BLM Wildlife Partner Grant Opportunities

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October 15, 2015

Though different, all three partners have much in common…

- Even though they represent different flagship species, they all have mission goals that include the conservation of <u>other wildlife and habitats</u>
- All want/need to work with state and federal agencies to accomplish their missions
- All rely on highly-motivated volunteers and memberships to raise operating funds
- They will often work together, but sometimes directly compete with one another and other organizations (be sensitive to this)
- Their activities and priorities directly influence lawmakers' and agency agendas

The BLM Benefits from Effective Partnerships

- **Expanded work capacity and accomplishments** from donated labor and funding
- **Enhanced social acceptance** builds public support for BLM programs
- **Increased agency knowledge, awareness, understanding** of public interests and needs

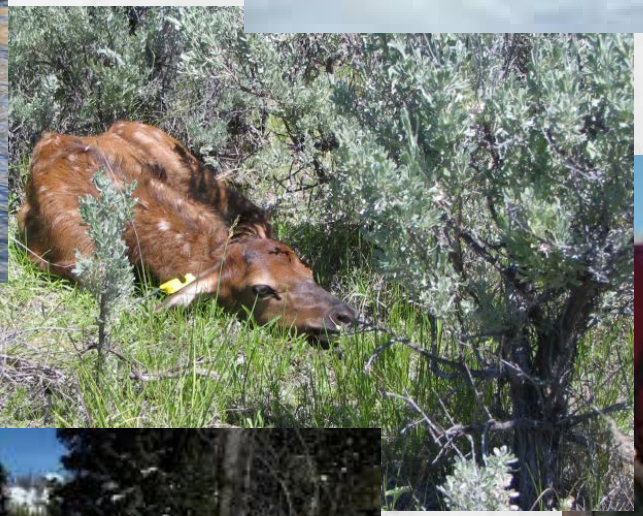
Priority Partner Projects – Rx Burns, Weed Control

Seeding, Planting, P/J and Forest Thinning

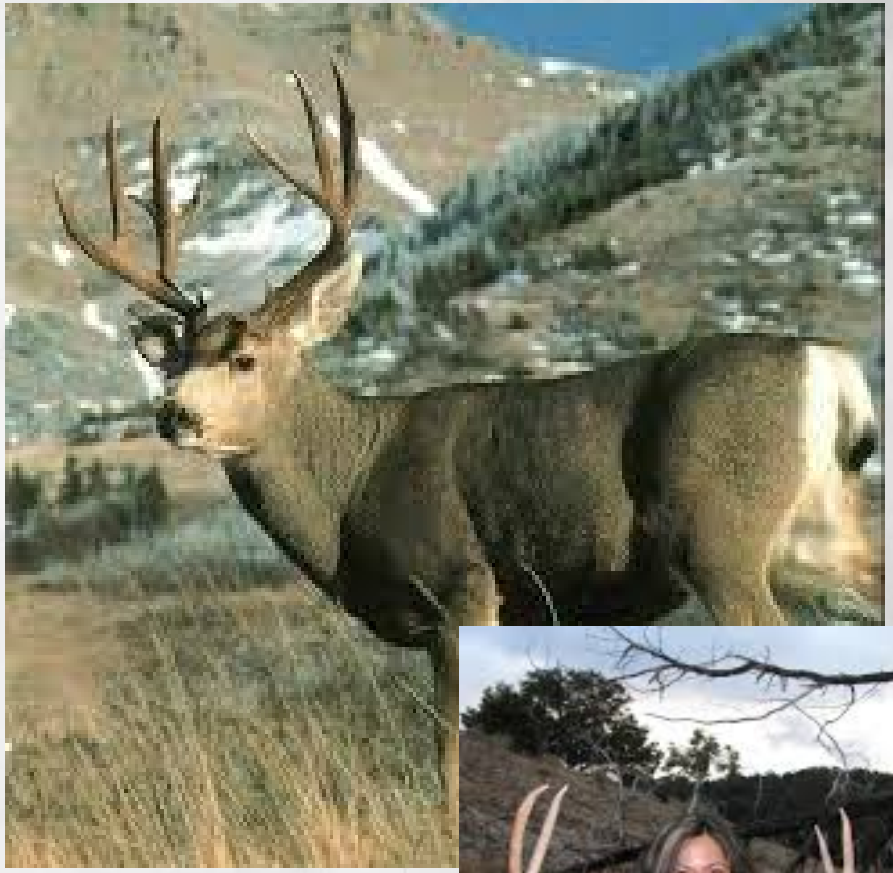
Aspen Regeneration, Riparian Restoration

Fence Modification, Water Developments

Science & Research



Mule Deer Foundation Partner Profile



- Founded **1988** in Redding, CA
- Smaller organization – HQ in Salt Lake City, Utah
- **40,000 Members/140 Chapters** (All western states, PA & GA)
- MDF also works to conserve **Black-tailed Deer**
- ***Priority concerns:*** range-wide population declines; habitat degradation; migration corridors; habitat fragmentation/energy development; deer/vehicle collision mortalities.
- BLM and MDF signed a **new MOU** in July 2015 - new emphasis on establishing measurable national **annual work objectives** with BLM

Mule Deer Foundation Mission

"The mission of the Mule Deer Foundation is to ensure the conservation of mule deer, black-tailed deer and their habitat."

