

# EPLUS

## Elk Private Land Use System



# INTRODUCTION - Current Status

## Statewide Participation

- Over 3,800 active ranches and 13,802 licenses sold through EPLUS

### Elk Management Zones

PMZ – Primary Management Zone

SPZ – Special Management Zone

SMZ – Secondary Management Zone

2023 EPLUS Active Ranches	
PMZ Base Ranches (30%)	726
PMZ SCR Ranches (70%)	1,803
Total PMZ Ranches	2,529
SPZ Total Ranches	102
SMZ Total Ranches	1182
Total EPLUS Ranches	3,813

# INTRODUCTION – EPLUS Rule

- EPLUS was developed in 2005 to:
  - Recognize, “Landowners who provide meaningful benefit to elk and accept elk on their properties and all elk hunters who wish to recreate on deeded lands or public lands within New Mexico’s exterior boundaries.”  
(19.30.5.2 NMAC)
- November 2018 new EPLUS Rule adopted.

# ISSUES WITH PREVIOUS SYSTEM

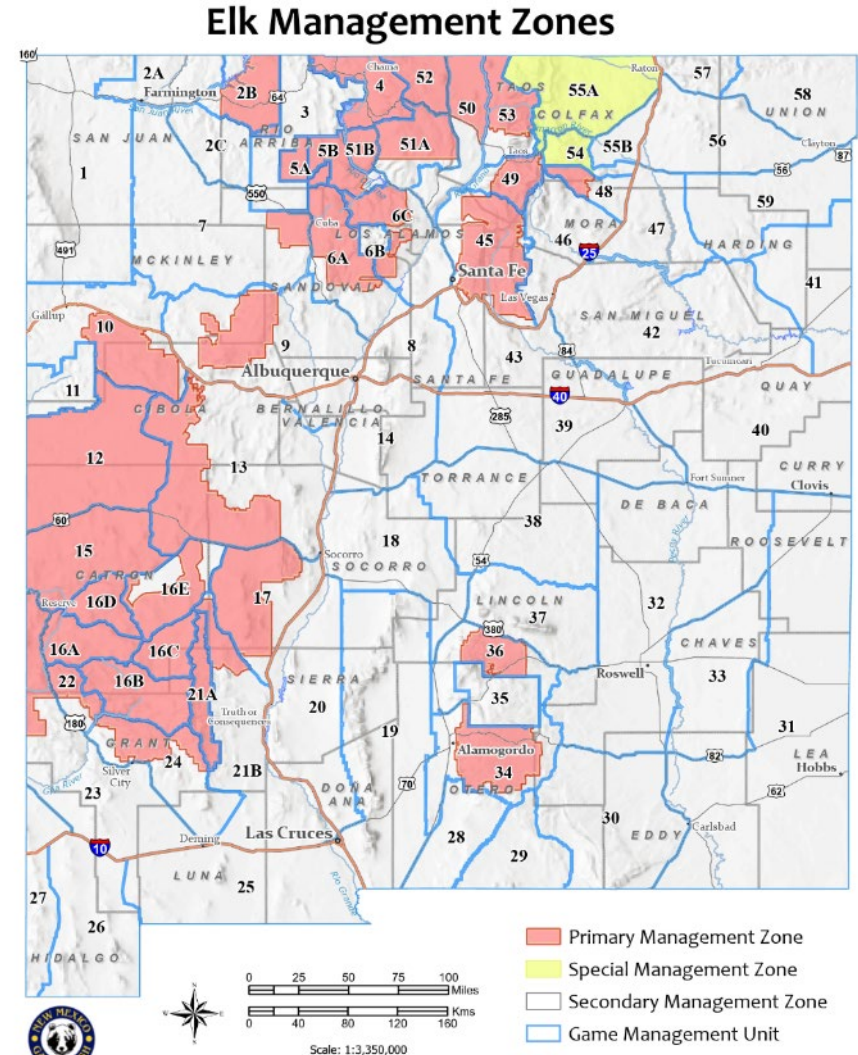
- More properties competing for a limited resource
- Annual new applications were increasing (350+/yr.)
- Increase in smaller properties enrolling
- Unconverted and Bonus authorizations going to base properties that may not use them

