



## **ELK SEASON EXTENDED IN SOUTHWEST AND NORTHEAST MONTANA TO ADDRESS HARVEST OBJECTIVES**

As MWF was going to press, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission released its decision to extend elk hunting in some areas of Montana. While the general 2008 big game hunting season ends Sunday, Nov. 30, in an attempt to reduce elk populations in some areas, hunting for elk will continue in 18 hunting districts in southwest Montana and two hunting districts in northeastern Montana.

“The elk harvest in some key areas was much lower than we hoped for,” said Quentin Kujala, chief of wildlife management for FWP in Helena. “Once again, a lack of snow and cold weather—and some difficult public access issues—played a significant role in keeping the harvest below our elk-management objectives.” Kujala said that while there are other areas of the state where elk numbers remain over objective, those are typically areas where public access has been difficult and FWP does not expect that to change.

“We’re asking for hunter and landowner help in those areas that will remain open,” Kujala said. “Hunter harvest across landownership is needed to help get elk numbers in line with population objectives.” The season will run Dec. 1 through Dec. 21 in FWP Region 3 and December 1 through Dec. 14 in FWP Region 6. The FWP Commission, however, can close any extended season in any hunting district on 24-hour notice. Those closures would occur if the total elk harvest objective in those districts is achieved or if bull harvest gets to a level where a closure on bulls would be necessary.

Region 3 will be tracking harvest on an area-by-area basis to assure that the average bull harvest of the previous 4 years is not exceeded. If the bull harvest limit is approached in an area, that area will be closed to all bull hunting, but the antlerless portion of the season will remain open. To aid in that effort FWP is requesting all successful hunters in FWP region 3 to call 1-877-397-9453 (1-877-FWP-WILD) within 24 hours to report sex, age and location of harvest.

While Kujala encouraged hunters to participate he also cautioned hunters not to expect to find the hunting easy. Elk are challenging to hunt and the lack of snow has and will add to the difficulty unless conditions change.

Kujala reminded hunters that have received brucellosis blood sample test kits for the southwest Montana hunting districts to carry those with them and please return samples as per the included instructions. In addition, several kiosks containing collection kits have been placed at common access points. Hunters that have not received a kit are asked to pick one up. Hunters who have already harvested an elk in 2008 with their general elk license are not eligible to purchase a second general elk license, but they can purchase one of the available A9/B12 licenses that are available for two districts in Region 3.

Some Block Management Areas may not be open for the extended season. Hunters are urged to contact the regional FWP office to determine whether or not a BMA is open for hunting elk during the season extension.

Following is a summary of the hunting districts with extended seasons:

- ♦ **Open to hunters Dec. 1 – 21, with a valid general-elk license consistent with the 2008 elk hunting regulations in effect Nov. 30:** 300, 302, 314, 315, 320, 322, 323 (outside the Wall Creek WMA), 324, 325, 326, 327, South of Dad Creek in 328, 330, 333, 360, 362, 390, 393.

The A9/B12 licenses in the Region 3 districts that were issued through the drawing will remain in effect during the extension. Hunters will continue to be able to purchase over-the-counter A9/B12 licenses valid for Hunting Districts 315 and 393. Hunters holding brow-tined bull/antlerless permits valid for the Wall Creek Wildlife Management Area in district 323-10 will continue to be the only hunters allowed to harvest elk there.

- ♦ **Open Dec. 1 – 14 antlerless only**, and open to hunters with an elk permit valid for the specific district during the general rifle season in combination with a general elk license or an A9/B12 license valid for HD 622: 622, 631 (A9/B12 licenses valid in HD 622 not valid on the CMR Refuge).

All other hunting regulations apply during the extended season, including the need to have permission to hunt on private land.  
No other general hunting season extensions for deer or elk are planned at this time.