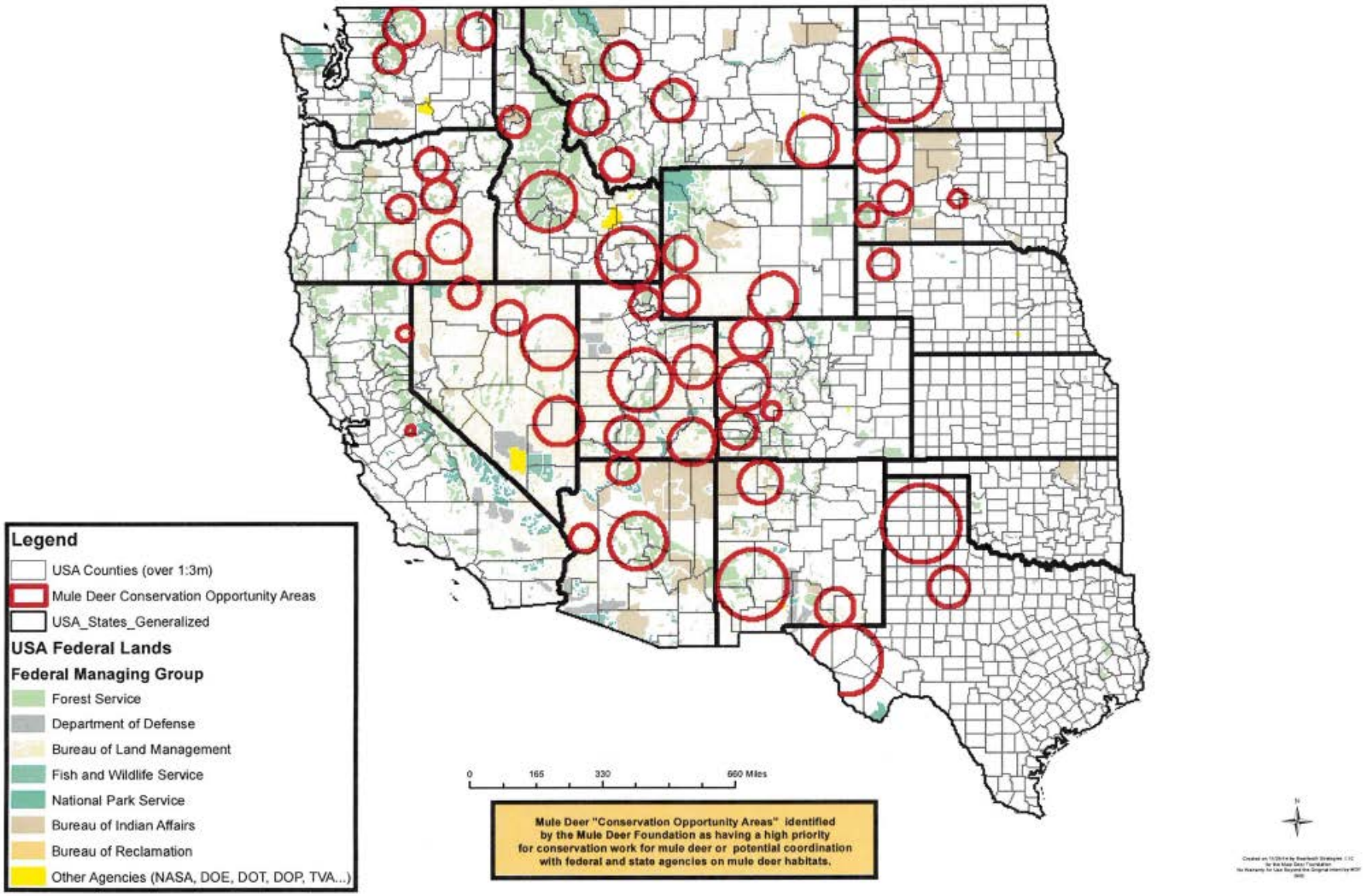
MULE DEER HABITAT on BLM-Managed Lands Across the Western United States

- ✓ Mule deer habitat covers over **840 million acres** of the Western United States.
- ✓ Approximately **131 million acres** of mule deer habitat **(16%)** are managed by the BLM.

Elk Habitat Data: State Wildlife Agencies, 2006

Mule Deer "Conservation Opportunity Areas" (from the Mule Deer Foundation)
Greater Sage Grouse "Priority Areas for Conservation" (from USFWS Conservation Objectives Team report)
Estimated Occupied Lesser Prairie Chicken Habitat (from the Playa Lakes Joint Venture)
DRAFT 11/5/14

Western US Federal Lands (Lower 48)



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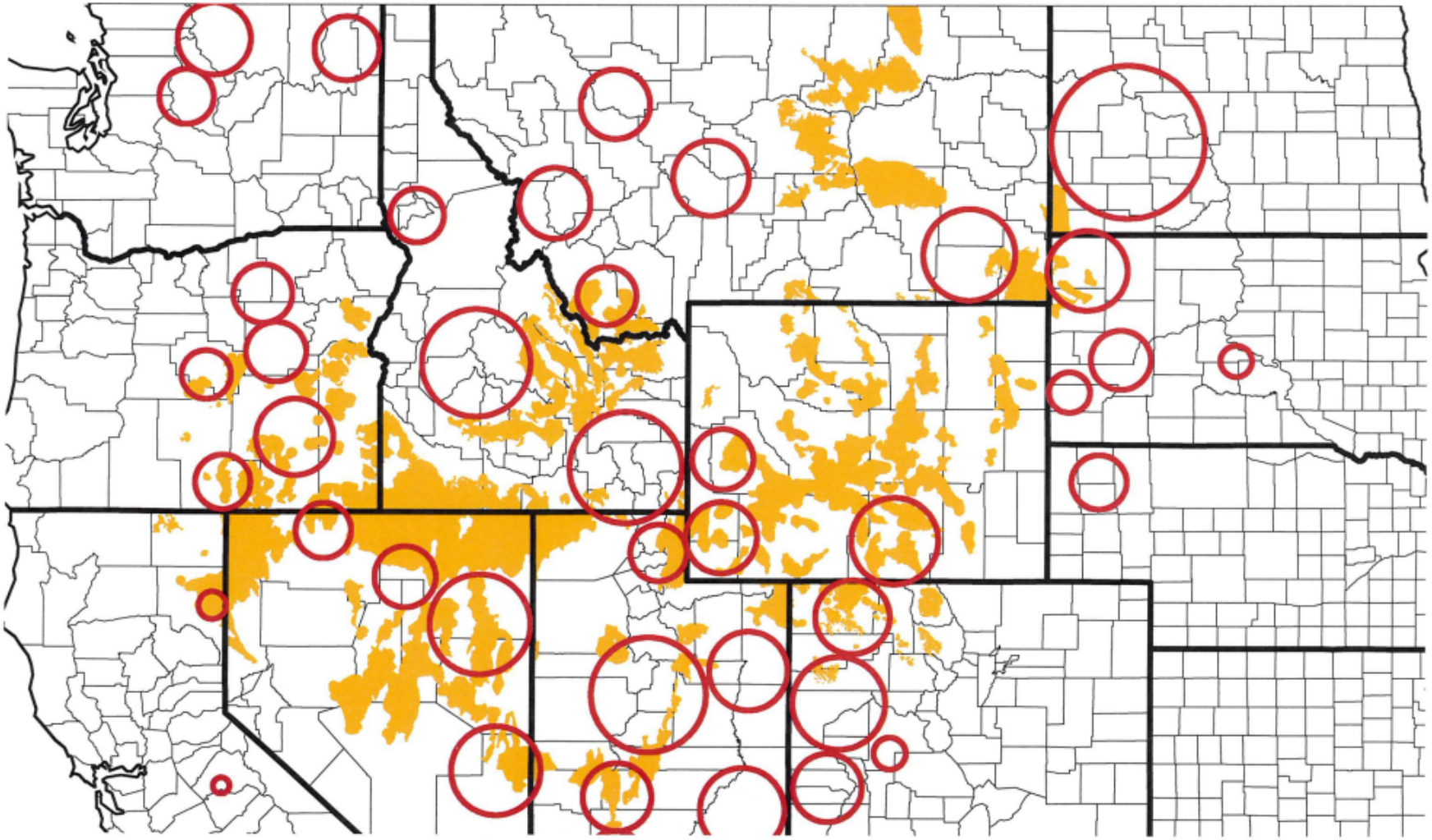
DRAFT 11/5/14

Sage Grouse Priority Areas for Conservation (PAC)



0 95 190 380 Miles

Legend

- Mule Deer Conservation Opportunity Areas
- Greater Sage Grouse Priority Areas for Conservation
- WAFWA_Counties

Mule Deer "Conservation Opportunity Areas" identified by the Mule Deer Foundation as having a high priority for conservation work for mule deer or potential coordination with federal and state agencies on mule deer habitats.

