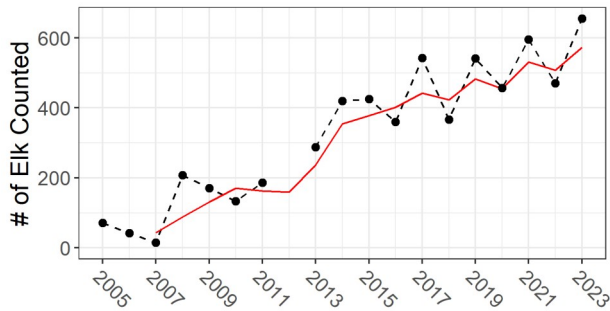
HD 311

Lower Madison Elk Management Unit

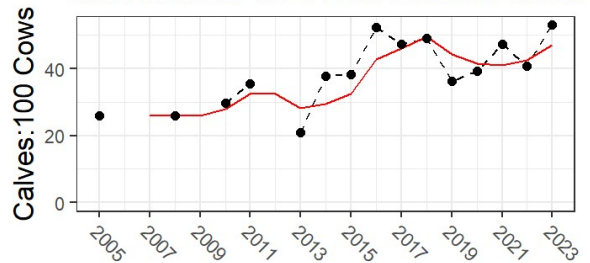


Current Population Status & Trend

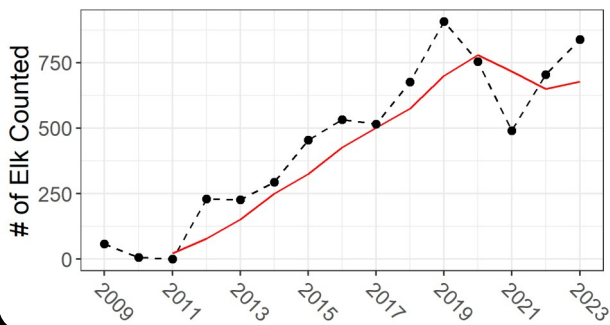
Total Elk Counted- HD 311 N. Tobacco Roots



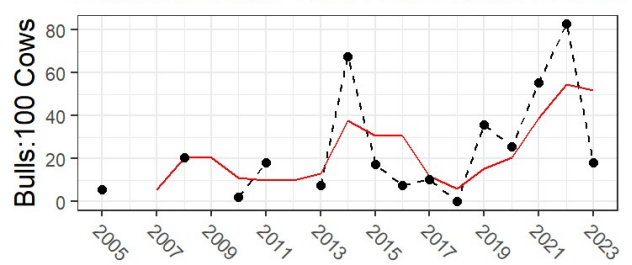
Recruitment- HD 311 N. Tobacco Roots



Total Elk Counted- HD 311 Red Mountain



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 311 N. Tobacco Roots



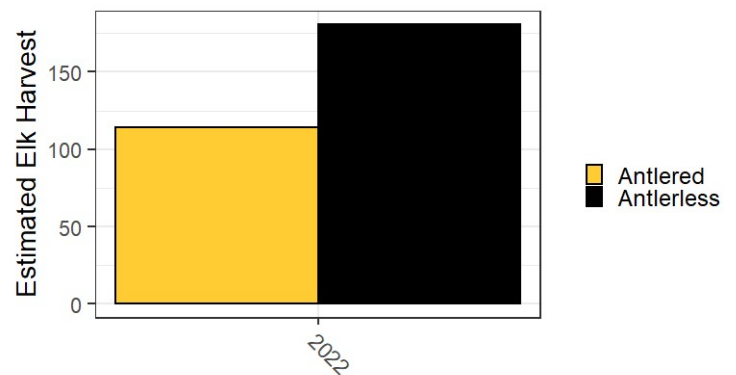
Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. No classification data is available for Red Mountain because it is surveyed in the summer.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
311	2022	954	6,417

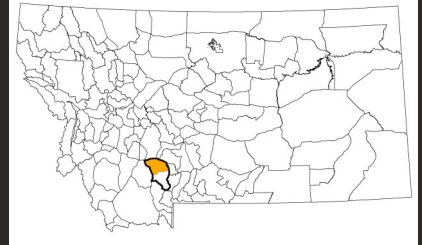
Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data may not be comparable to previous years.

Elk Harvest- HD 311



HD 311

Lower Madison Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 200-1,000 elk observed in North Tobacco Root herd unit	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 200-1,000 elk observed in Red Mountain herd unit	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater in both herd units	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Number of elk game damage complaints remains below 10 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land and provides landowners with flexibility to manage to their tolerance level • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	

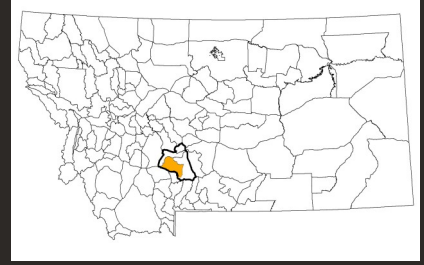


HD 312

Size: 495 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland,
Grassland & Human Land Use

Public Ownership: 23%



Bridger Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 312 is a largely private land HD generally north of I-90, east of the Missouri River, and it includes most of the Bridger Mountain Range. Private lands in the district are used for agriculture and subdivisions; subdivisions have been increasing. There are three elk herds that use HD 312. The main elk herd ranges into HD 390 and north 393, which can complicate counting efforts. Elk movement strategies between these areas are diverse: Some elk may remain residents in the Maudlow area. Others spend winter as far south as Manhattan along I-90 and then spend summer near Ringling. Another small herd of elk resides in the Springhill Community area, and a different small herd resides at the southern tip of the Bridger Mountains. New radio-collar data indicate the small herd at the southern tip of the Bridger Mountains may be best associated with elk in HD 393, thus they are currently counted with the southern Bangtails elk (HD 393).

Hunting District 312 is currently managed to allow landowners flexibility to use hunting as a tool to manage elk numbers and distribution. Since the HD began using a shoulder season, elk-related game damage complaints are few. There is currently one BMA in this district and no WMAs. Opportunities for elk harvest do exist on public lands in the unit across the few accessible DNRC parcels and the USFS land of the Bridger Mountains. However, elk security on the public land is limited with numerous roads and trails and a growing demand for all-season recreational access on those public lands. Forestry projects underway for forest health and fuels reduction purposes may improve elk habitat on public lands, but elk security around roads and trails should also be evaluated.

Elk in the Horseshoe Hills and Maudlow area were captured in 2021 and tested for exposure to brucellosis; results were negative.

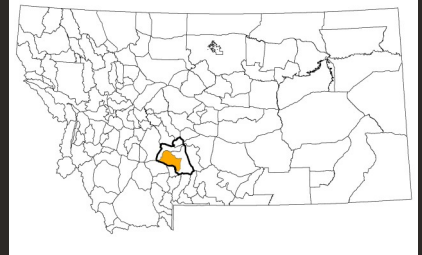
Management Challenges:

- Elk which may be counted in HD 312 also may use HD 393 and HD 390. Counts and management strategies need to be coordinated between these districts.
- Elk in HD 312 reside predominantly on private lands.



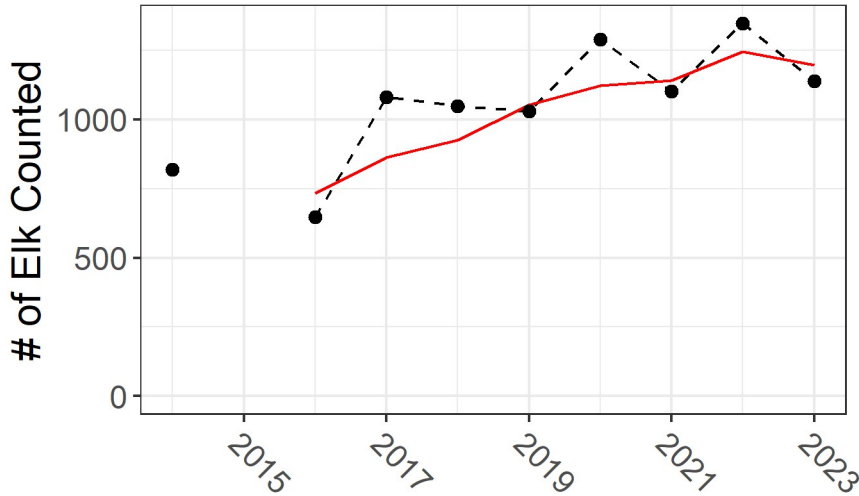
HD 312

Bridger Elk Management Unit



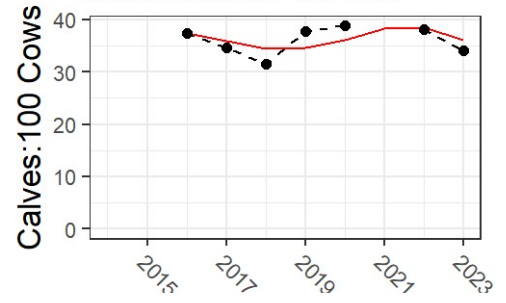
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 312

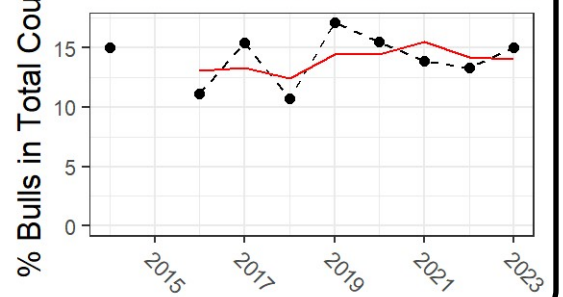


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 312



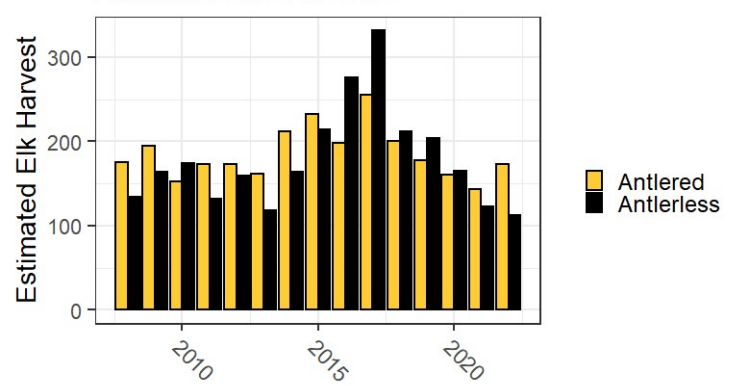
% Bulls in Total Count- HD 312



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

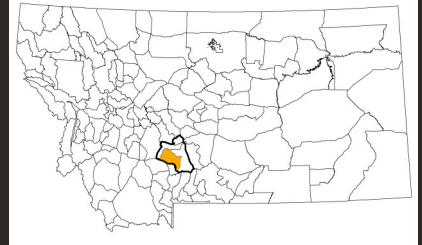
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
312	2008	1,400	7,727
	2010	1,408	8,266
	2012	1,832	10,499
	2014	1,447	8,178
	2016	1,885	10,633
	2018	1,656	9,538
	2020	1,397	8,269
	2022	1,169	7,186

Elk Harvest- HD 312



HD 312

Bridger Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,000-2,000 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest on public and private lands is within 25% of 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land and provides landowners with flexibility to manage to their tolerance level
	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Number of elk game damage complaints remains below 10 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

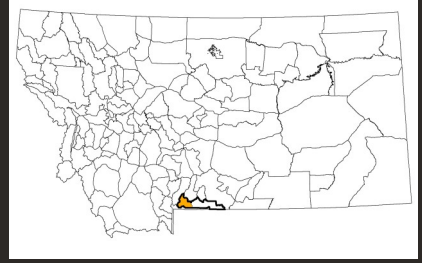


HD 313

Size: 252 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 80%



Northern Yellowstone Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 313 lies immediately north of Yellowstone National Park in the vicinity of the town of Gardiner. This HD is approximately 80 percent public land, most of which is USFS. Private land ownership is largely restricted to subdivisions and small ranches along the Yellowstone River between Gardiner and Sixmile Creek and in Cinnabar Basin. Most of the elk are part of the Northern Yellowstone Herd, which migrates to summer range in YNP, though there are some resident elk that remain in HD 313 all year. FWP and YNP have collaborated for many years to count elk on winter range in both YNP and HD 313. The Northern Yellowstone Herd reached observed highs in the mid-1990s, with over 19,000 elk observed in the highest year. The population declined steadily for the next two decades, reaching observed lows just below 4,000 in the mid-2010s. In recent years, the population increased, and stabilized with winter counts between 5,500 and 6,500 observed animals across the whole winter range. Historically, 50 to 75 percent of the herd wintered primarily in YNP, but this distribution has shifted, with an excess of 75 percent of the herd wintering in HD 313 in recent years. FWP owns the 4,680-acre Dome Mountain WMA near the northern end of HD 313. The WMA and adjacent areas typically provide winter range for 2,000 to 3,000 elk and a year-long habitat for a smaller resident herd.

The public land portions of HD 313 are accessible via numerous trailheads and secondary road access points. Road densities are high in the Gardiner Basin, where much of the transitional and winter range is open and visible from the road system. In contrast, other portions of the HD lie within the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area, where elk security from hunters is greater. Hunting pressure is very high in the Gardiner area. Elk management and regulations in HD 313 have been and continue to be intensely debated. Some hunters favor increased hunting restrictions to reduce crowding and increase the bull:cow ratio; others favor increased opportunity. Balancing the needs of diverse predator populations, the elk population, and varied public interests remains a significant challenge.

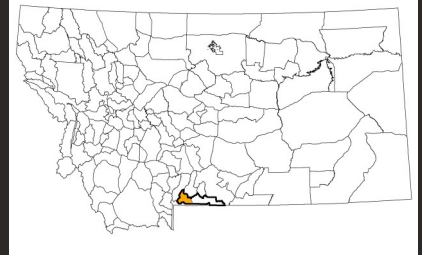
Management Challenges:

- This is primarily a migratory herd that spends a large portion of the year in Yellowstone National Park, where FWP has no management authority.
- It is not possible to differentiate “resident” HD 313 elk from migratory elk because by the time most are readily observable, they are commingled with migratory elk.
- This population is subject to a higher level of natural mortality than many others in the state, including periodic winterkill events, and high predation rates from a full complement of large predators.
- Recruitment is typically lower in this herd than in others.
- Annual proportion of population wintering in Montana varies, but has shifted to a larger proportion in Montana rather than Yellowstone National Park due to changes in forage availability, predation, hunting pressure, and land use. (Continued on next page)



HD 313

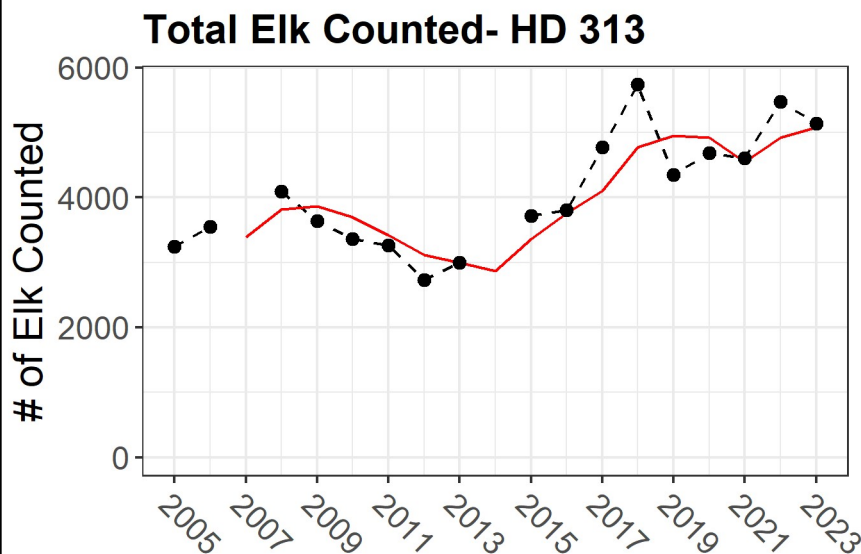
Northern Yellowstone Elk Management Unit



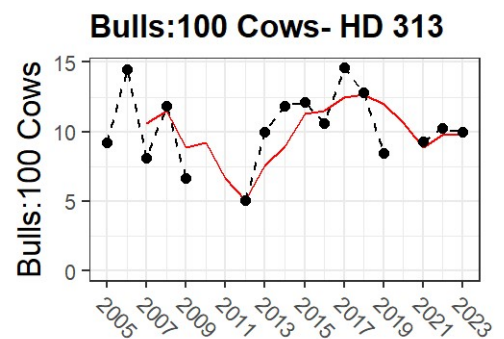
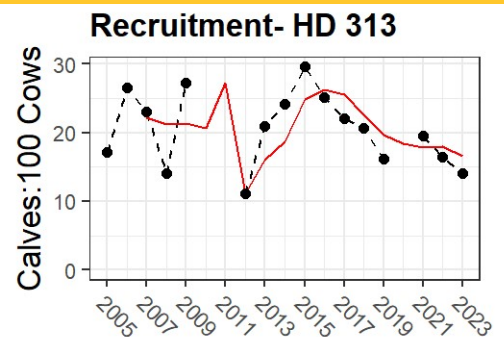
Management Challenges Continued:

- The public frequently expresses a simultaneous interest in competing goals: more harvest opportunity and greater numbers/older aged bulls.
- Tribal treaty rights harvest is outside FWP management authority.
- Brucellosis has been detected in elk in this HD; it falls within the Designated Surveillance Area and requires implementation of the Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis Work Plan to minimize impacts to livestock, particularly at the northern end of HD 313 near Sixmile.

Current Population Status & Trend

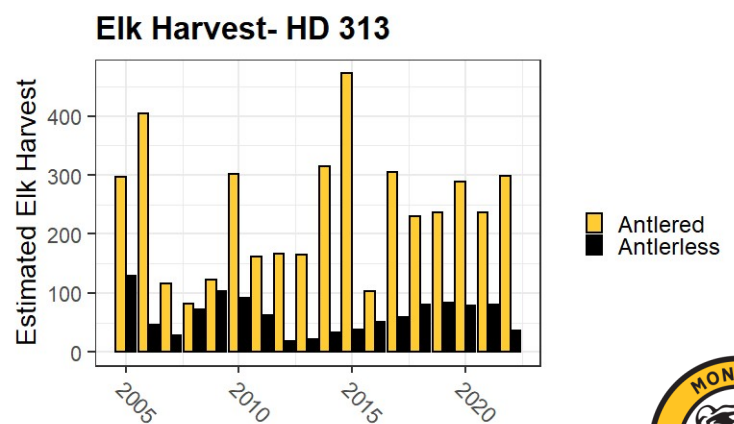


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average



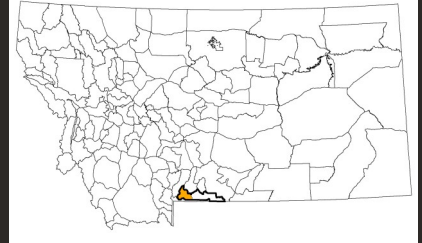
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
313	2006	2,044	10,808
	2008	1,171	6,923
	2010	1,297	7,824
	2012	941	5,792
	2014	1,017	6,776
	2016	1,055	7,149
	2018	1,175	7,336
	2020	1,262	9,557
	2022	1,307	8,921



HD 313

Northern Yellowstone Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 3,000-5,000 elk observed in MT portion of winter range	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with tribal partners to encourage reporting of tribal harvest numbers and share population concerns if they exist • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

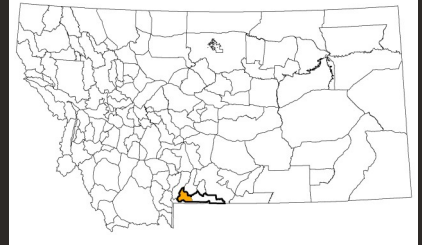
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use of Dome Mtn WMA	Elk are consistently observed on the Dome Mountain WMA and adjacent winter range with tolerance during winter aerial surveys and ground observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality fall and winter forage available to elk across Dome Mountain WMA • Manage recreation on Dome Mountain WMA and prioritize wildlife security • Continue cooperative hay lease agreement with landowner adjacent to WMA • Update recreation travel plans to minimize elk displacement from Dome Mountain WMA from motorized and nonmotorized travel • Use season structure and HD portion as necessary to manage elk distribution near Dome Mountain WMA
	No increase in elk game damage complaints or brucellosis complaints from adjacent private landowners	
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest on public and private lands is within 20% of long-term average	
	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	



HD 313

Northern Yellowstone Elk Management Unit



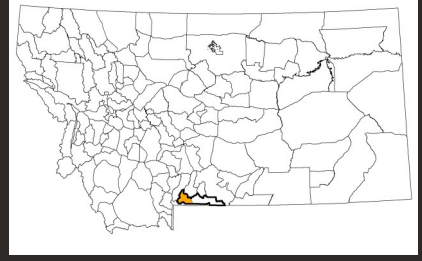
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution (Continued)

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year trend of game damage complaints does not increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with neighboring landowners experiencing damage from elk about potential mitigations and what they can do to prevent damage • Engage with neighboring landowners to explore options for elk tolerance on adjacent winter range when conflict risk is low • Maintain vegetative transects on the Dome Mountain WMA to monitor range condition and vegetative trend • Continue weed management to reduce infestations, improve range condition, and minimize weed spread to other areas of the Dome Mountain WMA or neighboring properties • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Adjust HD boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land and provides landowners with flexibility to manage to their tolerance level • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use special season structure in portion of HD north of Dome Mountain WMA
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	



HD 313

Northern Yellowstone Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected in hunter harvest surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a combination of antlered and antlerless harvest matrices to distribute harvest between sexes via adjusting season structure and/or quotas • Continued engagement with a diversity of stakeholders interested in this elk herd
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined, brow-tined with less than 6 points, 6 points or more) are observed during winter aerial surveys	
Increase or maintain harvest success rates	B License success rate is within 25% of 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

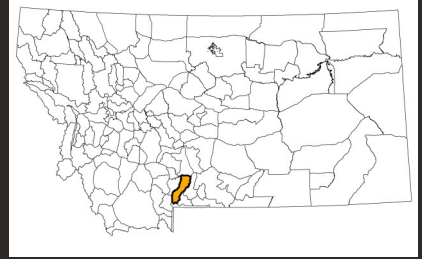


HD 314

Size: 483 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 40%



Upper Yellowstone West Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 314 is bounded by I-90 at the north end, the Gallatin Crest along its western boundary, Yellowstone National Park and Sphinx Creek drainage at the south end, and the Yellowstone River along its eastern border. HD 314 is approximately 60 percent private land, which lies in Paradise Valley in agricultural areas and subdivisions along the Yellowstone River, and in the eastern foothills of the Gallatin range. The public land is primarily USFS, with some isolated parcels of DNRC and BLM. Private land in HD 314 is primarily rangeland and irrigated hay ground. Paradise Valley and northern 314 north of Wineglass Mountain has seen substantial development in recent decades and portions of elk winter range and transitional range have been converted to residential subdivisions. Additionally, there are several large parcels which are owned by notraditional landowners that do not have agricultural operations. Elk winter primarily on private land in many areas scattered along the western edge of Paradise Valley, and on private lands between Wineglass Mountain and I-90 west of Livingston.

Hunter access to elk on private land is challenging, though there are some large landowners that do allow free public access. There is currently only a single Block Management cooperator in HD 314. Several large landowners allow only limited or outfitted hunting, which can create refuge areas that prevent hunters from targeting elk concentrations. Hunting pressure is high on public lands and areas enrolled in Block Management. High levels of hunting pressure can move elk from public lands to private lands with limited hunting pressure, though there are areas on public land that provide elk security away from roads and trails. Recreational use of USFS lands along the Gallatin Crest is increasing in popularity; in some areas this may pressure elk away from traditional summering areas. Population trends have diverged north versus south in HD 314; the southernmost portion has been under objective for years, but the northern portion has been over objective. Thus, antlerless harvest opportunities have differed between the northern and southern portions.

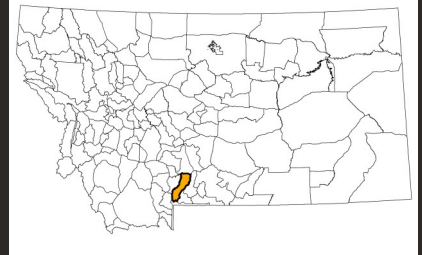
Management Challenges:

- Elk in this HD exist much of the year on private lands with variable hunter accessibility. Although there is summer range habitat on public land, the areas most conducive to antlerless harvest are on private, thus liberalizing licenses may not result in a population change.
- Managing divergent trends in different herd units requires careful allocation of antlerless opportunity.
- Management of hunter crowding issues (both real and perceived) on public lands.
- Hunting pressure on USFS land is very high and can move elk to private land. Efforts to reduce hunter crowding may require reduced opportunity.
- Recent and potential future development in Paradise Valley.
- Brucellosis has been detected in elk in this HD; it falls within the Designated Surveillance Area and requires implementation of the Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis Work Plan to minimize impacts to livestock.

