



## **2019 Minnesota Elk Harvest Report**

Barbara Keller, Big Game Program Leader  
Jason Wollin, Acting Karlstad Area Wildlife Supervisor  
Kyle Arola, Thief Lake Wildlife Area Supervisor

### **Introduction**

A limited number of licenses are offered to Minnesota residents to hunt elk. In 2019, 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 2019, there were four regular season hunts held in Zone 20: 1) Season A - September 7 through September 15, 2) Season B – September 21 through September 29, 3) Season C - October 5 through October 13, and 4) Season D – December 7 through December 15. There was one regular season hunt in Zone 30: 1) Season A - September 7 through September 15. The first three hunts were structured to fall within the breeding season when bull elk are most vulnerable and elk can be located by vocalizations. The late season is used as a mechanism to harvest antlerless elk because patterns are more predictable and elk are in larger groups. All of the seasons were 9 days in length. Hunter success rates were lower this year. These dates were also chosen to not conflict with the Youth Firearm Deer Season on October 17 through October 20 and the Regular Firearm Deer Season November 9 through November 17.

### **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, a spleen sample, and the whole liver. Hunters must register their animal in person within 24 hours at the local DNR office and provide biological samples. 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 27 licenses were available and 2,819 individuals or parties (up to two hunters) applied for the opportunity to hunt elk for both zones and all seasons (Table 1). Applicants were given the opportunity to select both zone and season in which to hunt. First, random drawings were held for landowner names in Zone 20 (20% = 5 tags offered). Once landowner names were drawn and selected, the second round was for names of applicants that had applied for 10 years or more (20% = 5 tags offered). All

remaining landowner names were then placed into the general drawing with all the other applicant names for the remaining elk tags available in the zone and season they had selected on their application. Lastly, after all names were picked, there was a random drawing from the names to determine the Either-Sex tags and Antlerless tags. Zone 30 only had two Bull-Only tags available, so no landowner tags were offered.

In 2019, a total of 15 elk were harvested in zones 20 and 30 (Table 2). This gives us a total hunter success rate of 56% for Zone 20 and 50% for Zone 30. Long-term elk harvest for all zones is depicted in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1. License allocation and application numbers of the 2019 Minnesota elk seasons

Kittson County Season A

Zone	Either-Sex	Antlerless	Bull-only	Total	Total Applicants
Zone 20 – Kittson Central	2	5	0	7	747
Zone 30 – Kittson Northeast	0	0	2	2	781
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,528</b>

Kittson County Season B

Zone	Either-Sex	Antlerless	Bull-only	Total	Total Applicants
Zone 20 – Kittson Central	1	6	0	7	569
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>569</b>

Kittson County Season C

Zone	Either-Sex	Antlerless	Bull-only	Total	Total Applicants
Zone 20 – Kittson Central	1	5	0	6	435
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>435</b>

Kittson County Season D

Zone	Either-Sex	Antlerless	Bull-only	Total	Total Applicants
Zone 20 – Kittson Central	0	5	0	5	287
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>287</b>

Table 2. Distribution of the 2019 Minnesota elk harvest.

Kittson County Central Hunt Zone (20)

Season	Either-Sex Licenses	Antlerless Licenses	Bulls taken	Antlerless taken	Total elk taken
Season A (Sept 7 – 15)	2	5	2	3	5
Season B (Sept 21 - 29)	1	6	1	2	3
Season C (Oct 5 – 13)	1	5	1	3	4
Season D (Dec 7 – 15)	0	5	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>

Kittson County Northeast Hunt Zone (30)

Season	Bulls-only Licenses	Antlerless Licenses	Bulls taken	Antlerless taken	Total elk taken
Season A (Sept 7 – 15)	2	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 3. Grygla elk harvests, 1987-2019

	Grygla Elk Harvests			
	Bulls (or Either-Sex)		Antlerless	
Year	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
2018	Closed	0	Closed	0
2019	Closed	0	Closed	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>39</b>

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

Table 4. Kittson County elk harvests, 2008-2019

	Kittson County (Combined Zone 20 & 30)			
	Bulls (or Either-Sex)		Antlerless	
Year	Permits	Harvest	Permits	Harvest
2008	1	1	10	10
2009	12	9 <sup>a</sup>	4	5
2010	1	1	3	3
2011	2	3 <sup>b</sup>	8 <sup>c</sup>	4
2012	5	4 <sup>d</sup>	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
2018	6	5	16	12 <sup>e</sup>
2019	6	5	21	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>54</b>

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

<sup>b</sup> One bull was a male calf and was legally tagged as an antlerless animal.