N

Mule Deer Foundation & Mule Deer Working Group

- MDF also works closely with the **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Mule Deer Working Group (MDWG)**
- New multi-agency MDWG **MOU** underway
- MDWG develops strategies to assist agencies in the management of declining black-tailed and mule deer populations and works to improve communications among wildlife professionals.
- **MDWG** has produced **multiple excellent publications/products** that provide **technical guidance** to aid in the planning and management of mule deer populations and their habitat ***(ex. "Best Available Science")***
- These products are available at www.muledeerworkinggroup.com and include:
  - ***North American Mule Deer Conservation Plan***
  - ***Mule Deer Habitat Guidelines for 7 Ecoregions in Western North America***
  - ***Energy Development Guidelines for Mule Deer***
  - ***Mule Deer Conservation: Issues and Management Challenges (book)***
  - **Seasonal Range Map of Mule Deer Distribution in North America**
  - **Multiple topical Fact Sheets addressing Mule deer and habitat management**

MDF Grant Process

- Informal process. No set due date for proposals. However, most Chapter fundraising banquets happen in **Jan, Feb, Mar,** so the earlier in the year you submit a funding request, the better chances you have.
- Grants are **valid for 2 years** and tend be smaller **($5-25K),** with more localized Chapter management and decision-making.
- Funding criteria include: direct benefits to Mule deer/Black-tailed deer; no more than 50% of project costs; photos/final report required.
- ***See Handouts - "MDF Project Funding Request Form" and example "MDF Award Notification Letter w/Instructions" and "MDF Example of Funded Projects in Montana"***
- *MDF Funding Request Forms* should be routed through your BLM State Wildlife Program Lead for review – BLM/RMEF National Liaison is also available to assist. Funding requests are forwarded to your state MDF Regional Director. ***(See Handout – "RMEF_MDF_NWTF Habitat Grants Contact List")***

National Wild Turkey Federation

NWTF

Conserve. Hunt. Share.

Grant and Partnership Opportunities with the National Wild Turkey Federation

NWTF Partner Profile

- Established in **1973**
- **230,000+** members
- **1700** Chapters in **all 50 states**
- Restore and manage a population of **7 million turkeys**
- Conserve habitat for turkeys, upland birds (sage-grouse) and other wildlife
- **17 million acres** of acquired or improved habitat
- **$372M** spent on conservation
- Chapters raise approx **$3.9M** each year for habitat and conservation management through Super Fund donations
- **$10-80K** available in each western state to support grants

The Mission

- **The mission of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) is dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of our hunting heritage.**
- **Does that mean you can't do projects with NWTF if they don't benefit wild turkeys?**

Not at all….

WILD TURKEY HABITAT on BLM-Managed Lands Across the Western United States

- ✓ Wild turkey habitat covers over 414 million acres of the western United States.
- ✓ Approximately 18 million acres of western wild turkey habitat (4%) is managed by the BLM.

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Wild Turkey Habitat Data: State Wildlife Agencies, 2006

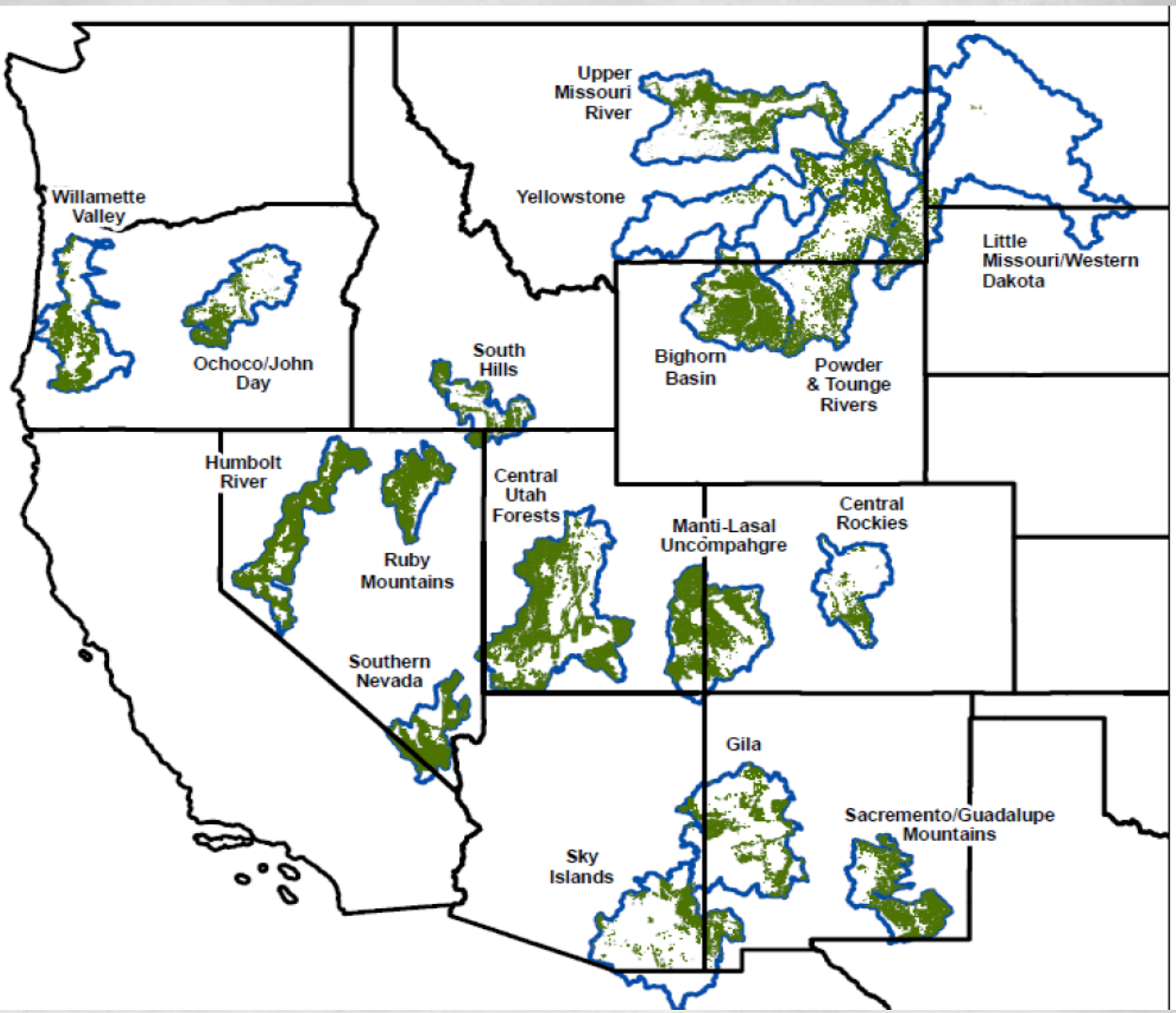
Conservation Mission Delivery the "Big Six"

