

ELKHORN COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT AREA

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2005 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

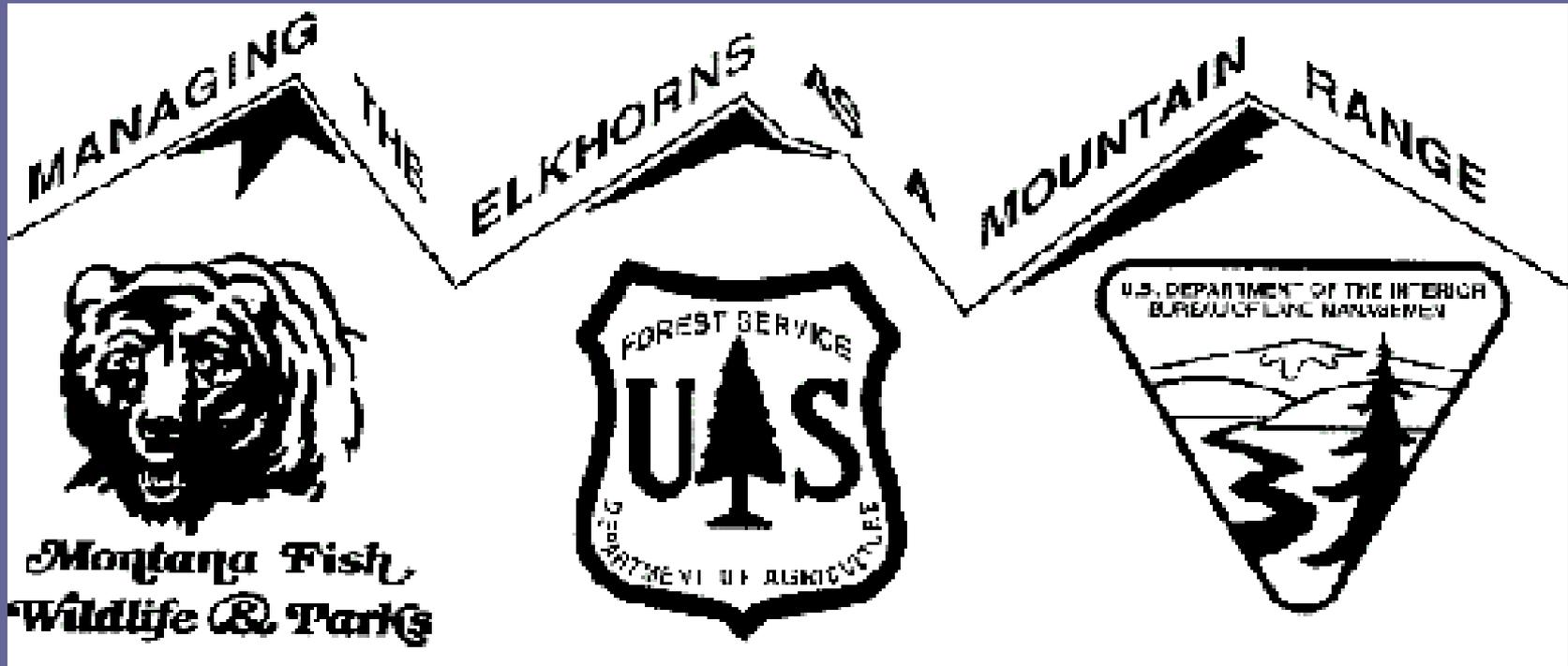


How big are the Elkhorn Mountains?

- 300,000 acres
- About 21 miles long and 19 miles wide
- The private lands consist of many in-holdings within the public lands (small mining patents, larger homesteads), as well as private lands, which surround the mountains that include large ranches as well as subdivisions
- 160,000 acres FS lands (Helena & Beaverhead –Deerlodge NF)
- 75,000 acres BLM
- MFWP State school trust lands and Wildlife Management



2005 Cooperative Projects



ELKHORN CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Partnerships between the land management agencies, private citizens, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and other non-profit groups seek to protect and/or enhance at least 200,000 acres of critical elk winter ranges and other wildlife habitat from 2003 to 2007.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and its partner the Conservation Fund purchased the 5,548 acre Iron Mask Ranch and a 321 acre parcel from Winston Land & Livestock.



CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

T-SHIRT Logo contests

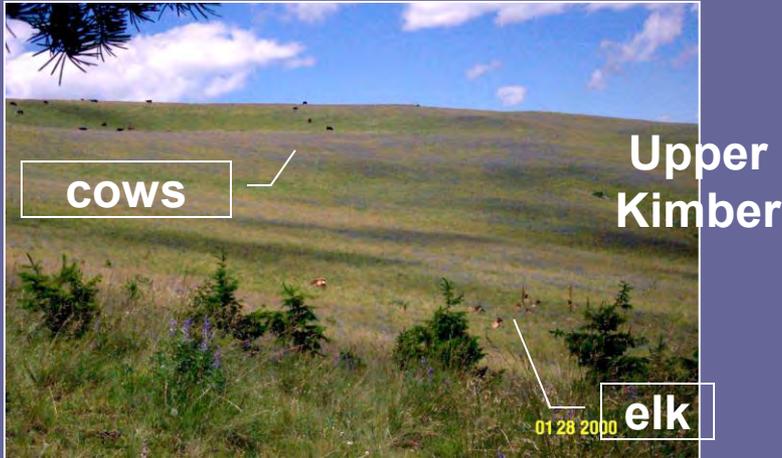
MYRNA LOY – EVENING IN
THE ELKHORNS showing of
the VIDEO

Community Celebration – Art
& Music in the Park in
conjunction with the FS 100
years celebration

Guided hike into Crow Creek
Falls



ELKHORN WORKING GROUP VEGETATION INVENTORY & RANGE



Participated with ERG in setting out cages, locating and reading Parker-3 transects

Participated in field trips and meetings with the Working Group and ERG



Westslope Cutthroat Trout Restoration

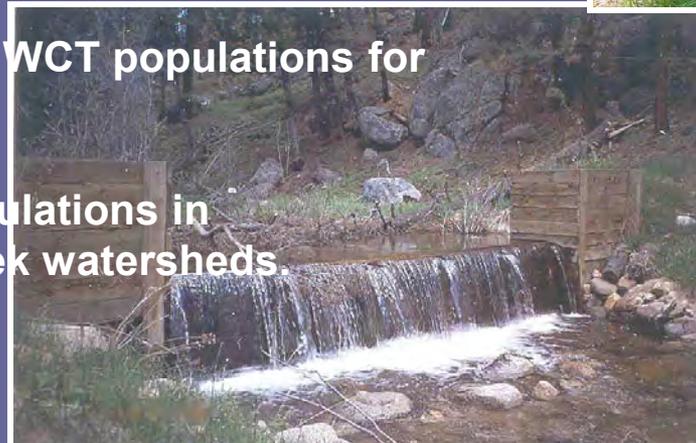
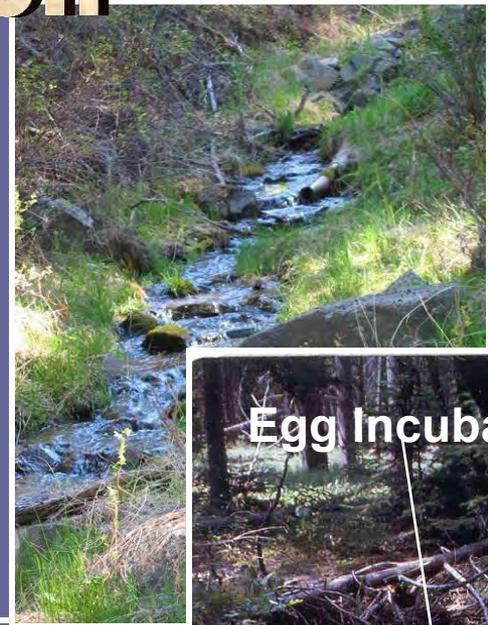


the Elkhorns are one of the premiere reintroduction areas for westslope cutthroat trout in the entire state.

- Continued removal of nonnative brook and rainbow trout from Staubach, Muskrat, Eureka, Little Tizer, Whitehorse, South Fork Warm Springs,

- Collected eggs from existing WCT populations for on-going introduction efforts.

