



Dear Citizen's Elk Committee Members,

Please find the following comments relative to the recommendation to reform the damage hunt roster and how damage hunts are utilized.

We are strongly in support of this effort, and we encourage the committee to dig deeply into this issue. For years, damage hunts have been effective tools in the management of elk on specific properties where damage was occurring. However, like any program, it is starting to show some age and reforms are needed to ensure that it is a tool that is effective for landowners, helps redistribute elk and provides a reasonable chance of success for the hunters selected for the hunt.

We encourage the committee to keep thinking locally, but also to think a little more broadly as well in order to have the number of people available to help in a timely and effective fashion. In many instances, there will likely not be enough "local" hunters to make the damage hunts successful, and as we have seen over the last two to three years, areas with greatly expanding human populations do not always coincide with expanding elk populations. Furthermore, we suggest that having FWP look at organizing damage rosters by community so hunters can choose the community closest to them, rather than focus on districts many hours away, reducing the likelihood of them showing up.

Other things to consider are a fee for hunters to enter into the damage roster and disallowing people to sign up if they miss their window of opportunity. Many hunters sign up for damage hunts in case they do not put an elk or deer in the freezer. Then when called, those hunters are not inclined to show up and hunt when called or life circumstances change availability. Having a nominal fee to enter into the hunt roster would help ensure the dedication of the hunter.

If the suggestion of an application fee is selected, we suggest that the proceeds of such a fee go towards either Block Management or to help offset damages for landowners enrolled in the game damage hunts.

We do have serious concerns regarding the equitable allocation of the resource by only allowing landowners to select damage hunt participants as we believe that this could lead to a situation where family and friends are called upon, rather than utilizing the entirety of the damage roster. Landowners should retain the ability to deny permission, but the agency must be the one that selects the hunters randomly. Adding an educational component relative to hunter'andowner relations to part of the damage roster criteria hunt might be one way to find a balance between

less than enthusiastic hunters and those who seek to fill their freezer. Elk are a public resource and as such should be managed by the agency, just as the hunt must be administered solely by FWP.

Sincerely,

Marcus Strange,

On behalf of the Montana Citizen's Elk Management Coalition