

# Elkhorn Cooperative Management Area 2006 FINAL Program of Work

Approved by:

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# FINAL ELKHORN PROGRAM OF WORK FOR 2006

Prepared by: Elkhorn Implementation Group



## 2006 Cooperative Projects

**PRIORITY 1. ELKHORN INITIATIVE** – Participate in all aspects of this partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to enhance wildlife habitat in the Elkhorns through land adjustments and habitat projects. Coordinate with RMEF on LWCF proposals. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Elkhorn Steering Committee, Larry Cole, Al Christophersen, Jerry Wells, Tom Carlsen.**

**PRIORITY 2. IRON MASK ACQUISITION** – Phase 1 or Iron Mask acquisition will be completed in 2006 (2000 acres). Remainder will be acquired as LWCF funding is approved. **Lead Persons: Steve Hartmann**

**PRIORITY 3. INTEGRATED WEED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM** – Goals for 2006 include: Increase the interagency commitment and funding for the “Elkhorn Interagency Weed Coordination”; collected data needs to be digitized for a Elkhorn Mountain Range Noxious Weed map; set up baseline monitoring transects; complete grant project completion reports; set up successful spray days; strategize and make adjustments and recommendations for work in 2006; establish priorities with private land owners and the Counties (Weed Management Areas) to help put together State Trust Fund grant proposals. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Diane Johnson, Eric Tolf, John Sanford, Jay Winfield, Jay Cole, Pam Converse, Tom Carlsen.**

## **PRIORITY 4. PRIVATE LANDOWNER COORDINATION AND VEGETATION**

**ENHANCEMENT** – As part of the Elkhorn Initiative and working across boundaries to improve wildlife habitat, continue to work with private land owners, RMEF, County Weed Coordinator, FWP, FS, and Broadwater Conservation District to complete the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the Rattlesnake and Prairie Gulch private land prescribed burns. Review agreements (collection agreement with BCD and Participation Agreement with private landowners) and discuss projects to enhance bighorn sheep and elk habitat in order to reduce the impacts of wildlife on private land. Continue slashing of juniper, while protecting timbered corridors, aspen, and cottonwoods areas and prepare for prescribed burning in spring. GPS noxious weeds, pre and post treat with FNAWS grant. Write the next phase of RMEF grants for funding. Continue to work with landowners on other projects. Ongoing Projects include: Rattlesnake prescribed burn project; Prairie Gulch prescribed burn project, North Elkhorns fence and water development projects; Noxious weed treatment. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Tom Carlsen, David Nunn, Pam Converse, and Mike Cole and Private Landowners.**

**PRIORITY 5. ELKHORN WORKING GROUP/ VEGETATION INVENTORY AND RANGE UTILIZATION STUDY** – 2006 is a critical year for the Elkhorn Working Group as findings and recommendations for the 3 year study will be completed. Results of the study and recommendations need critical review for incorporation in the 2007 Program of Work. Provide collaboration efforts and technical support to the when findings and recommendations from the Vegetation Inventory and Range Utilization Study is presented as well as the Fire History Study. Involve the Elkhorn Working Group in the assessment of the Roberts/Cottonwood watersheds. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Jerry Wells, Tom Carlsen, , Denise Pengeroth, Elkhorn Steering Committee, Shelley Douthett, Lois Olsen.**

**PRIORITY 6. ELKHORN MOUNTAINS WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT (WCT) RESTORATION PROGRAM** – The Elkhorn CMA is one of the premiere reintroduction areas for westslope cutthroat trout in the entire state. Efforts in 2006 will include the continued introduction of native WCT to the SF of Crow Creek (1.8 miles of stream), Little Tizer Creek (1.2 miles of stream), and a new introduction to Crazy Creek (1.8 miles of stream). These projects compliment similar introduction efforts in Muskrat, Eureka, and Whitehorse creeks which have increased the distribution of WCT in the mountain range by about 12.5 mile of stream. Additional projects will include continued removal of nonnative brook and rainbow trout from Dutchman, SF Warm Springs, and McClellan Creeks, and collection of eggs from existing WCT populations for on-going introduction efforts. Efforts will be made to tie in the Elkhorn Program with the overall Missouri River subbasin assessment. The Program is currently supported by FWP, the Helena National Forest, the BLM and MT Trout Unlimited. The Helena Forest Foundation has submitted a grant proposal to Bring Back the Natives for 2005 (still waiting for grant money). **Lead Persons: Lee Nelson; other resources needed: Debbie Andersen (HFF), Ron Spoon, Brad Shepard, Archie Harper, Len Walch, Sarah LaMarr, and Elkhorn Coordinator.**