# ISSUES WITH PREVIOUS SYSTEM

- Many marginal properties were in the program (not providing “meaningful benefit”)
- Encouraged splitting properties
- Long wait for SCR properties to get tags
- Special/Secondary Zone unconverted rate was high

# Created Elk Management Zones

- **Primary Management Zone:**
  - Where license numbers are set by Commission
  - Distribution of tags strictly regulated
- **Special Management Zone:**
  - Largely or completely private
  - Managed on a Ranch-to-Ranch basis
- **Secondary Elk Management Zone:**
  - License numbers not set on private land
  - Register Ranch – Ranch Code
  - Licenses Over-the-Counter



4/5/2024

Data Sources: New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, USGS, US Census, NASA, ESRI and Business Partners.

# PRIMARY ZONE Operation

- Ranches apply through EPLUS
- Ranches evaluated by participation guidelines
- Licenses divided by Public/Private Split
- Private licenses allocated through acre based formula

- Option to sign up as Ranch-only or Unit-wide
- Ranches can join to form Co-ops
- License numbers evaluated on 4 year cycle



# CHANGES FOR PRIMARY ZONE

- Implemented scoring process retroactively
- Allocated Unconverted and Bonus authorizations through SCR properties first



- Eliminated draw history system for SCRs
- Implemented random, weighted SCR draw based on property habitat score
- All acre changes are subject to re-evaluation



# UNIT-WIDE RANCHES ONLINE - PMZ

EPLUS Unit-wide Properties

find EPLUS Property or GMU

NEW MEXICO

SPUR LAKE BASIN

9373ft

16TAINS

GALLO MOUNTAINS

MANGAS MOUNTAINS

HORSE MOUNTAIN

CROSBY MOUNTAIN

10215ft

16E

16D

108.464 34.064 Degrees

10:33 AM  
1/8/2020

<https://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/hunting/maps/eplus/>

# UNIT-WIDE RANCHES ONLINE - PMZ

The screenshot displays the EPLUS Unit-wide Properties web application. The browser address bar shows the URL: <https://nmdgf.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=76118557a984487281f3f88b9b2c7eaf>. The application title is "EPLUS Unit-wide Properties" and includes a search bar for "find EPLUS Property or GMU". The map shows a topographic view of a ranch area with several orange-outlined parcels. A popup window titled "(1 of 2) eplus\_uw\_properties: 15-20961" is open, displaying the following details:

eplus_uw_properties: 15-20961	
gmu	15
ranch_number	20961
UnitRanch	15-20961
RanchName	SKOUSEN
Contact	JEANETTE HEAP
Address	BOX 990 ST JOHNS, AZ 85936
Phone	(575) 533-6515
ElkAcre	2,240
Status	UW
MB	3
A	3
ES	0
ESBow	2
Zoom to	

At the bottom of the map, a green box contains the URL: <https://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/hunting/maps/eplus/>. The application is powered by Esri and includes a footer with text: "Bureau of Land Management, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, METI/NASA, EPA, USDA | Bureau of Land Management - New Mexico". The system tray at the bottom shows the time as 12:00 PM on 1/8/2020.

# UNIT-WIDE RANCHES ONLINE - PMZ

- Unit-wide map views Aug. 1 – Dec. 31, 2019

Primary Dimension: Page Other

Plot Rows Secondary dimension Sort Type: Default

Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews
	18,059 % of Total: 1.08% (1,670,213)	12,833 % of Total: 0.94% (1,369,133)
1. /hunting/maps/elk-private-lands/	18,059(100.00%)	12,833(100.00%)

- Unit-wide map views Aug. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023

/hunting/maps/eplus/

Page path and screen class	Views	Users
	25,406 1.59% of total	12,677 2.41% of total
1 /hunting/maps/eplus/	25,383	12,672

# EVALUATION:

## EPLUS ELK RULE (19.30.5.7 NMAC)

Now contains two separate requirements:

1. That the property demonstrates **regular** elk use and;
2. That the property provides meaningful benefits to elk as determined by appropriate department staff and in accordance with Commission approved guidelines.

# Defined ELK USE

**Property must show evidence of regular elk use.**

- Regular elk use should be consistent and predictable, and associated with seasonal use of the property.
- Not rare, sporadic, or unpredictable transitory elk use.



