



2017 Minnesota Elk Harvest Report

Erik Thorson, Acting Big Game Program Leader
Ruth Anne Franke, Area Wildlife Supervisor (Karlstad)
Jason Wollin, Asst. Area Wildlife Manager (Karlstad)
Kyle Arola, Acting Wildlife Area Supervisor (Thief Lake)

Introduction

A limited number of licenses are offered to Minnesota residents to hunt elk. In 2017, there were two established zones open for elk hunting: 1) Zone 20 - Kittson County Central and 2) Zone 30 - Kittson County Northeast (Figure 1). Elk hunting in Zone 10, near Grygla, Minnesota, has been closed since 2013 because the population is below goal (Figure 2). In 2017, there were two regular season hunts held in both open zones: 1) Season A - September 9 through September 17 and 2) Season B - October 7 through October 15. The hunts were structured to fall within the breeding season when bull elk are most vulnerable and elk can be located by vocalizations.

Methods

All elk hunters are required to attend a mandatory orientation session the day before their respective hunts begin. At this session, DNR staff provide hunters with their license and a kit to collect biological samples from their harvested animal. Field samples collected by the hunter include blood, hair with skin, muscle tissue, ticks (if found), and the whole liver. Hunters must register their animal in person within 24 hours at the local DNR office. DNR staff help map the harvest location, provide a possession tag, and take the hunter-collected biological samples. DNR staff also collect lymph nodes, the obex (brain stem), the whole brain (with consent), and a tooth so an accurate age can be determined at a later date. Alternative arrangements are made for the collection of some samples, if immediate collection would interfere with a hunter's planned taxidermy mount. DNR staff submit all biological samples to Wildlife Health for disease testing and other monitoring projects.

Results

A total of 13 licenses (including one landowner permit each for Zones 20 and 30) were available and 1,695 individuals or parties (up to two hunters) applied for the opportunity to hunt elk for both zones and seasons (Table 1). Applicants were given the opportunity to select both zone and season in which to hunt. First, random drawings were held for landowners in their respective zones. Once landowner licenses were drawn and selected, two more drawings were held in the second round for applicants that had applied for 10 years or more and one elk license was drawn for each zone. All remaining

landowners were then placed into the general drawing with all the other applicants for the remaining elk licenses available in the zone and season they had selected on their application. These licenses were distributed through a third random drawing conducted per zone.

In 2017, a total of 10 elk were harvested in zones 20 and 30 (Table 2). Long-term elk harvest for all zones is depicted in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1. License allocation and application numbers of the 2017 Minnesota elk seasons

Kittson County Season A

Zone	Either-Sex	Antlerless	Bull-only	Total	Total Applicants
Zone 20 – Kittson Central	0	1	3	4	595
Zone 30 – Kittson Northeast	0	0	2	2	463
Total	0	1	5	6	1,058

Kittson County Season B

Zone	Either-Sex	Antlerless	Bull-only	Total	Total Applicants
Zone 20 – Kittson Central	0	1	3	4	303
Zone 30 – Kittson Northeast	0	0	3	3	334
Total	0	1	6	7	637

Table 2. Distribution of the 2017 Minnesota elk harvest.

Kittson County Central Hunt Zone
(20)

Season	Bulls-only Licenses	Antlerless Licenses	Bulls taken	Antlerless taken	Total elk taken
Season A (Sept 9 – 17)	3	1	3	1	4
Season B (Oct 7 – 15)	3	1	2	0	2
Total	6	2	5	1	6

Kittson County Northeast Hunt Zone
(30)

Season	Bulls-only Licenses	Antlerless Licenses	Bulls taken	Antlerless taken	Total elk taken
Season A (Sept 9 – 17)	2	0	2	0	2
Season B (Oct 7 – 15)	3	0	2	0	2
Total	5	0	4	0	4

Table 3. Grygla elk harvests, 1987-2017

Year	Grygla Elk Harvests			
	Bulls (or Either-Sex)		Antlerless	
	Permits	Harvest	Permits	Harvest
1987	2	1	2	1
1996	2	2	7 (1 alternate)	6
1997	5 (2 alternate)	1	5 (2 alternate)	2
1998	4 (2 alternate)	2	0	0
2004	1	1	4	2
2005	1	0	4	0
2006	2	2	6	2
2007	0	0	6	6
2008	2	2	10	6
2009	2	3*	12	11
2010	2	1	5	3
2011	2	2	3	0
2012	2	1	3	0
2013	Closed	0	Closed	0
2014	Closed	0	Closed	0
2015	Closed	0	Closed	0
2016	Closed	0	Closed	0
2017	Closed	0	Closed	0
Total	27	18	67	39

*One bull was a sub-legal spike and was legally tagged as an antlerless animal.