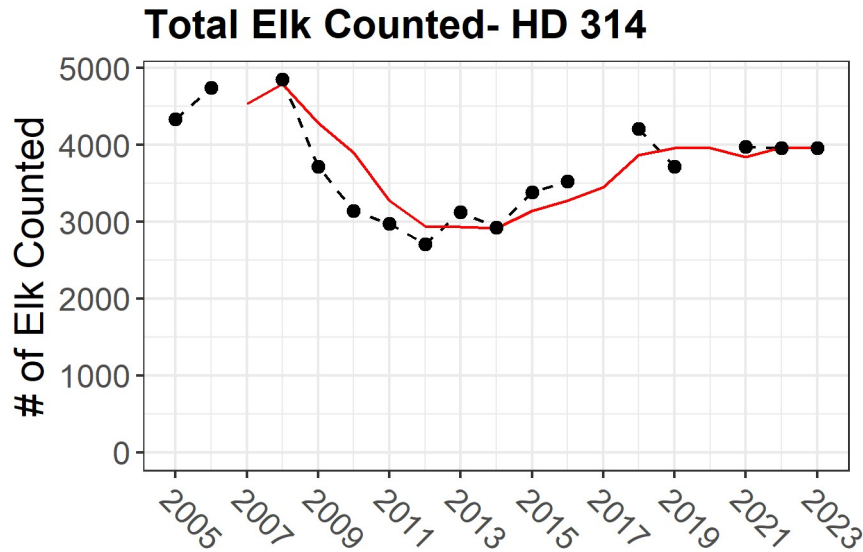


HD 314

Upper Yellowstone West Elk Management Unit



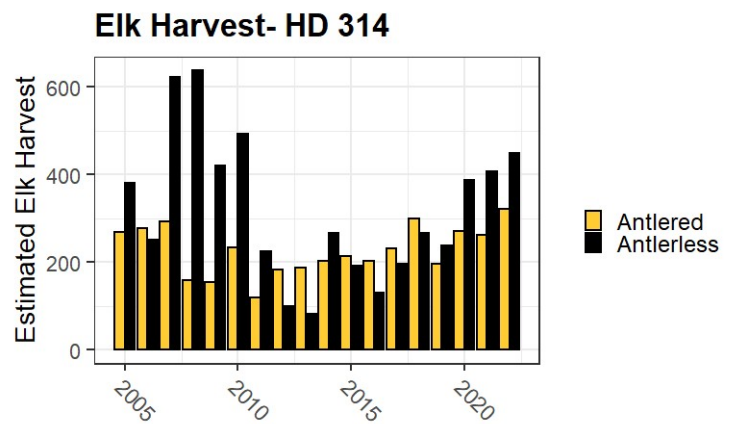
Current Population Status & Trend



Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. Due to a variety of reasons (survey conditions, staff turnover, etc.) classification data were not collected consistently enough to establish a trend in this HD.

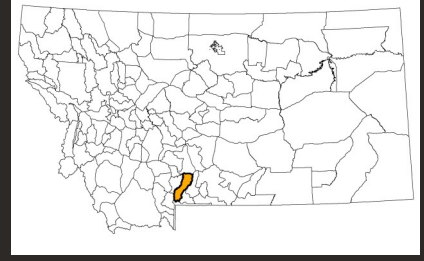
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
314	2006	1,862	10,764
	2008	2,454	15,465
	2010	1,894	13,984
	2012	1,397	9,252
	2014	1,443	9,213
	2016	1,403	9,050
	2018	1,707	10,881
	2020	1,916	11,304
	2022	2,106	13,172



HD 314

Upper Yellowstone West Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 2,900-4,200 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

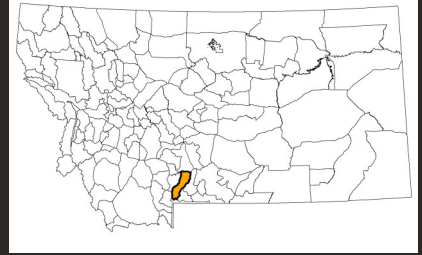
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest on public and private lands is within 20% of long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Regularly engage landowners/land managers to discuss elk management • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk
	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	
	Harvest on private land is at a level sufficient to influence population trajectory	
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Adjust HD boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year trend of game damage complaints does not increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land and provides landowners with flexibility to manage to their tolerance level
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	



HD 314

Upper Yellowstone West Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Region 3 resident hunter satisfaction regarding hunter congestion and crowding does not decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

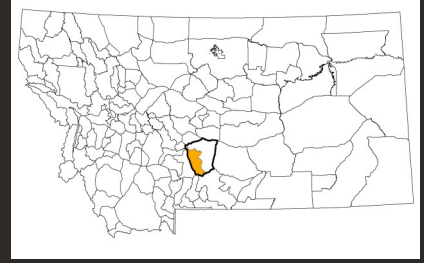


HD 315

Size: 580 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland & Shrubland

Public Ownership: 20%



Crazy Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 315 is on the western side of the Crazy Mountain Range and the eastern side of the Shields River drainage. It is bounded by U.S. 89 along the western boundary, the Yellowstone River at the southern end, the Crazy Mountain Divide along the eastern boundary, and the Sixteen Mile drainage at the northern end. HD 315 is approximately 80 percent private land. The public land is primarily USFS in the Crazy Mountains with scattered parcels of DNRC. National forest land provides a portion of the spring, summer, and fall elk habitat, but privately owned land in mountain foothill and sagebrush-grassland communities provide nearly all the elk winter range. Private land in HD 315 is primarily rangeland and irrigated hay ground, with some dryland farming. Subdivision has increased along the eastern foothills of HD 315 in recent years. The largest concentrations of elk winter on private land in the southern foothills of the Crazies north of Sheep Mountain, and in the Kavanaugh, Oil, and Rees hills in northwestern HD 315.

Hunter access to elk on private land is challenging. There are currently eight major Block Management cooperators with multiple units. Several large landowners allow only limited or outfitted hunting, which can create refuge areas that prevent hunters from targeting elk concentrations. Hunting pressure is high on public lands and areas enrolled in Block Management. High levels of hunting pressure can move elk from public lands to private lands with limited hunting pressure, though there are areas on public land that provide elk security away from roads and trails. In 2021, the American Fork fire burned over 21,000 acres in HD 315 and adjacent HD 580. This fire may improve forage conditions in some areas, but it substantially reduced elk security on public land in the upper Shields River drainage. Wintering elk numbers in HD 315 have increased substantially in recent years, likely due in part to movement of elk from HD 580 into southern HD 315 to winter.

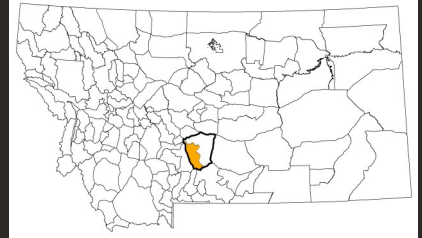
Management Challenges:

- Elk in this HD exist much of the year on private lands with variable hunter accessibility. Although there is summer range habitat on public land, the areas most conducive to antlerless harvest are on private, thus liberalizing licenses may not result in a population change.
- Management of hunter crowding issues (both real and perceived) on public lands.
- Hunting pressure on USFS land is very high and can move elk to private land. Efforts to reduce hunter crowding may require reduced opportunity.



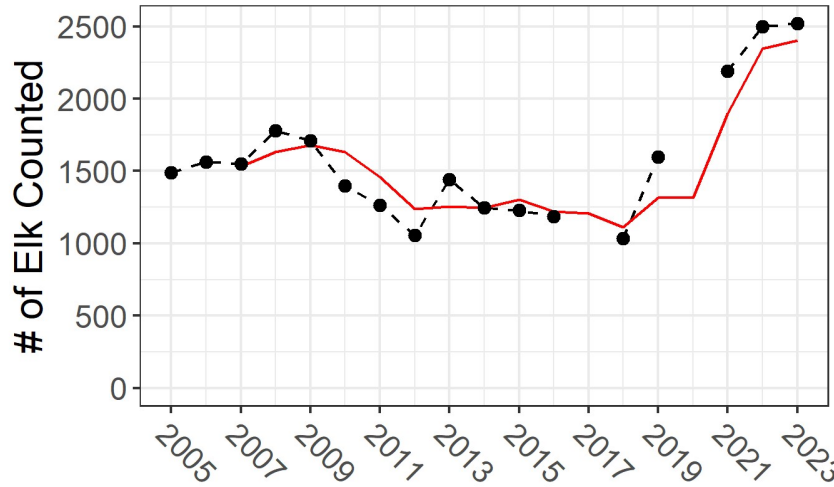
HD 315

Crazy Mountains Elk Management Unit



Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 315

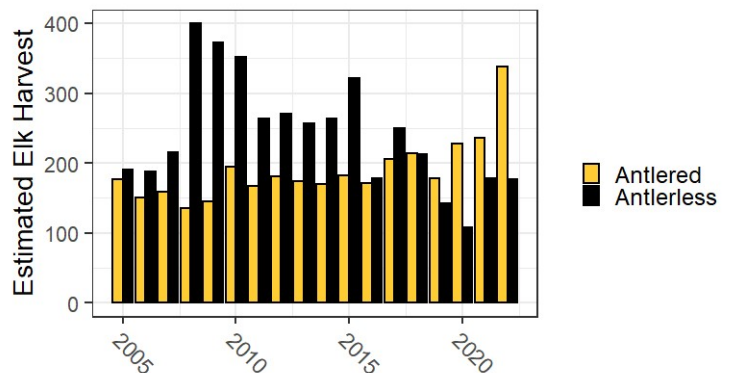


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. Due to a variety of reasons (survey conditions, staff turnover, etc.) classification data were not collected consistently enough to establish a trend in this HD.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
315	2006	1,292	6,644
	2008	1,799	10,061
	2010	1,829	11,687
	2012	2,086	11,956
	2014	1,933	10,203
	2016	1,959	12,072
	2018	1,873	11,239
	2020	1,582	10,719
	2022	1,754	10,697

Elk Harvest- HD 315



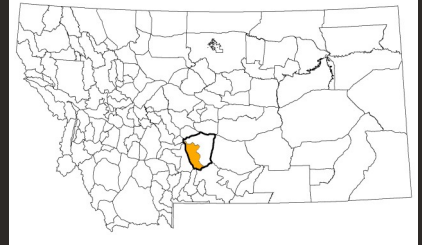
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,200-2,000 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure



HD 315

Crazy Mountains Elk Management Unit



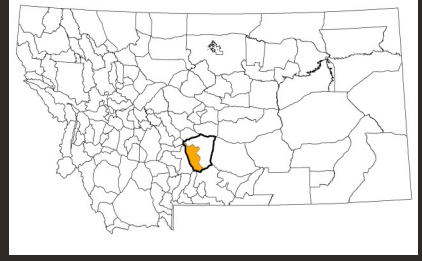
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest on public and private lands is within 20% of long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Regularly engage landowners/land managers to discuss elk management
	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk
	Harvest on private land is at a level sufficient to influence population trajectory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Distribute changes in population across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Adjust HD boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Number of elk game damage complaints remains below 10 per year OR 3-year trend of game damage complaints does not increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or



HD 315

Crazy Mountains Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Region 3 resident hunter satisfaction regarding hunter congestion and crowding does not decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Use antlerless and antlered harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structures and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

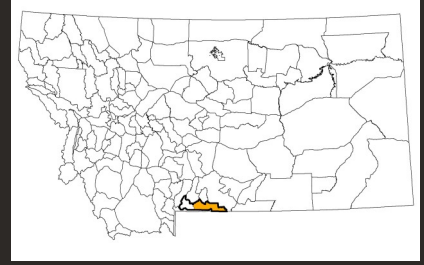


HD 316

Size: 466 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 99%



Northern Yellowstone Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 316 is a wilderness backcountry unit north of Yellowstone National Park in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness area. This unit is over 99 percent public land, most of which is USFS wilderness area where access is by foot and horseback only. There is an area near Cooke City that provides motorized access to USFS lands, and there are some isolated private parcels in this area as well. The terrain in HD 316 is moderately to extremely rugged with extensive areas of timber and high elevation subalpine and alpine communities. HD 316 is summer range for a portion of the Northern Yellowstone Herd: There are not significant numbers of elk that winter in HD 316 and traditional winter aerial surveys are not flown.

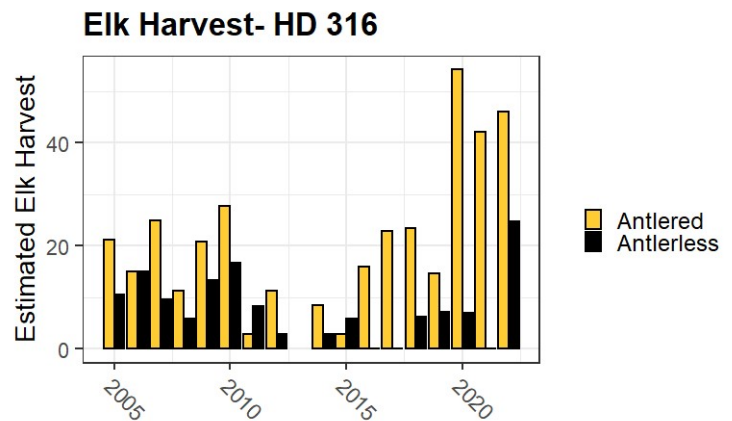
Legal access to HD 316 is available via many trailheads. Because of the rugged, backcountry nature of HD 316, hunting regulations are not focused on population management. Instead, regulations provide for the opportunity to hunt bull elk in a unique backcountry setting with a rifle during the rut. Elk densities during summer and fall are relatively low.

Management Challenges:

- It is not feasible to estimate elk numbers in HD 316 using traditional methods.
- Public comment expressed an interest in establishing a population goal for other time periods (summer/hunting season) which would require developing new techniques/survey methods.
- Elk distribution is influenced by weather, habitat, and predation (among other drivers).
- HD is USFS wilderness area and FWP has no control over habitat conditions.
- FWP has little ability to influence elk numbers or distribution in HD 316.

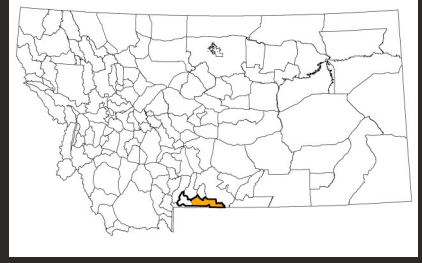
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
316	2006	185	1,178
	2008	168	1,189
	2010	163	913
	2012	131	887
	2014	108	768
	2016	134	1,034
	2018	142	762
	2020	233	1,588
	2022	241	1,362



HD 316

Northern Yellowstone Elk Management Unit



No population demographic objective; elk population surveys are not conducted in this HD because there are few wintering elk.

No distribution objective; HD is primarily a backcountry/wilderness district.

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide a unique backcountry hunting opportunity	Hunting regulations maintain special hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use backcountry early rifle opportunity• Use antlered harvest opportunity
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Elk harvest estimates are within or above 20% of the 10-year average	matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

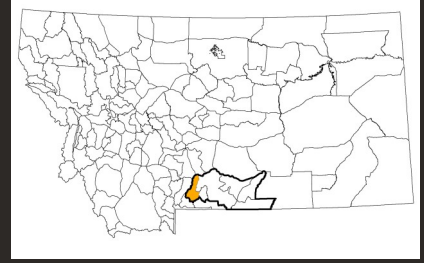


HD 317

Size: 425 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 66%



Absaroka Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 317 is on the western flank of the Absaroka Mountains and the eastern side of Paradise Valley. It is bounded by the Yellowstone River along its northern and western boundaries, the Sixmile Creek drainage at the south end, and by the Hellroaring, Boulder, and West Boulder hydrologic divides along its southeastern and eastern boundaries. HD 317 is approximately 34 percent private land, which lies in Paradise Valley in agricultural areas and subdivisions along the Yellowstone River, and in the western foothills of the Absaroka Range. The remainder of HD 317 is primarily USFS, much of which lies within the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness area. There are some scattered parcels of DNRC and BLM lands in Paradise Valley and along the USFS boundary. Paradise Valley has seen substantial development in recent decades, with some areas of traditional rangeland converted to residential subdivisions. Additionally, there are some parcels which are owned by landowners that do not run traditional agricultural operations. Elk winter primarily on private land and along the USFS boundary in the eastern foothills of the Absaroka range in Paradise Valley, with a smaller herd of 200 to 300 animals wintering in the Livingston Peak subunit southeast of Livingston. Elk from the Northern Yellowstone Herd sometimes cross Sixmile Creek to winter in the Emigrant Face area of HD 317 and elk from adjacent HD 525 sometimes cross Mission Creek into the northeastern corner of HD 317.

Hunter access to elk on private land in HD 317 is challenging, though it is available in some areas. Some landowners allow only limited or outfitted hunting, which can create refuge areas that prevent hunters from targeting elk concentrations. There are currently no landowners enrolled in Block Management. Hunting pressure on public lands is high in areas near access points. Portions of HD 317 provide a backcountry hunting opportunity; these areas receive moderate hunting pressure but also have lower densities of elk.

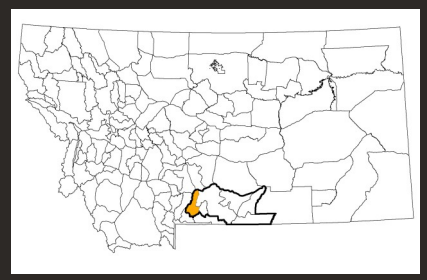
Management Challenges:

- Elk in this district spend a significant portion of the year on private lands, and realizing harvest requires access to through private lands.
- There is summer range habitat on public land, but the areas most conducive to antlerless harvest are on private, thus liberalizing licenses may not result in a population change.
- Management of hunter crowding issues (both real and perceived) on public lands.
- Hunting pressure on USFS land is very high and can move elk to private land. Efforts to reduce hunter crowding may require reduced opportunity.
- Recent and potential future development in Paradise Valley.
- Brucellosis has been detected in elk in this HD; it falls within the Designated Surveillance Area and requires implementation of the Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis Work Plan to minimize impacts to livestock.



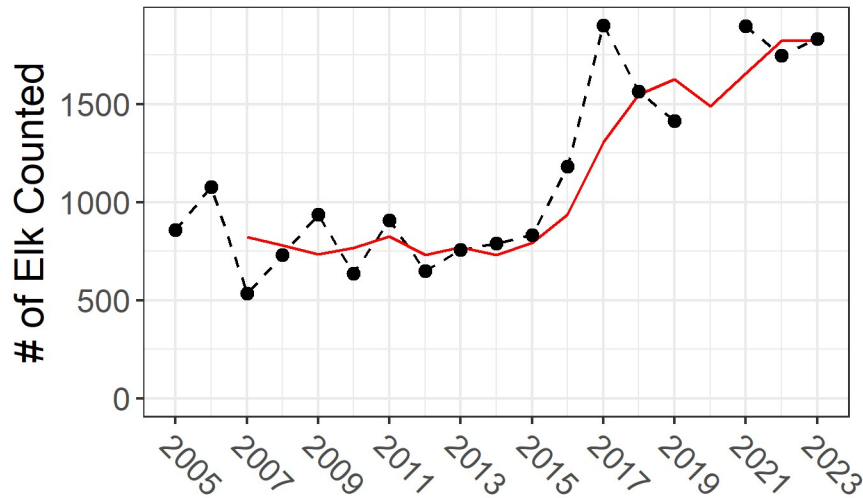
HD 317

Absaroka Elk Management Unit



Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 317

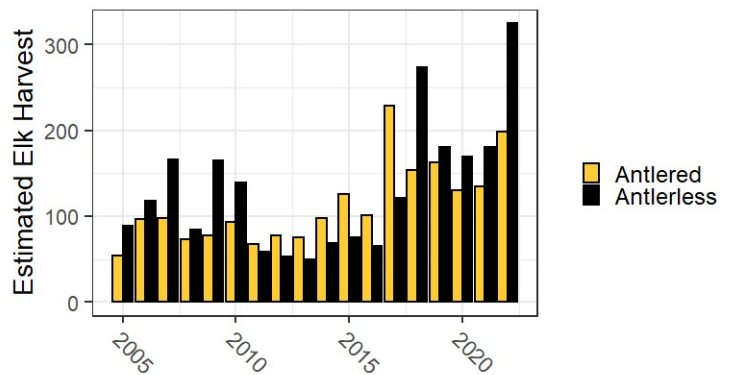


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. Due to a variety of reasons (survey conditions, staff turnover, etc.) classification data were not collected consistently enough to establish a trend in this HD.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

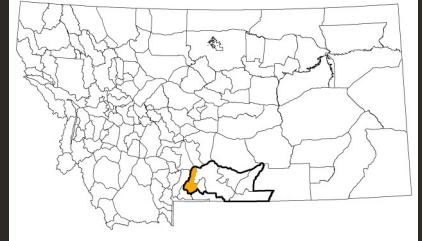
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
317	2006	794	4,547
	2008	741	4,315
	2010	772	3,848
	2012	733	4,061
	2014	729	4,659
	2016	820	5,458
	2018	1,227	7,311
	2020	1,236	7,707
	2022	1,436	7,864

Elk Harvest- HD 317



HD 317

Absaroka Elk Management Unit



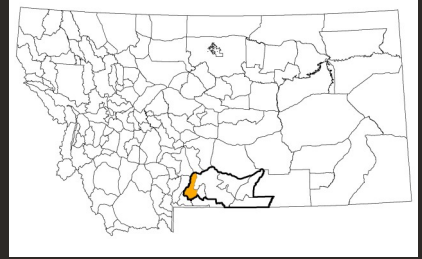
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial surveys between 900-1,700 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas



HD 317

Absaroka Elk Management Unit



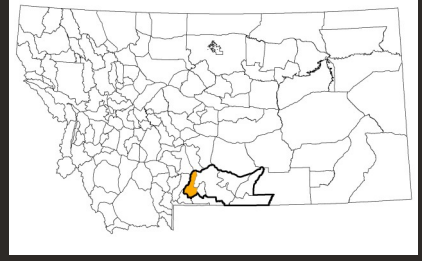
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest on public and private lands is within 20% of long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly engage landowners/land managers to discuss elk management • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	Harvest on private land is at a level sufficient to influence population trajectory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Adjust HD boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year trend of game damage complaints does not increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	



HD 317

Absaroka Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Region 3 resident hunter satisfaction regarding hunter congestion and crowding does not decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

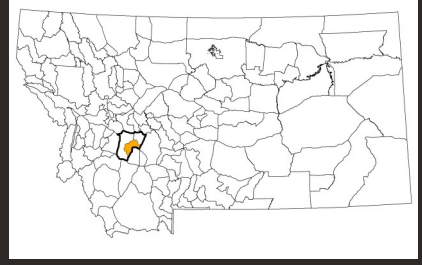


HD 318

Size: 275 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 82%



Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 318 lies north of Butte and west of Boulder along the east slope of the Continental Divide and includes the headwaters of the Boulder River. It is located in the northern part of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) and is adjacent to the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest along its northern boundary at the Occidental Plateau. It is further bounded by I-15 to the east and the Continental Divide to the west, which intersect just north of Butte. It is 82 percent public land with 75 percent of the land administered by the USFS. The BDNF Electric Peak recommended wilderness area is 11,300 acres (6 percent) and located along the Continental Divide in the northwest portion of the district. The remaining lands are managed by the BLM (7 percent), other state or local governments (less than 1 percent), or are in private ownership (18 percent). Some of the elk in this district are migratory, with the majority of exchange expected to be east-west over the Continental Divide. Summer range for elk occurs almost entirely on public land. Fall use areas are also generally on public land unless weather induces elk to move to private land winter ranges at lower elevations. As much as 26 percent of the winter range occurs on private land.

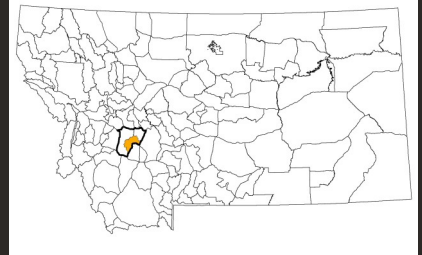
Access is very high due to the amount of public land and landowner cooperation. Motorized use of public land has diminished habitat security and effectiveness. Public access to public land is extensive, and hunting is not restricted on any significant parcels of private agricultural land. Motorized travel on public land is regulated through National Forest and BLM travel plans, and those plans have not been revised since the prior elk plan. Approximately 82 percent of all land is within 1 mile of an open, motorized route during fall hunting seasons. Open-motorized route density within the BDNF here is high with over 1.8 road miles/mi² during fall hunting seasons. The district is a popular destination for motorists and camping during fall hunting seasons and for snowmobiling in winter. There are four cooperators enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, at least one of which has maintained enrollment since the program's inception.

The number of elk observed has remained relatively stable in most years during postseason aerial surveys. Elk move to areas with greater forest cover in winter in some years, and without fresh snow cover they can be difficult to find. Counts are expected to be low under those conditions. While few if any brow-tined bulls were observed during winter surveys, the hunter-harvest phone survey estimated that bull harvest varied between 40 and 129 (84 long-term average) and was thought to be a better metric of bull availability within the district during fall seasons. Distribution of elk shifts with varying severity of winters and human activities. Game damage complaints are rare and mostly occur during severe winters. Building stackyards for stored hay has alleviated some of those complaints.



