

## FACT SHEET

### Hunter Access and Elk Shoulder Seasons in HD 445,446,449, & 452

While the public is understandably very interested in these new antlerless elk shoulder seasons, it is important for hunters to know that this is a 2 ½ month opportunity, and in many ways, these shoulder seasons will offer opportunities very similar to those that were available during the general season.

**There is not now, nor will there be, any single list of landowners who may allow access during this season. Access opportunities can be expected to fluctuate, depending upon the distribution of elk and the decisions landowners make based upon their farm/ranch operations and their willingness to accommodate hunters throughout the season.**

Although FWP will provide additional assistance to hunters and landowners through the services of a Hunt Coordinator for HD 445 and for HD446, 449, & 452, this is a very limited resource focused on managing INFORMATION that can help connect hunters with elk and access.

Many of the calls that are currently overwhelming the phone lines for Hunt Coordinators and other FWP staff are calls requesting information that is already posted at this link:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/seasons/elkShoulder.html> Hunters are encouraged to be patient and recognize that while volume of calls and requests for information is very high at the front end of this season, things will slow down as the season progresses.

Hunters need to be realistic in their expectations as to what this extended hunting opportunity may provide and also as to what the Hunt Coordinator may be able to provide in the way of information. Hunters will still need to be prepared to hunt just as they do during the general or any other hunting season.

Many landowners, in the interest of efficiency, will be looking for hunters who are familiar with the area and prepared to hunt under the conditions they may encounter. If a hunter has not hunted an area, that hunter will need to be prepared to spend the necessary time and effort to become familiar with the area and how to effectively hunt there.

Hunters are also reminded that this antlerless elk hunting opportunity will not be available on any U.S. Forest Service land or FWP Wildlife Management Area land.

Block Management Areas (BMA's) that allow bird hunting after the general hunting season in all of these hunting districts are open according to the rules designated for the particular BMA.

#### **Hunting District 446,449, & 452 – Block management and other access information**

For shoulder seasons in these hunting districts, the block management areas that are allowing antlerless elk hunting are:

- BMA 178 Birch Creek – HD 446 open – sign-in and walk until February 15 – maps available online, at R4 HQ's, & on-site at sign-in boxes.
- BMA 177 Catlin – Open only for that area in HD 452 (R4 portion) Sign-in and walk through February 15 – new map online, at R4 HQ's, & on-site at sign-in boxes.

- BMA 151 Townsend – HD 446/452 open until January 1 for antlerless elk. Map available online, at R4 HQ's, & on-site at sign-in boxes.
- BMA 93 Checkerboard – HD 452 Reservations until January 1.
- BMA 82 Rader – HD 446 as specified for birds and antlerless elk until January 1. Map available online, at R4 HQ's, & on-site at sign-in boxes.
- BMA 119 Bair Ranch – HD 449 not open for shoulder season elk at this time.

In HD 446, 449, and 452, many landowners not in Block Management are allowing shoulder season hunters through options they feel best suit their ranch or lands. Some of those options that sportsmen need to know about are:

- **Landowners that allow access without fee or significant restriction:** – Hunt Coordinator (HC) may be able to direct hunters to these landowners in some cases. These opportunities may be only available on certain days, and will certainly ebb and flow in relation to presence of elk and pressure from hunters.
- **Landowners that are only allowing invited guests and are restricting access to hunters they know:** HC will offer those landowners the same service as any other landowner. If those landowners want hunters, HC will send hunters their way. HC may get a call from these landowners from time to time, which may provide hunters with an additional opportunity.
- **Landowners wanting everything to go through HC:** HC will be working with landowners to help get hunters on the ground on the day when the landowner wants hunters due to elk presence. This will not be done by reservation. It will be done as a first-come, first-served opportunity when a HC hears a landowner has elk and wants hunters, the HC will provide that information to hunters who call or otherwise contact the HC.
- While HC can be viewed as an additional resource, hunters are still encouraged to contact landowners on their own and ask for permission.

#### **Hunting District 445: Block management and other access information**

- BMA 174 Lane Ranch/ Elk Ridge closed. Access by permission only from landowner.
- BMA 81 Sieben Livestock closed – booked full and not accepting any further inquiries until after January 15<sup>th</sup>, at which the landowner will assess situation and work through HC if more hunters are needed.
- BMA 52 Smith River multiple landowners – see map and rules. Elk presence is a low probability on some lands, while on others elk may be seen more often.

Three key landowners in HD 445 are allowing access, but they have already confirmed access commitments with hunters through January 15<sup>th</sup>. After that time, these landowners will assess their individual situations to determine whether or not they wish to continue to allow access, and if so, how that access may be managed. In the interim, they may have cancellations and if so, will coordinate through HC to fill spots.