

Deer & Elk – HD 311 & 301



Draft Changes for 2022-2023 Hunting Regulations:

New boundaries: combine southern half of Hunting District 311 with HD 301, add a portion of HD 333 and small boundary change in the southern portion, described more in Elk — HD 310 draft change.

New HD 311 (current portion of HD 311 north of Highway 84 plus a portion of current HD 333):

- General elk license: Valid for brow-tined bull (BTB)/antlerless elk archery and rifle season. Antlerless elk until Feb. 15.
- Elk B license 397-00: Valid for antlerless elk during the early shoulder season, through the archery and rifle seasons, and into the late shoulder season. Shared license type with neighboring districts 312 and 309.
- General deer license: Valid for either sex mule deer or either sex white-tailed deer during the archery season; antlered buck mule deer or either-sex white-tailed deer for the general rifle season.
- Antlerless mule deer B license 311-01: 200 B licenses retained (same number of licenses that existed in the current portion)

New HD 301: (current HD 301 plus south half of current HD 311)

- General elk license: Valid for BTB/antlerless elk through archery and first two weeks of rifle season, BTB only from third week of rifle season to end of rifle season.
- Elk B license 301-01: Would be eliminated to reduce LPTs.
- Deer: No change.

Biological Implications:

There is no biological justification to make this change: HD 301 and HD 311 have different elk herds. This change is being recommended based on the regulations simplification directives to eliminate portions and to combine hunting districts where possible. The north portion of the current HD 311 represents farms and ranches where elk were rarely, if ever, present during the 2005 Elk Plan process. There was no elk objective for this area, yet elk have moved into the area causing brucellosis risk and substantial game damage. The south half of old HD 311 represents large rangeland and a large wilderness area. The current HD 311 encompassed the whole known movement of the HD 311 elk herd; it was not known to enter HD 301. The south half of HD 311 and HD 301 have similar mountainous habitat with accessible herds that are within objective, so only moderate management is needed. The current HD 311 is also divided into

portions for mule deer management: 200 B licenses were available in the north portion but not the south.

The new districts reflect old portions for elk and deer management, so elk and deer management would not change in the new HD 311. However, elk management would become slightly more conservative in the south half of the current HD 311 if it were combined with HD 301.

Biology did drive the addition of the portion of the current HD 333 into the proposed HD 311. This area shares a small elk herd, has the same habitat type and elk management challenges, and the areas could be managed similarly.

Social Implications:

Comments may include:

- Landowners in the HD 333 portion that would be put into the new HD 311 have not yet been contacted so it is unknown how they would receive being placed into a shoulder season. Some may appreciate the opportunity to manage elk, others may have different concerns.
- Some landowners or farmers in HD 301 are concerned with game damage and may object to the perceived loss of elk B license 301-01. However, hunter success on this license is negligible, and landowner concerns could be met with game damage activities appropriate to their localized crop damage concerns if they meet eligibility requirements.
- There could be some lost opportunity for antlerless elk hunting in the south half of the current HD 311, which may result in some perceived loss by sportspersons. Some landowners in the south half of old HD 311 may be concerned about less ability to manage cow elk.

District biologist:

Julie Cunningham

406-577-7865 • juliecunningham@mt.gov