HD 318

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit

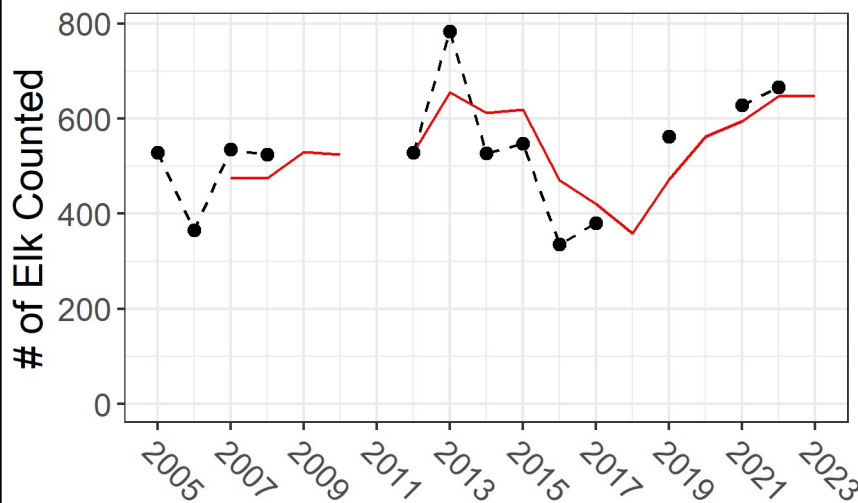


Management Challenges:

- Open, motorized-route density on public land reduces habitat security and habitat effectiveness.
- Extensive motorized use of public land via USFS and BLM system roads and illegal off-road use may be contributing to redistribution of elk from public to private land.
- Snowmobile use may be contributing to redistribution of wintering elk from public to private land, resulting in game damage complaints and lower landowner tolerance for elk.
- Winter ranges may be at risk because of continued housing development.
- Hunter crowding.

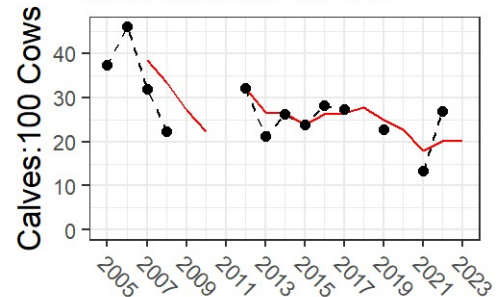
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 318

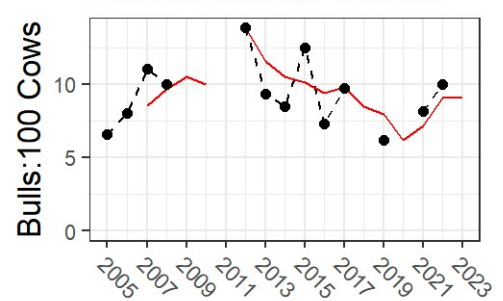


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 318



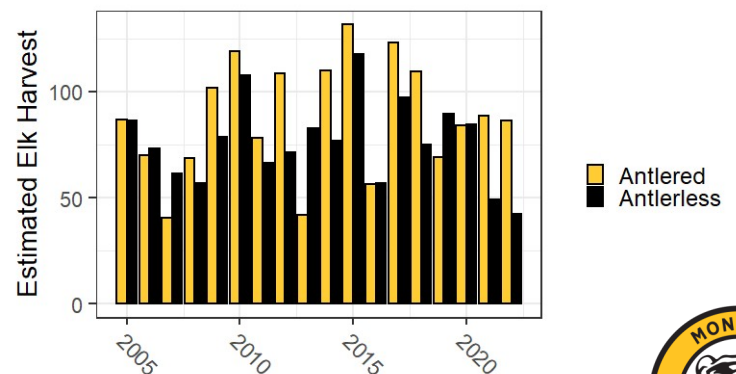
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 318



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

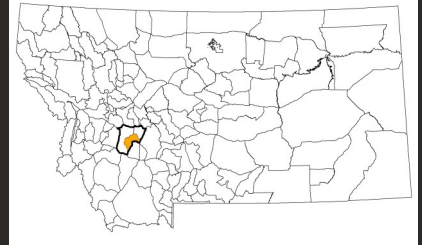
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
318	2006	856	7,134
	2008	939	8,197
	2010	1,272	10,915
	2012	1,305	10,538
	2014	1,435	13,072
	2016	1,268	11,889
	2018	1,246	11,962
	2020	1,264	11,118
	2022	1,204	10,706

Elk Harvest- HD 318



HD 318

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 400-800 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
There is no bull:cow ratio goal for this HD due to difficulty observing bulls during aerial surveys; see recreation Goals related to bull harvest below		

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk continue to migrate between seasonal ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands Encourage retention of all designated and de facto roadless areas and proposed wilderness areas Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access Pursue new conservation easements Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected in hunter harvest surveys	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	



HD 319

Size: 620 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 77%



Fleecer Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 319 is located near the communities of Butte, Anaconda, Divide, and Wise River. It encompasses Fleecer Mountain and a portion of the Anaconda-Pintler Range. It is bound by I-15 on the east, Montana Highway 43 and the Big Hole River to the south, the Pintler Range on the west, and I-90 to the north. In 1982 HD 319 was split into two districts to better distribute hunters: HD 319 and HD 341. These districts were recombined in 2022 under the department direction of regulation simplification.

About 67 percent of general elk range is on public land, with the majority of the acreage managed by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. FWP-owned Fleecer and Mt. Haggin WMAs are located in this HD and comprise 13 percent of general elk range. The WMAs comprise 22 percent of elk winter range while the USFS comprises 67 percent, private land 8 percent and the BLM 2 percent. Access to elk on both public and private lands is very good throughout the district. FWP has maintained four BMAs in this HD and holds a perpetual conservation easement on a ranch near Mt. Haggin WMA. Additionally, many private landowners provide some level of free public hunting access. Approximately 70 percent of the HD provides hunting characterized as “moderate to high levels of motorized access” and 30 percent provides more of a backcountry experience.

HD 319 comprises elk winter and summer ranges and the migratory routes between them. The majority of elk are migratory. Temporary movement to an adjacent HD occasionally occurs, especially during winter. Critical winter ranges occur on the eastern flanks of Fleecer Mountain, the south-facing foothills near Wise River, and in the German Gulch area. Between 2004 and 2022, an average of 85 percent of the harvest occurred during the general rifle season and 33 percent of the bulls harvested had 6 or more points on one antler. Most hunters are from the local communities of Butte and Anaconda. Wildlife viewing is very popular on Fleecer winter range and Mt. Haggin WMA summer range.

FWP has undertaken several habitat projects on Fleecer and Mt. Haggin WMAs in recent years that have improved habitat conditions across thousands of acres of elk summer and winter range. Four land acquisitions have added almost 1,430 acres to Fleecer and Mt. Haggin WMAs.

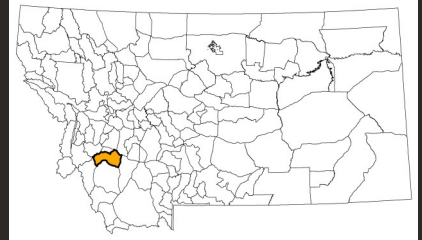
Management Challenges:

- At times, elk numbers exceed tolerance levels of private landowners adjacent to Fleecer WMA.
- Elk crossing I-15 near Gregson exit.
- Lack of travel management plan and enforcement on Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.



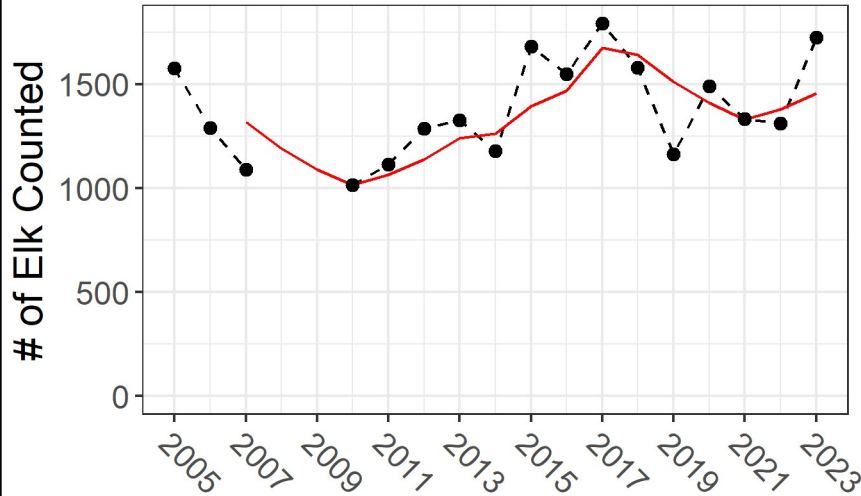
HD 319

Fleecer Elk Management Unit



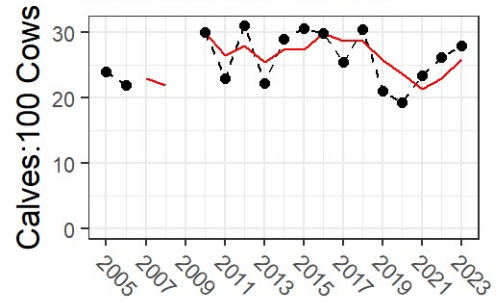
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 319

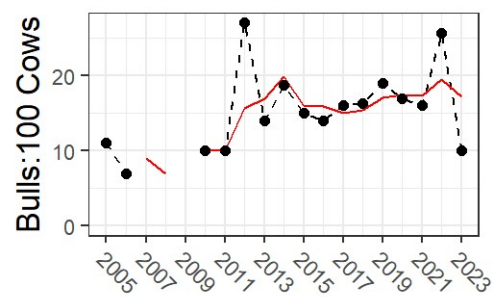


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 319



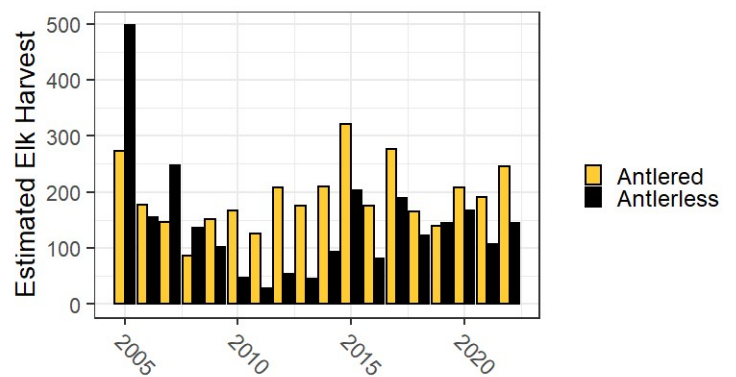
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 319



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
319	2006	2,312	15,516
	2008	2,127	15,180
	2010	1,553	11,296
	2012	1,590	11,369
	2014	2,126	16,107
	2016	2,018	16,612
	2018	2,088	17,689
	2020	2,271	18,941
	2022	1,937	16,523

Elk Harvest- HD 319

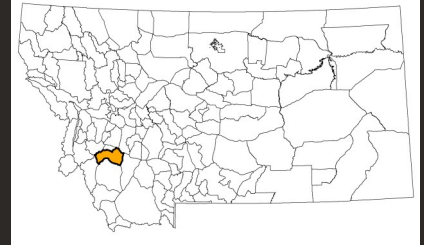


Hunter effort and harvest data were reconciled to current HD boundary.



HD 319

Fleecer Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 850-1,100 elk observed in the portion of the HD that was former HD 319 (pre-2022)	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Adjust hunting district boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts at 800 elk or fewer observed across all ownerships on Fleecer winter range	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 450-600 elk observed in the portion of the HD that was former HD 341 (pre-2022)	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

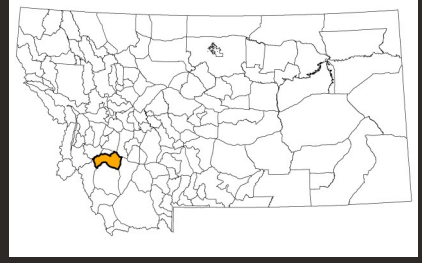
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	3-year average harvest on private land is greater than 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Acquire private lands adjacent to WMAs as opportunities arise, especially in critical seasonal ranges • Maintain an active habitat improvement program on Fleecer and Mt. Haggin WMAs
	3-year average harvest on public land is greater than 30%	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Complaints of chronic elk game damage are reduced	
Maximize elk use of Fleecer and Mt. Haggin WMAs	Total elk counted on WMA is greater than elk using adjacent private lands during winter aerial surveys	



HD 319

Fleecer Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use regulations that provide for special youth hunting opportunities • Use regulations that provide for special hunting opportunities for holders of a PTHFV
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Promote hunter recruitment and retention	5% or more of the antlerless elk harvest is attributed to Youth and PTHFV hunters	

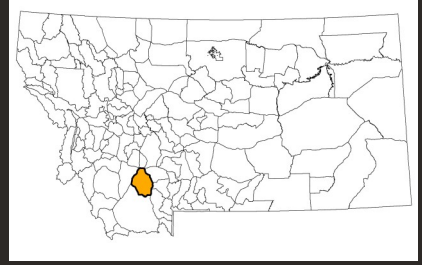


HD 320

Size: 383 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland
& Forest

Public Ownership: 45%



Tobacco Root Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 320 encompasses the Tobacco Root Mountain Range in southwest Montana. The USFS administers about 32 percent of the district. About 8 percent is administered by the BLM, about 5 percent is administered by the DNRC, and about 55 percent is private lands.

Legal access to public lands is high across most of the district. Across summer and early fall elk ranges, motorized route density is low and offers moderate to high habitat security. Motorized route density across winter ranges administered by state agencies and the BLM are very high and offer little to no habitat security. Hunter access to private lands is variable across the district, ranging from open through Type I BMAs to highly restricted. A measurable percentage of elk annually migrate to private agricultural lands during early fall. Recent changes to ownership of two key private lands has resulted in little hunter harvest of elk among two primary herds. Future hunter harvest of elk among those herds will be instrumental in the ability to manage population within objective range. Rate of habitat fragmentation/loss, through sub-division and house development, has increased over the past decade. That fragmentation has resulted in reduced lands available to hunting and elk population management effectiveness. Continued fragmentation will eventually result in permanent elk displacement from existing habitat. Private lands habitat conservation should be a priority across this district.

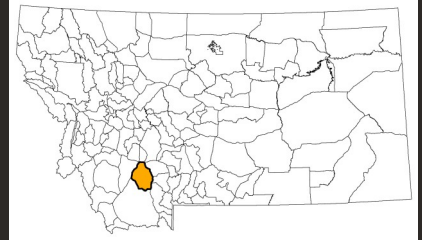
Management Challenges:

- Legal hunter access to concentrations of elk on private agricultural lands.
- Minimal enforcement of unauthorized motor vehicle travel across all public lands.
- Habitat condition on public lands (i.e., noxious weeds, minimal forest disturbance, livestock grazing).
- Structure development across private lands.



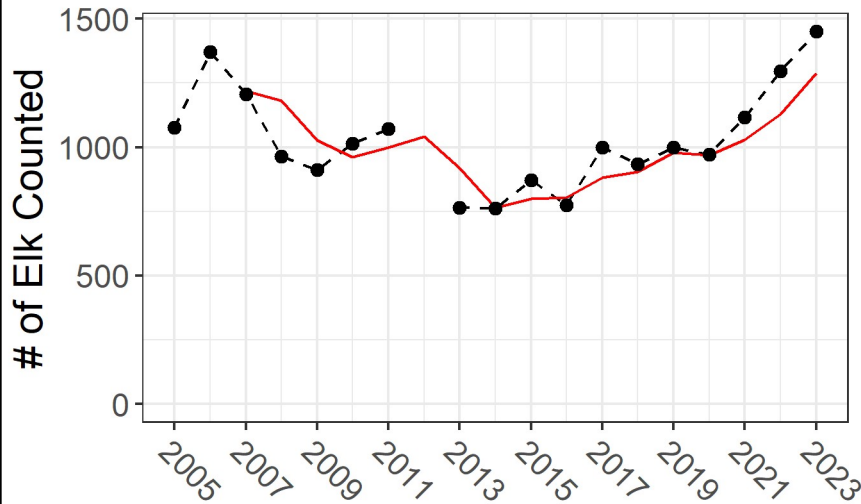
HD 320

Tobacco Root Elk Management Unit



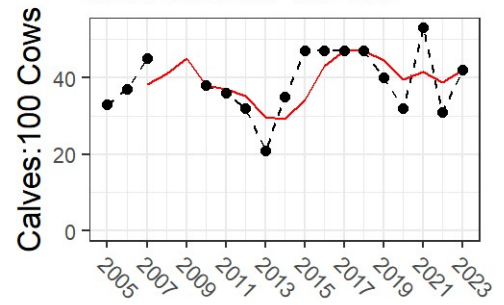
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 320

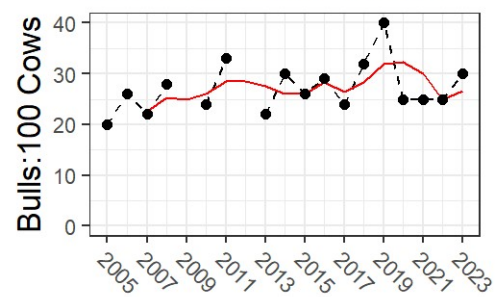


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 320



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 320



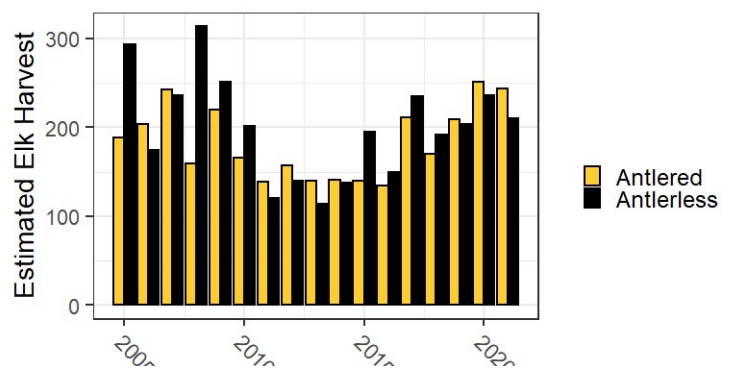
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
Former 320 & 333	2006	1,958	11,694
	2008	2,587	15,585
	2010	2,112	12,964
	2012	2,087	12,740
	2014	1,925	10,916
	2016	1,996	13,846
	2018	2,005	12,006
	2020	2,185	15,298

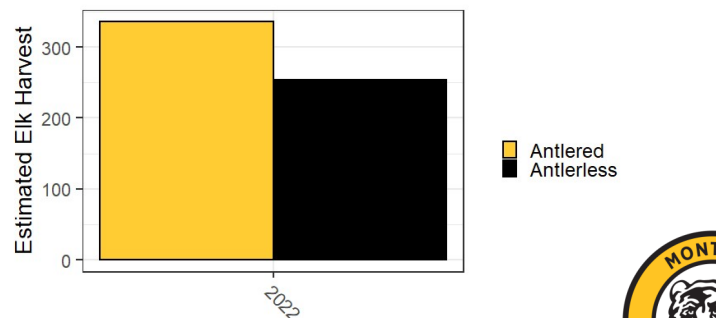
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
320	2022	2,297	15,034

Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data displayed may not be directly comparable across years.

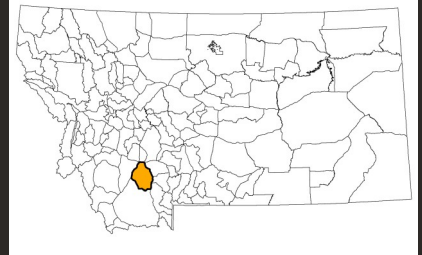
Elk Harvest- Former HDs 320 & 333



Elk Harvest- HD 320



HD 320



Tobacco Root Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 500-1,500 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Promote habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

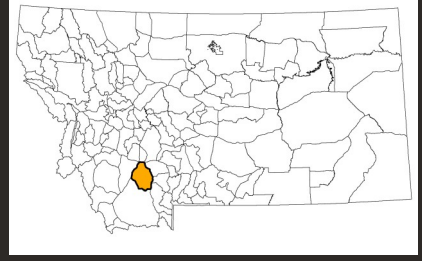
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use of public land	Stable or increasing number of hunter reports of elk observations on public land and elk harvest on public land collected via hunter check stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges • Promote recreational use plans that minimize elk displacement from public lands
	No increase in elk game damage complaints	
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to minimize displacement of elk from public lands • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest where needed
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	



HD 320

Tobacco Root Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a combination of antlered and antlerless harvest matrices to distribute harvest between sexes via adjusting season structure and/or quotas • Consider implementation and evaluation of harvest regulations that allow for yearling bull harvest
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	<p>Age classes of hunter-harvested bulls detected at check stations include 1-2 years old, 3-4 years old, over 4 years old</p> <p>Bulls that are non-brow-tined, brow-tined with less than 6 points, and brow-tined with 6 or more points are observed during winter aerial surveys</p>	

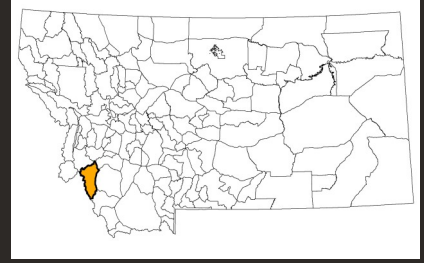


HD 321

Size: 787 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 63%



West Big Hole Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 321 is located in the upper Big Hole Valley and encompasses the west half of the valley from Montana Highways 43 and 278 on the east to the Continental Divide on the west. Because of its high elevation and snow accumulation, few elk winter in the valley; instead, they migrate over the divide in the spring to calve and spend the summer. They are usually available to Montana hunters for only a part of the general hunting season. Elk that summer north of Montana Highway 43 migrate into the East Fork of the Bitterroot in HD 270 to winter. Elk that summer south of Montana Highway 43 migrate over the Beaverhead Range to winter near Salmon, Idaho. The majority of elk range in HD 321 comprises private land (59 percent) while USFS Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest comprises 35 percent. Most of the landowners in HD 321 are fourth-generation ranchers and allow some level of public hunting access, especially in the south half of the district.

In 2010, HD 321 was split into two districts: HD 321 south of Montana Highway 43, and HD 334 north of Montana Highway 43. This action was taken to better manage the two distinct elk herds. These districts were recombined in 2022 under the department direction of regulation simplification. Access to elk on both private and public land is good in the southern half of the district. While FWP only maintains one BMA, most of the landowners in this portion of the district provide some level of free public hunting. In the north half of the district, access to public land is good but access to private land is low.

Since 2010, full coverage summer aerial surveys have been dedicated to both the south and north half of HD 321. From 2010 through 2022, an average of 75 percent of the harvest occurred during the general season and 37 percent of the bulls harvested had 6 or more points on one antler. In recent years there has been an increasing trend in the percent bull harvest during archery season, in the number of nonresident hunters, and in the number of days afield by nonresident hunters, suggesting that archery season has become quite popular in this district.

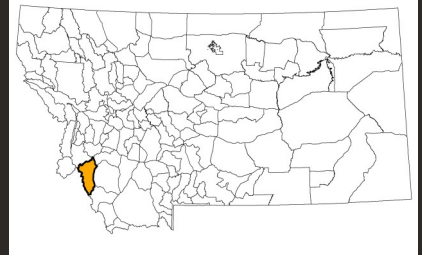
Management Challenges:

- Large shoot-outs on opening day.
- Lack of access in the north portion of the district.
- Large concentrations of elk on private land.



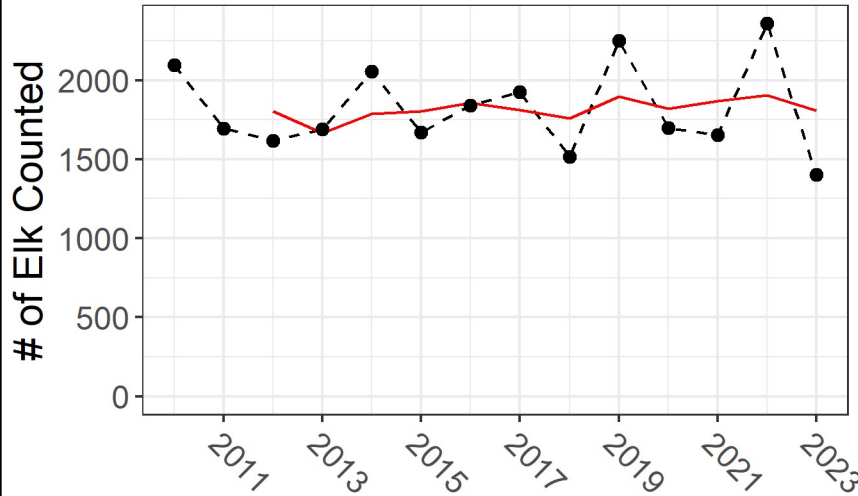
HD 321

West Big Hole Elk Management Unit



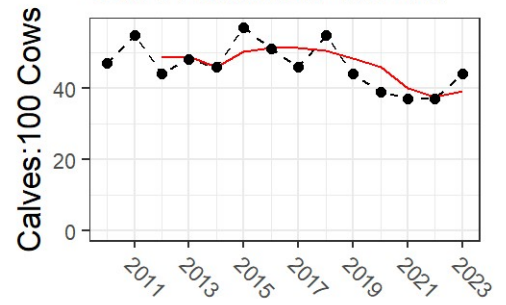
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 321

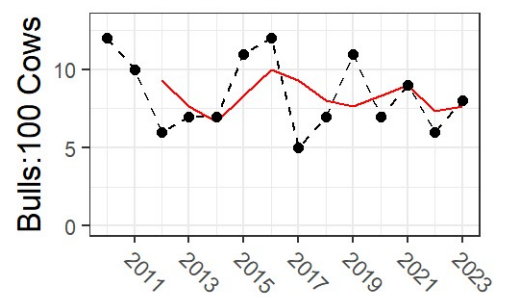


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. Surveys in HD 321 are conducted in the summer resulting in a calf production estimate rather than a recruitment estimate.

