

Other predators of elk including grizzly bears, black bears, and mountain lions have completed species management plans. If predation on elk by black bear or mountain lions is considered excessive, adjustments in harvest regulations for these species could be made if considered in an ecological context. Revisions of the black bear and mountain lion management plans are scheduled after current research studies on these species are completed between 2007 and 2009. Grizzly bears are currently a federally protected species managed under the Endangered Species Act. Like wolves, grizzly bears are being considered for delisting by the USFWS. Montana has completed a grizzly bear management plan for southwestern Montana and is working on a management plan for the rest of the state.

HB 262, passed by the 2003 Montana Legislature establishes policy for FWP regarding management of large predators. That policy is as follows:

Policy for management of large predators – legislative intent.

- (1) In managing large predators, the primary goals of the department must be to:
 - (a) preserve citizens' opportunities to hunt large game species;
 - (b) protect humans, livestock, and pets; and
 - (c) preserve and enhance the safety of the public during outdoor recreational and livelihood activities.
- (2) As used in this section:
 - (a) "large game species" means deer, elk, mountain sheep, moose, antelope, and mountain goats; and
 - (b) "large predators" means bears, mountain lions, and wolves.
- (3) With regard to large predators, it is the intent of the legislature that the specific provisions of this section concerning the management of large predators will control the general supervisory authority of the department regarding the management of all wildlife.

Surveys of Hunter Attitude, Opinion, Preference, and Characteristics

FWP has conducted a variety of statewide and more focused surveys of hunters for attitude, opinion, preference, and characteristics over the years through its Responsive Management Unit. Statewide samples of resident and non-resident hunters were surveyed in 1988 (Allen and FWP 1988), 1998 (King and Brooks 2001) and residents only in 2002 (Brooks, unpublished). We presented some results in earlier sections and will cover more general results here and within the following Economics and Commerce section.

Average age of all elk hunters increased from 38 years in 1988 to 46 years in 1998 and for residents only, remained stable at 42 years in 2002. In 1988, 5% of the sample was women, 6% in 1998, and 12% in 2002. Participation in archery hunting increased from 1% of the sample in 1988 to 15% in 1998. The percent of resident hunters that used an ATV increased from 4% in 1988, to 8% in 1998, and 9% in 2002. Non-resident hunter use of ATVs increased from 4% in 1988 to 11% in 1998. Resident hunter use of horses decreased from 22% in 1988, to 15% in 1998, and 14% in 2002. Non-resident hunter use of horses declined from 37% in 1988 to 26% in 1998.

