

ELKHORN MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT – TIMELINE

- 1939 – Thirty-four (34) elk from Yellowstone National Park released near Elkhorn Creek in the SW portion of the range.
- 1943 – Limited hunting for fork-horned bull elk allowed.
- 1967 – End of general either-sex elk hunting and beginning of antlered bulls with either-sex elk permits hunting.
- 1978 – Draft Elkhorn Wilderness Study Report called for 25,000 acres of Wilderness in and around the High Peak/Crazy Peak/Casey Peak areas.
- 1981 – Final Elkhorn Wilderness Report recommended no wilderness but instead provided specific criteria to be followed in developing the “Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit.” The management unit would emphasize wildlife. Other activities would only be allowed if compatible with the area’s wildlife values.
- 1981 – 1990 Elkhorn intensive elk studies took place which were jointly funded by FWP and USFS. Three hundred twenty-eight elk were captured and 245 elk radio-equipped to study elk population dynamics, habitat selection and land-use.
- 1986 – Branched-antler bull regulation was adopted so that when the “spikes legal” season went into effect in 1987, a sufficient number of bulls would be available to issue some branch-antlered bull permits.
- 1986 – Completion of Helena National Forest Plan and Deerlodge National Forest Plan (1987) administratively designated 648 km² of the Elkhorn Mountains as a Wildlife Management Unit.
- 1987 – Start of spike bulls legal and branch-antlered bulls on permits hunting regulation.
- 2000 – First year of unlimited mule deer buck permits in HD 380.
- 2002 – Elkhorn working Group established to advise FWP, USFS, and BLM in the development of collaborative recommendations related to wildlife/livestock management strategies in the Elkhorn Mountains.
- 2007 – BLM’s Iron Mask property acquisition (5,566 acres) on the east side of the Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest just to the northwest of Townsend.
- 2013 – Limestone Hills (big game wintering area) withdrawn to the Department of the Army for military use.

2014/15 – RMEF/USFS’s Jenkins Gulch property acquisition (317.5 acres). Property was an inholding within the Elkhorn Mountains Wildlife Management Unit.

2015 – 2019 Elkhorn Mountains Elk Project was designed to provide managers with information on elk ecology, habitat use and to provide recommendations for managing elk habitat in areas of mountain pine beetle infestations.

2020/21 – RMEF/USFS’s Southern Elkhorn Mountains property acquisition (1,418 acres). Property was an inholding with the Elkhorn Mountains Wildlife Management Unit.

2021 – New Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest Plan completed, reaffirmed the USFS’s Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit.

2022 – Unlimited mule deer buck permits in HD 380 changed to limited permits.

Original Timeline provided by:

Richard DeSimone, retired Wildlife Biologist, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Updated by:

Adam Grove, Wildlife Biologist, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks