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Northern Ag Network

RANCHERS UPSET OVER NEW FWP REGULATIONS

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Montana landowners are hopping mad at Montana's Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission this week. Over 100 of them from all over a large part of central Montana, gathered in Roundup on March 3 to discuss what they can do to fight the newly-announced big game regulations.

Toby Dahl, who ranches west of Roundup told those in attendance they view it as both a Property Rights issue, and an Economic Issue, for ranchers and for rural towns.

The people in the room on Monday seemed furious with the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission for [their recent action](#) to dramatically limit the opportunity to hunt big game. Many of these ranchers, and the communities they come from, depend on the income from hunting as a big part of their economic survival.

In particular, they are upset over the Commission's elimination of the previously-unlimited 900-series Antelope Archery Licenses, allowing instead only Special Licenses, that must be obtained through a drawing. With limits put on either-sex permits, the number of licenses for non-resident hunters could be limited to ten percent in a district.

They are also angry at the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission for reducing the Elk Archery Hunting opportunity in the Missouri Breaks, saying this will make it more uncertain about whether a person can obtain a permit, and cause a negative economic impact on communities and outfitters.

On the other side of the coin, many resident hunters have so far been very supportive of the FWP proposals, because they say the new rules would provide better hunting opportunities for resident hunters, and less overcrowding.

Two of the organizers of the event, [Mark and Deanna Robbins](#), ranchers from Roy, said they think their way of life is at stake here. By the end of the evening, the group was collecting money to form an organization to fight this issue, and raise awareness of the problem.

Some at the meeting suggested organizing a massive statewide "Land Lock-Out" during this fall's hunting season by Private Landowners, as a way to show their displeasure with the action of the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission.

No decisions were made, other than to start forming a mailing list, and explore what other groups might share their concerns...but judging by the frustration that was being vented in Roundup on Monday...this story is a long ways from over.

Submitted by Taylor Brown

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