<sup>c</sup> 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.

<sup>d</sup> One bull was a sub-legal spike and was confiscated.

<sup>e</sup> One antlerless cow was taken with an Either-Sex tag.

Figure 1. Kittson County Elk Hunt Zones.

## Minnesota 2019 Elk Hunt Zones

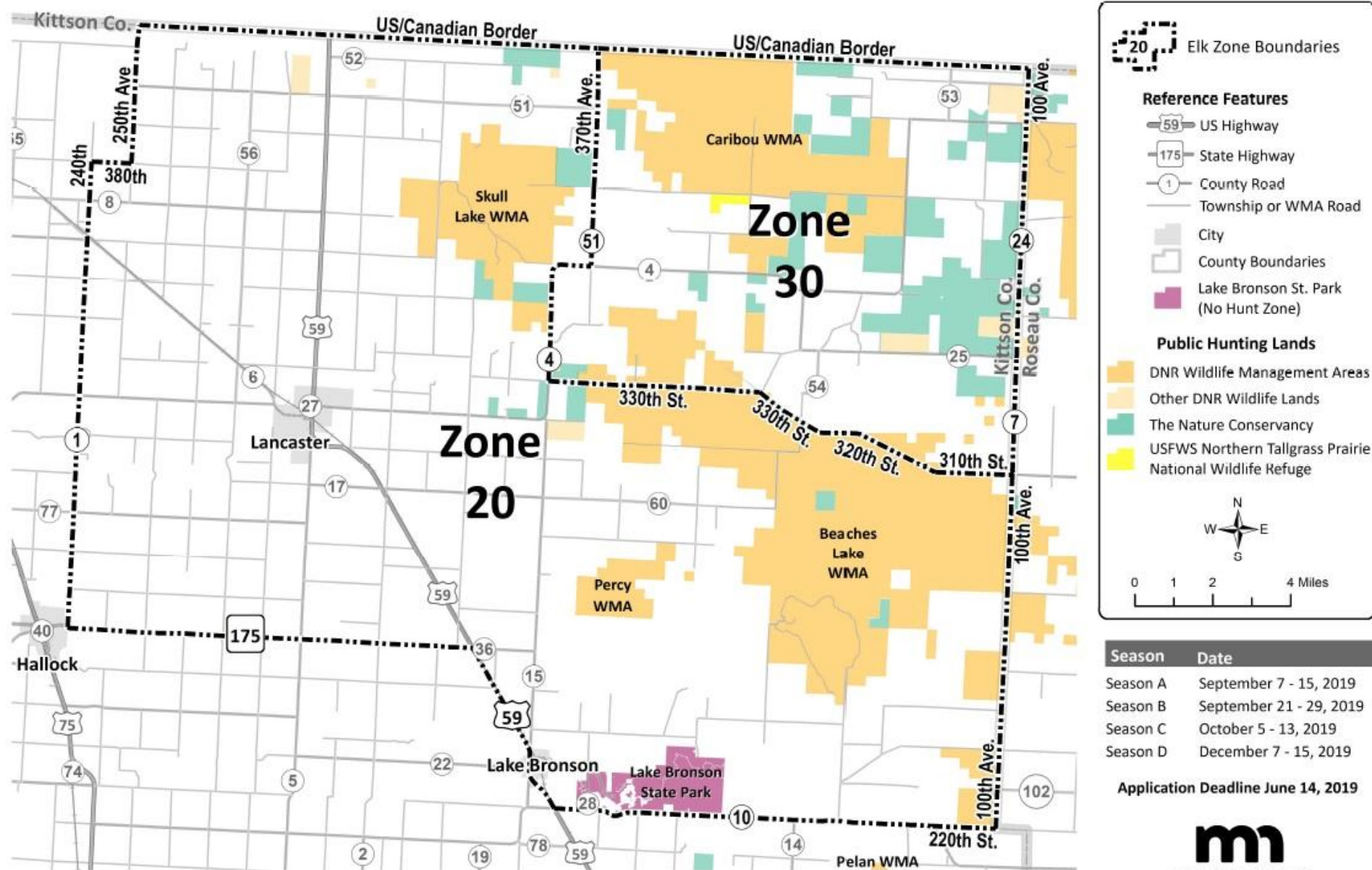


Figure 2. Grygla Elk Hunt Zone.