- Continued with securing populations in Dutchman and McClellan Creek watersheds



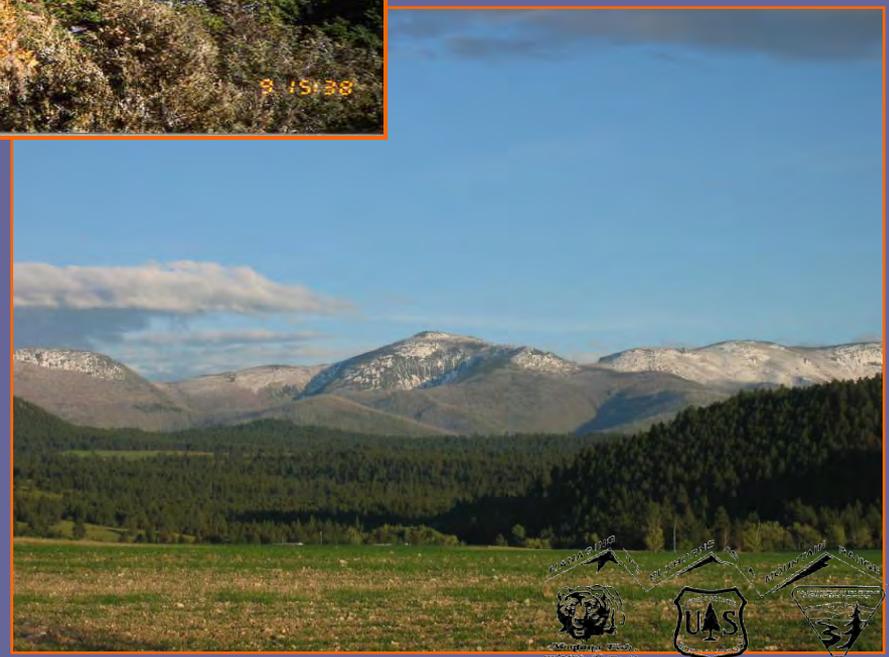
ELECTROFISHING FOR WCT



- Continue monitoring existing WCT populations in the Elkhorns.

- Efforts will be made to tie in the Elkhorn Program with the overall Missouri River subbasin assessment.

Fire exclusion and Prescribed Burning



FIRE HISTORY STUDY

Contract completed in April 2005.

Results = most ecosystem veg. types in the eastern portion of the Elkhorn Mountains have been seriously impacted by long-term fire exclusion and other land-use activities.

Plot sampling = increase in closed canopy forest; photos from 1880 and 1980 of the study area also show that tree coverage expanded substantially.

Results = 3 major vegetation types (mountain grassland, Douglas-fir, Sagebrush) had approx. 20 year-long mean fire intervals historically.



The entire project landscape suggest that restoration activities should focus on both the vegetation –fuels and fire traits



Integrated Noxious Weed Management

- Integrated Weed Management Strategy
- high priority areas for prevention, herbicides and biological control, education
- RMEF, private landowners, FNAWS, & MFWP
- 2005 treated BLM xx acres and FS xxx acres



Partnerships & Coordination with Private Landowners



Original RMEF proposal submitted totaled \$538,875. Looking at a landscape approach to reduce conifer and juniper encroachment while restoring grasslands over a 3 year period.

- 2,500 acres are proposed to be slashed and prescribed burned
- 2500 acres monitored and treated for noxious weeds.



RMEF awarded \$34,500 to BCD for Prescribed Burning private lands in Prairie and Rattlesnake Gulches

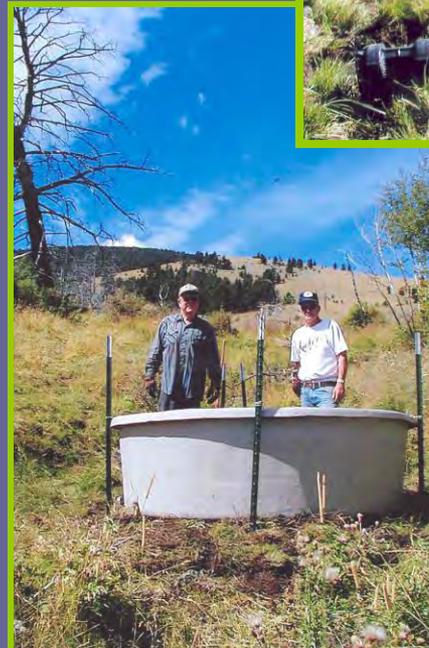
Cooperation between 4 landowners, FS, MFWP, BCD, County Weed District and RMEF

FNAWS grant for noxious weeds spraying



Partnerships & Coordination with Private Landowners

BCD was awarded \$15,000 of RMEF grants for the North Elkhorns Habitat enhancement project.