- NWTF has taken a **more strategic approach** to conservation delivery with the introduction of the Big Six - **738 million acres** of identified **Focal Landscapes.**
- NWTF conservation experts identified regions across the country with **similar ecosystems/conservation issues**. Six areas of concern were established to help identify the most urgent needs and better monitor conservation objectives.

BLM Land

Only shows BLM lands within Focal Landscapes

Only includes Focal Landscapes with significant BLM acreage.



Conservation Challenges for the Big Six

- ✓ Improve ***habitat diversity***
- ✓ Improve ***forest health***
- ✓ Improve ***pine management***
- ✓ Improve ***water quality***
- ✓ Increase ***winter wildlife survival***
- ✓ Maintain ***healthy hardwood forests***
- ✓ Restore ***oak woodlands and savannas***
- ✓ Restore ***prairies***
- ✓ Stop ***habitat loss***

Expected Outcomes

- Strategy will allow the NWTF and its partners to **better focus limited funding/staff** on the top priority conservation needs within each region.
- Improved system no longer focuses on individual areas, but will **impact the sustainability of species and habitats across large landscapes.**
- Process will also **ensure the health and stability of wild turkey populations for future generations.**

The Process

Each year, NWTF chapters across the country hold fund raising banquets that support on-the-ground habitat work. Through working with the local chapters and the regional biologist, BLM biologists/partnership coordinators can successfully apply for funding through the NWTF's state "Super Fund" program.

Do Superfund dollars have to be used only on projects benefitting wild turkeys?

Not at all, in fact, many projects funded by the NWTF have benefitted a variety of non-game species, big game, and even the suite of species associated with riparian habitat.

What are the first steps to applying for these funds?

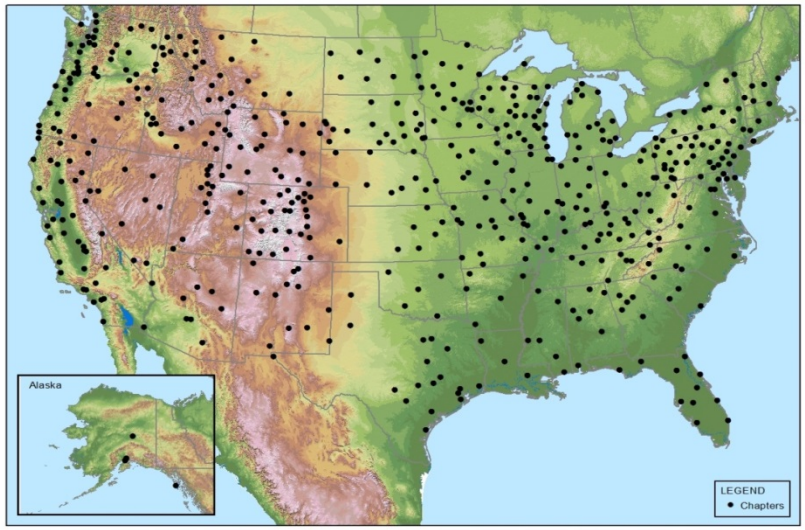
- ✓ First, get to know your regional NWTF biologist and, if possible, the local NWTF chapter representatives. It doesn't hurt to bring in the state wildlife management agency as well.
- ✓ Invite the biologist to look at your project, and get him or her engaged with your management program.
- ✓ Write up a proposal, including a map of the project and a description of what you want to do. With the assistance of the Regional biologist, and support from the local chapter (s), you stand a good chance at receiving funding through the Superfund program.

After the Project…

- ✓ Take photos of the project
- ✓ Present the results to the local NWTF chapter
- ✓ Maybe give a presentation of the overall project
- ✓ Continue to actively work with the local chapter and regional biologist
- ✓ Keep them up to date on future projects so funding in the future will be available

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Partner Profile

- BLM/RMEF partners since RMEF established in **1984** (Troy, MT)
- **1987** First projects - **2 Rx burns (675 acs)** in San Juan/White River, CO Resource Areas ($3100)
- **205,000+** members/**500+** Chapters
- **9,278 projects** in **49 states**
- **6.6 million acs!** protected/enhanced
- **$1 Billion Dollars!** leveraged with partners for conservation
- BLM/RMEF partner portfolio - **900+ projects,** valued in excess of **$114M**
- **2011** BLM/RMEF National Liaison Cost-Share position, patterned after successful USFS position



RMEF Headquarters / Elk Country Visitor Center
Missoula, Montana

- **123 RMEF Staff Members (49 in the Field)**
- **2 Co-located Federal Liaisons (BLM,USFS)**