2012 ELK OBJECTIVES AND STATUS

Hunting District	EMU	Elk Plan Objective Point Estimate (Observed Elk)	2012 or Most Recent Number of Elk Observed- Representative of Trend	Last Year Counted if Not 2012	Status -- Over, At or Below Objective	Estimated Elk Numbers Assuming 80% of Elk Are Observed 2011
100	PURCELL	300	138	2009	Below	173
101	SALISH	NA			NA	0
102	SALISH	NA	NA		NA	
103	SALISH	260	283	2010	At	354
104	LOWER CLARK FORK	225	128	2008	Below	160
109	WHITEFISH	600	452	2005	NA	565
110	WHITEFISH	See 109	See 109		NA	
120	SALISH	110	125	2010	At	156
121	LOWER CLARK FORK	1355	1358		At	1698
122	SALISH	NA	NA		NA	
123	LOWER CLARK FORK	365	291		At	364
124	LOWER CLARK FORK	130	138	2008	At	173
130	BOB MARSHALL	See 140	See 140		At	
132	NORTH SWAN	low numbers			NA	
140	BOB MARSHALL	225	210		At	263
141	BOB MARSHALL	See 140	See 140		At	
150	BOB MARSHALL	400	472		At	590
151	BOB MARSHALL	See 150	See 150		At	
170	NORTH SWAN	low numbers			NA	
R-1 Total			3,595			4,494
200	LOWER CLARK FORK	300	329	2011	At	411
201	NINEMILE	600	751		Over	939
202	LOWER CLARK FORK	350	224		Below	280
203	NINEMILE	950	526		Below	658
204	ROCK CR NORTH OF AMBROSE CR	400	504		Over	630
204/261	ROCK CR AMBROSE CR TO WILLOW CR	520	267		Below	334
210	ROCK CREEK	1,450	1362		At	1703
211	SAPPHIRE	Combined w/210			At	0
212	FLINT CK (SUBOBJECTIVE=500)	1,000	2232		Over	2790
213	FLINT CK	750	574		Below	718
214	SAPPHIRE	450	390		At	488
215	DEER LODGE	1400	2206		Over	2758
216	ROCK CREEK	325	333		At	416
240	BITTEROOT	750	714		At	893
250	WEST FORK	2000	812		Below	1015
260	BITTEROOT	See 240	See 240		At	
261	ROCK CK WILLOW CK TO SKALKAHO CK	400	609		Over	761
270	SAPPHIRE (SUB-OBJECTIVE=2600)	3,000	3332		At	4165
280	BOB MARSHALL	NA	NA		NA	
281	BOB MARSHALL	600	705		At	881
282	BOB MARSHALL	See 285	See 285		At	
283	GARNET	500	735		Over	919
284	GRANITE BUTTE	See 293	See 293		Below	
285	BOB MARSHALL	1000	982		At	1228

2012 ELK OBJECTIVES AND STATUS

Hunting District	EMU	Elk Plan Objective Point Estimate (Observed Elk)	2012 or Most Recent Number of Elk Observed- Representative of Trend	Last Year Counted if Not 2012	Status -- Over, At or Below Objective	Estimated Elk Numbers Assuming 80% of Elk Are Observed 2011
290	GARNET	See 298	See 298		Over	
291	GARNET	600	1288		Over	1610
292	GARNET	800	690		At	863
293	GRANITE BUTTE	750	495		Below	619
298	GARNET	600	767		Over	959
R-2 Total			20,827			26,034
300	TENDROY	800	1703	2010	Over	2129
301	GALLATIN/MADISON	500	719		Over	899
302	TENDROY	625	991	2011	Over	1239
309	GALLATIN/MADISON	see 301	see 301		Over	
310	GALLATIN/MADISON	1500	397	2011	Below	496
311	GALLATIN/MADISON	2700	2096	2008	Below	2620
312	BRIDGER	600	502	2007	At	628
313	NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE	4000	2734		Below	3418
314	GALLATIN/MADISON	3000	2977	2011	At	3721
315	CRAZY MOUNTAINS	1000	1060		At	1325
316	NORTHERN YELLOWSTONE	no wintering elk	NA		NA	
317	ABSAROKA	900	690		Below	863
318	DEER LODGE	500	588		At	735
319	FLEECER	955	841		At	1051
320	TOBACCO ROOT	1000	1258	2011	Over	1573
321	SAPPHIRE	no wintering elk	NA	2011 summer survey 1051	NA	
322	GRAVELLY	8,000	9653	2011	Over	12066
323	GRAVELLY	See 322	See 322		Over	
324	GRAVELLY	See 322	See 322		Over	
325	GRAVELLY	See 322	See 322		Over	
326	GRAVELLY	See 322	See 322		Over	
327	GRAVELLY	See 322	See 322		Over	
328	TENDROY	625	1008		Over	1260
329	PIONEER	830	815		At	1019
330	GRAVELLY	See 322	See 322		Over	
331	PIONEER	1290	1188		At	1485
332	PIONEER	830	396		Below	495
333	TOBACCO ROOT	See 320	See 320		Over	
334	SAPPHIRE	no wintering elk	NA	2011 summer survey 644	NA	
335	DEER LODGE	600	998		Over	1248
339	GRANITE BUTTE	700	815		At	1019
340	HIGHLAND	1600	1680		At	2100
341	FLEECER	525	445		At	556
343	GRANITE BUTTE	700	630		At	788
350	HIGHLAND	See 340	See 340		At	
360	GALLATIN/MADISON	2200	1264		Below	1580
361	GALLATIN/MADISON	175	150	2007	At	188
362	GALLATIN/MADISON	2500	2171		At	2714
370	HIGHLAND	See 340	See 340		At	

2012 ELK OBJECTIVES AND STATUS

Hunting District	EMU	Elk Plan Objective Point Estimate (Observed Elk)	2012 or Most Recent Number of Elk Observed- Representative of Trend	Last Year Counted if Not 2012	Status -- Over, At or Below Objective	Estimated Elk Numbers Assuming 80% of Elk Are Observed 2011
380	ELKHORN	2000	1736		At	2170
388	NONE	NA	NA		NA	
390	BRIDGER	900	1391		Over	1739
391	BRIDGER	550	1330		Over	1663
392	WEST BIG BELT	1100	1313		Over	1641
393	BRIDGER	1500	3658		Over	4573
R-3 Total			47,197			58,996
400	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	NA	NA		NA	
401	SWEETGRASS HILLS	350	474	2011	Over	593
403	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	See 400	See 400		NA	
404	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	See 400	See 400		NA	
405	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	See 400	See 400		NA	
406	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	See 400	See 400		NA	
410	MISSOURI RIVER	2300	3281		Over	4101
411 (east)	SNOWY	400	691	2008	Over	864
530	SNOWY	See 411 (east)	1800		Over	2250
411(west)	SNOWY	400	339		At	424
412	SNOWY	300	919		Over	1149
413	LITTLE BELT	500	335	2011	Below	419
415	BOB MARSHALL	200	331	2011	Over	414
416	LITTLE BELT	475	873		Over	1091
417	MISSOURI RIVER	400	549	2009	Over	686
418	LITTLE BELT	150	148	2011	At	185
419	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	See 400	See 400		NA	
420	LITTLE BELT	1200	1263	2011	At	1579
421	BIRDTAIL	500	620		Over	775
422	BOB MARSHALL	500	1687		Over	2109
423	BIRDTAIL	See 421	See 421		Over	
424	BOB MARSHALL	See 425	See 425		At	
425	BOB MARSHALL	2500	2717		At	3396
426	MISSOURI RIVER	75	NA		NA	
432	LITTLE BELT	325	458		Over	573
441	BOB MARSHALL	500	682	2011	Over	853
442	BOB MARSHALL	See 425	See 425		At	
444	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	See 400	See 400		NA	
445	DEVIL'S KITCHEN	2200	3054		Over	3818
446	EAST BIG BELT	950	2238		Over	2798
447	HIGHWOOD	700	1326		Over	1658
448	LITTLE BELT	See 420	See 420		At	
449	CASTLE MOUNTAIN	600	961		Over	1201
450	TETON	100	403		Over	504
452	CASTLE MOUNTAIN	See 449	See 449		Over	
454	LITTLE BELT	250	216		At	270
455	DEVIL'S KITCHEN	See 445	See 445		Over	
471	GOLDEN TRIANGLE	See 400	See 400		NA	
R-4 Total			25,365			31,706
500	MID-YELLOWSTONE	60	36	2007	NA	45
502	MID-YELLOWSTONE	50	88		Over	110
510	MID-YELLOWSTONE	10	NA		NA	
511	SNOWY	See 411 W	See 411 W		At	