Calf Production- HD 321



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 321

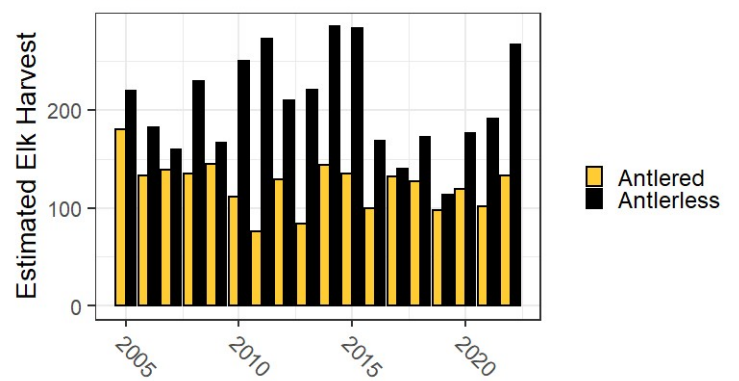


Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

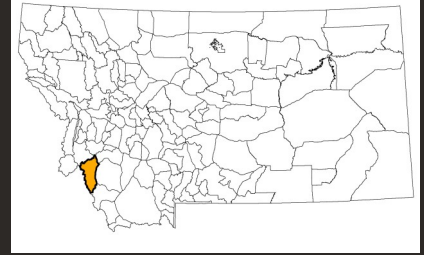
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
321	2006	1,351	8,236
	2008	1,764	10,532
	2010	1,903	10,986
	2012	2,297	13,270
	2014	2,189	13,271
	2016	1,900	12,832
	2018	1,811	11,911
	2020	1,735	11,461
	2022	1,617	10,439

Hunter effort and harvest data has been reconciled to current HD boundary.

Elk Harvest- HD 321



HD 321



West Big Hole Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain summer aerial survey counts between 800-1,000 elk observed in the portion of the HD south of Hwy. 43	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain summer aerial survey counts between 800-1,000 elk observed in the portion of the HD north of Hwy. 43	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Adjust hunting district boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	3-year average harvest on private land is greater than 30% 3-year average harvest on public land is greater than 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Complaints of chronic elk game damage are reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Promote hunter recruitment and retention	5% or more of the antlerless elk harvest is attributed to Youth and PTHFV hunters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use regulations that provide for special youth hunting opportunities
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use regulations that provide for special hunting opportunities for holders of a PTHFV
Maintain equitable allocation of bull elk harvest between rifle and archery hunters	3-year average archery bull harvest comprises 30% or less of total bull harvest in the portion of the HD South of Hwy. 43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide recommendations for travel management planning to maintain or improve elk security

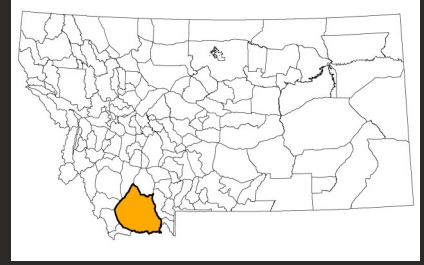


HD 322

Size: 3,039 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 63%



Gravelly Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 322 encompasses the Gravelly, Greenhorn, Ruby, Snowcrest, Blacktail, and Centennial mountain ranges in southwest Montana. The USFS administers about 24 percent of the district. About 20 percent is administered by the BLM, about 13 percent is administered by the DNRC, and about 37 percent is private lands. Three FWP-administered WMAs are within the district. Those include the Wall Creek, Blacktail, and Robb-Ledford WMAs. The district encompasses the Red Rocks Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, administered by the USFWS.

Legal access to public lands is high across most of the district. Across summer and early fall elk ranges, motorized route density is low and offers moderate to high habitat security. Motorized route density across winter ranges administered by state agencies and the BLM are very high and offer little to no habitat security. Hunter access to private lands is variable across the district, ranging from open through Type I Block Management Agreements to highly restricted. A measurable percentage of elk annually migrate to private agricultural lands during early fall. Past radio-collar research identified two herd strategies within the district. Two elk herds that encompass the Blacktail and Ruby mountain ranges are short-distance, elevational migrants that express high use of private agricultural lands during the fall. Five other wintering herds are long-distance migrants that overlap across summer range and spend most of the year on public lands. Depending on future hunter access and harvests, herds expressing different migratory strategies may need to be managed separately to meet management objectives.

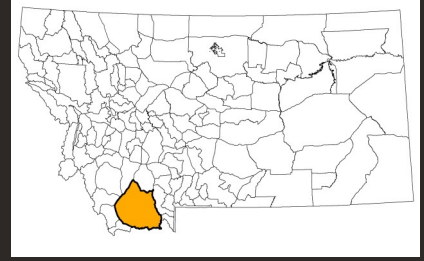
Management Challenges:

- Legal hunter access to concentrations of elk on private agricultural lands.
- Dense motor vehicle routes across rangelands administered by state agencies and the BLM.
- Minimal enforcement of unauthorized motor vehicle travel across all public lands.
- Influence of fall snow accumulation on harvest.

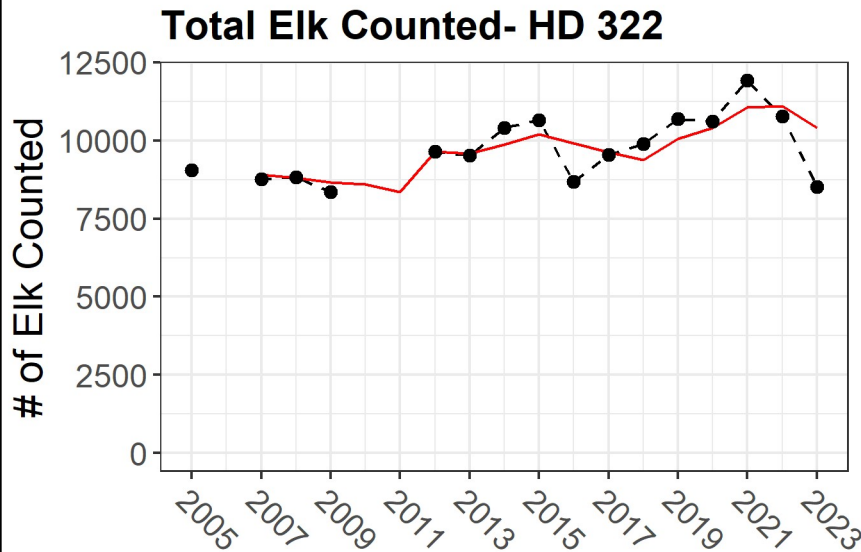


HD 322

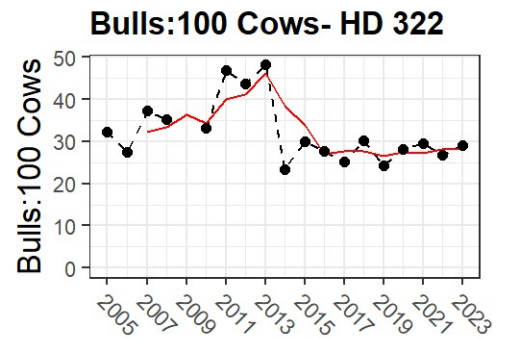
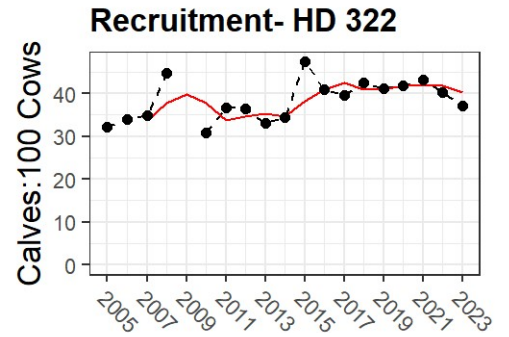
Gravelly Elk Management Unit



Current Population Status & Trend



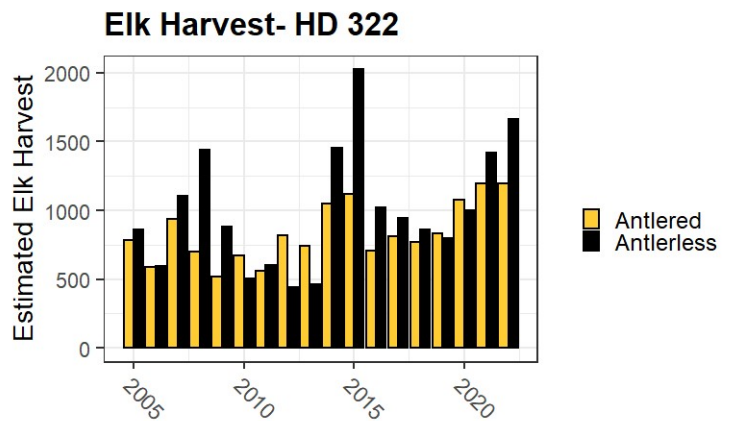
Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

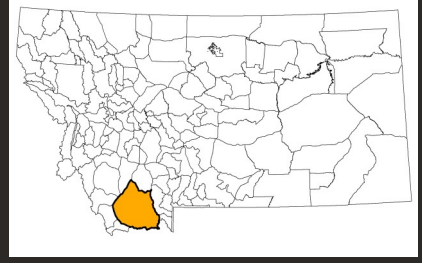
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
322	2006	6,469	34,918
	2008	9,740	55,897
	2010	6,840	38,004
	2012	6,638	36,790
	2014	9,840	56,580
	2016	9,734	59,933
	2018	8,380	51,190
	2020	8,821	59,869
	2022	8,436	56,329

Hunter effort and harvest data has been reconciled to current HD boundary.



HD 322

Gravelly Elk Management Unit



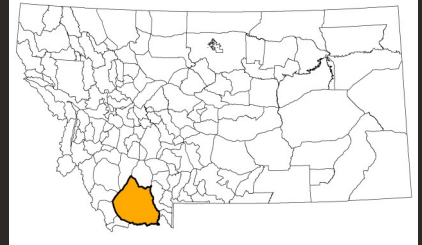
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 6,000-10,000 elk observed	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size</p> <p>If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	<p>3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Promote habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas



HD 322

Gravelly Elk Management Unit



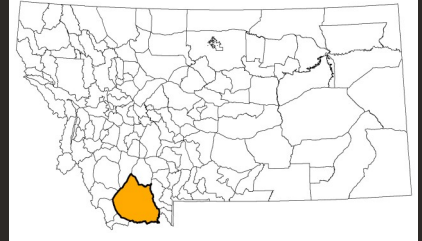
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use of public land	Stable or increasing number of hunter reports of elk observations on public land and elk harvest on public land collected via hunter check stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality forage available to elk across all seasonal ranges Promote recreational use plans that minimize elk displacement from public lands Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to minimize displacement of elk from public lands Maintain existing cooperative livestock grazing systems on WMAs
	No increase in elk game damage complaints	
Maximize tolerance for elk on private ag lands in proximity to WMAs	Number of annual elk distribution complaints received from neighboring landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider development of cooperative livestock grazing systems with neighboring landowners on WMAs currently without livestock Communicate with WMA neighboring landowners experiencing damage from elk about potential mitigations and prevention methods
Maximize elk use of Robb Ledford, Blacktail and Wall Creek WMAs during fall and winter	Percentage of hunters that harvested or observed elk on WMA is stable or increasing (using check station data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement habitat management projects that maximize the quantity of quality fall and winter forage available to elk across WMAs Consider WMA neighboring landowner tolerance for elk Update recreational travel plans to minimize elk displacement from WMAs by motorized and nonmotorized travel
	Total elk counted on WMA is greater than elk using adjacent private lands during winter aerial surveys	
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use WMA-specific hunting regulations that allow for harvest but minimize displacement of elk from WMAs during the general hunting season Adjust HD boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	



HD 322

Gravelly Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a combination of antlered and antlerless harvest matrices to distribute harvest between sexes via adjusting season structure and/or quotas • Consider implementation and evaluation of harvest regulations that allow for yearling bull harvest
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	<p>Age classes of hunter-harvested bulls detected at check stations include 1-2 years old, 3-4 years old, over 4 years old</p> <p>Bulls that are non-brow-tined, brow-tined with less than 6 points, and brow-tined with 6 or more points are observed during winter aerial surveys</p>	

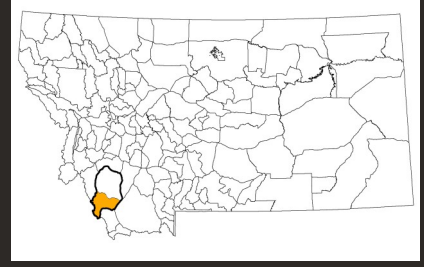


HD 329

Size: 790 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 66%



Pioneer Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 329 has diverse topography and land cover. The north-western portion includes the upper end of the Big Hole Valley and the timbered mountains stretching between Big Hole Pass and the Continental Divide. The eastern portion is made up of rolling hills of sage-steppe grassland with smaller patches of timber. Dividing these is the sage-brush dominated Bannack Bench. The southern edge follows the willow-dominated riparian corridor of Horse Prairie Creek. Most public and private land is seasonally devoted to livestock. Timber extraction has been important in the forested mountains in the western part of the district. The legacy of mining is evident on the landscape and some claims are still active. Increasingly, residential development has taken place in elk migratory and winter range. This trend is expected to continue with potential consequences for elk movements and populations.

In summer and early fall, elk primarily use higher elevation mountains in the western portion of the district. Some elk migrate southwest into Idaho with the onset of winter; others move east across the Bannack Bench to the eastern hill country of HD 329 and HD 302. Wintering elk numbers are augmented by animals migrating from east and west Pioneers. Elk use some portions of Horse Prairie and Trail Creeks year-round, but numbers increase markedly during the hunting season. In this area, large numbers of highly visible elk are found on private lands that are largely inaccessible to public hunters. The notable increase in elk on private lands along Horse Prairie Creek coincides with the onset of archery season. Migratory movements along the Bannack Bench and movements onto public lands near Horse Prairie Creek regularly lead to law enforcement issues during the rifle season.

Access to elk on private land is very limited; however, some valuable hunting access exists in two conservation easements and BMAs in and around the Horse Prairie area. Road access is good across the majority of public lands, though this does have negative consequences for elk security. Some areas of good security during the early rifle season exist between Selway and Big Hole Pass. This is improved by October 15th closures to motorized travel on some roads. However, this district has seen strong growth in hunter days over the past 10 years. Some of this growth is due to growth in archery pressure occurring prior to road closures.

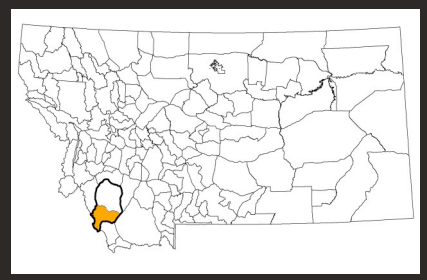
Management Challenges:

- Increasing pressure from motorized transportation on both authorized and unauthorized routes is reducing elk security and habitat quality.
- The increase in motorized disturbance is creating conflicts between user groups, creating increased issues with invasive plants, and potentially displacing elk to private lands.
- Hunter crowding.
- This area is expected to experience increasing pressure from residential and energy development in elk migration corridors and winter range. These developments will impact elk space use and potentially populations.
- Hunter access may be constrained as these developments proceed.
- Elk are increasingly using private land throughout the year, though the issue is most severe during archery and general season.
- Hunter access to much of this private land is often very limited, creating de facto refuges for elk.



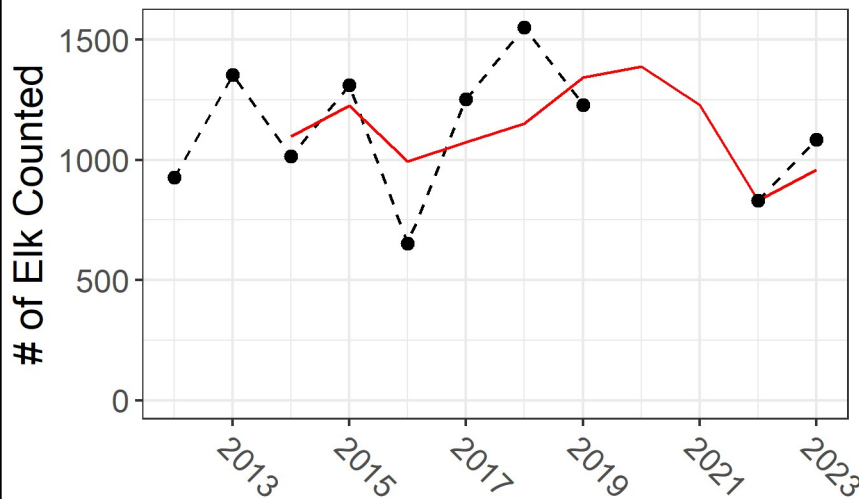
HD 329

Pioneer Elk Management Unit

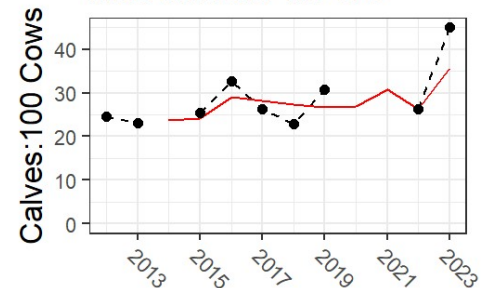


Current Population Status & Trend

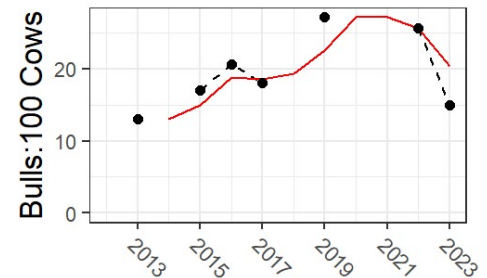
Total Elk Counted- HD 329



Recruitment- HD 329



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 329



Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

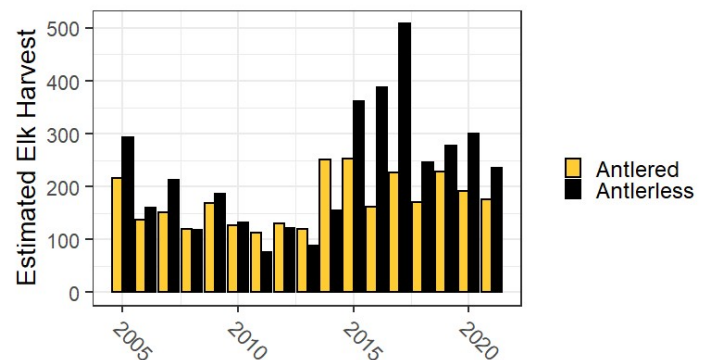
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
Former 329	2006	1,282	7,234
	2008	1,296	7,428
	2010	1,159	6,534
	2012	1,235	6,790
	2014	1,583	9,412
	2016	2,051	13,204
	2018	1,924	11,384
	2020	1,956	12,473

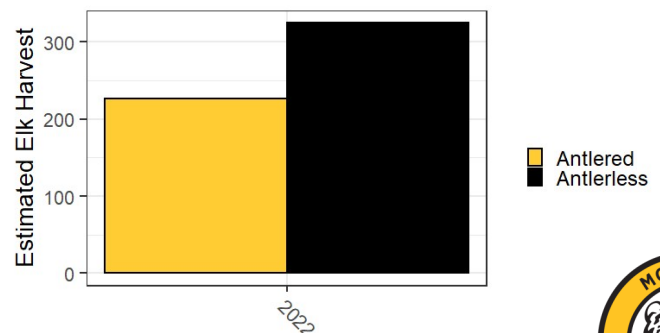
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
329	2022	1,970	12,303

Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022; harvest and hunter effort data displayed may not be directly comparable across years.

Elk Harvest- Former HD 329

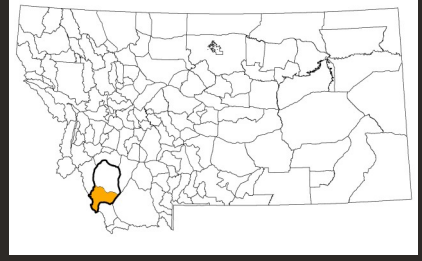


Elk Harvest- HD 329



HD 329

Pioneer Elk Management Unit



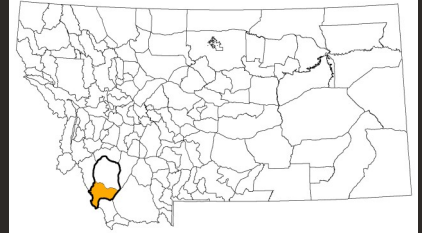
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
<p>Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 700-1,300 elk observed</p>	<p>3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size</p> <hr/> <p>If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private land • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public land
<p>Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater</p>	<p>3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HD 329

Pioneer Elk Management Unit



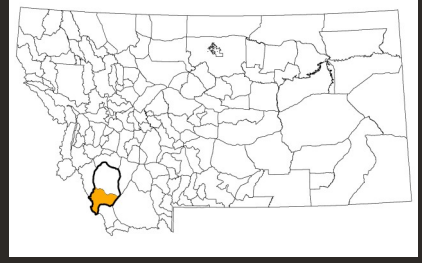
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Maintain >80% of HD as seasonally occupied elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Monitor elk distribution via annual aerial elk survey, harvest information, observations, and telemetry data when available • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
The landscape remains functionally permeable to elk seasonal movements	Elk are observed migrating to and from seasonal ranges through identified migration corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk while preserving open space and traditional agriculture • Use aerial surveys, harvest information, observations and telemetry data to identify and conserve migration corridors • Use Montana Action Plan and FWP's Terrestrial Wildlife Movement and Migration Strategy
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year average of annual game damage does not increase above long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Consider using public/private land-specific harvest regulations to minimize displacement of elk from public lands Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land



HD 329

Pioneer Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Hunter numbers and hunter days level off or decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Consider using public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute hunting pressure • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Consider implementation and evaluation of harvest regulations that allow for yearling bull harvest
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	5-year average of harvested bulls with 6 points or more on one antler is 35% or more	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined, brow-tined with less than 6 points, 6 points or more) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

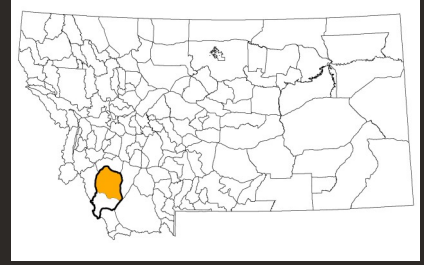


HD 331

Size: 1,361 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 81%



Pioneer Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting district 331 contains the Pioneer Mountains. The Big Hole River edges the western, northern, and north-eastern parts of the district. The south and southeastern boundaries follow Montana Highway 278 and I-15, respectively. The area is bisected by Grasshopper Creek and the Wise River. The majority of this district is mountainous and forested with scattered open parks. The edges of the district are lower elevation and dominated by sage-brush and agricultural lands. Land use is diverse though cattle production dominates both private and public lands. Other land uses include mining and some timber extraction. The Wise River Byway is popular for summer recreational activities. Residential development has been rapidly increasing in recent years on seasonal ranges, or in the case of the Grasshopper Valley, major elk migration routes.

The majority of elk in this district are elevational migrants moving from the low-elevation edges of the district to the higher-elevation Pioneer Mountains in the summer. The combination of timber cover and open parks make the central Pioneers particularly important to maternal elk. A number of elk that summer in the Pioneers will also migrate to other districts including HD 329, 321, or 319 during part or all of the winter. Radio-collar data reveals some of elk will also winter in Idaho. A series of large wildfires have occurred in the western Pioneers since 2007 and these have likely had both positive and negative consequences for elk summer/fall habitat. An increase in vacation homes built on former mining claims is an emerging issue for elk security, particularly in areas that would otherwise be closed to motorized transport. More widely, the proliferation of OHVs have made both official and user-made routes an issue for elk security during the summer and fall.

Extensive public lands provide elk hunting opportunity. Elk hunting access is also facilitated by five consistent BMAs of varying size and one conservation easement. Road density is relatively high in the east Pioneers though road conditions can be very rough. Road access is more limited in the west Pioneers, which contains the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area. This area has become increasingly popular with hunters, especially archery hunters trying to avoid the highly motorized hunting in the rest of the Pioneer EMU.

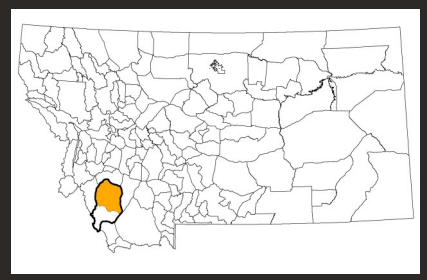
Management Challenges:

- Elk are increasingly using private land throughout the year, though the issue is most severe during the general hunting season.
- Hunter access to much of this private land is often limited, creating de facto refuges for elk.
- The concentration of elk also impacts neighboring traditional landowners that experience game damage.
- This area is experiencing increasing pressure from residential, mining, and energy development in elk seasonal ranges. These developments will impact elk space use and potentially populations.
- Hunter access may be constrained as these developments proceed.
- Increasing pressure from motorized transportation on both authorized and unauthorized routes is reducing elk security and habitat quality.
- The increase in motorized disturbance is creating conflicts between user groups, creating increased issues with invasive plants, and potentially displacing elk to private lands.
- Balancing hunters' desire for robust elk numbers with traditional landowners' desire for more aggressive management to reduce game damage.