# Defined MEANINGFUL BENEFIT :

Properties are evaluated to ensure they provide Meaningful Benefits:

- Guidelines were developed by the Department and adopted by the Commission



# SCORING SYSTEM

## Forage: (Including agriculture)

- 0 = No meaningful forage is available, or forage is in the form of a lawn or lawn shrubs, gardens, flowers or other ornamental plantings. (Extremely rocky terrain; sandy, bare soils; thick timber with no understory)
- 1 = Marginal forage is available. (Sparse bunchgrasses, scrub habitat, moderately timbered areas with some forage potential)
- 2 = Moderate forage is available. (Open upland grasslands or open savanna-like forest/woodland, dense bunch grass)
- 3 = Substantial forage is available. (Grass meadows, bottomlands and riparian areas)
- Forage Score: \_\_\_\_\_



# SCORING SYSTEM

**Water:** (Water should be located on a property where it is readily available for use by elk.)

- 0 = No water is available for elk use. (Includes a water hydrant near or attached to a building or utilization of an exposed or manual hose system)
- 1 = Some water is available throughout at least one season by natural sources or by an established system that can be turned on or off.
- 2 = Water is available throughout at least any two seasons on a consistent basis.
- 3 = Permanent, year round water is available.
- Water Score: \_\_\_\_\_





# SCORING SYSTEM

## Cover:

- 0 = No meaningful cover is provided on the property. (Or cover is compromised by houses, buildings, driveways and/or other disturbances)
- 1 = Poor cover components are provided on the property. (Thin cover or small areas of cover)
- 2 = Good cover components are provided on the property.
- Cover Score: \_\_\_\_\_



# SCORING SYSTEM

## Surrounding Area:

- 0 = Surrounding area is encumbered with human activity, highly developed with houses/buildings and vehicular byways seriously altering or inhibiting elk use and/or travel.
- 1= Surrounding area has low human activity with low numbers of buildings or vehicular byways and having some impact on elk use and travel.
- 2 = Surrounding area is remote and unencumbered by human activity having no impact on elk use and travel.
- Surrounding Area Score: \_\_\_\_\_



# SCORING SYSTEM

## Agriculture:

0 = No agriculture - Native grasses; unimproved pasture grasses; routinely unharvested or un-grazed with minimal harvest opportunity.

- 1 = Agriculture – Marginally productive, dry/unirrigated type, occasionally to routinely harvested crop.
- 2 = Agriculture – Productive, maintained (irrigated, cultivated, fertilized, etc.), yearly harvestable crop.
- Agriculture Score: \_\_\_\_\_