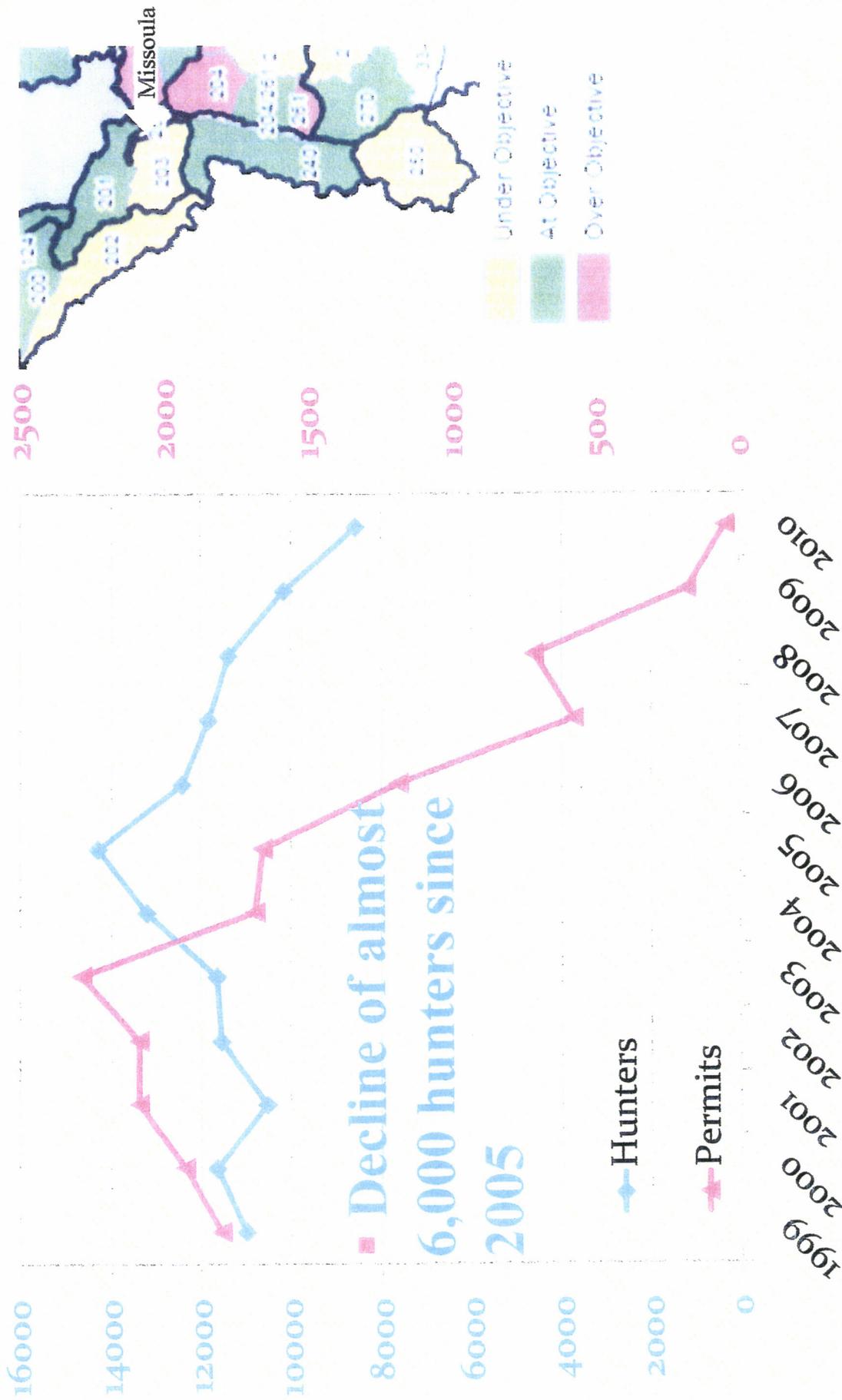
2012 ELK OBJECTIVES AND STATUS

Hunting District	EMU	Elk Plan Objective Point Estimate (Observed Elk)	2012 or Most Recent Number of Elk Observed- Representative of Trend	Last Year Counted if Not 2012	Status -- Over, At or Below Objective	Estimated Elk Numbers Assuming 80% of Elk Are Observed 2011
520	ABSAROKA	1050	1479		Over	1849
540	LITTLE BELT	600	1436		Over	1795
560	ABSAROKA	700	1573		Over	1966
570	MID-YELLOWSTONE	100	273		Over	341
575	MID-YELLOWSTONE	225	706		Over	883
580	CRAZY MOUNTAINS	975	3465		Over	4331
590 Bull	BULL MOUNTAINS	750	1387	2011	Over	1734
590 Pine	BULL MOUNTAINS	300	435		Over	544
R-5 Total			10,878			13,598
600	HI LINE	0	NA		NA	
611	HI LINE	See 600	See 600		NA	
620	MISSOURI RIVER	See 621	See 621		Over	
621	MISSOURI RIVER	1400-1650	1935		Over	2419
622	MISSOURI RIVER	See 621	See 621		Over	
630	MISSOURI RIVER	See 631	See 631		Over	
631	MISSOURI RIVER	300 - 350	433		Over	541
632	MISSOURI RIVER	See 631	See 631		Over	
640	HI LINE	See 600	See 600		NA	
641	HI LINE	See 600	See 600		NA	
650	HI LINE	See 600	See 600		NA	
651	HI LINE	See 600	See 600		NA	
652	HI LINE	See 600	See 600		NA	
670	HI LINE	See 600	See 600		NA	
680	BEARS PAW	See 690	See 690		Over	
690	BEARS PAW	250	394		Over	493
R-6 Total			2,762			3,453
700	MISSOURI RIVER	200-300	1382		Over	1728
701	MISSOURI RIVER	See 701	See 701		Over	
702	CUSTER FOREST	See 704	See 704		Over	
703	ENID	low numbers	NA		Over	
704	CUSTER FOREST	500	856		Over	1070
705	CUSTER FOREST	See 704	See 704		Over	
R-7 Total			2,238			2,798
TOTAL		90,910	112,862			141,078

Estimated elk numbers are not comprehensively validated with site specific research or enhanced monitoring efforts. Estimates are not framed with confidence intervals and are subject to adjustment.

Over Objective: Over objective range expressed in Elk Plan.	70
At Objective: Within objective range expressed in Elk Plan.	47
Below Objective: Below objective range expressed in Elk Plan.	16
NA: No stated objective, no wintering elk or no survey flown.	31