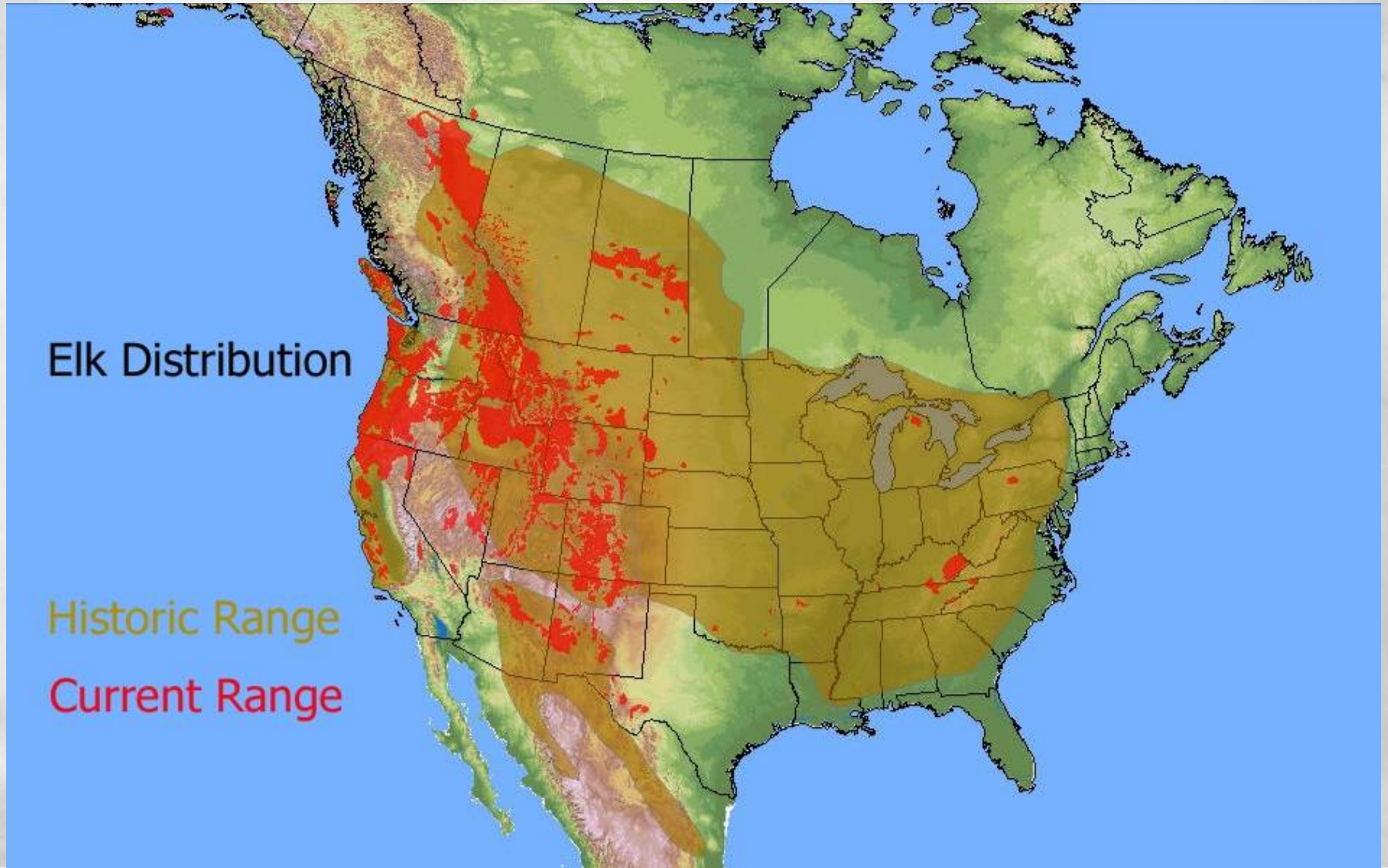
RMEF Mission:

To ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat, and our hunting heritage

BLM Mission:

"…to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of our public lands"

Historic and Current Elk Distribution in North America



RMEF Major Mission Program Areas

- ***Habitat Stewardship -*** *Habitat Enhancement, Wildlife Management & Research*
- ***Access & Land Protection -*** *Acquisitions, Land Exchanges, Conservation Easements*
- ***Elk Restoration***
- ***Hunting Heritage***

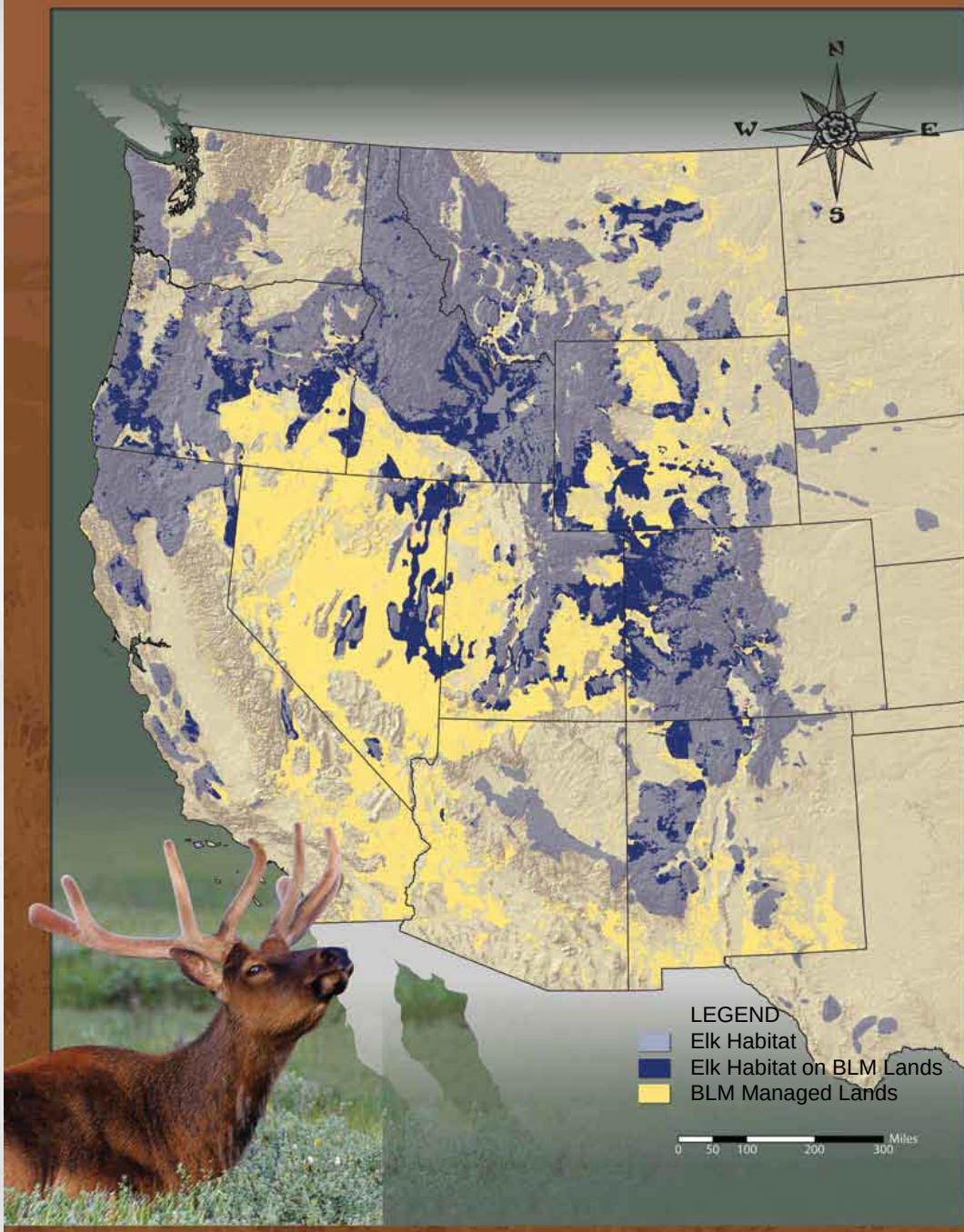
One of first calves born in Missouri in over 100 years!