# SCORING SYSTEM

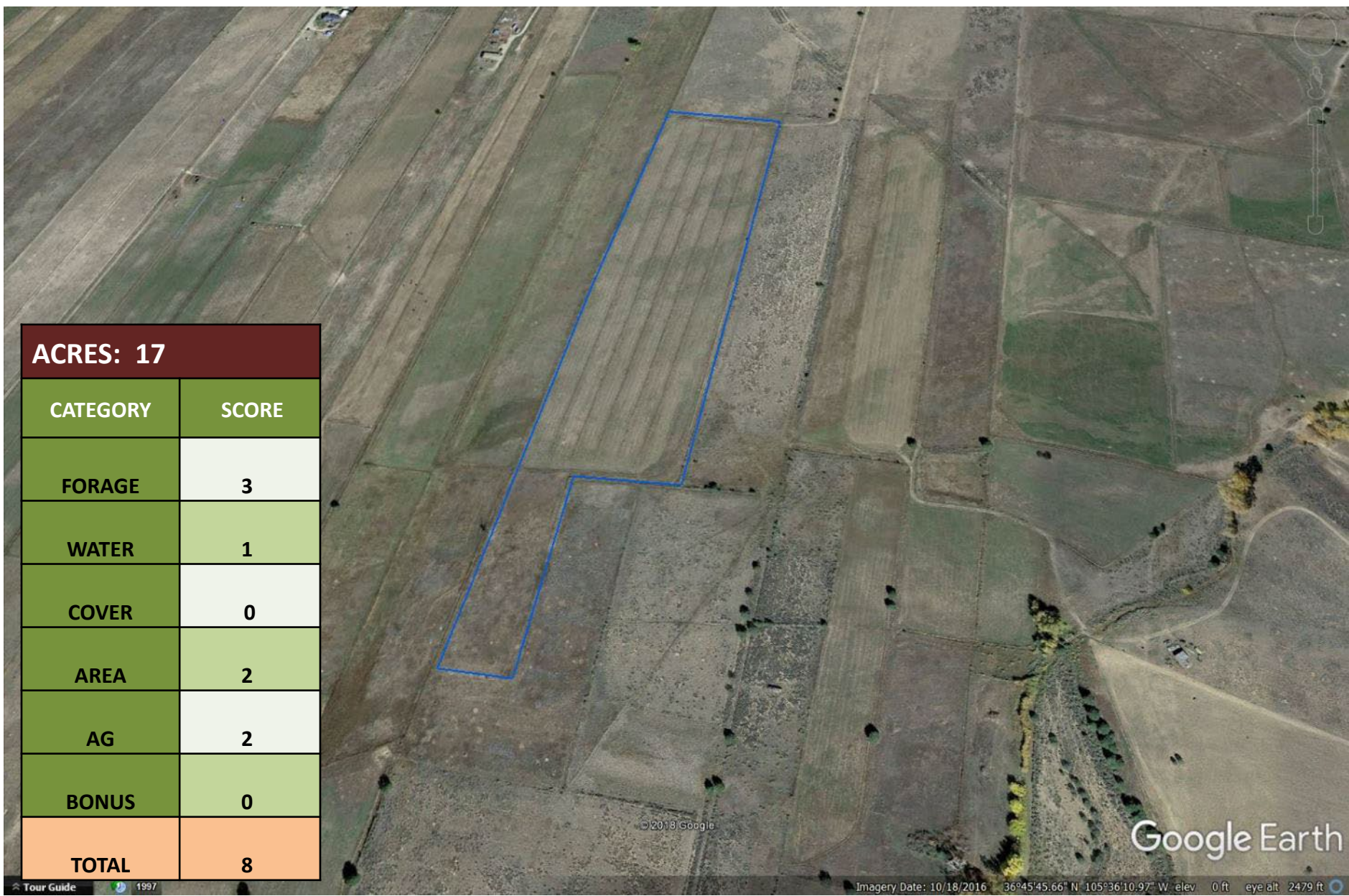
## Added Bonus: (For considerations not captured elsewhere.)

- 0 = No special considerations.
- 1 = Special consideration exists.
- 1 = Additional considerations exist.
- Added Bonus Score: \_\_\_\_\_  
(not to exceed two)



**ACRES: 17**

CATEGORY	SCORE
FORAGE	3
WATER	1
COVER	0
AREA	2
AG	2
BONUS	0
TOTAL	8



© 2018 Google

Google Earth

**ACRES: 27**

CATEGORY	SCORE
FORAGE	3
WATER	0
COVER	2
AREA	2
AG	0
BONUS	0
TOTAL	7



Google Earth



ACRES: 20	
CATEGORY	SCORE
FORAGE	1
WATER	0
COVER	1
AREA	1
AG	0
BONUS	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>