Elk Hunting Opportunity in Southwest Region Two



Includes Hunting Districts 202, 203, 240 250, 270, 261 & 204, covering 3,927 square miles (37% of Region Two). "Permits" means antlerless permits or licenses.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

May 29, 2010

Scott Boulanger
Circle KBL Outfitters and Guides
P.O. Box 733
Darby, MT 59829

Dear Scott,

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate the time you've taken to share your concerns about wolf and lion management in Montana.

I shared your message with Art Noonan, Deputy Director of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and asked him to review your concerns. Deputy Director Noonan provided the enclosed detailed memorandum in response to my request.

I hope the information provided by Deputy Director Noonan is useful. The Department and I share many of your concerns and a number of actions, as you know, have been implemented.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can assist with in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "B. Schweitzer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor

C: Art Noonan



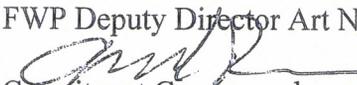
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MEMO

DATE: May 25, 2010

TO: Governor Brian Schweitzer

FROM: FWP Deputy Director Art Noonan

RE: 
Constituent Correspondence (#16392.1)
Scott Boulanger, Owner
Circle KBL Outfitters and Guides
POB 733
Darby, MT, 59829

This is background from Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) in response to a letter from Mr. Scott Boulanger. FWP enjoys a productive working relationship with Mr. Boulanger, who is a member of the Bitterroot Elk Working Group, serving in an advisory role to FWP. Results of FWP's recent aerial elk surveys in the Bitterroot Watershed have prompted Mr. Boulanger to advocate for an emergency closure of Hunting District 250 (the West Fork of the Bitterroot) to the hunting of elk and deer in 2010.