Original RMEF grant = 3 year phase \$192,000

- Treat 4500 acres of noxious weeds
- 7 miles of elk friendly fence
- 6 water developments

Landowners opted to build water developments and construct fence with the \$15,000



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS PROJECTS



Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks

Annual Population Survey Work

Conducted aerial surveys (counted and classified) elk on winter ranges, bighorn sheep, mule deer, antelope and mountain goats.



Block Management

Currently 20 Block Management Areas (BMAs) exist on all sides of the Elkhorns, including 20,000 acres and over \$100,000 paid to landowners.

When funding becomes available the number of BMA's in the Elkhorns may increase.



Bighorn Sheep Monitoring & Restoration



2005 spring count estimated approximately 163 sheep

The population objective is 250 bighorn sheep as agreed with the landowners.

Issued 3 either sex tags

Season Setting

1987 – Changes in Hunting Regulations. Montana Dept. Fish, Wildlife & Parks started an innovative hunting season regulation:

- Harvest of spike bulls with a general license
- Permit-only branch-antlered bulls. (resulted in a bull elk population of up to 14 years of age.)
- Elkhorns is one of the best places in the state for hunting and non-hunting bull elk enthusiasts.
- Management Plan – 1,800 to 2,200 elk post -season
- 2004 winter count =1,745+/- 100 branch bulls.
- Aver age of bulls harvested on either sex permits are 5 ½ 6 ½ years of age
- A-7 antlerless elk tags issued to address drought and private land issues

Fall 2005

100 either sex permits

250 antlerless permits (150 valid anywhere in HD 380) plus 50 each for the north and south Elkhorns

100 A7 licenses valid for private land.

Bureau of Land Management Projects



BLM Bighorn Sheep Prescribed Burning Project

Iron Mask Ridge
Pre-treat unit by
slashing and weed
control

Burning will occur in
2006



North Elkhorns Timber Harvest & Burns



Forest Service Projects



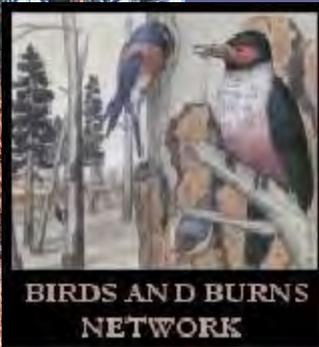
North Elkhorns Vegetation Project & Birds and Burn Research Project

Vegetation Project

HNF participated in court briefs,

Went to field with appellants to work out a plan

Next Steps for Vegetation project?



Birds & Burn Project

Began project in 2002

Surveyed vegetation in 4 units

Completed 2 bird surveys (26 nests located in 2005)



Hall Creek Campground Salvage Sale



Spring 2004 - 420 Anti-aggregate pheromones bubble packs were placed in the stand to decrease the spread of beetles



5 acre project – approximately 200 trees

Commercially removed dead Douglas fir trees killed by the Douglas fir bark beetle



Inventory & Monitoring

- Monitoring noxious weeds in Bighorn sheep burn units
- Goshawk surveys completed at the region and forest levels
- Continue monitoring with indicator species through the Landbird program



Crow Creek Trail 109

Reconstruction of and installation of new footbridges will occur on Crow Creek Trail 109 to provide for user safety.

NEPA completed in March 2005

Contract was awarded Fall 2005

Implementation will occur spring/summer 2006

Pack and saddle stock use will no longer be allowed from the Jump-off trailhead to the trail junction with trail #135.



Prescribed Burning

1,292 acres have been burned to improve Bighorn Sheep Habitat.

RMEF, FNAWS, FS & SIKES ACT funding supported these projects.



Aspen Enhancement

Unique habitat type

Several projects included: conifer removal, prescribed burning and fencing with wildlife proof fence.

Stands that were burned had the most dramatic results, an average of 122 living sprouts per 100 square feet, about a 35-fold increase.