RMEF National Priorities – Issues, Concerns

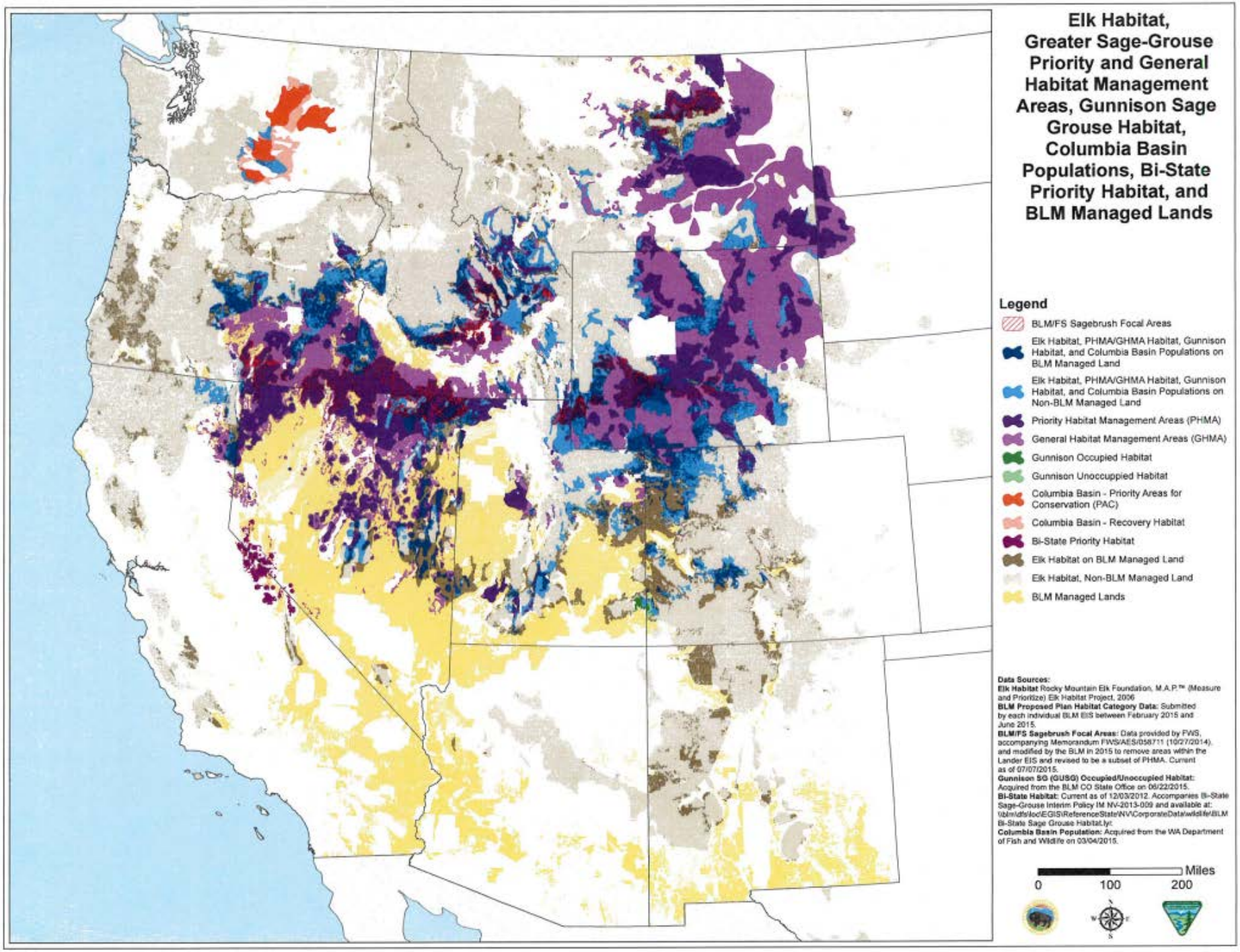
- **Early Seral Habitat** – Forage Quantity/Quality
  - Agency Use of Elk Nutrition Models (and Best Available Science)
- Forest & Rangeland Landscape Health
- **Aspen** Restoration
- **Access** to Public Lands
- Permanent **Habitat/Land Protection** of Key Landscapes
- Wildlife **Movement Corridors/Linkage Zones**
- Future of Hunting & Decline in Hunter Numbers
- Declines in Conservation Funding – Federal and State
- Youth in the Outdoors
- State Predator Management Based on Science
- Wild Horses and Burros

ELK HABITAT on BLM-Managed Lands Across the Western United States

- ✓ Elk habitat covers over 277 million acres of the Western United States.
- ✓ Approximately 43 million acres of elk habitat (16%) is managed by the BLM.



Elk Habitat Data: State Wildlife Agencies, 2006


Elk Habitat, Greater Sage-Grouse Priority and General Habitat Management Areas, Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat, Columbia Basin Populations, Bi-State Priority Habitat, and BLM Managed Lands
Legend
BLM/FS Sagebrush Focal Areas
Elk Habitat, PHMA/GHMA Habitat, Gunnison Habitat, and Columbia Basin Populations on BLM Managed Land
Elk Habitat, PHMA/GHMA Habitat, Gunnison Habitat, and Columbia Basin Populations on Non-BLM Managed Land
Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA)
General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA)
Gunnison Occupied Habitat
Gunnison Unoccuppied Habitat
Columbia Basin - Priority Areas for Conservation (PAC)
Columbia Basin - Recovery Habitat
Bi-State Priority Habitat
Elk Habitat on BLM Managed Land
Elk Habitat, Non-BLM Managed Land
BLM Managed Lands
Data Sources:
Elk Habitat Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, M.A.P.™ (Measure and Prioritize) Elk Habitat Project, 2006
BLM Proposed Plan Habitat Category Data: Submitted by each individual BLM EIS between February 2015 and June 2015.
BLM/FS Sagebrush Focal Areas: Data provided by FWS, accompanying Memorandum FWS/AES/058711 (10/27/2014), and modified by the BLM in 2015 to remove areas within the Lander EIS and revised to be a subset of PHMA. Current as of 07/07/2015.
Gunnison SG (GUSG) Occupied/Unoccupied Habitat: Acquired from the BLM CO State Office on 06/22/2015.
Bi-State Habitat: Current as of 12/03/2012. Accompanies Bi-State Sage-Grouse Interim Policy IM NV-2013-009 and available at: \\blm\dfs\loc\EGIS\ReferenceState\NV\CorporateData\wildlife\BLM Bi-State Sage Grouse Habitat.lyr
Columbia Basin Population: Acquired from the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife on 03/04/2015.
Miles
0
100
200

RMEF Stewardship Grants – aka "Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Grants" are used to fund…

- **Habitat Enhancement** – Prescribed burning, noxious weed control, forest thinning, aspen restoration, water developments, etc.
- **Wildlife Management** – fence modifications, studies to determine elk movement patterns, habitat use, calving areas, winter ranges, etc.)
- **Research** – Generally University and/or Research Station led investigations (elk/calf survival, pregnancy rates, forage nutritional levels, disease studies, migration, predator/prey interactions, etc.)