While there are inaccuracies in Mr. Boulanger's presentation of supporting data, his logic and opinions are based in fact. Annual aerial surveys have provided advance warning that the Bitterroot population of more than 6,000 elk is on the verge of a steep decline. That portion of the Bitterroot hardest hit is the West Fork (Hunting District 250). Elk survival has declined to a level that is not replacing adult elk mortality. FWP and the FWP Commission have severely curtailed female elk harvest across the six Bitterroot hunting districts, and virtually eliminated female harvest in the West Fork, in an attempt to maximize the adult breeding stock in the population. However, the continued loss of calves is beyond the control of elk hunters, and requires increased harvest of black bear, lion and wolf to relieve predation pressure on calves. If this situation is allowed to continue unchecked, existing breeding stock will be replaced with about half the normal numbers of surviving calves, which in turn will produce only about half the normal number of newborn calves, which in turn will continue surviving at half the normal rate, and the downward spiral of an elk population—unthinkable until only very recently—would be realized. We emphasize that the prediction of an elk population crash in the Bitterroot is strongly supported by FWP data, obtained in its annual aerial surveys, and that the abrupt change in ratios of calves per hundred cows observed in those surveys gives FWP and the public early warning of a result that might be avoided with prompt and decisive action.

Mr. Boulanger also expressed concern about mule deer in the West Fork, particularly low numbers of bucks per hundred does in FWP surveys. While there may be similarities between the elk and deer situations in the West Fork, fawn survival is high and the deer population is not at immediate risk. Mule deer populations generally are on a declining trend across west-central Montana, and FWP is addressing this at a regional scale.

In Fall 2009, FWP developed hunting season proposals for 2010 in anticipation of the results of its spring surveys. With input and supporting testimony from the Bitterroot Elk Working Group, and with Mr. Boulanger's participation, FWP proposed eliminating the harvest of antlerless elk in Hunting District 250, to include eliminating antlerless harvest by archers, youth, and permit-to-hunt-from-a-vehicle. This proposal represents the most severe elk hunting restriction of a general hunting district in west-central Montana. FWP also proposed severely limiting the harvest of antlerless elk throughout the Bitterroot, and proposed lengthening the spring hunting season for black bear in Hunting District 250 and Hunting District 270. The FWP Commission approved these proposals in February 2010 and we await the upcoming hunting season as the first opportunity to implement these measures.

In April, the FWP Commission adopted as tentative FWP's proposal to increase lion harvest across Region Two, and by 50% in the Bitterroot. Similarly, FWP has presented proposals to the FWP Commission for its consideration in May, which would allow as much as a 160% increase in wolf harvest in the Bitterroot for 2010. These two proposals complete FWP's comprehensive package of harvest management proposals for conserving elk breeding stock and reducing predation on elk calves.

In his letter, Mr. Boulanger acknowledged action taken by FWP and the FWP Commission to offer only 125 permits for the harvest of mule deer bucks in Hunting District 250 in 2010. In 2009 and prior hunting seasons, unlimited permits were offered to hunt mule deer bucks, and 800 hunters typically participated annually. Mr. Boulanger advocates that mule deer hunting be closed entirely.

Results of the annual elk and deer surveys conducted by FWP confirmed the assumptions that FWP made in proposing hunting seasons for 2010, and provided no new cause for alarm or immediate actions beyond those already taken or proposed. Mr. Boulanger's letter was a topic of thoughtful discussion by the Bitterroot Elk Working Group during its meeting of May 4, 2010, with Mr. Boulanger participating. At its conclusion, the Working Group voted unanimously to further discuss and develop a future proposal for the 2011—not 2010—hunting season to conserve the Bitterroot elk population. In addition, receipt of Mr. Boulanger's letter was acknowledged by the Region Two Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) at its meeting of May 11, and the CAC expressed its interest in further considering Mr. Boulanger's concerns at a future meeting.

FWP's position departs from Mr. Boulanger's only in that FWP believes that the severe restrictions—and elimination, in some places—of antlerless elk and deer hunting opportunities are already sufficient to protect the reproductive segment of deer and elk populations from overharvest by hunters.