Table 4. Kittson County elk harvests, 2008-2017

	Kittson County (Combined Zone 20 & 30)			
	Bulls (or Either-Sex)		Antlerless	
Year	Permits	Harvest	Permits	Harvest
2008	1	1	10	10
2009	12	9 ^a	4	5
2010	1	1	3	3
2011	2	3 ^b	8 ^c	4
2012	5	4 ^d	13	3
2013	8	6	15	6
2014	9	6	0	0
2015	7	5	0	0
2016	7	5	0	0
2017	11	9	2	1
Total	63	49	55	32

^a One additional bull (6x7) was wounded but not retrieved in 2009. It was found dead later and is counted in the total.

^b One bull was a male calf and was legally tagged as an antlerless animal.

^c Three unsuccessful hunters from the Grygla zone were invited to participate in the January extended season in Kittson County, however only 2 participated and were included in the number of antlerless permits issued.

^d One bull was a sub-legal spike and was confiscated.

Figure 1. Kittson County Elk Hunt Zones.

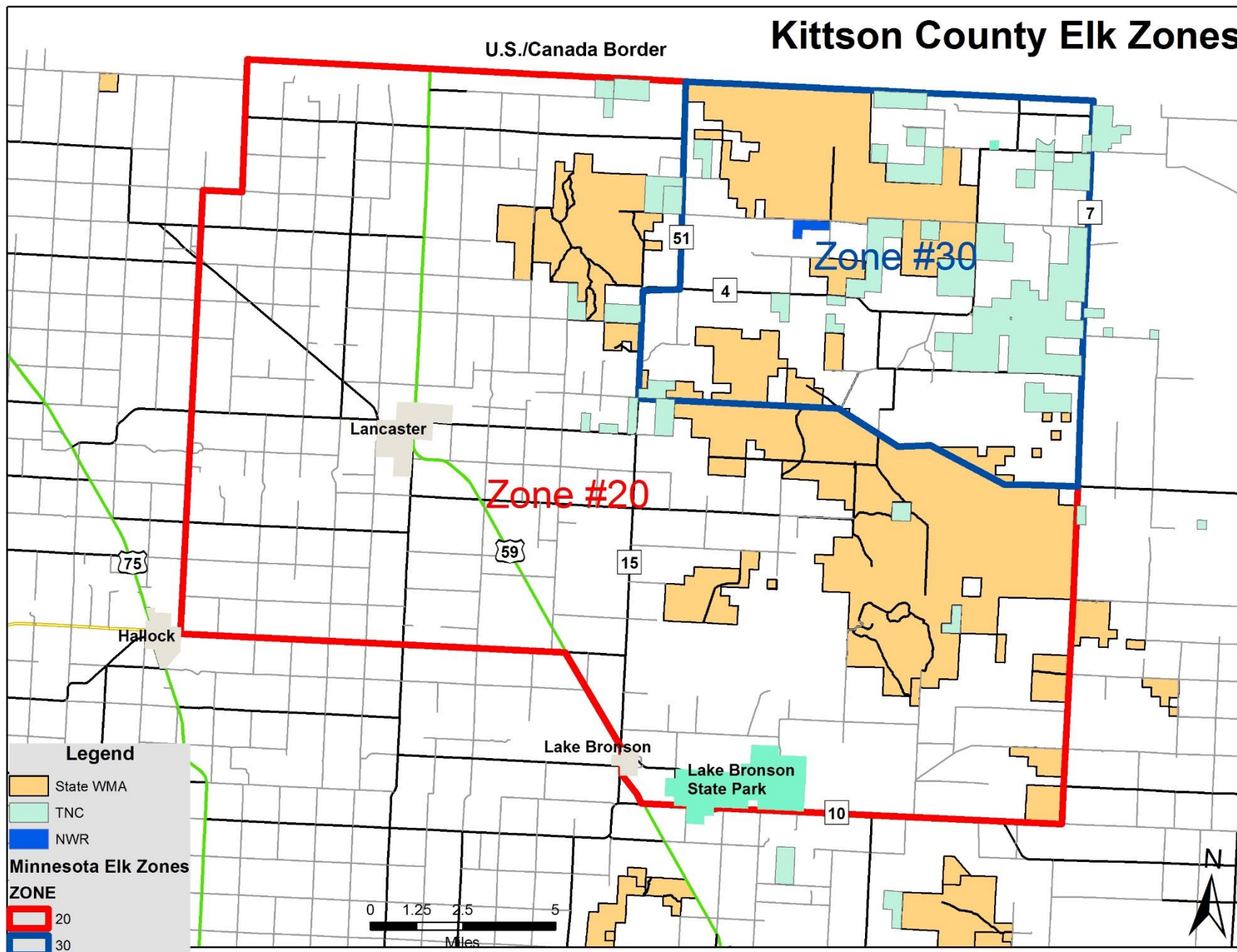


Figure 2. Grygla Elk Hunt Zone.