**PRIORITY 7. UPDATE LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS/SOUTH ELKHORNS/ROBERTS-COTTONWOOD WATERSHEDS** – The Landscape Analysis (LA) for the Elkhorns was completed in 1992. While information in the document assists in guiding all future management actions in the mountain range, the document is intended to be dynamic and continually updated as new or better information becomes available. Currently the LA is currently 13 years old with a 1997 update. Data from past accomplishments, new advanced data collected from the Vegetation and Range Study, and from the Fire History contract should be incorporated into the Landscape Analysis (LA). A database for cataloging and tracking both implementation and effectiveness monitoring should also be developed. The Roberts/Cottonwood watersheds (tributaries of Crow Creek) should be reviewed and overlaid to the Crow burn units identifying a comprehensive restoration plan involving fuel treatments, riparian enhancement and weed treatments. Review and update the South Elkhorns Implementation Area Document per the Landscape Analysis update. Identify accomplishments, new data, and landscape/watershed level projects. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Shelley Douthett, Lois Olsen, Elkhorn Implementation and Extended Groups, Elkhorn Working Group.**

**PRIORITY 8. ELKHORN FIRE PLAN** – An Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan was signed in 2001. It outlines the conditions under which a wildland fire could be managed to achieve resource objectives in portions of the Elkhorn Mountains, as well as to outline the appropriate fire suppression response for wildlives in the Elkhorns. The Fire Guide Plan is tiered to the 1986 and 1987 Helena and Deerlodge Forest Plans, and the BLM Resource Management Plan. Approximately 80,000 acres fall within the “Wildland Fire Use” area. Under the Plan projects need to be identified to create “defensible boundaries” for the fire use area; develop a pre-attack strategy for the flexible fire suppression areas. Make private “inholding” contacts in wildland fire use area. Reestablish the RAWS station for more accurate data to meet the ERC. Develop and coordinate dry run exercise. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, David Nunn, Townsend FMO, Roger Steerman, Dave Larsen.**



## **Bureau of Land Management**

### **1. BIGHORN SHEEP PRESCRIBED BURNING PROJECT ON IRON MASK RIDGE-**

Complete NEPA and pre-treatment slashing and weed control on a prescribed burn unit on the Iron Mask Ridge. **Lead Persons: Sara LaMarr, Tom Carlsen, Elkhorn Coordinator.**

### **2. SOUTH ELKHORNS RANGE AND VEGETATION TREATMENT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION**

–Complete work on commercial and non-commercial thinning units for 2006 and prescribed burn in 2007. Approximately 50 acres. **Lead Persons: John Thompson, Sara LaMarr, Mike Small, and Mike Wyatt.**

**4. INDIAN CREEK PLACER TAILINGS RECLAMATION** – Complete aerial flyover of the Indian Creek drainage. Generate a topographic map of the drainage, approximately 3 miles. In 2006 the Site characterization effort will be completed in order to generate a Preliminary Alternative Analysis Report (PAAR) to assess the optimal design/construction sequence to mitigate the past historical mining effects via reconstruction of a hydraulically and geomorphically functioning stream channel. **Lead Persons: Jodi Woods, Beth Ihle,**

**5. LIMESTONE HILLS MILITARY TRAINING AREA WITHDRAWAL** – Chapters 1-4 are near completion. The Draft LEIS is schedule to go out for public review in spring of 2006. **Lead Persons: Steve Hartmann**

**6. ROAD STABILIZATION** – BLM will be doing road stabilization work in the Elkhorns with the SWECO dozer. Opportunity to share with Forest and conduct a joint project. **Lead Persons: Brad Rixford, Steve Wyatt, Charlie McKenna and Curt Cuneo, Terry Sexton and Eric Tolf**



## Montana Dept. Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

### **1. ANNUAL POPULATION SURVEY WORK**

Conduct aerial surveys on elk winter ranges as weather permits to count and classify elk in Hunting District 380. Surveys will be conducted on bighorn sheep, mule deer, antelope, and mountain goats as well; **Lead Person: Tom Carlsen.**

### **2. BLOCK MANAGEMENT**

There are currently 20 BMA's on all sides of the Elkhorns, including 100,000 acres and over \$100,000 paid to landowners. If additional funding becomes available in 2006, and additional interest is expressed, the number of BMA's in the Elkhorns may increase; **Lead Person: Tom Carlsen.**

### **3. BIGHORN SHEEP MONITORING AND RESTORATION**

A population objective to manage 250 bighornsheep was establish in the Elkhorns per an agreement with the landowners. A 2005 spring count estimated approximately 163 sheep. FWP were approved for issuing 3 either sex permits and 3 ewe permits. **Lead Person: Tom Carlsen.**

**4. SEASON SETTING:** FWP will update hunting season quotas for the Elkhorns. Goal in permits is to maintain late winter observed population of about 1,800 elk. For the fall of 2006, there are 110 either sex permits and 450 antlerless permits There will be no early or no late season permits. **Lead Persons: Tom Carlsen.**