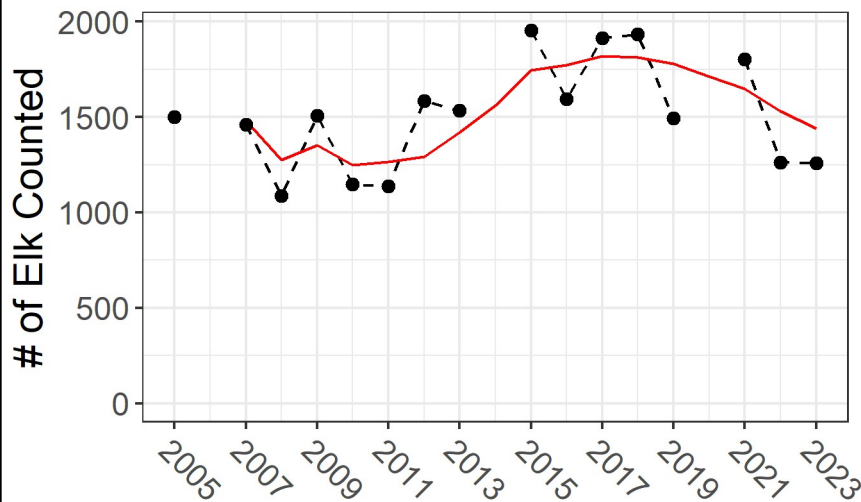
HD 331

Pioneer Elk Management Unit



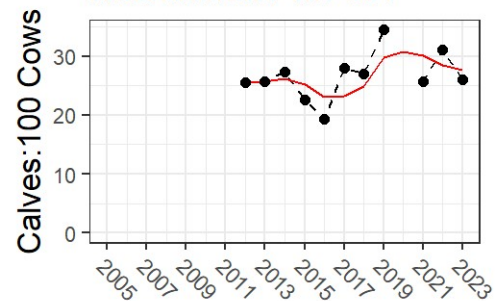
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 331

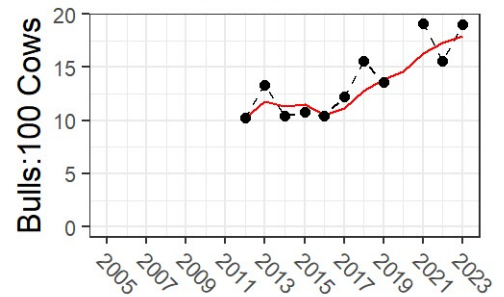


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 331



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 331

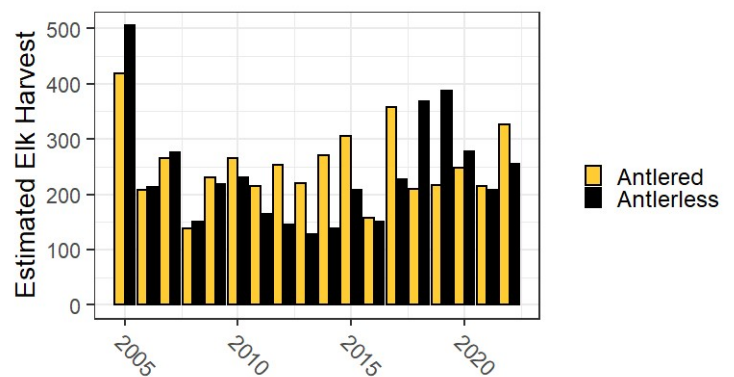


Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
331	2006	2,854	18,217
	2008	2,686	18,762
	2010	2,706	17,871
	2012	2,717	17,987
	2014	2,962	20,473
	2016	2,813	19,920
	2018	3,338	22,174
	2020	3,195	21,682
	2022	2,782	19,867

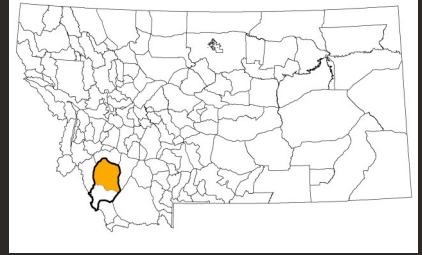
Hunter harvest and effort data was reconciled to current HD boundary.

Elk Harvest- HD 331



HD 331

Pioneer Elk Management Unit



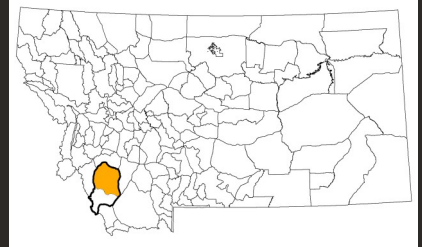
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,250-1,950 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public land
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security



HD 331

Pioneer Elk Management Unit



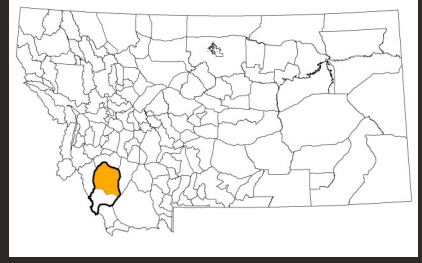
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Maintain 88% of HD as seasonally occupied elk habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Monitor elk distribution via annual aerial elk survey, harvest information, observations, and telemetry data when available • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk while preserving open space and traditional agriculture
	3-year average of check station data shows less than 50% of bull harvest occurs during the 1st weekend of general rifle season	
The landscape remains functionally permeable to elk seasonal movements	Elk are observed migrating to and from seasonal ranges through identified migration corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use aerial surveys, harvest information, observations and telemetry data to identify and conserve migration corridors • Use Montana Action Plan and FWP's Terrestrial Wildlife Movement and Migration Strategy
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	3-year average of annual game damage does not increase above long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to minimize displacement of elk from public lands



HD 331

Pioneer Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Minimize hunter crowding	20% or more of harvest occurs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	6-year hunter number average is 3,500 or fewer	
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider using public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute hunting pressure
Increase or maintain antlerless harvest success rates	B License success rate is within 25% or greater of long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	5-year average of harvested bulls with 6 or more points on one antler is over 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider implementation and evaluation of harvest regulations that allow for yearling bull harvest
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined, brow-tined with less than 6 points, 6 points or more) are observed during winter surveys	
Provide elk viewing opportunities in areas that the public can reasonably access	Summering elk groups continue use of mountain parks along the Wise River Byway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide recommendations to USFS on resource use and travel management as it concerns elk summer range habitat quality and security

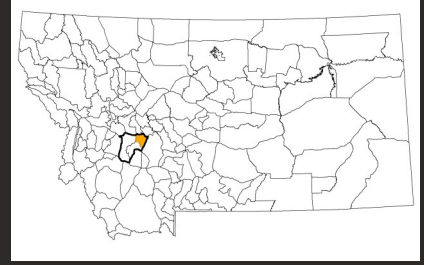


HD 335

Size: 217mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 56%



Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 335 lies immediately south of Helena, along the east slope of the Continental Divide and includes the headwaters of Tenmile Creek. It is located in the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (HLCNF) and is adjacent to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest along its southern boundary at the Occidental Plateau. It is further bounded by I-15 to the east, the Continental Divide to the west, and U.S. 12 and the City of Helena to the north. It is 56 percent public land with 46 percent of the land administered by the USFS. The Jericho and Lazyman roadless areas total 20,597 acres (15 percent) and are toward the northern part of the district. The remaining lands are managed by the BLM (8 percent), other state or local governments (2 percent), or are in private ownership (44 percent). Some of the elk in this district are migratory, with the majority of exchange expected to be east-west over the Continental Divide and with HD 380 (Elkhorns) to the east. Summer range for elk occurs almost entirely on public land. Fall use areas are also generally on public land unless weather induces elk to move to private land winter ranges at lower elevations. As much as 49 percent of the winter range occurs on private land.

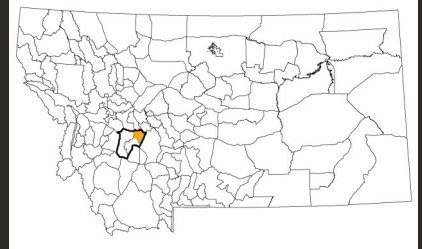
Access is very high due to the amount of public land and landowner cooperation. Motorized use of public land has diminished habitat security and effectiveness. Public access to public land is extensive, and hunting is not restricted on any significant parcels of private agricultural land. Motorized travel on public land is regulated through National Forest and BLM travel plans. The HLCNF travel plan was revised in 2016, which resulted in some improvement in habitat security and effectiveness. The BLM travel plan has not been revised since the prior elk plan. Approximately 90 percent of all land is within 1 mile of an open, motorized route during fall hunting seasons. Open-motorized route density on the HLCNF is high during fall hunting seasons, ranging from a low of 0.8 road miles/mi² to a high of 1.1 road miles/mi², and habitat security and effectiveness are poor, with the exception of the two inventoried roadless areas. The district is adjacent to Helena, and recreational use in all forms is increasing in all seasons. There are two ranches enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, one of which has maintained enrollment since the program's inception.

The number of elk observed during postseason aerial surveys sometimes varied sharply between surveys and is thought to be due to changes in the distribution of elk. Distribution of elk shifts with varying severity of winters and human activities. Game damage complaints are rare and mostly occur during severe winters. Making recommendations to landowners that do not qualify for game damage about storing hay alleviated some of those complaints.



HD 335

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit

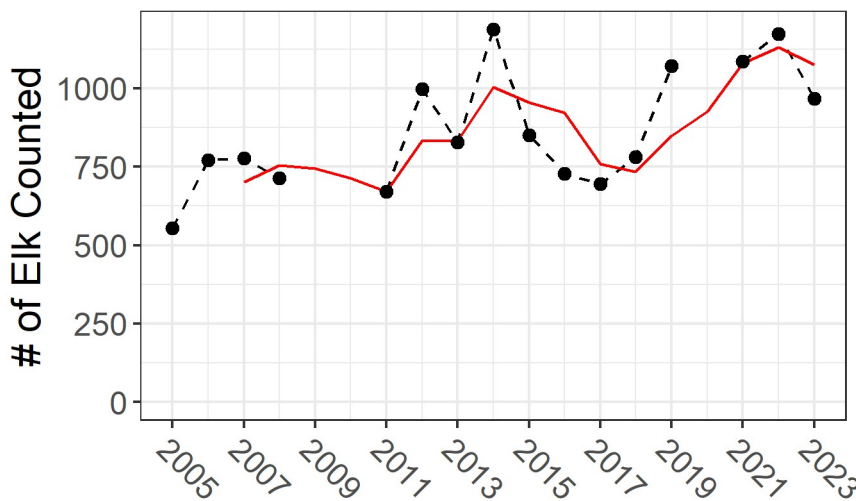


Management Challenges:

- Winter and some summer ranges are at risk due to continued housing development.
- Open, motorized-route density on public land reduces habitat security and habitat effectiveness.
- Extensive motorized use of public land via USFS and BLM system roads and illegal off-road use may be contributing to redistribution of elk from public to private land.
- Snowmobile use may be contributing to redistribution of wintering elk from public to private land, resulting in game damage complaints and lower landowner tolerance for elk.
- Increasing motorized and nonmotorized recreation on public land.

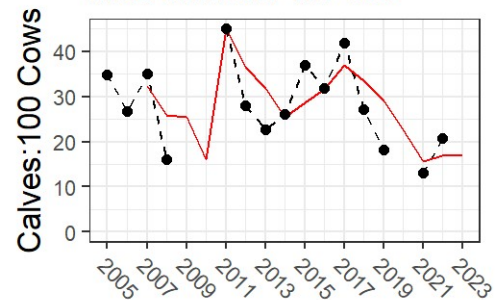
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 335

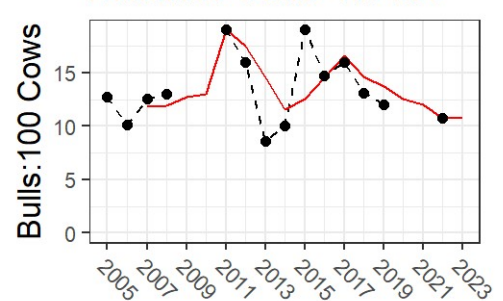


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 335



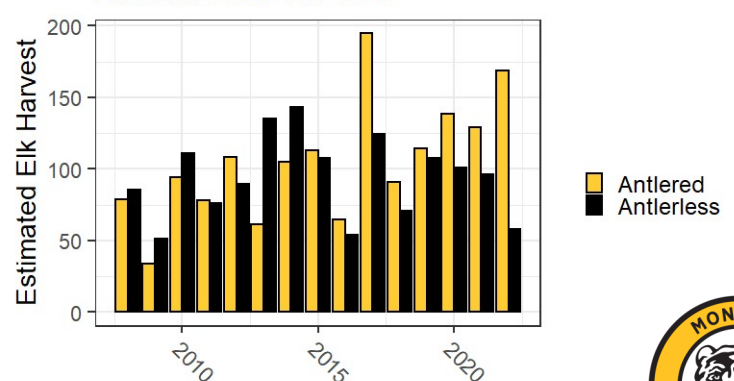
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 335



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

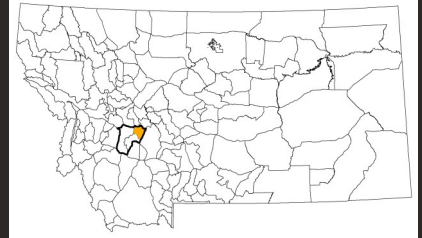
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
335	2008	1,004	7,116
	2010	1,050	7,727
	2012	1,234	8,691
	2014	1,365	10,707
	2016	1,480	11,922
	2018	1,341	9,974
	2020	1,369	11,582
	2022	1,415	11,263

Elk Harvest- HD 335



HD 335

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 500-1,400 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

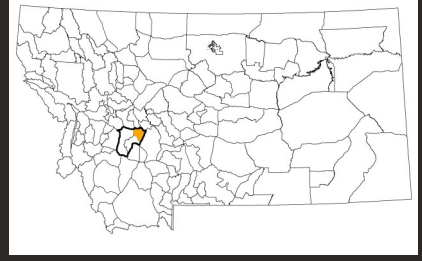
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk continue to migrate between seasonal ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Encourage retention of all designated and de facto roadless areas and proposed wilderness areas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Pursue new conservation easements • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas



HD 335

Deer Lodge Elk Management Unit



Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected at hunter check stations and/or in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined bulls) are observed during winter aerial surveys	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	

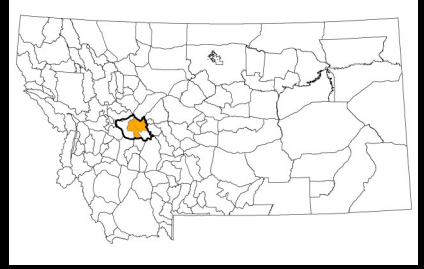


HDs 339 & 343

Size: 540 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest
& Grassland

Public Ownership: 40%



Granite Butte Elk Management Unit



****HD 339: Special Management District for Bull Elk****



District Summary

Hunting Districts 339 and 343 lie north of Helena along the east slope of the Continental Divide and include the headwaters of Little Prickly Pear, Canyon, and Lyons creeks. They overlap with the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (HLCNF) and are further bounded by Lyons Creek to the north, U.S. 12 to the south, and reach to the eastern edge of the Helena Valley and the Missouri River. Combined they are 40 percent public land with 20 percent administered by the USFS. The Sweeney Creek, Specimen, Nevada Mountain, and Anacoda Hill roadless areas are near or overlapping the Continental Divide; these are important public land habitat for elk and other wildlife. The remaining lands are managed by the BLM (12 percent); DNRC (7 percent); other federal, state, or local governments (less than 1 percent); or are in private ownership (60 percent). The Sleeping Giant Wilderness Area occurs on BLM land. The Canyon Creek WMA is located in both districts and provides access to federal and state lands from Montana Highway 279. Some of the elk in this district are migratory, with the majority of exchange expected to be east-west over the Divide and some exchange with HD 335 to the south and HD 423 to the north. Summer range for elk occurs almost entirely on public land. Fall use areas are also generally on public land unless weather induces elk to move to private land winter ranges at lower elevations. As much as 60 percent of the winter range occurs on private land.

Access is very high due to the amount of public land and landowner cooperation. Motorized use of public land has diminished habitat security and effectiveness. Public access to public land is extensive, and hunting is restricted on only a few significant parcels of private agricultural land. Private landowners in both districts allow public hunting access through FWP's Block Management Program or other access agreements or administer their own system of public hunting. There are numerous conservation easements in these units, including four administered by FWP.

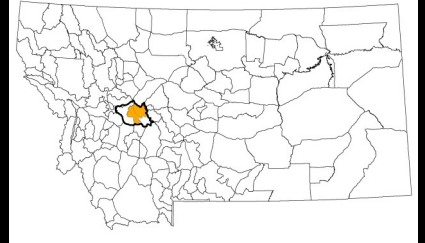
Motorized travel on public land is regulated through USFS and BLM travel plans. The HLCNF travel plans were revised in 2016, which resulted in some improvement in habitat security and effectiveness. The BLM travel plan has not been revised since the prior elk plan. Approximately 67 percent of all land is within 1 mile of an open, motorized route during fall hunting seasons. Open-motorized route density on the HLCNF is high during fall hunting seasons, ranging from a low of 0.9 road miles/mi² to a high of 1.1 road miles/mi², which reduces habitat security and effectiveness. The districts are close enough to Helena that recreational use in all forms is increasing in all seasons and hunter crowding is an issue. There are 10 ranches enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, and many of those have been enrolled since the program's inception.

The number of elk observed during postseason aerial surveys increased, and distribution of elk shifts with varying severity of winters and human activities. Game damage complaints are rare and mostly occur during severe winters. Providing stack yard materials to landowners that qualify for game damage has eliminated some conflicts, and making recommendations to landowners that do not qualify for game damage about storing hay alleviated some of the other conflicts.



HDs 339 & 343

Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

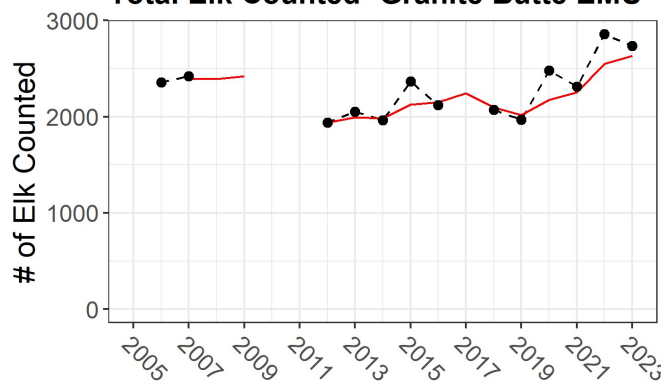


Management Challenges:

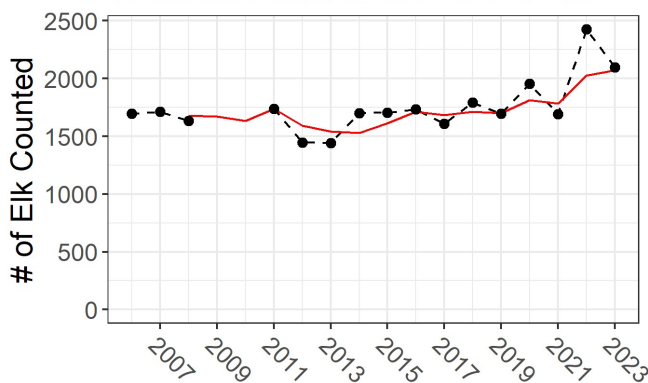
- Distribution of elk throughout the EMU shifts with varying severity of winters. Elk will winter in HD 293 during mild to moderate winters, but a significant proportion will move into HDs 339 and 343 during more severe winters to take advantage of east-slope Chinook winds.
- Some elk counted east of the Divide in winter are not there during the fall hunting seasons.
- Winter ranges are at risk due to continued housing development, particularly in the eastern portion of HD 343.
- Small, non-commercial properties in the eastern portion of HD 343 that do not qualify for game damage assistance experience conflicts with elk.
- Hunter crowding.

Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- Granite Butte EMU

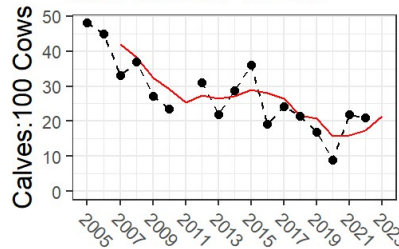


Total Elk Counted- HDs 339 & 343

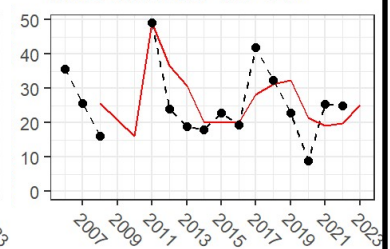


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

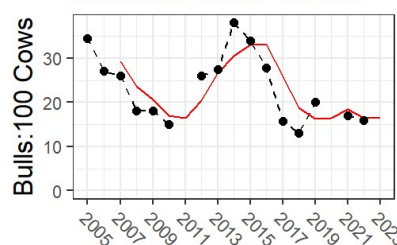
Recruitment- HD 339



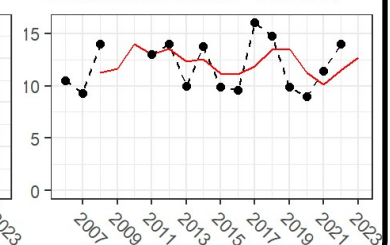
Recruitment- HD 343



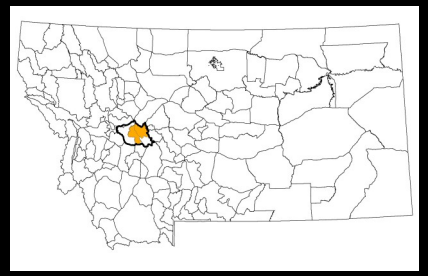
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 339



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 343



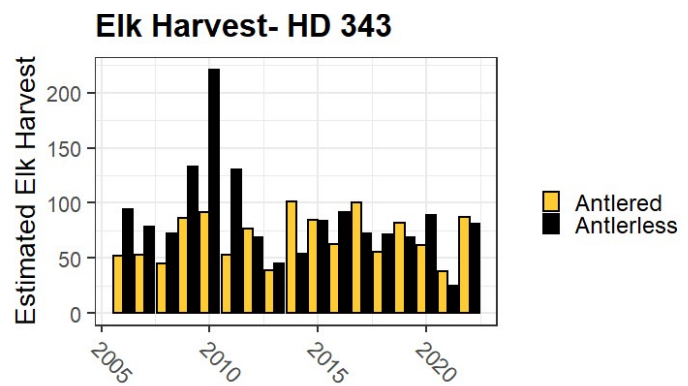
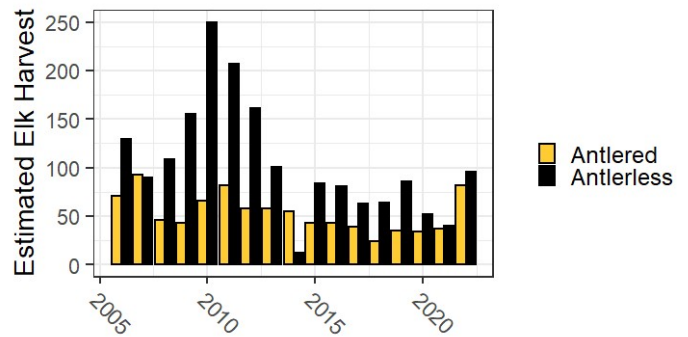
HDs 339 & 343



Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
339	2006	835	5,598
	2008	950	6,583
	2010	1,170	7,329
	2012	1,459	8,815
	2014	833	6,637
	2016	739	5,794
	2018	752	5,613
	2020	733	5,077
343	2006	946	6,417
	2008	1,215	9,666
	2010	1,523	12,707
	2012	1,402	11,211
	2014	1,230	9,098
	2016	1,298	11,122
	2018	1,118	9,262
	2020	1,167	9,443
	2022	1,041	8,439

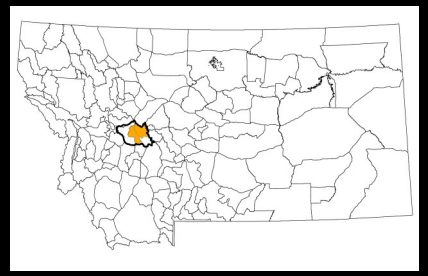


Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain aerial survey counts in the Granite Butte EMU between 1,800-3,500 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Maintain winter aerial survey counts in HDs 339/343 between 1,200-2,600 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
HD 339 bull:cow ratio is 15:100 or greater OR Total number of bulls observed is within 25% of long-term average (10+ years)	3-year average bull:cow ratio is at or above minimum bull:cow threshold OR Total number of bulls observed is within 25% of long-term average (10+ years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
HD 343 bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is at or above minimum bull:cow threshold	



HDs 339 & 343



Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk continue to migrate between seasonal ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	HD 343 3-year average of annual game damage does not increase above long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage retention of all designated and de facto roadless areas and proposed wilderness areas • Pursue new conservation easements and monitor existing conservation easements • Work with public land managers to improve habitat effectiveness, increase elk security, and improve quality of native forage

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
HD 339 Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	The average age of bulls harvested on either-sex permit is 5.5 or more years old	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull harvest on General Elk License is within or above 25% of the long-term average for each district	

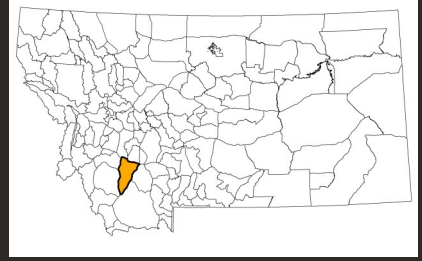


HD 340

Size: 851 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 49%



Highland Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 340 is located in the Butte-Whitehall-Dillon vicinity. This HD encompasses the Highland Mountains and the lower portion of the Big Hole River. It is bound by the Beaverhead and Jefferson rivers to the east, I-90 to the north, and I-15 to the west. Approximately 53 percent of the general elk range occurs on public land (BLM, USFS, and a small amount of DNRC) and 47 percent on private land. Regarding elk winter range specifically, use shifts to 76 percent public land and 24 percent private. Most of the HD is easily accessible except for portions of the east side of the Highlands where access is limited. FWP has maintained six BMAs in this HD. Additionally, many private landowners provide some level of free public hunting access. Approximately 85 percent of the HD provides hunting recreation characterized as “moderate to high levels of motorized access” and 15 percent provides more of a backcountry recreational experience.

