



Dear Citizen's Elk Committee Members,

Please find the following comments relative to the recommendation to move towards a choose your weapon/choose your season model in order to alleviate some hunting pressure.

The Coalition has not taken a formal position on this, but we encourage the committee to continue to explore the model. Hunter distribution, hunter pressure and a large number of people flocking to destination areas in general have the opposite desire when it comes to hunters helping manage elk populations.

In 2008, the Limited Entry bundle permit system for the archery season in the Missouri River Breaks and Central/Eastern Montana were instituted to deal exactly with this issue - hunter pressure and overcrowding. Limited Entry bull permits were successful in reducing hunter pressure on public land and private land that was open for hunting, but with the increase in cow elk hunting, more hunters utilizing those landscapes, more permits for bulls, etc we are seeing the opposite effect - more elk on lands where no season or hunter can impact their behavior.

While hunter pressure remains the number one issue relative to elk distribution, we are not convinced that forcing people into an either/or situation is the appropriate approach. Looking to other states on how they manage hunter pressure, effective harvest rates, etc, we believe that a mix of opportunities can be utilized to achieve management goals while providing ample opportunity for public and private land hunters, while giving elk the much needed time to reset on to lands where they would be available.

We encourage the committee to continue to explore how to manipulate hunting seasons structures while seeking to increase harvest during the regular seasons. Archery hunting is not always an effective management tool, as most hunters are very selective, and the use of A tags is generally reserved for bulls, rather than cows. The rifle season still produces more harvest, yet we have lower harvest rates than some of our neighboring states due to pressure.

We encourage the committee to look at increased permit areas, controlled pressure, community solutions and season structure including choose your weapon/choose your season. This committee can help bridge the divide between long seasons and low harvest by focusing on strategies that increase the number publicly available elk through Block Management, WHIP, Habitat Montana and other current incentive-based programs, rather than seek to limit which weapon can be used to kill elk. Moving to an either/or scenario should be thoroughly vetted with

organizations such as the Montana Bowhunters Association, Montana Traditional Bowhunters and others who are active in the season setting process relative to archery, including MCEMC groups.

Sincerely,

Marcus Strange

On Behalf of the Montana Citizen's Elk Management Coalition