

RMEF — Elk Hunt Forecast for 2010 HUNGER

MISSOULA, Mont.—Elk and elk hunting opportunities are abundant in much of North America, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is offering a sneak peek at upcoming seasons in its annual roundup of hunt forecasts for 28 states and provinces, now posted at www.rmef.org.

“Generally speaking, elk populations are in great shape and hunters have much to look forward to across the West, as well as in several Midwestern and Eastern states,” said David Allen, president and CEO of the Elk Foundation. “A mild winter, much needed spring and summer moisture and our habitat conservation successes all factor into our optimism for the upcoming hunting season.”

This summer, RMEF passed the 5.8 million acre mark for habitat conserved or enhanced for elk and other wildlife.

Allen added, however, that wolves continue to be a growing concern in regions where the predators share habitat with elk and other big game herds. In some areas, elk calf survival rates are now insufficient to sustain herds for the future. The urgent need to control wolf populations is a localized wildlife management crisis now compounded by a recent court decision to return wolves to full federal protections under the Endangered Species Act. RMEF has asked Congress to intervene and grant management authority to the states.

Nebraska

- Elk Population: 2,400
- Bull/Cow Ratio: Not available
- Residents only
- Hunter Success: 80 percent bulls, 58 percent cows

The state’s elk herd is still growing consistently around 15-20 percent every year. As numbers grow, opportunities to hunt grow with them, but only if you’re a resident. This year, the state will issue 272 tags, up 40 from last year, with 98 bull and 174 cow permits. To promote strong landowner relations, one-third of those permits are available to private landowners in a drawing and are non-transferable.

South Dakota

- Elk Population: 5,000
- Bull/Cow Ratio: 75/100
- Residents only
- Hunter Success: 50 percent

The state’s largest herd in the Black Hills National Forest numbered as many as 5,000 animals back in 2003. Aggressive management knocked that number down to the current 3,000. But public attitudes have shifted and there is once again a cry for more elk and more hunting opportunity. To reach a goal of 4,000 in the Hills, managers have had to cut rifle tags again this year to 1,065—a drop of 300 from last year. Still, residents’ odds of hunting a bull in the Black Hills are a solid 1:10. If you pull a tag, make the most of it, as you have to wait nine years to apply again.

From Page 2

needy. Even though this was another banner year, much more fresh meat is needed.

“The generosity of hunters never ceases to amaze me” said Jeff Olson, president of South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger. “I am surprised by the increase, as donations of deer and antelope to SAH programs across the country were down in many states last fall. Additionally, total deer harvest in South Dakota was also down. To show any increase in donations at all really shows the sportsmen are becoming even more dedicated to this program in South Dakota.”

In 2010, Sportsmen Against Hunger will again reimburse participating processors \$50 for each donated antlerless deer, and \$40 for each donated doe or fawn antelope. The processing certificate program is costly and the organization is always looking for additional ways to help fund the program. Last season, sportsmen donated almost \$30,000 to SAH through an optional check-off program when applying for big-game tags.

Information on making tax-deductible donations, as well as on history and operation of Sportsmen Against Hunger including a list of participating processors, can be found on the Sportsmen Against Hunger web site: www.feedtheneedsd.com

The Game, Fish and Parks Department, through the GFP Commission, has been a significant supporter of Sportsmen Against Hunger. Other support has come for many years through grants from Wal-Mart, Scheels of Sioux Falls, the Elmen Foundation, the Great Dacotah Chapter of Safari Club International, and the Black Hills Advertising Federation.

“Many people contribute to the continuing success of Sportsmen Against Hunger,” Olson said. “They include the hunters who harvest and donate a few more deer than they would normally take, the 49 participating game processors who generally reduce their fees for processing donated game, the food pantries that distribute the donated game meat, and the hunters, private donors and corporations who make generous funding contributions to the program in South Dakota.”

For more information on Sportsmen Against Hunger, call 605-280-4977.



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