There are several herds that comprise the elk population in HD 340. Each of these herds is migratory, although some herds make larger movements between seasonal ranges than others. All herds generally stay in the district year-round although temporary movement to an adjacent HD does occasionally occur. On average, 89 percent of the harvest occurs during the general season and 30 percent of the bulls harvested have 6 or more points on one antler. Wildlife viewing occurs throughout the district during all seasons of the year.

FWP assisted DNRC with a key land exchange in 2016 that increased public land in the Rochester Basin area of HD 340 by 245 acres, put higher quality wildlife habitat in public ownership, and secured access in perpetuity to thousands of acres of public land that previously was difficult to access.

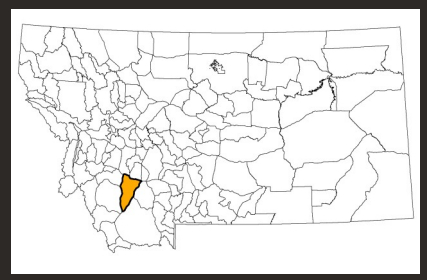
Management Challenges:

- No travel management plan on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.
- Poor enforcement of travel management on public land (BLM and USFS).
- Poor public access on the east side of the HD.



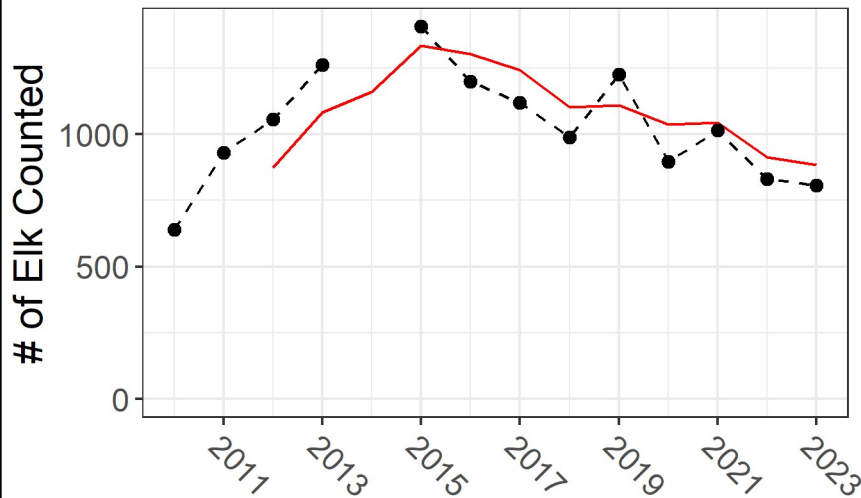
HD 340

Highland Elk Management Unit



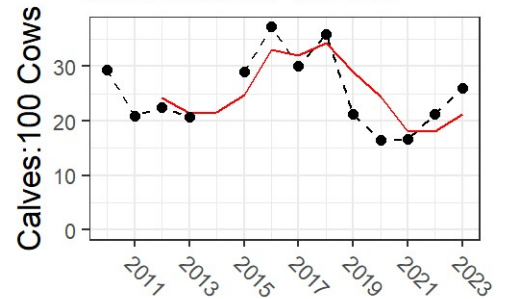
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 340

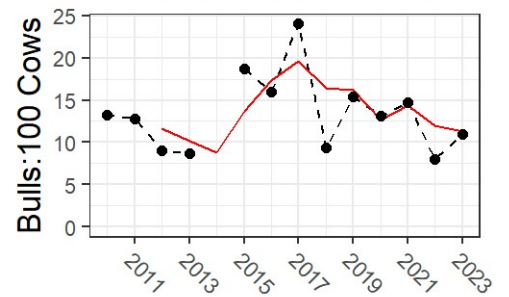


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 340



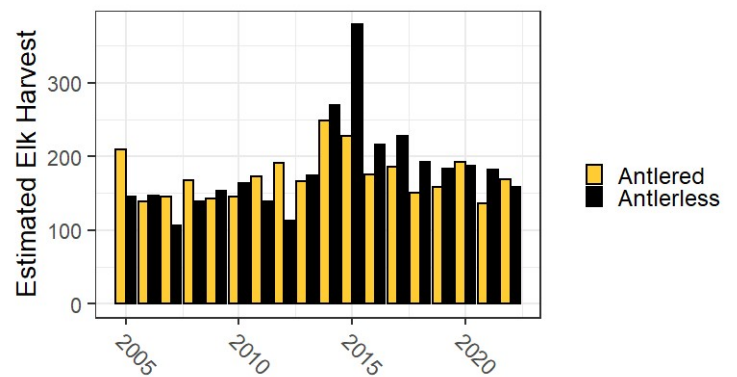
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 340



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

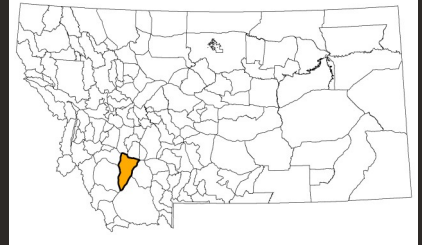
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
340	2006	1,669	10,008
	2008	1,615	11,923
	2010	1,795	12,753
	2012	2,016	15,452
	2014	2,675	19,549
	2016	2,412	19,547
	2018	2,217	16,576
	2020	2,419	19,040
	2022	1,922	14,720

Elk Harvest- HD 340



HD 340

Highland Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 800-1,200 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	3-year average harvest on private land is greater than 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
	3-year average harvest on public land is greater than 30%	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Complaints of chronic elk game damage are reduced	

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use regulations that provide for special youth hunting opportunities • Use regulations that provide for special hunting opportunities for holders of a PTHFV
Promote hunter recruitment and retention	5% or more of the antlerless elk harvest is attributed to Youth and PTHFV hunters	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	

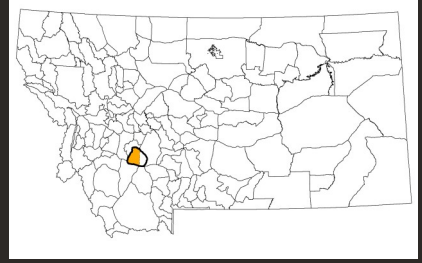


HD 350

Size: 537 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 67%



Whitetail-Bull Mountain Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 350 is located in the Butte-Boulder-Whitehall vicinity. This HD spans from Elk Park summer range on the west to the Whitetail Valley winter range on the east. It is bound by I-15 between Boulder and Butte to the north and west, I-90 between Butte and Whitehall to the south, and the Whitehall-Boulder Road to the east. Approximately 81 percent of the general elk range occurs on public land (USFS, BLM, and small amount of USFWS) and 12 percent on private land. Eighty-nine percent of elk winter range occurs on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest while 9 percent occurs on private land. Public access is good throughout the HD except on the west side where access through Elk Park is limited. FWP has maintained four BMAs in this district and holds one perpetual conservation easement on a ranch in the Whitetail Valley.

Much of HD 350 is forested, with Douglas fir and Rocky Mountain juniper occurring at lower elevations and lodge pole pine dominating upper-elevation forests. Habitat concerns include conifer expansion into shrubland and grasslands on elk winter range and beetle-killed lodgepole falling and piling up in elk summering and transition areas, greatly impeding movement. In 2021, the Haystack Fire burned over 10,000 acres in the Little Boulder Creek drainage on the northern end of HD 350. This fire reset the ecological seral stage of the lodgepole forest and burned much of the downed timber. It will provide very good elk summer range habitat over the next decade.

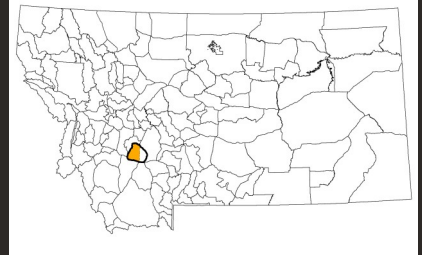
Elk generally winter on the east and north side of the HD and calve and summer in the Whitetail Reservoir and Elk Park areas. All herds generally stay in the district year-round although movement across the Whitehall-Boulder Road boundary between HDs 350 and 370 does occur. On average, 87 percent of the harvest occurs during the general season and 32 percent of the bulls harvested have 6 or more points on one antler. Wildlife viewing occurs primarily in the Whitetail Valley and Elk Park where elk are most visible.

HD 350 had been managed together with HD 370 from 2006 to 2019 because of the regular movement of elk across the Whitehall-Boulder Road boundary during hunting season and the similarity in access. However, access in HD 370 has become more restrictive in recent years, making it necessary to manage each HD separately.



HD 350

Whitetail-Bull Mountain Elk Management Unit

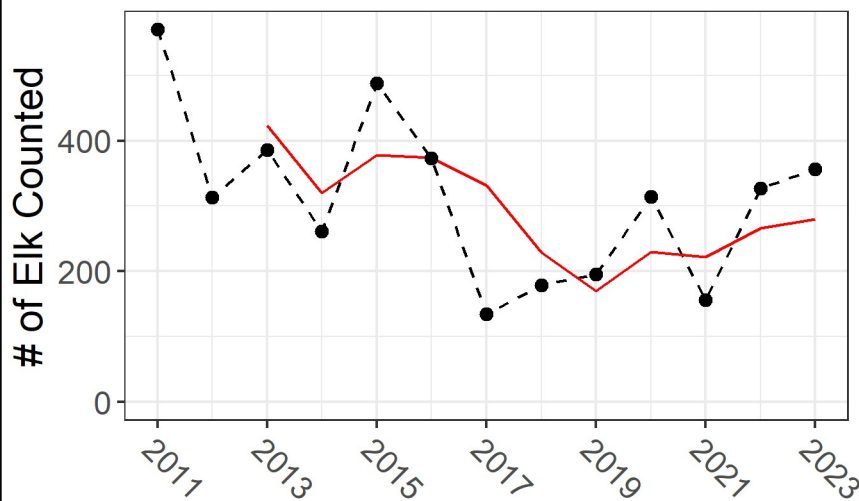


Management Challenges:

- Increasing trend in hunting pressure from larger southwest Montana communities (Bozeman, Helena).
- No travel management plan on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.
- Lack of enforcement of travel management on BLM.
- Beetle-kill lodgepole forests and Douglas fir/Rocky Mountain juniper encroachment on elk seasonal ranges.

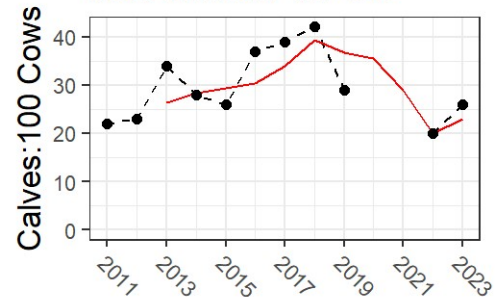
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 350

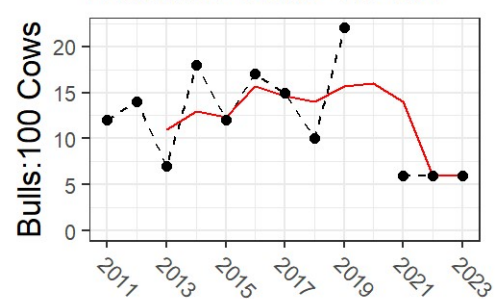


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 350



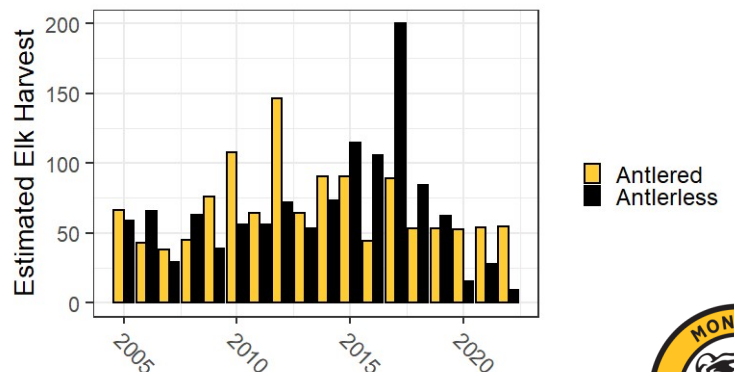
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 350



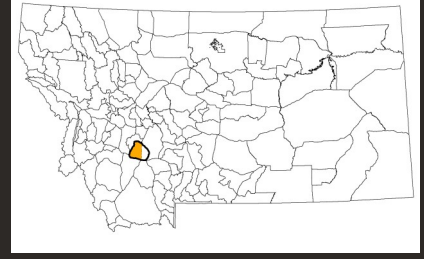
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
350	2006	825	5,881
	2008	877	6,689
	2010	1,110	8,345
	2012	1,245	9,292
	2014	1,298	9,530
	2016	1,282	10,092
	2018	1,197	9,206
	2020	900	6,314
	2022	815	6,817

Elk Harvest- HD 350



HD 350



Whitetail-Bull Mountain Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 300-400 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	3-year average harvest on private land is greater than 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
	3-year average harvest on public land is greater than 30%	
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Complaints of chronic elk game damage are reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Promote hunter recruitment and retention	5% or more of the antlerless elk harvest is attributed to Youth and PTHFV hunters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use regulations that provide for special youth hunting opportunities • Use regulations that provide for special hunting opportunities for holders of a PTHFV • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	

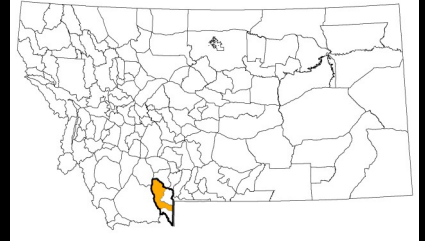


HD 360

Size: 678 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 54%



Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 360 includes the west side of the Madison Mountain Range from Ennis Lake to Hebgen Lake. It includes USFS land where elk summer and private land where elk winter. FWP owns Bear Creek WMA, which represents 3,458 acres of diverse habitat from mountain foothill winter range to high-elevation summer range. Hunter access to public lands in HD 360 includes scattered DNRC and BLM lands in the agricultural flats, access points in Bear Creek WMA, and USFS trailheads at Indian Creek, Papoose Creek, and USFS lands north of Hebgen Lake. Limited motorized access is allowed east of Beaver Creek Road, and no motorized access is allowed in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area.

There are two herd units that winter in the Madison Valley. The HD 360 North (360N) elk herd generally spends winter north of the Ennis Airport and is associated with the Jack Creek and Cedar Creek drainages. Some elk may reside in the Madison Valley year-round, while others may move higher into the Madison Mountains, even crossing to the Big Sky area along the West Fork of the Gallatin River. The HD 360 South (360S) elk herd generally spends winter south of the Ennis Airport and has a diverse migratory behavior which includes individual summer ranges spread across HD 310 (the Upper Gallatin watershed), the Cabin Creek area north of Hebgen Lake, and the Henry's Lake area of Montana and Idaho.

The elk herds that winter in the Madison Valley present substantial hunter opportunity, but also substantial game damage and brucellosis risk to agricultural producers. For more than 15 years, working groups of concerned landowners have met with FWP leadership to discuss reducing the elk population of the valley. One challenge is that the landowners who are concerned with agricultural damage and brucellosis risk may allow generous hunting access whereas landowners less concerned with damage may choose not to allow hunter access. Elk may take refuge from hunters on and around these private lands during the fall hunting season, which can hinder harvest thereby inflating the elk population and resulting in more winter and spring damage.

Elk in HD 360 have had several diseases, including brucellosis, echinococcus (Hydatid cysts), and mange. During severe winters, starvation deaths can occur, particularly if the population is over 5,000 elk, but in severe winters elk will seek haystacks and cattle feedlines to offset the limitations of natural forage availability and accessibility. Severe winters therefore result in more extreme conflict situations.

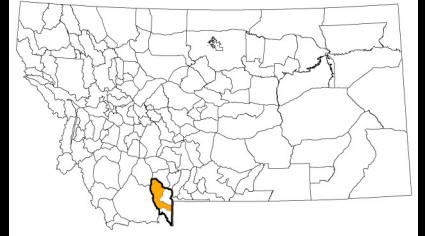
Management Challenges:

- Not all landowners are willing to allow hunter access to elk during general archery and rifle seasons.
- Many landowners allow significant access, but the elk are not always on their properties during general rifle season.
- Elk may use refuge areas during rifle season and move onto agricultural areas after general rifle season ends.
- The elk herd causes significant agricultural risk and damage.
- Brucellosis has been detected in elk in this HD; it falls within the Designated Surveillance Area and requires implementation of the Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis Work Plan to minimize impacts to livestock.
- Influence of fall snow accumulation on harvest; the Madison Valley exists on an elevational gradient and years with heavier snows during fall and winter will push elk into more accessible areas (generally agricultural areas) and harvest will be higher whereas years with lighter snows during fall and winter will result in less harvest.



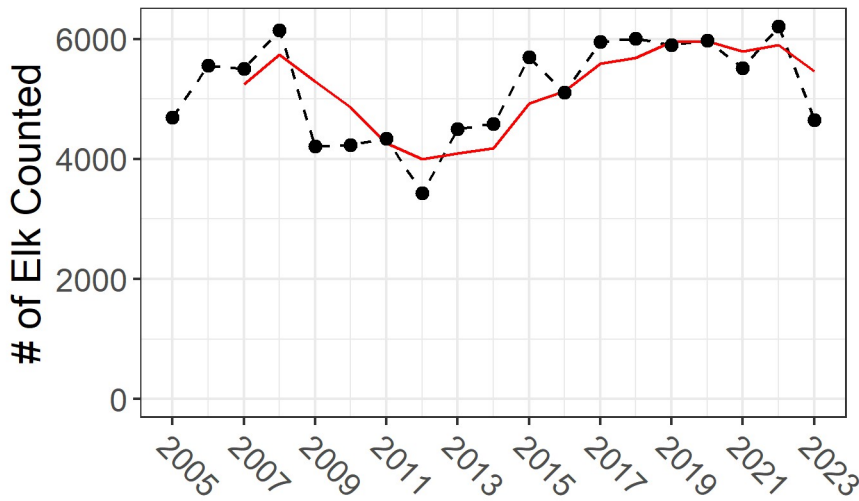
HD 360

Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit

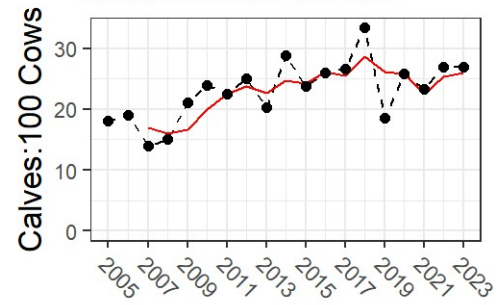


Current Population Status & Trend

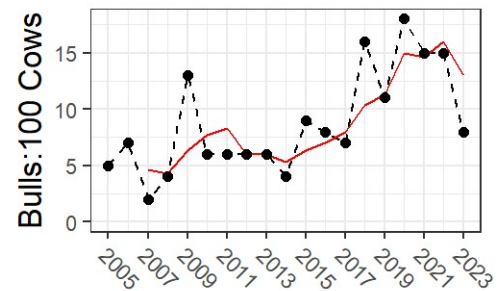
Total Elk Counted- HD 360



Recruitment- HD 360



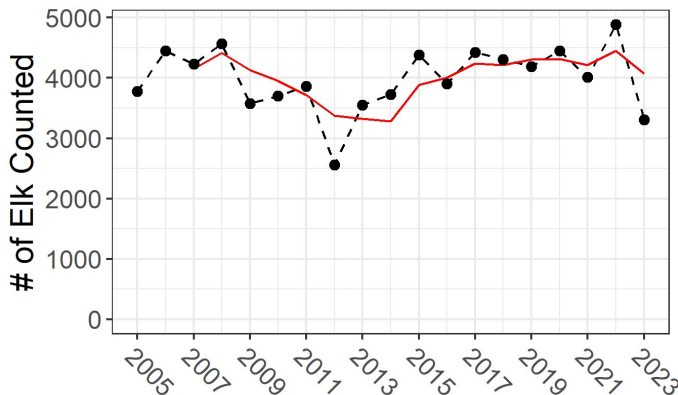
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 360



Total Elk Counted- HD 360 North



Total Elk Counted- HD 360 South

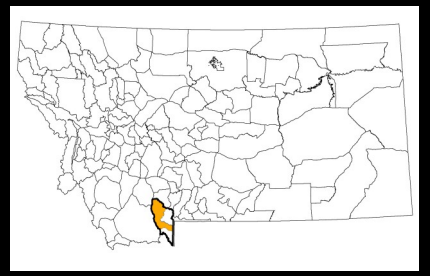


Note: Due to landowner concerns about low-level flights disturbing wildlife and livestock, flights do not fully classify the large elk groups on agricultural lands. Calf:cow ratios are samples taken from ground surveys. Bull:cow ratios include only bachelor bull groups that can be classified along the foothills (away from agricultural lands) and do not include spikes or raghorns in the large cow/calf groups.

Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.



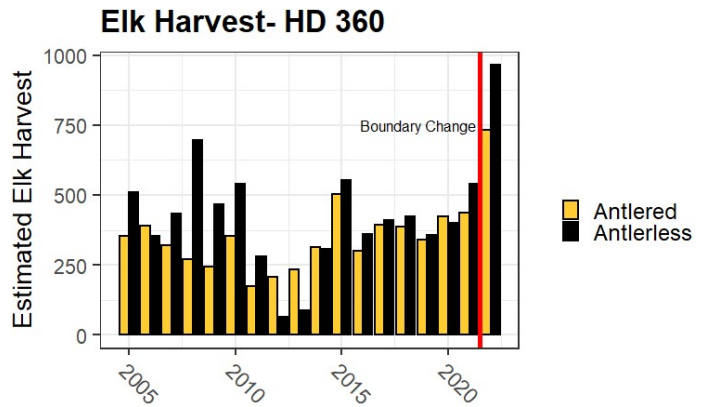
HD 360



Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
360	2006	2,801	14,740
	2008	3,857	22,367
	2010	3,168	18,898
	2012	2,023	11,695
	2014	2,819	16,134
	2016	3,357	22,104
	2018	3,009	20,063
	2020	3,298	24,054
	2022*	3,541	24,210



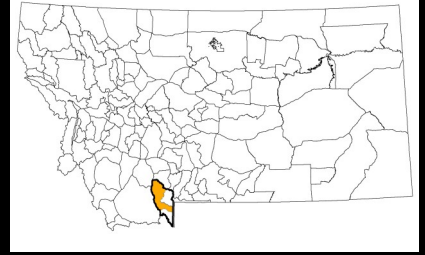
*Hunter effort and harvest estimates were reconciled to current HD boundary with the exception of a minor boundary change in 2022.

