

The National Park Service (NPS) and the State of Montana (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Montana Department of Livestock) announced today that they will begin preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a new plan to manage a wild and migratory population of Yellowstone-area bison, while minimizing the risk of brucellosis transmission b [...]

- Hunter, Bowhunter Education Instructors Needed in Region 3

Volunteer instructors are being sought for the Hunter and Bowhunter Education programs in Gallatin County. [...]

FWP's new 'Come Home to Hunt' program brings sportsmen back to Montana



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Nick Schnabel looks out over a snowy landscape while elk hunting south of Bozeman last fall. Photo by Erik Petersen.



By BEN
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Outdoors

Think it's hard to be away from home?

It's even harder during hunting season.

Fortunately, in 2009, the Montana legislature passed a measure aimed at making it easier for former Montana hunters that have moved out of state to return and hunt. The new law encourages nonresident hunters to come back home to Montana to hunt with siblings, parents and extended family members.

"We had people forever looking for ways to get family members back to Montana to hunt," said FWP spokesman Ron Aasheim. "There are people that get disappointed and frustrated when their family members don't draw or don't have the resources for the guaranteed licenses.

"(The 'Come Home to Hunt' program) gives those folks that have raised kids here or went through hunter ed here a chance to hunt with family."

The new law allows former Montanans who bought a resident hunting license in previous years, or received a Montana hunting education certificate prior to 2010, to be sponsored by a family member to obtain a nonresident combination deer or elk license.

Five hundred deer combination and 500 elk combination licenses have been allotted to this year's program. To date, 204 deer and 277 elk licenses have been sold.

The "Come Home to Hunt" initiative is designed to expand Montana's hunting heritage by encouraging sons and daughters to return to the Treasure State to hunt with family.

"When you go to and from the hunt, you might talk about things you might not talk about otherwise," Aasheim said. "Hunting is a way to do something away from the phone and the computer. It is a way to bond. It is a real emotional thing for a lot of people."

To be eligible for a license, the sponsoring family member must be a Montana resident and have a valid Montana hunting license. The sponsor must be a parent, step-parent, grandparent, sibling, step-sibling, child, step-child, spouse or in-law.

The license price for qualifying nonresident hunters is \$338 for deer or \$643 for big game combination. Licenses will be sold on a first come, first served basis.

Those nonresident hunters that receive a license through the "Come Home to Hunt" program must hunt with a licensed family member. Proceeds from the sale of the licenses will go toward FWP efforts to expand public hunting access to inaccessible public land.

"It is remarkable how long families will plan for the hunting season," Aasheim said. "The enthusiasm and the commitment to hunting, you have to be a part of it to really appreciate it."

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