Image © 2024 Airbus

Google Earth

# APPEAL/EVALUATION PROCESS

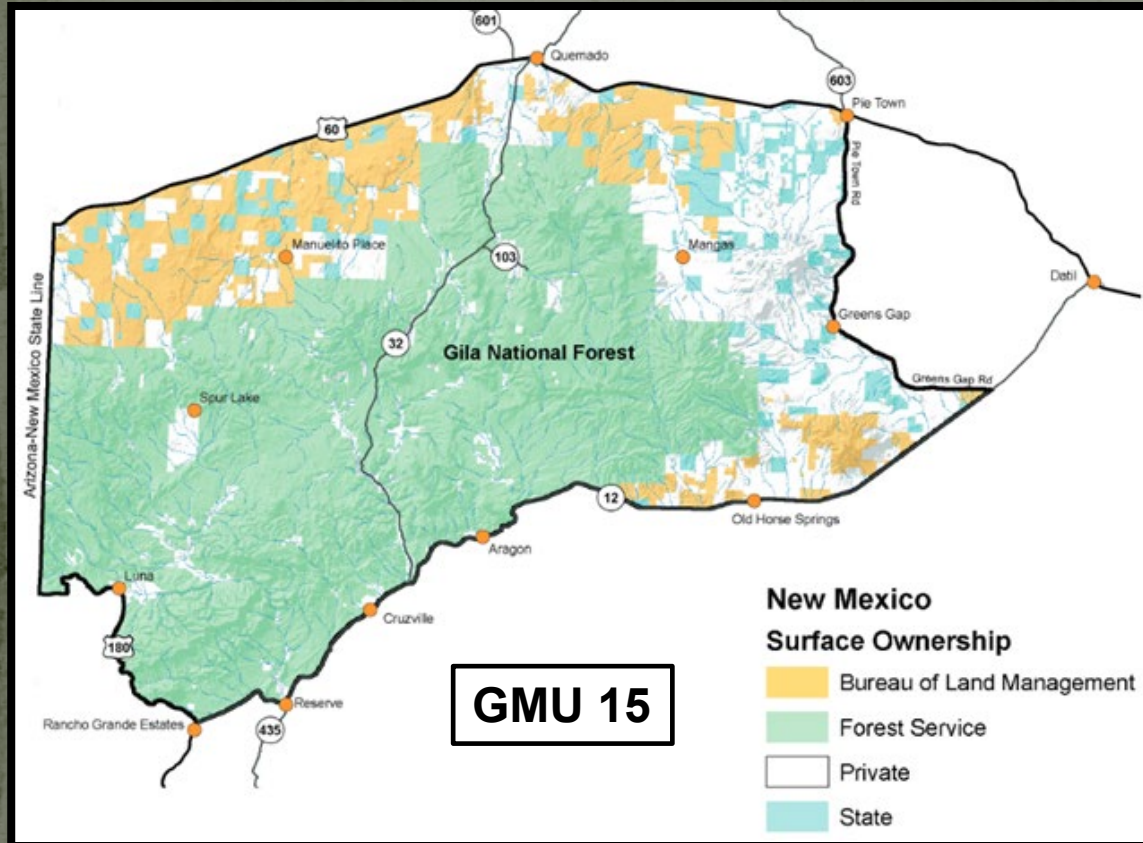
- Initial Re-evaluation
- Division evaluation
- If ranch still does not qualify landowner may request a Commission evaluation
- Commission evaluation is final

2019 Review Process All Ranches Reviewed in PMZ (3000+)	
Ranches Disqualified	820
Ranches Objections Filed	336
Ranches Re-Qualified on Objection Review	116
Ranches Filing Division Evaluation	22
Ranches Re-Qualified on Div. Evaluation	4
Ranches Filing a Commission Evaluation	1
<b>Total Ranches DNQ after Appeal Process</b>	<b>700</b>



# PRIVATE LAND LICENSES – PMZ

## GMU ACRE CALCULATION EXAMPLE



<b>Private Acres</b>	<b>235,282</b>
<b>Public Acres</b>	<b>812,212</b>
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>1,047,494</b>
<b>% Private Acres</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>% Public Acres</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Unenrolled Deeded</b>	<b>42,224</b>
<b>Enrolled Deeded</b>	<b>193,058</b>

<b>2023 GMU 15</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ES</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Total by Rule</b>	923	769	641	2333
<b>Public (78%)</b>	720	600	500	1820
<b>Private (22%)</b>	203	169	141	513

# PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPLIT

- Varies from Unit to Unit in the PMZ

Unit	Ownership	Acres	Split
<b>5B</b>	Private	12,717	6%
	Public	213,696	94%
<b>13</b>	Private	387,376	37%
	Public	646,987	63%
<b>21B</b>	Private	104,250	61%
	Public	66,572	39%
<b>Statewide</b>	Private	3,411,734	26%
	Public	9,948,359	74%

# BASE vs SCR ALLOCATION

- Base/SCR properties are determined through the acreage based allocation formula
- Base/SCR cutoff varies from unit to unit
- The average SCR cutoff is about 800 acres statewide
- The SCR cutoff ranges from 200 acres up to 4000 acres statewide