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 3,300-4,700 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land
	If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas



HD 360



Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit

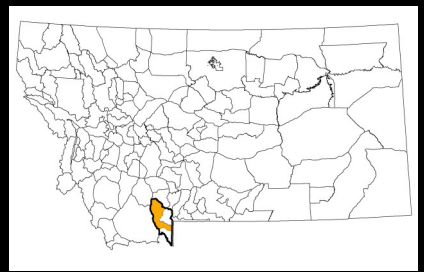
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	40-70% of elk harvest occurs on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use hunter check station data to gather data • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Maintain elk distribution between the HD 360N and HD 360S herds (north and south of Ennis Airport)	Winter aerial survey counts between 2,500 and 3,500 south of the Ennis Airport (HD 360S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access
	Winter aerial survey counts between 800 and 1,200 north of the Ennis Airport (HD 360N)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maintain elk distribution across landownerships with available habitat throughout the year	Elk GPS collar data shows elk use of USFS lands during summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weed spraying on Bear Creek WMA • Habitat improvement projects on Bear Creek WMA
	Number of summer elk game damage complaints remains below five per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation management on Bear Creek WMA • Enforcement of winter closures on Bear Creek WMA
Maximize elk use of Bear Creek WMA	Elk use Bear Creek WMA during winter (documented via winter aerial surveys and landowner observations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Number of annual game damage complaints does not increase from the long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land and provides landowners with flexibility to manage to their tolerance level
Minimize transmission of brucellosis to livestock	Use Strategies and Measures in statewide table	



HD 360

Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit



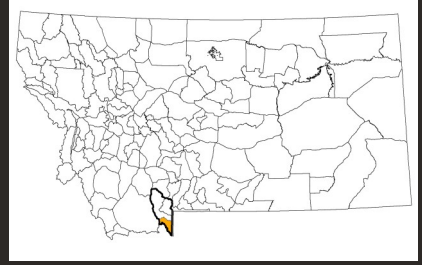
Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected at hunter check stations and/or in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined) are observed during winter aerial surveys	



HD 361

Size: 224 mi²
 Primary Habitat: Forest
 Public Ownership: 80%



Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 361 lies south of the Madison River and Hebgen Lake to the Montana-Idaho border. It can be known as the Henry's Mountains or the Lionhead. The area is heavily timbered, generally lodgepole pine and Douglas fir, but including Englemann's spruce and subalpine fir. The area is relatively high elevation with little winter range, although pockets of elk may winter in the willows or lodgepole forests of "the flats" of Hebgen Lake. The area receives significant snowfall and is a recreation hub for snowmobiling. HD 361 is a summertime melting pot for elk: In addition to the few winter residents, elk from the Gravelly Mountains, Madison Range, and possibly from the Island Park area of Idaho may all mix in HD 361.

Elk counts are not conducted in this district as summering elk generally disperse to different winter ranges where they are counted. In winter, few elk remain in HD 361. This district does not have a numeric population size goal, but it does present some limited hunting harvest opportunity.

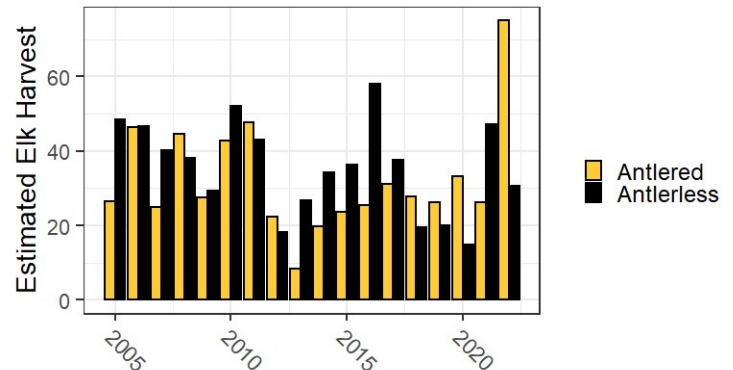
Management Challenges:

- Management challenges in this HD are minimal and are addressed as they arise.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

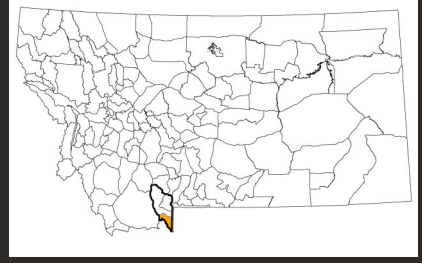
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
361	2006	500	2,919
	2008	558	4,059
	2010	501	3,716
	2012	523	4,119
	2014	485	4,029
	2016	566	4,753
	2018	516	4,265
	2020	327	2,536
	2022	587	4,640

Elk Harvest-HD 361



HD 361

Gallatin/Madison Elk Management Unit



No population demographic objective; elk population surveys are not conducted in this HD because there are few wintering elk.

No distribution objective; HD is a high-elevation summer range district that is largely public land where few elk winter.

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	

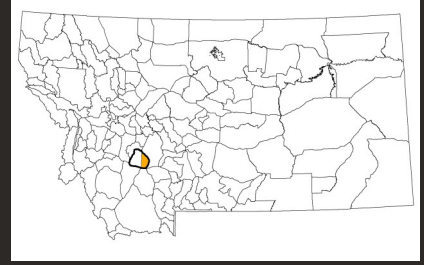


HD 370

Size: 678 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 55%



Whitetail-Bull Mountain Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 370 is located in the Whitehall-Boulder-Cardwell vicinity. This HD includes the Bull Mountains and portions of the Whitetail and Boulder Valleys. It is bound by the Whitehall-Boulder Road to the west and north, Montana Highway 69 to the east, and I-90 between Cardwell and Whitehall on the south. Approximately 52 percent of the general elk range occurs on public land (USFS, BLM, and small amount of DNRC) and 47 percent on private land. This allocation of general use is consistent with the ownership of elk winter range as well. Public access is difficult throughout the HD except on the west side where portions of three BMAs allow access to both private and public lands.

Elk generally winter on the both the east and west flanks of the Bull Mountains. They move to higher elevations to calve and summer. There is movement of elk into HD 350 across the Whitehall-Boulder Road and into HD 380 across Montana Highway 69. On average, 91 percent of the harvest occurs during the general season and 31 percent of the bulls harvested have 6 points or more on one antler.

HD 370 had been managed together with HD 350 from 2006-2019 because of the regular movement of elk across the Whitetail-Boulder Road boundary during hunting season and the similarity in access. However, access in HD 370 has become more restrictive in recent years, making it necessary to manage each HD separately. Because of the large amount of private land comprising HD 370, hunter access to elk herds is greatly controlled by landowners. Additionally, landownership in the Bull Mountains is checkerboarded between private and USFS land. Almost 23 percent of public lands in HD 370 is inaccessible by public road. Since 2017, an increasing amount of private land in HD 370 has been leased to private outfitting.

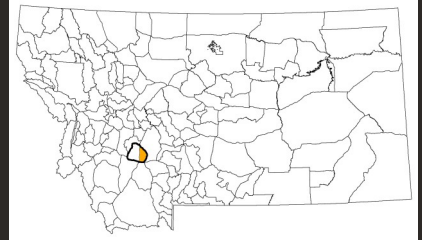
Management Challenges:

- Checkerboard landownership in the Bull Mountains.
- Limited access to the east side of the Bull Mountains.
- Low tolerance for elk on private land.



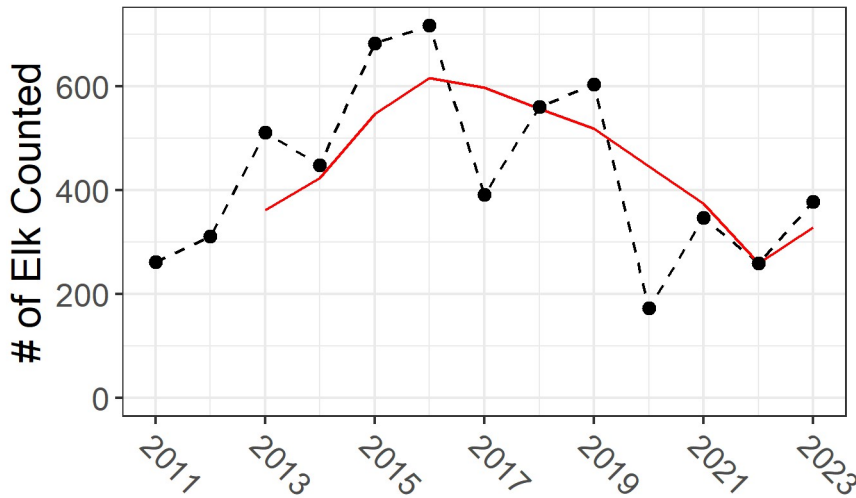
HD 370

Whitetail– Bull Mountain Elk Management Unit



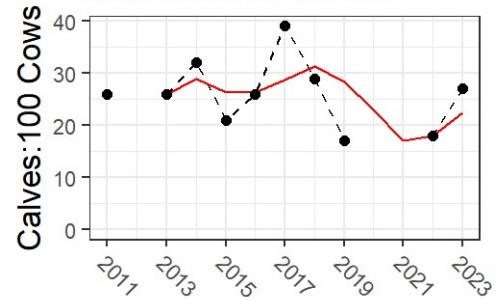
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 370

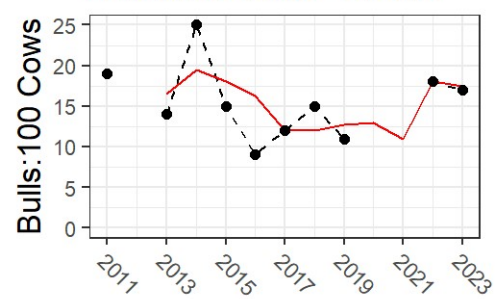


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 370



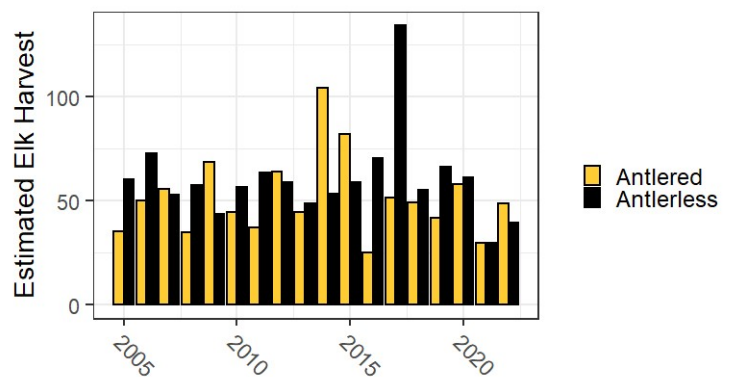
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 370



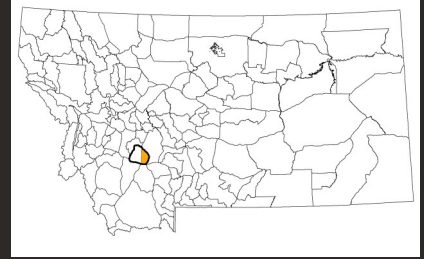
Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
370	2006	563	3,337
	2008	686	4,570
	2010	643	4,568
	2012	843	6,506
	2014	953	7,045
	2016	937	6,481
	2018	812	5,172
	2020	667	4,278
	2022	542	3,670

Elk Harvest-HD 370



HD 370



Whitetail-Bull Mountain Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 350-450 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	3-year average harvest on private land is greater than 30% 3-year average harvest on public land is greater than 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Complaints of chronic elk game damage are reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Promote hunter recruitment and retention	5% or more of the antlerless elk harvest is attributed to Youth and PTHFV hunters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use regulations that provide for special youth hunting opportunities
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use regulations that provide for special hunting opportunities for holders of a PTHFV

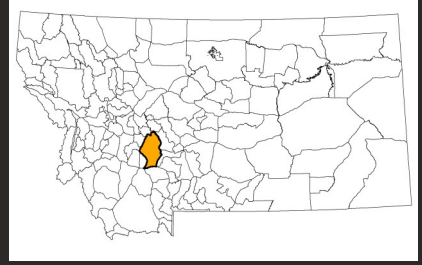


HD 380

Size: 1,044 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland,
Grassland & Forest

Public Ownership: 42%



Elkhorn Mountains Elk Management Unit



****Special Management District for Bull Elk****



District Summary

Hunting District (HD) 380 is located primarily in Broadwater and Jefferson counties with a small portion in Lewis and Clark County. The dominant land uses in HD 380 are livestock grazing and irrigated or dryland agricultural crop production. Municipalities in close proximity to HD 380 include Helena, East Helena, Townsend, Boulder, Whitehall, Three Forks, and Clancy. The Elkhorn Mountains, a small island mountain range, are located in HD 380. Most of the lands in the Elkhorn Mountains are USFS lands managed by the Helena-Lewis and Clark and Beaverhead-Deerlodge national forests. There are a considerable number of private-land in-holdings within the administrative boundaries of the national forests.

The USFS land in the Elkhorns is managed as a Wildlife Management Area, the only one in the National Forest System. The Elkhorns Wildlife Management Area is part of the larger Elkhorns Cooperative Management Area (ECMA) which is managed under a cooperative management agreement between the USFS, BLM, FWP, and NRCS. The collaborative Elkhorn Working Group provides input and recommendations to FWP and the USFS on issues related to elk and habitat management in HD 380.

Elk in HD 380 are a combination of seasonally migratory (short-distance elevational migration) elk and resident elk. A large proportion of the winter range in the HD is public land (primarily USFS and BLM). Most of the elk in the HD use public land winter range for all or at least a portion of the winter. Large numbers of elk are found on accessible public or private lands during the hunting season. As of the 2022 hunting season, there were 22 BMAs in HD 380.

Bull hunting in the HD has been managed by a spike-bulls only on a General Elk License with limited either-sex permits (regulates brow-tined bull harvest) regulation since 1987. This regulation was adopted to improve chronic very low postseason ratios of bulls (particularly brow-tined bulls) per 100 cows. The spike regulation also maintains hunter opportunity and helps control overall elk numbers.

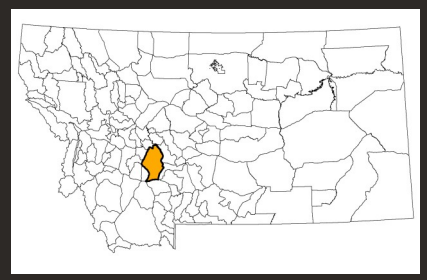
Management Challenges:

- Habitat quality issues on USFS lands that include excessive downfall, conifer encroachment in historically open meadows, high density timber stands with a lack of understory, and elk security concerns in some areas.
- Increased elk use of private lands leading to increased conflicts with private landowners in some areas.
- The ability to get good survey counts of brow-tined bulls and total elk numbers in the HD on a consistent basis.
- Conflicting public opinions on how best to manage elk numbers, elk distribution, and hunter opportunity in the HD.



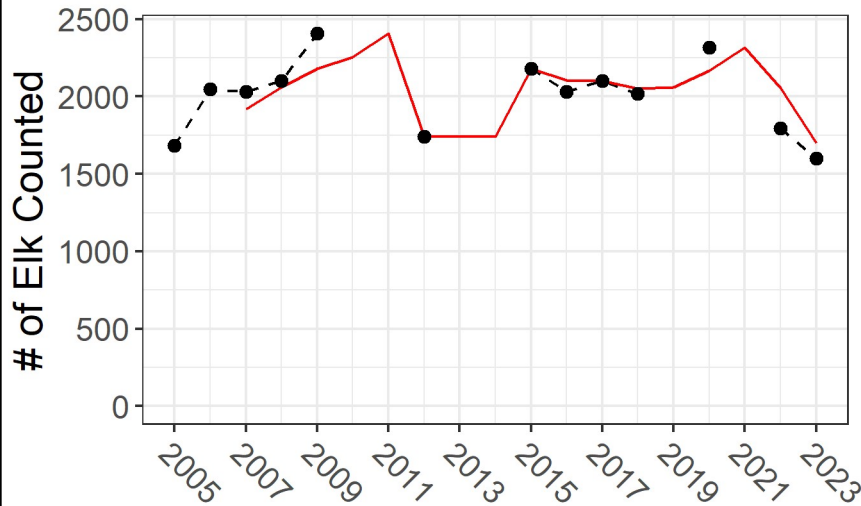
HD 380

Elkhorn Mountains Elk Management Unit



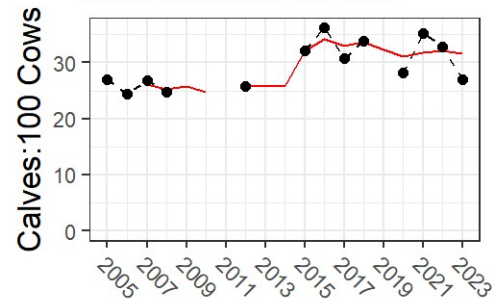
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 380

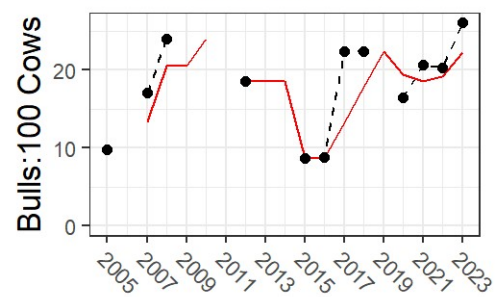


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 380



Bulls:100 Cows- HD 380

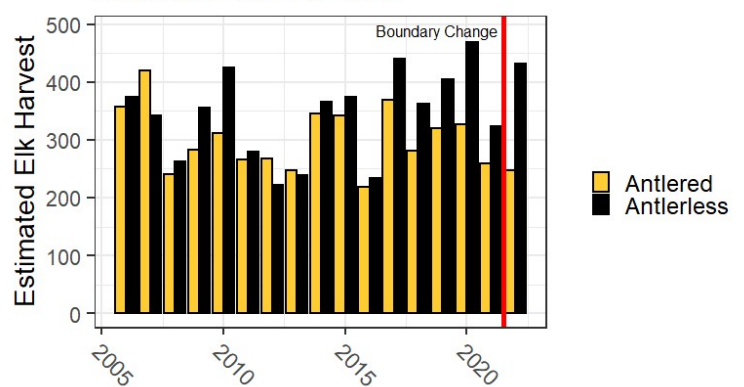


Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

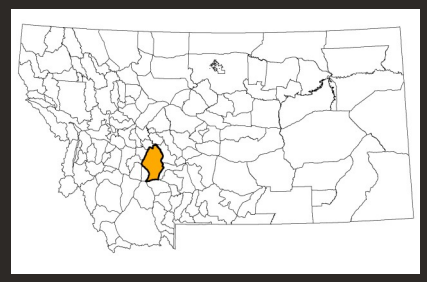
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
380	2006	3,177	20,887
	2008	3,265	25,161
	2010	3,559	26,178
	2012	3,396	24,420
	2014	3,862	27,647
	2016	3,462	27,737
	2018	3,443	25,945
	2020	3,253	25,232
	2022*	3,116	23,686

**Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022.

Elk Harvest- HD 380



HD 380



Elkhorn Mountains Elk Management Unit

Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,700-2,300 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 15:100 or greater	3-year average of bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use of public land	Elk use of private lands during the year declines over time as indicated by periodic HD landowner surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
	Number of elk game damage complaints is within or below 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of elk harvest on private lands increases initially followed by an increase in the proportion of elk harvest on public lands, as elk availability on public land increases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to increase hunting access Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the value of antlerless elk harvest to private landowners where elk concentrate during the general rifle season

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Provide opportunity to harvest mature bulls	The average age of bulls harvested on either-sex permit is 6.5-7.5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull harvest on General Elk License is within 20% of the long-term average	
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	

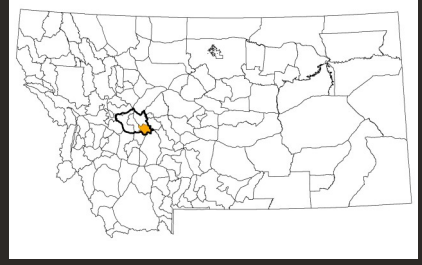


HD 388

Size: 196 mi²

Primary Habitat: Human Land Use

Public Ownership: 16%



Granite Butte Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 388 encompasses most of the Helena valley and was established in 2006 to address expanding development. There is no population demographic objective established for this district because elk here are not formally surveyed.

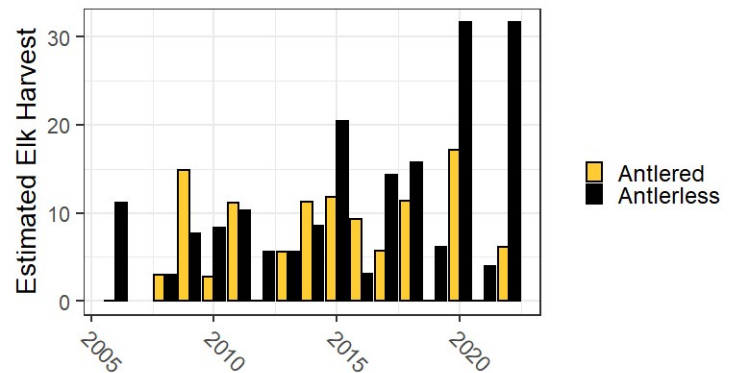
Management Challenges:

- Winter ranges compromised (eliminated) due to continued housing development.
- Small, non-commercial properties that do not qualify for game damage assistance experience conflicts with elk.
- At least one herd of elk is habituated to coming into an alfalfa field inside the district and is undisturbed on neighboring properties.
- Safety concerns hinder ability to manage elk in this unit.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

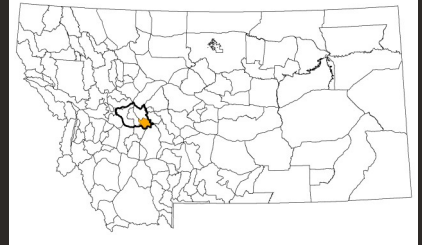
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
388	2006	116	732
	2008	155	1,215
	2010	184	780
	2012	198	1,400
	2014	145	619
	2016	155	1,134
	2018	183	1,008
	2020	216	1,466
	2022	201	1,189

Elk Harvest-HD 388



HD 388

Granite Butte Elk Management Unit



No population demographic objective; Elk population surveys are not conducted in this HD.

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Discourage permanent occupancy by elk	A resident elk population is not permanently established in this HD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Use special weapons opportunities where safety is a concern

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Balance safety concerns with harvest opportunities	Minimal/no safety issues during hunting season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special weapons opportunities

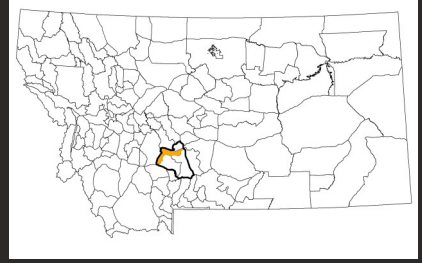


HD 390

Size: 340 mi²

Primary Habitat: Grassland & Shrubland

Public Ownership: 10%



Bridger Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 390 encompasses a portion of Broadwater, Gallatin, and Meagher counties. The HD is primarily private land with the dominant land uses being livestock grazing and irrigated or dryland agricultural crop production (primarily irrigated alfalfa). Municipalities in close proximity to HD 390 include Bozeman/Belgrade, Manhattan, Three Forks, and Townsend. Most of the HD lies east of the Missouri River in the area between the Big Belt Mountains and the Bridger Range.

Elk in HD 390 are a combination of resident (majority) and seasonally migratory elk (short-distance elevational migrants). Almost all of the elk winter range in the HD is found on private land, as there is little public land in the HD. Currently, during the hunting season, most of the elk in the HD are found on properties that are outfitted or otherwise have very restricted or no public hunting access. As of the 2022 hunting season, four BMAs were entirely or partially in HD 390. However, elk presence on those BMAs is limited during the hunting season.

Shoulder seasons were implemented in 2016 to reduce the antlerless elk population in this HD; the effectiveness of these seasons has varied on an annual basis and is largely weather and access dependent.

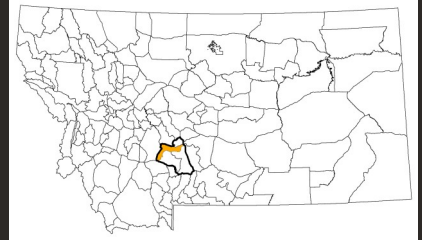
Management Challenges:

- Achieving sufficient antlerless and bull elk harvest to manage the population due to inaccessible elk/lack of sufficient public hunting access.
- Some landowners maintain large numbers of elk on their property during the hunting season, but then outside of the hunting season those elk often end up on neighboring properties where tolerance is lower.
- Elk at times move between adjacent HDs, thus obtaining accurate survey counts can be challenging.
- Conflicting public opinions on how to manage the elk population, elk distribution, and hunter opportunity.