## Forest Service Projects

**1. SOUTH ELKHORNS AMPS** – Complete data collection for 2006/2007 and validate. Prepare assessments, analysis and revisions on the Dahlman and Elkhorn Allotments for 2007/2008. Helena and B-D will plan for Dahlman and Elkhorn Allotments on the 2007/2008 Forests Program of Work. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Shelley Douthett, Eric Tolf, Mike Cole, Terry Sexton.**

**2. CROW CREEK FALLS TRAIL 109** – Implement first phase of reconstruction of trail 109 in and around Crow Creek Falls. Contract awarded fall of 2005. Implementation of contract will start spring of 2006. **Lead Persons: Roy Barkle, Elkhorn Coordinator**

**3. PRESCRIBED BURNING** – Continue slashing and/or re-burning of Crow Creek units to fully meet objectives. Maintenance burns in the Crow units, complete implementation of Units 25 and 29 from the Crow Creek project including aspen enhancement in Unit 25. Complete mechanical slashing in the Power Gulch Bighorn Sheep Burn Unit; evaluate the

need to do prescribe burning in Manley Park and on Bullock Hill. **Lead Persons: David Nunn, Dave Larsen, Tom Carlsen, LaWen Hollingsworth, Lois Olsen and Elkhorn Coordinator.**

**4. SHEPS GRASSLAND AND RIPARIAN RESTORATION PROJECT-** Continue to remove young conifers along the grassland and parkland interface. Continue to move trees down to nearby riparian areas to act as barriers to livestock and help restore riparian vegetation (willow and alder communities). **Lead Persons: Shelley Douthett, Deena Gobbs, Tracy Schilling and Elkhorn Coordinator and Townsend fire crew.**

**5. INVENTORY and MONITORING –**

- a. Complete “post-treatment” monitoring of weeds in Bighorn Sheep burn units.
- b. Inventory conditions in the Warm Springs Fire Area.
- c. Complete field surveys of South Fork Crow Creek for suitability as a beaver reintroduction project.
- d. Complete Aspen monitoring
- e. Complete goshawk surveys and expand to BLM and B-D portions of the Elkhorns.
- f. Monitor Crow prescribed burn units.

**Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Diane Johnson, Jay Winfield, Tom Carlsen, Lois Olsen, Sarah LaMarr, LaWen Hollingsworth, Townsend FMO, Dave Larsen.**

**6. IRON MINE TRAIL RELOCATION –** Survey and design approximately 5 ½ miles of trail from the Town of Elkhorn to the Muskrat Trail to avoid private land. **Lead Persons: Eric Tolf and Elkhorn Coordinator.**

**7. MAUPIN and STRAWBERRY CREEK RIPARIAN FENCES –** Construct permanent fences to protect riparian areas in these drainages. **Lead Persons: Jay Winfield and Elkhorn Coordinator.**

**8. NORTH ELKHORNS VEGETATION PROJECT-** Helena Forest interdisciplinary team will collect additional data for the new units. Portions of the new proposal will include hazardous fuels reduction due to the encroachment of new homes creating a wildland urban interface issue. **Lead Persons: Duane Harp, Elkhorn Coordinator, Sharon Scott, Lois Olsen, Denise Pengeroth.**

**9. NORTH ELKHORNS NATIONAL NETWORK RESEARCH PROJECT –**Continue to fund one more year of inventory and monitoring of key breeding bird species and cavity nesting species for baseline trend. Surveys would be extended into the new proposed units. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator, Vicki Saab (Forest Service Research), Lois Olsen, Denise Pengeroth, and Sharon Scott.**

**10. ELKHORN TOWNSITE PROJECTS -** Continue to work toward transferring the Title of the cemetery to Jefferson County. Look into possible fundraising events to help restore one or both of the State Park Buildings. **Lead Persons: Terry Sexton, Elkhorn Coordinator.**

**11. ASPEN ENHANCEMENTS** – Review fences in spring of 2006 determine maintenance and monitoring. Provide information on maintenance to Steering Group and Forest to determine if this should continue to be a long-term project and what resource should implement. Tie this project into the Forest aspen plan. **Lead Persons: Elkhorn Coordinator and Denise Pengeroth or aspen committee.**

**12. EAST PACIFIC/JANUARY SUNRISE ABANDONED MINE CLEANUP WORK**– Identify and prioritize this project on the Helena National Forest 5 year AML POW. Coordinate with State on priority, work with State. **Lead Persons –Beth Ihle, Steve Wyatt.**

**13. ROAD MAINTENANCE**- Improve drainage on the Keating Gulch), and Prickly Pear roads (need NEPA and funding is a low priority). **Lead Persons: Charlie McKenna, Steve Wyatt and Elkhorn Coordinator.**

**14. STRAWBERRY LOOKOUT TREE REMOVAL**- Remove approximately 200 trees that are inhibiting the view from the lookout towards the west and northeast directions, overlooking the communities. Project will be contracted. **Lead Persons: Rob Martinez and Duane Harp and Elkhorn Coordinator.**