



NEWS RELEASE

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Ranchers and Landowner Concerns Ignored in Fish Wildlife & Parks Commission Decision

HELENA – The Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA) is asking Montana’s ranchers, landowners, outfitters, and sportsmen to denounce the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Commission’s recently adopted archery elk permit proposal.

Despite overwhelming comment in opposition and historical amounts of comment from ranchers, landowners, outfitters, local businesses, local governments, and many archery sportsmen, Montana’s FWP Commission voted to severely reduce elk archery permits. What was presumed to be a proposal for just the Missouri River Breaks ended up spanning twenty-three vast Montana hunting districts.

The goal of this change is a veiled attempt to eliminate the certainty of outfitter licenses and to eliminate the leasing of private land for hunting. Elk populations in Montana are greater than ever and one of the tools to increase elk harvests has just been arbitrarily discarded by the commission. It appears as though the commission’s intent is to manipulate access to private land, not manage wildlife.

The commission’s purpose is to oversee the Department, which is directed by state statute to supervise all wildlife and implement voluntary programs that encourage hunting access on private lands, while at the same time promoting harmonious relations between landowners and the hunting public. It is clear that this Commission’s decision will have the opposite effect.

“FWP showed a genuine lack of integrity in developing these rules,” said Chuck Rein, MSGA Landowner/Recreation and Wildlife Committee member. “It’s time that they look at incentives instead of disincentives when seeking recreational access to private land.”

MSGA supports a cooperative effort to work with landowners and provide incentives to increase hunting access. Ignoring the adverse economic consequences of big game utilizing private land to force access onto those lands may provoke unintended consequences.

MSGA and landowners across the state will not respond favorably to “heavy handed” tactics designed to address big game populations via forced access. This can only lead to greater conflicts and reduced or eliminated access. MSGA is calling on the FWP Commission to seriously consider landowner concerns and provide incentives that address these issues. The reality will be that landowner/sportsmen relations will deteriorate dramatically. This can be avoided by prudent leadership from the Commission.

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The Montana Stockgrowers Association, a non-profit organization representing nearly 2,500 members, strives to serve, protect and advance the economic, political, environmental and cultural interests of cattle producers, the largest sector of Montana’s number one industry agriculture.