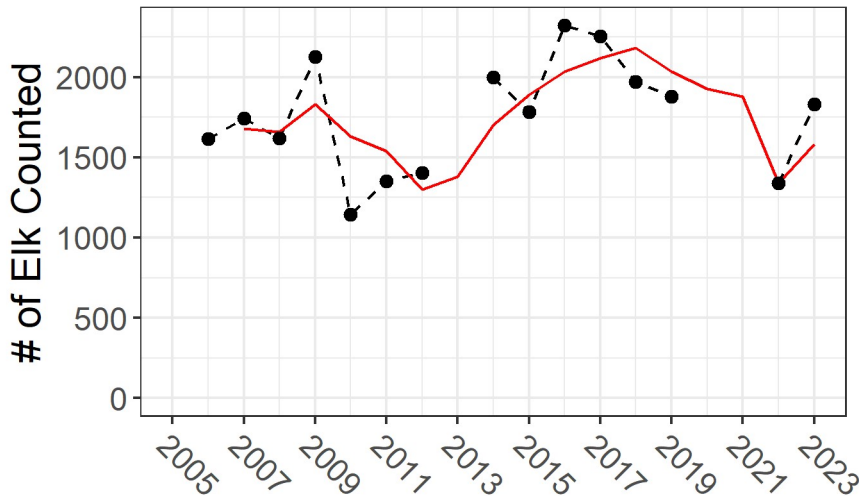
HD 390

Bridger Elk Management Unit



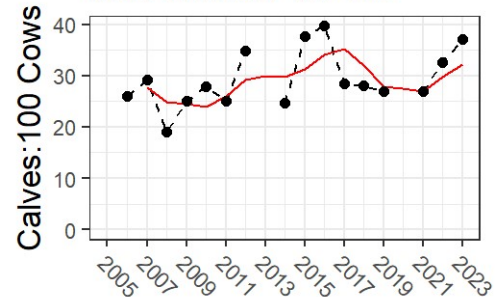
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 390

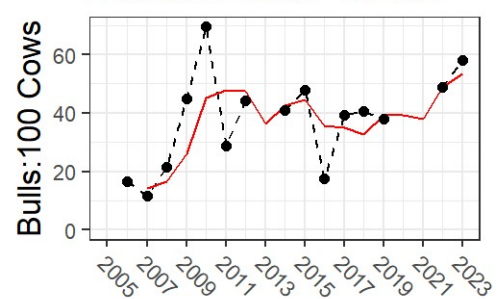


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 390



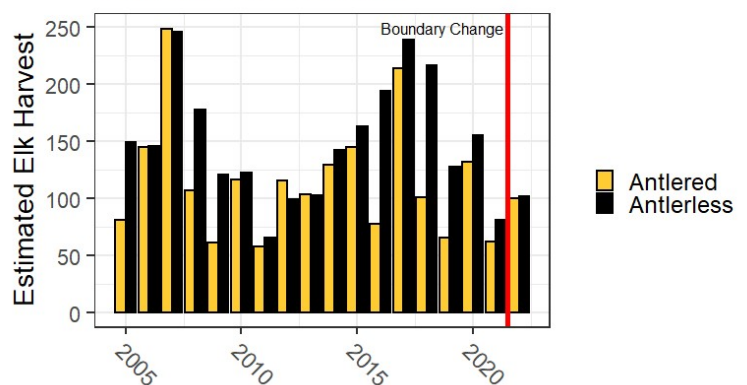
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 390



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
390	2006	706	3,361
	2008	1,102	7,157
	2010	704	4,821
	2012	721	4,174
	2014	750	4,212
	2016	973	6,954
	2018	1,072	9,062
	2020	952	6,285
	2022*	722	4,807

Elk Harvest- HD 390

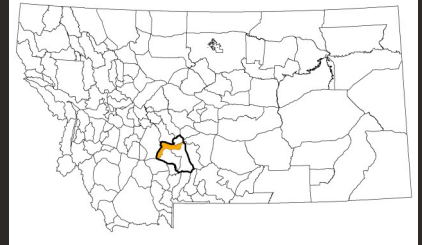


**Disclaimer: this HD had a boundary change in 2022.



HD 390

Bridger Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,200-1,800 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Distribute changes in population across all herds or delineated geographic areas	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Minimize elk use of agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Number of elk game damage complaints is within or below 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest Promote the value of antlerless elk harvest to private landowners where elk concentrate during the general rifle season Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	

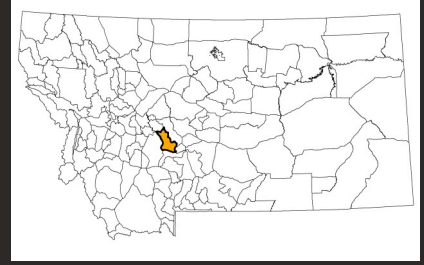


HD 391

Size: 472 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest
& Grassland

Public Ownership: 40%



Southwest Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 391 is located primarily in Broadwater County with a very small portion in Lewis & Clark County. The HD is a mixture of public (mostly USFS) and private lands with the dominant land uses being live-stock grazing and irrigated (primarily alfalfa) or dryland agricultural crop production. Municipalities in close proximity to HD 391 include Helena, East Helena, and Townsend. The HD lies on the west side of the Big Belt Mountains east/southeast of Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

Elk in HD 391 are a combination of resident (majority) and seasonally migratory elk (short-distance elevational migrants). The majority of the elk winter range in the HD is found on private land. Very few elk currently winter on USFS lands. Few elk are found on USFS lands during the hunting season, particularly during the rifle season; most of the elk are found on properties that are outfitted or otherwise have very restricted or no public hunting access. As of the 2022 hunting season, five BMAs were found in HD 391. Elk presence is limited on those BMAs during the hunting season.

Recent elk hunting regulations in the HD have been designed to address elk distribution by removing harvest pressure on USFS lands while increasing harvest pressure on private lands. Unfortunately, the regulations have had little effect on elk distribution to date because of the lack of adequate hunting access to private lands that hold large numbers of elk during the hunting season and poor elk security on USFS lands.

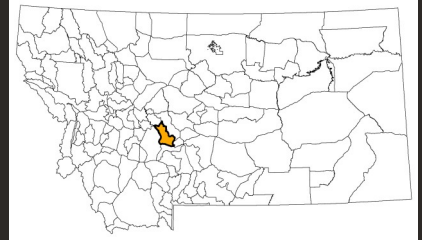
Management Challenges:

- Some private lands hold large numbers of elk during the hunting season and access is not sufficient to manage the population or to achieve changes in elk distribution.
- Some landowners maintain large numbers of elk on their property during the hunting season, but then outside of the hunting season those elk often end up on neighboring properties where tolerance is lower.
- Shoot-out situations are somewhat common when large groups of elk in open environments move from private land refuge areas.
- Habitat quality issues on USFS lands that include poor elk security, noxious weeds, livestock grazing impacts, and areas that are inherently poor elk habitat due to the lack of an understory or being too steep or rocky.
- Conflicting public opinions on how best to manage elk numbers, elk distribution, and hunter opportunity in the HD.



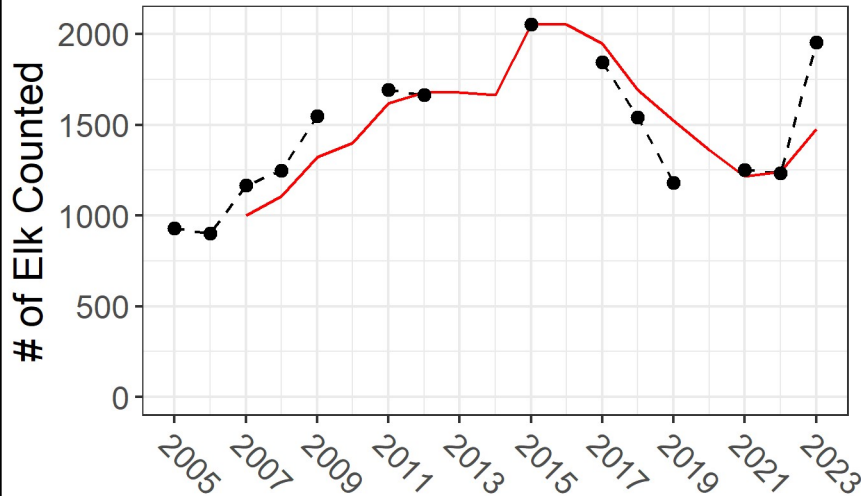
HD 391

Southwest Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit



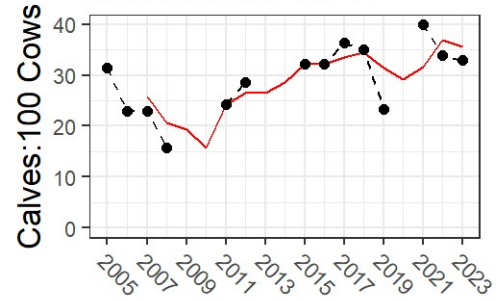
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 391

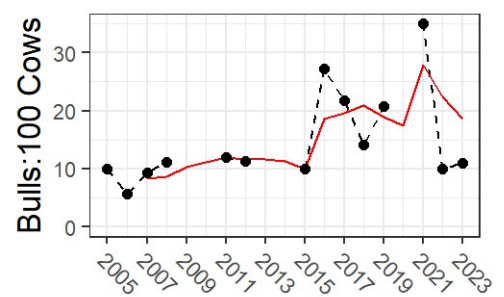


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 391



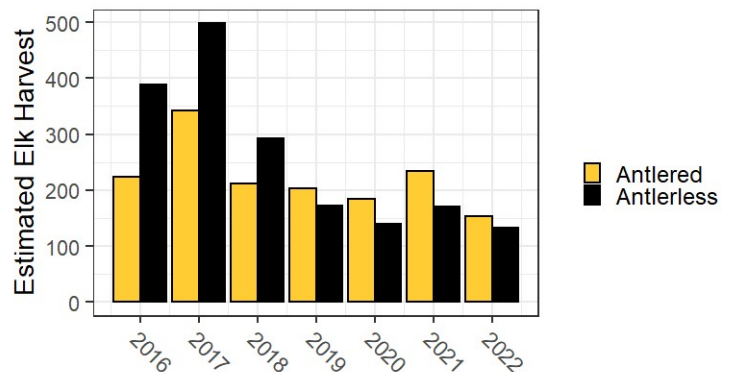
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 391



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

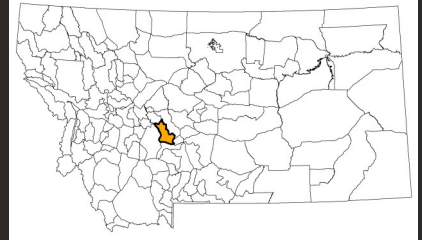
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
391	2016	2,259	17,734
	2018	2,270	17,217
	2020	1,943	14,367
	2022	1,727	13,256

Elk Harvest-HD 391



HD 391

Southwest Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 1,000-1,500 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use of public land	Increasing number of hunter reports of elk observations on public land and elk harvest on public land collected via hunter check stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Proportion of elk harvest on private lands increases initially followed by an increase in the proportion of elk harvest on public lands, as elk availability on public land increases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the value of antlerless elk harvest to private landowners where elk concentrate during the general rifle season
Minimize elk use of agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Number of elk game damage complaints is within or below 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	

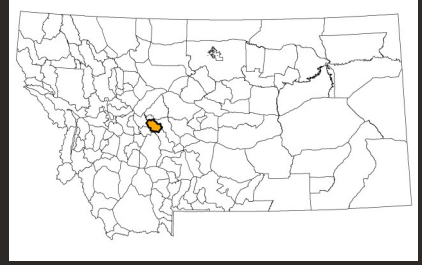


HD 392

Size: 251 mi²

Primary Habitat: Forest

Public Ownership: 91%



Northwest Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting district 392 is located in Broadwater and Lewis and Clark counties. The HD is primarily USFS (Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest) lands with most of the private lands in the HD being inholdings within the USFS administrative boundary. The HD lies on the west side of the Big Belt Mountains east of the Missouri River north of Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Most of the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area is found in the north end of HD 392. Municipalities in close proximity to HD 392 include Helena, East Helena, and Townsend. The boundary of this HD changed in 2016; the current HD boundary was designed to create a HD that was predominantly public land.

Elk in HD 392 are believed to be a combination of resident and seasonally migratory elk (short-distance elevational migrants). Given that most of the HD is public land, the majority of the elk winter range in the HD is also on public land. As of the 2022 hunting season, there are no BMAs in HD 392 in large part because there is little private land in the HD. Most of the private land in the HD is rural subdivisions or small parcels.

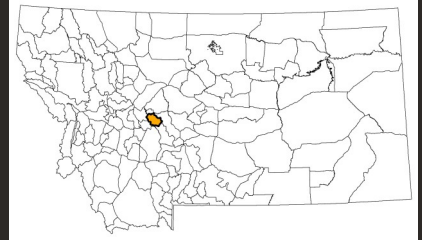
Management Challenges:

- Habitat quality issues on USFS lands that include poor elk security, noxious weeds, livestock grazing impacts, and areas that are inherently poor elk habitat due to the lack of an understory or being too steep or rocky.
- Getting an accurate count of the HD's elk population can be challenging given the amount of timber and the poor background conditions (lack of snow, or lack of fresh snow) often present when surveys are flown.
- Few brow-tined bulls are typically observed during the annual aerial survey even though older-aged brow-tined bulls (older than 2.5 years) are documented in the harvest indicating most brow-tined bulls may be wintering in an adjacent HD.
- Some HD 392 elk may winter on the north end of HD 391 meaning there may be more elk in the HD during other times of the year.
- Conflicting public opinions on how best to manage elk numbers, elk distribution, and hunter opportunity in the HD.



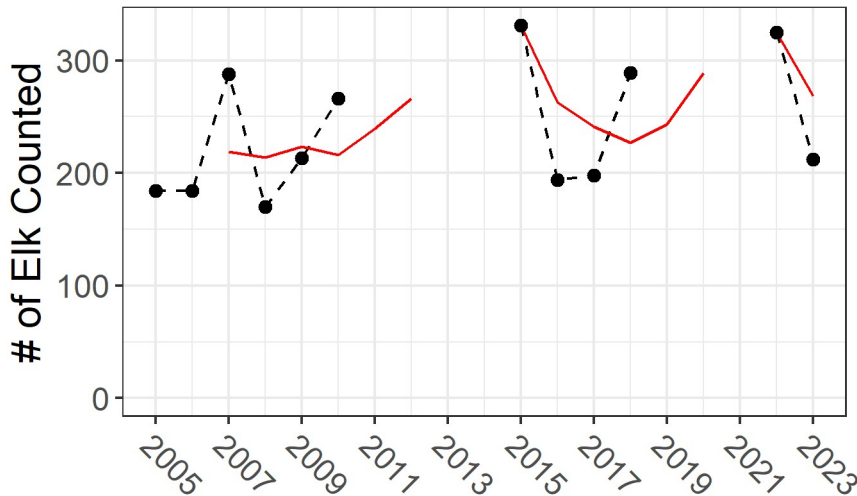
HD 392

Northwest Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit



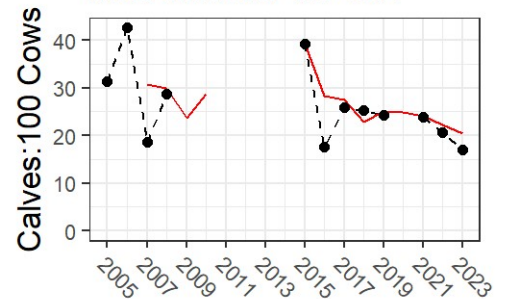
Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 392

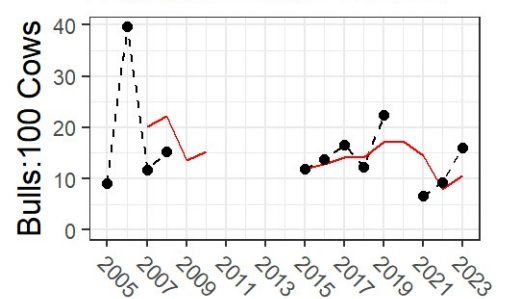


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average.

Recruitment- HD 392



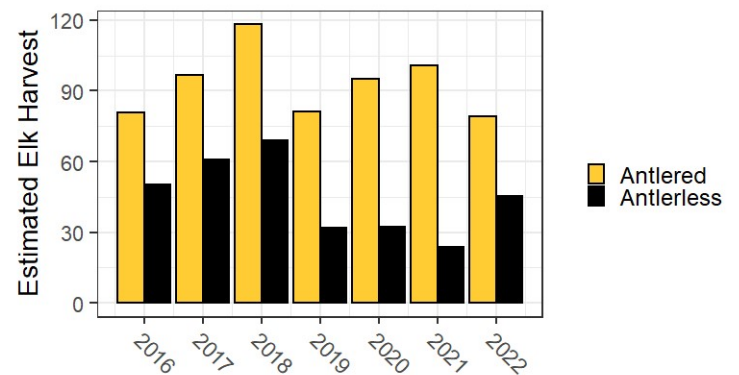
Bulls:100 Cows- HD 392



Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

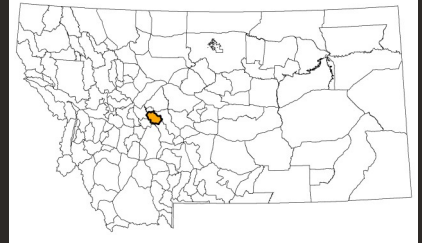
Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
392	2016	1,373	10,669
	2018	1,217	8,487
	2020	1,011	8,068
	2022	987	7,923

Elk Harvest-HD 392



HD 392

Northwest Big Belt Mountains Elk Management Unit



Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 480-720 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas

Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize elk use of public land	Stable or increasing trend of bull harvest on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security
Distribute changes in population size across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with public land managers to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Minimize elk use where tolerance is low	Number of elk game damage complaints remains at or below 1 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access

Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Provide opportunity to harvest antlerless elk	Hunting regulations maintain antlerless hunting opportunity	

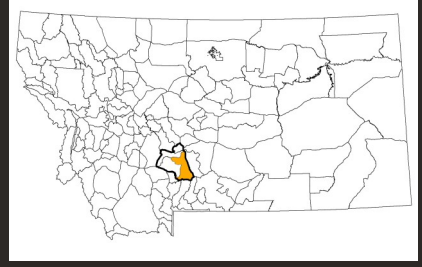


HD 393

Size: 617 mi²

Primary Habitat: Shrubland

Public Ownership: 13%



Bridger Elk Management Unit

District Summary

Hunting District 393 is primarily private land. It is bounded by I-90 at the southern end, U.S. 89 along the eastern boundary, the Sixteen Mile drainage at the north end, and Montana Highway 86 and the Bridger Mountain Range along the western boundary. The district includes the Bangtail Range and a portion of the northern Bridger Range. HD 393 is approximately 87 percent private land. Most of the public land is USFS in the Bangtails and northern Bridgers; the remainder of the public land is primarily scattered parcels of DNRC. Most of the elk habitat, particularly elk winter range, is under private ownership. Private land in HD 393 is primarily rangeland and irrigated hay ground, with some dryland farming. Subdivision has increased in recent years, particularly at the southern end of the HD and in the Brackett Creek drainage. Elk movement strategies are diverse across the HD; the movements of some elk span the boundaries of adjacent HDs 312 and 390. Elk primarily winter on private lands in the Shields River drainage, including the Ferry and Willow Creek drainages, west of the communities of Clyde Park and Wilsall, and near Elk Ridge in northeastern HD 393. Additionally, a smaller herd of elk winters in southwest HD 393 in the Jackson, Bridger, and Kelly creek drainages near the southern tip of the Bridger Range. This herd frequently crosses between HD 312 and HD 393; recent radio-collar data has indicated these elk may be more associated with HD 393 than HD 312 and they are currently counted in surveys of HD 393.

Hunter access to elk on private land is challenging. There are currently three major Block Management cooperators with multiple units. Hunting pressure is high on public lands and areas enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program. Elk security on public lands is limited, given the relatively small size of public parcels and high road/trail density. Several large landowners allow only limited or outfitted hunting, which can create refuge areas that prevent hunters from targeting elk concentrations. HD 393 has been managed with liberal harvest opportunity for many years, but elk numbers have not been appreciably reduced.

Elk in the eastern Bangtails were captured in 2020 and tested for exposure to brucellosis. Brucellosis was not detected and HD 393 remains outside the Designated Surveillance Area for brucellosis.

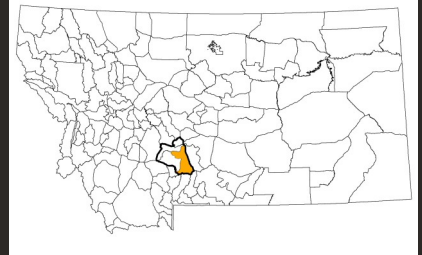
Management Challenges:

- Elk in this HD move between 312, 390, and 393 occasionally complicating counts. This challenge can be exacerbated by difficulty in scheduling flights for these adjacent units to avoid under/double counting.
- Elk in this HD exist much of the year on private lands with variable hunter accessibility thus liberalizing licenses may not result in a population change.



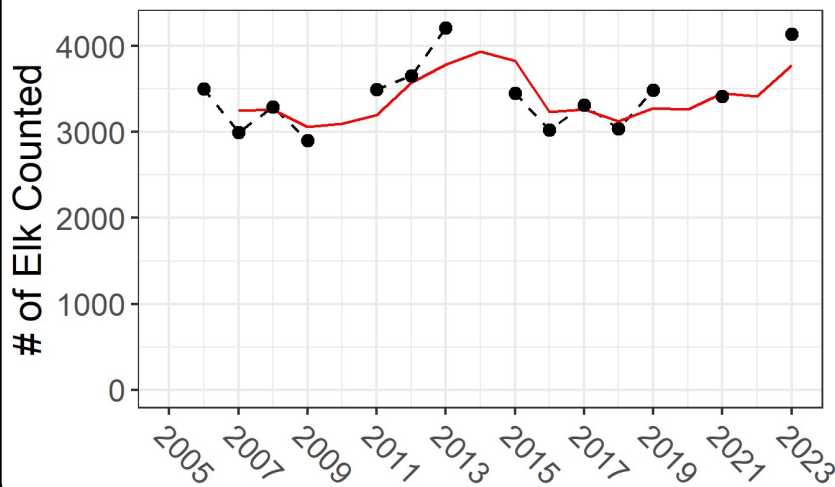
HD 393

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Current Population Status & Trend

Total Elk Counted- HD 393

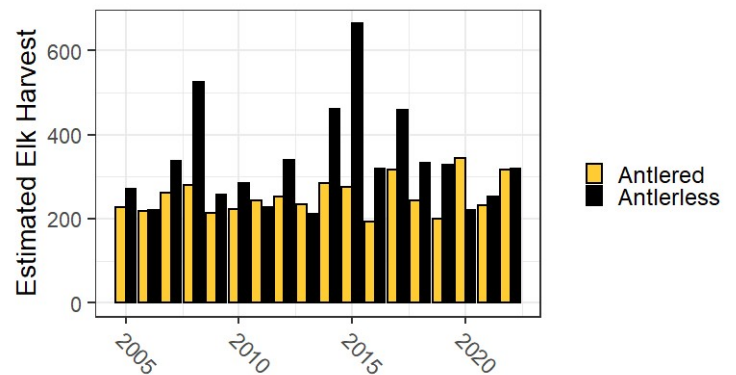


Points show observations from survey flights and the solid red line shows a 3-year moving average. Due to a variety of reasons (survey conditions, staff turnover, etc.) classification data were not collected consistently enough to establish a trend in this HD.

Hunter Effort and Harvest Statistics

Hunting District	License Year	Hunters	Hunter Days
393	2006	1,546	8,198
	2008	2,199	12,992
	2010	1,855	9,948
	2012	2,234	13,304
	2014	2,283	12,278
	2016	2,097	13,563
	2018	2,050	12,523
	2020	1,877	11,472
	2022	1,861	12,237

Elk Harvest-HD 393



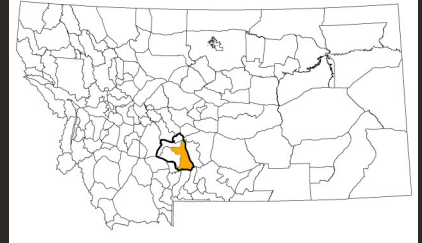
Objective: Manage toward elk population size and demographic targets

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Maintain winter aerial survey counts between 2,700-4,000 elk observed	3-year average of elk counts is within goal range for population size If outside goal range, population is trending toward goal range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Bull:cow ratio is 10:100 or greater	3-year average bull:cow ratio is meeting or exceeding minimum bull:cow threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas



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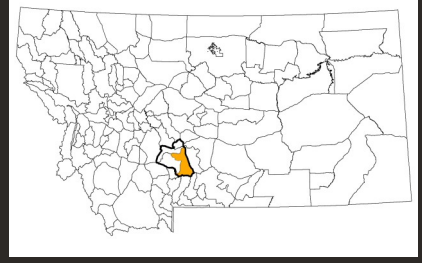
Objective: Maintain an acceptable elk distribution

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Distribute elk harvest amongst landownerships with available habitat	Elk harvest on public and private lands is within 20% of long-term average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain harvest opportunities across ownership types • Use public/private land-specific harvest regulations to distribute harvest • Use antlerless harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas • Regularly engage landowners/land managers to discuss elk management • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Provide input and support to efforts targeted at conserving or improving elk habitat on private lands • Pursue habitat conservation projects with high potential to benefit elk
	Proportion of harvest on public land is not declining	
	Harvest on private land is at a level sufficient to influence population trajectory	
Distribute changes in population across all herds	Similar population trends of individual herds observed during winter aerial surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land management agencies to improve habitat conditions for elk on public lands
Minimize elk use of agricultural lands where tolerance is low	Number of elk game damage complaints remains below 10 per year OR 3-year trend of game damage complaints does not increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public land managers to maintain or improve elk security • Adjust HD boundaries or use HD portions to apply antlered and antlerless harvest opportunity matrices to individual herds • Use a season type that accommodates elk harvest on private land



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Objective: Provide public elk recreation opportunities

Goals	Measures of Success	Strategies
Reduce hunter crowding	Region 3 resident hunter satisfaction regarding hunter congestion and crowding does not decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private landowners to maintain or increase hunting access • Use hunting season structure that does not exacerbate crowding on public lands • Use antlered harvest opportunity matrix to adjust season structure and/or quotas
Maximize bull hunting opportunity	Bull elk harvest is within or above 25% of the 10-year average	
Maintain a diversity of bull age classes	A diversity of bull antler sizes (brow-tined with less than 6 points and 6 points or more) are detected in hunter harvest surveys	
	A diversity of bull age classes (non-brow-tined and brow-tined) are observed during winter aerial surveys	