100% of PAC Dollars are Raised by State Volunteer Chapters

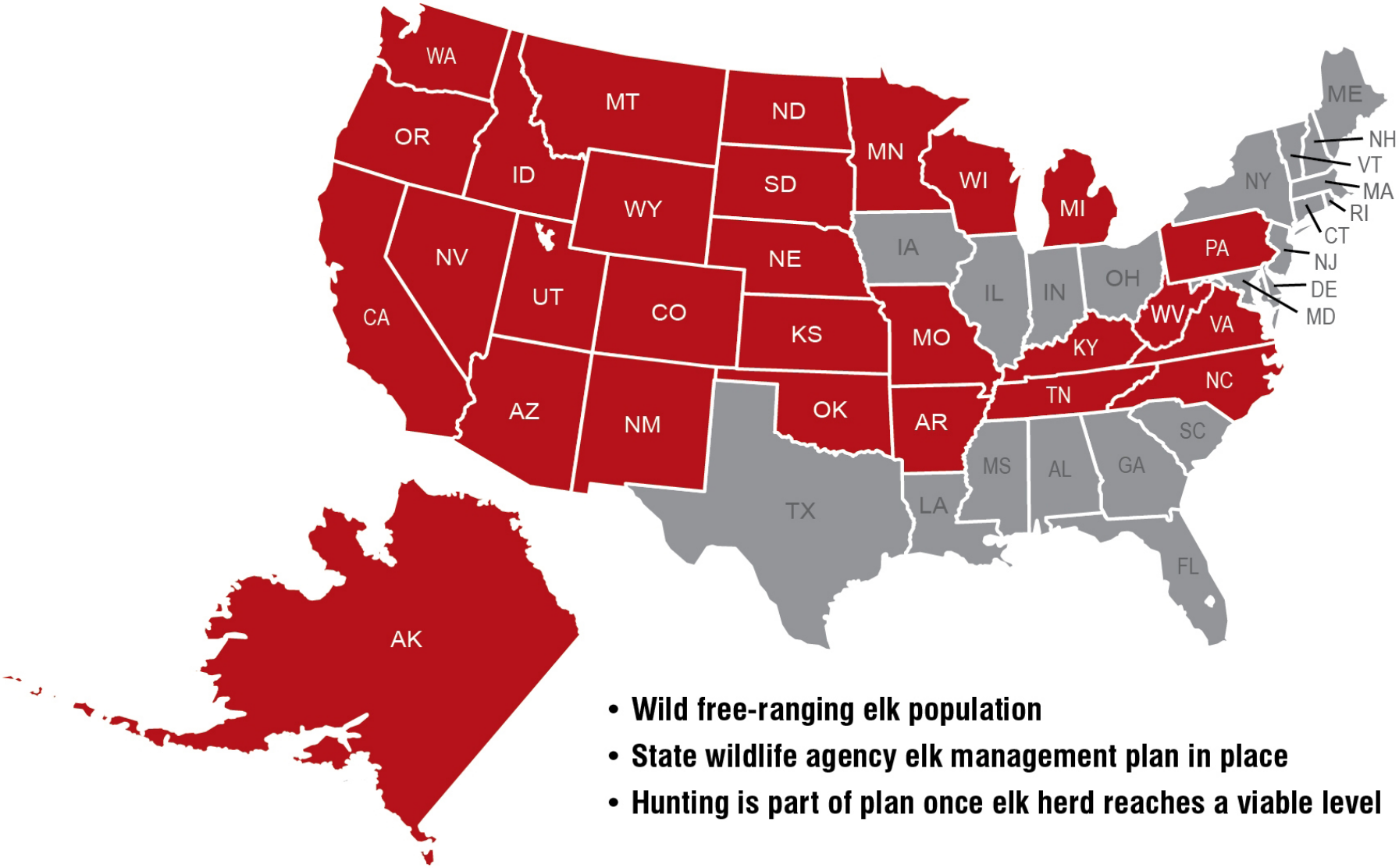
PAC National Allocation History:

- 2003 - $2,859,199
- 2004 - $1,944,163
- 2005 - $2,142,341
- 2006 - $2,144,301
- 2007 - $2,157,869
- 2008 - $2,279,796
- 2009 - $1,939,200
- 2010 - $1,679,623
- 2011 - $1,815,839
- 2012 - $2,250,724
- 2013 - $2,340,109
- 2014 - $2,472,518

RMEF Project Advisory Committees

- Project Advisory Committees (PACs) include: RMEF State Chair, Regional Director, and professional wildlife biologists from BLM, USFS, state fish and wildlife agencies, and universities.
- PAC members review, prioritize and recommend projects for funding.
- PACs exist in all states with wild, free-ranging elk managed under a formal state elk management plan.
- The use of PACs promote interagency support for RMEF projects and guarantees that limited funds are expended on projects with the greatest

States with Project Advisory Committees (PACs)



- Wild free-ranging elk population
- State wildlife agency elk management plan in place
- Hunting is part of plan once elk herd reaches a viable level

RMEF PAC Grant Funding Criteria

- Science based.
- Provide direct benefit to elk.
- Relevant to the area's wildlife needs/priorities.
- Fund on-the-ground implementation projects ***(no planning/admin/overhead, etc.)***
- BLM contractors, seasonals, and IGO work crews implementing habitat treatments are eligible costs.
- Request no more than 50% of total project costs.
- Consistent with the State wildlife agency's elk management plan ***(State sign-off required or letter/email of support).***
- Foster cooperative partnerships.
- Valid for 2 years from date of award.