Option	Base	SCR	Total
Ranch Only	468 (64%)	524 (29%)	992 (39%)
Unit Wide	258 (36%)	1,279 (71%)	1,537 (61%)
Total	726	1,803	2,529

# BONUS ALLOCATION

- Authorizations allocated to private deeded acres in each GMU/PMZ that are not enrolled in EPLUS make the Bonus pool
- Two Year unconverted average
- Bonus authorizations go through the habitat incentive program first, the SCR draw second, then to base properties



# HABITAT INCENTIVES

- Issued in recognition of significant habitat improvements for elk on enrolled ranches
- Use annual application
- Describe habitat improvement projects
- Competitive process
- Number available varies from unit to unit



# SECONDARY ZONE Operation

- Landowner verifies ownership in the SMZ
  - Ranch registers with DGF through online account and assigned ranch code
  - Hunters use ranch code to purchase OTC licenses
  - Licenses Ranch-only but transferrable with written permission
- Consistent season dates and weapon type
    - Sept. 1-24 Archery
    - Oct. 1-Dec. 31 Rifle
      - Any 5 consecutive days
  - Season exceptions on a case by case basis

# SPECIAL ZONE Operation

- Authorizations negotiated between biologist and landowner
- Tags transferable with written permission
- Consistent season dates and weapon type
  - Sept. 1-24 Archery
  - Oct. 1-Dec. 31 Rifle
    - Any 5 consecutive days
- Season exceptions on a case by case basis

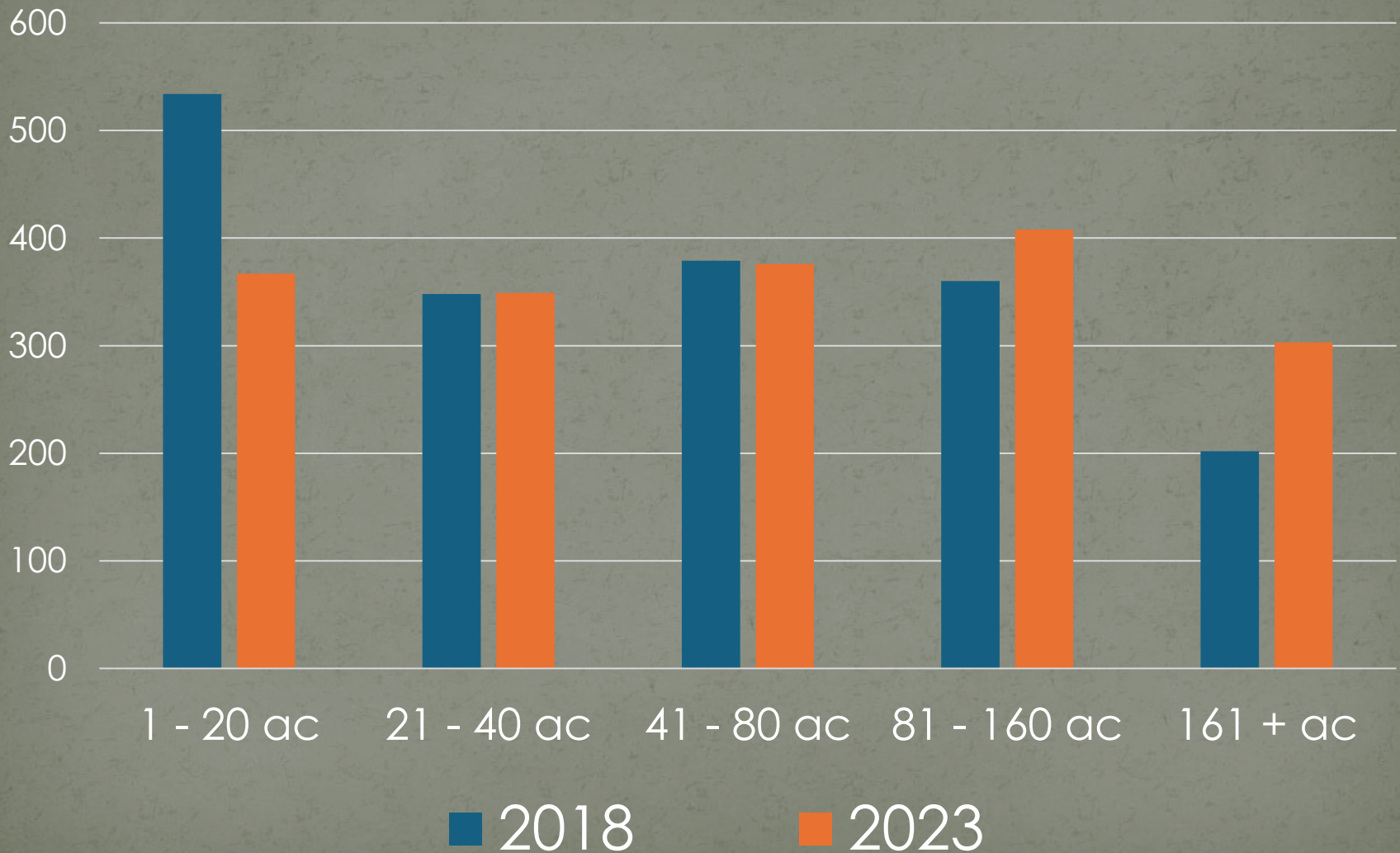
GMU	% PRIVATE	% PUBLIC
54	89%	11%
55A	87%	13%