2005 fire crew cut and placed juniper around existing brush fences for maintenance



Partnerships



RMEF volunteers constructing a corral by Eagle Guard Station





Centennial of Service Challenge Projects

- Awarded 4 projects
 - Indian Creek Grassland Restoration
 - North Crow Allotment Riparian Protection
 - Elkhorn Noxious Weeds
 - Conservation Education Program for the Elkhorns

Partnerships with RMEF, Cinnabar Foundation,
livestock permittees



United States
Department of
Agriculture
Forest Service

Forest Service *Centennial*



Indian Creek Grassland & Riparian Restoration



North Crow Allotment Improvements

The North Crow Allotment was established in the 1930's. The allotment includes 6 pastures divided by fences that were constructed in general along topographic breaks.

4 livestock permit holders on the North Crow Allotment originally proposed the idea to reconstruct fences on the allotment to better manage the livestock on this allotment and to protect fragile riparian areas.



2.5 miles of elk friendly fence construction
1.5 miles of fence removal
3 water developments
3 cattle guards

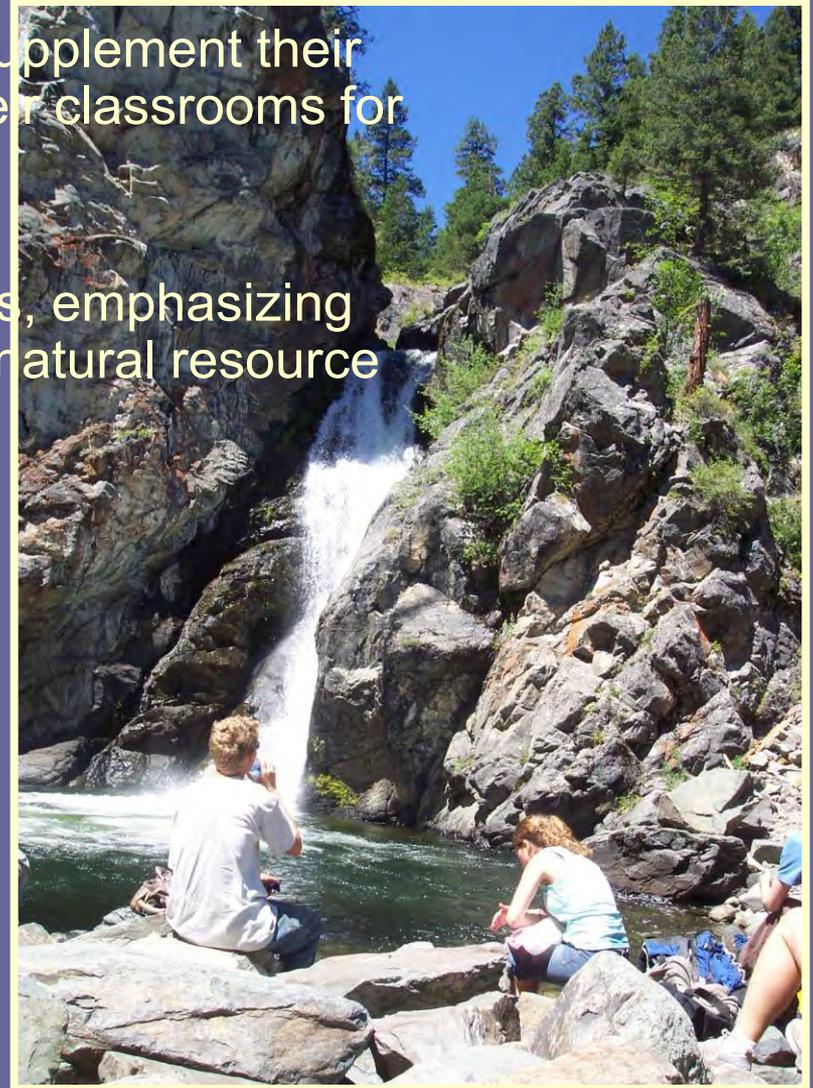
Elkhorn Noxious Weed Program

- Treated 603 acres of noxious weeds with chemical and bio-control means



Conservation Education Program

- Education activities for teachers to supplement their existing courses and programs in their classrooms for schools across Montana
- Program would highlight the Elkhorns, emphasizing wildlife and their habitats, and other natural resource management activities



Treat the Earth well:
it was not given to
you by your parents,
it was loaned to you
by your children. We
do not inherit the
Earth from our
ancestors; we borrow
it from our children.

Indian Proverb