RMEF PAC Grants Do Not Fund:

- ✓ Capital facilities
- ✓ Capital equipment
- ✓ Salaries of permanent positions
- ✓ Administrative, overhead, indirect costs
- ✓ Inventory, mapping, planning
- ✓ Events that have already happened
- ✓ Road closures/gates

PAC Grant Submission Process

- RMEF Regional Director issues call for proposals to PAC representatives (generally, at least 6 weeks prior to final due date - timelines vary between states)
- BLM State Wildlife Program Lead is typically the BLM's PAC representative – see RMEF PAC Summary Sheet
- Field Offices submit proposals to PAC representative at least 2-3 weeks before RMEF deadline to allow time for review and comments (Liaison also available to review)
- PAC meeting time and location is coordinated by RMEF Regional Director – usually a BLM or FS office
- Applicants and others are welcome to attend PAC meetings **as observers** – also can help answer any questions that may come up about the project

PAC Flexibility in Funding

- PAC may recommend full funding
- PAC may recommend partial funding
  - Projects with clear budget breakdowns lend themselves to partial funding, otherwise entire project may be tabled or returned for resubmission with request for additional information
- PAC may recommend no funding – project may be unsuitable or may have too many unanswered questions.
- Unfunded projects may be invited to resubmit.
- A second round PAC meeting may be scheduled to solicit new or revised projects, if funds remain.

PAC Process – Typical Reasons for Not Recommending Proposal

1. Cost per acre too high – important to show only implementation – not planning, etc.
2. Project does not meet RMEF's criteria.
3. Proposal lacked adequate information for PAC to evaluate (especially projects submitted from other resource programs, i.e., fuels, range).
4. Budget limitations.
5. Not coordinated with State F&W agency.
6. No request for volunteers for suitable work.
7. Unsuccessful proposals meeting RMEF criteria may be resubmitted in future for funding consideration.

PAC Process
Grant Award Notification

- Once the PAC makes its funding recommendations, the RMEF National Project Review Committee will issue a final decision and **notify recipients within 45 days**.
- Agency PAC members notify their respective agency's unsuccessful applicants regarding reasons for non-funding.
- Typically, grant funds are released once projects are completed. However, recipients may request funding in advance to assist with projects, or RMEF may be able to pay contractors directly upon completion of work.

Receiving Funding from Partners

- All partner funds are typically made available on a ***cost-reimbursable*** or ***"vendor direct" basis***, unless other arrangements (i.e., advance payments) are made.
- **Cooperative Agreements** are a good way to support wildlife partnerships and make working together easier. Agreements can be set up at the State, District, or Field Office level.
- BLM **Contributed Funds Account (7122)** can be established through a Cooperative Agreement to receive project funding.
  - Good for **5 years**
  - Should include an **overhead waiver request** (with BLM State Director approval) to avoid non-profits having to pay agency admin costs
  - Nice tool for **longer-term, multi-phase, landscape projects**
  - Convenient tool for **unspent year-end funds**
- ***NOTE:*** **MDF** and **NWTF** are both interested in working with the BLM on larger landscapes, over longer periods under Stewardship Authorities **(Stewardship Agreements/Contracts).**

Closing the Grant Loop - Project Completion Reports (PCRs)

TIMELINESS – PCRs should be submitted within 60 days of project completion

- PCRs can be used to support Wildlife Conservation Award nominations
- BLM project leads may consider sharing a project briefing/success story at partner banquets, Chapter meetings, or Annual Rendesvous events

QUALITY/ACCURACY

- Final costs reporting should reflect actual expenses, not estimated costs, of completing the acres/activities
- RMEF generates numerous reports, both internally and externally, based on feedback from PCRs. Information is used to guide, communicate and evaluate programs

PHOTOS – VERY IMPORTANT!!

Photos Are Essential to Partner Communications - Required for All Partner Grants

- Photos/videos are needed for website, television, social media, videos, magazines, publications, presentations, fundraising, etc.

- Tips for great photos:

  - ✓ Action shots: close-up & distance of equipment, work crews, volunteers, partners
  - ✓ Pre- and post-treatment shots from the same vantage point
  - ✓ Scenic landscape of the project site that gives a sense of the habitat we are working in
  - ✓ Critters using the project site taken at any time pre- or post-treatment

Tips & Recommendations for Developing Competitive Proposals

1) **Remember, it's not just about the money**, it's about building long-term relationships. **Invite partners to participate** in projects, even if you don't need much funding – this helps their organization by allowing them to claim accomplishments, and keeps them engaged with you over time.
2) **Emphasize benefits** to select partner species and include benefits to other wildlife (T&E, Pollinators, Fish, Non-Game) – especially relevant for Fuels and other non-wildlife program projects – **Wildlife staff should assist** these proposals.
3) Submit **cost-effective** projects that are **NEPA ready.**
4) Ask partners to **match only implementation costs**. Do not include costs associated with planning, administration, equipment, etc.
5) If multiple treatments are on the same acreage, **break treatments out in the budget portion**, so partners can pick and choose what they may/may not want to fund.

Tips & Recommendations for Developing Competitive Proposals – Cont.

6) **Acres matter!** Both **number of acres** involved and **cost/acre** will strongly influence your funding chances. Partners like high number of acres and low cost per acre. Youth crew-type projects often don't compete well, due to high overhead/costs per acre.

7) **Calculating acres** – when partners contribute a portion of the funds to do a project, they still get to claim **all** the acres - not just those pro-rated to their contribution. *(**See also Handouts** for individual partner grant application forms for more info on calculating acres.)*

8) **Reseeding/planting projects -** work with range personnel to **arrange for grazing rest** to protect the financial investment. Include this fact in your proposal.

9) **Ranchers/permittees** are expected to contribute to fencing projects.

10) Projects that are part of a long-term landscape-level treatment should include a description for **how the current project fits into the overall landscape goals**. [Ex. *"This project is part of a 5-year, 10,000-acre treatment to improve elk habitat. This portion of the overall project will treat 1,000 acres of winter range through prescribed burning."]*

Tips & Recommendations for Developing Competitive Proposals – Cont.

11) **Include volunteers** in your project - it's annoying to partners if you ask for funding to hire a contractor to remove a decadent fence when they can do it for free – and would love to do it.
12) **Attempt to bring in additional contributing partners** and document your efforts in your proposal. [Ex. If your proposal is to RMEF, and the project clearly benefits mule deer, you should approach MDF to request a contribution – even if it's $500 or in-kind volunteer labor. MDF will appreciate the invite, and the RMEF PAC will want to know that you tried to bring in additional partners.]
13) **Coordinate early** with State Fish & Wildlife agencies and other partners – don't wait till hunting season to ask for letters of support.
14) **Offer to draft** example letters of support.
15) **Invite partners** out to see your projects to showcase/demonstrate your successes. This builds interest and keeps them engaged. Plus, they may want to take their own photos for future articles.

Questions??