# 2018 vs. 2023 COMPARISONS





# PRE AND POST RULE RANCH ENROLLMENT FOR SCRs



# 2018 vs. 2023 PMZ Licenses

## 2018 Authorizations

- 8137 Issued
  - 24% Not Sold
- 6175 Sold
  - 24% Residents
  - 76% Nonresidents

Distribution of Licenses Sold		
Bag Type	Resident	Nonres.
MB	12%	88%
ES	11%	89%
A	53%	47%

## 2023 Authorizations

- 8958 Issued
  - 23% Not Sold
- 6896 Sold
  - 18% Residents
  - 82% Nonresidents

Distribution of Licenses Sold		
Bag Type	Resident	Nonres.
MB	10%	90%
ES	7%	93%
A	40%	60%

- PMZ was expanded to include GMU 12 and additional parts of 9, 13, 17, 21B, 34

# 2018 vs. 2023 PMZ Licenses by ranch size

2018

Acres	Sold	Not Sold
<b>Under 1,000</b>	2,006 (88%)	273 (12%)
<b>1,000-5,000</b>	2,558 (86%)	429 (14%)
<b>5,000-10,000</b>	780 (75%)	262 (25%)
<b>10,000+</b>	831 (45%)	998 (55%)

2023

Acres	Sold	Not Sold
<b>Under 1,000</b>	2,301 (89%)	288 (11%)
<b>1,000-5,000</b>	2,435 (83%)	507 (17%)
<b>5,000-10,000</b>	817 (75%)	277 (25%)
<b>10,000+</b>	1343 (57%)	990 (42%)

# 2018 vs. 2023 SPZ Licenses

## 2018 Authorizations

- 3786 Issued
  - 53% Not Sold
- 1770 Sold
  - 27% Residents
  - 73% Nonresidents

Distribution of Licenses Sold		
Bag Type	Resident	Nonres.
ES	11%	89%
A	41%	59%

## 2023 Authorizations

- 2428 Issued
  - 45% Not Sold
- 1338 Sold
  - 21% Residents
  - 79% Nonresidents

Distribution of Licenses Sold		
Bag Type	Resident	Nonres.
ES	8%	92%
A	39%	61%

- GMU 46 was changed to SMZ in 2023

# 2018 vs. 2023 SMZ Licenses

## 2018 Authorizations

- 11025 Issued
  - 52% Not Sold
- 5288 Sold
  - 33% Residents
  - 67% Nonresidents

Distribution of Licenses Sold		
Bag Type	Resident	Nonres.
MB	17%	83%
ES	25%	75%
A	52%	48%

## 2023 OTC Licenses

- Point of Sale
- 5568 Sold
  - 32% Residents
  - 68% Nonresidents

Distribution of Licenses Sold		
Bag Type	Resident	Nonres.
ES	31%	69%
A	36%	64%

# QUESTIONS

