



Annual Report
2018

PRESIDENT'S & CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Kyle Weaver
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyle Weaver".



Philip Barrett
Chairman of the Board

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Philip G. Barrett".

The finest way to measure what the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has accomplished is through the soles of your boots, the chirps of cows and calves as they filter through aspens, the smell of rain on sage, that first flash of ivory tines through black timber. Those are the moments that stay with us, and RMEF delivered them all across America in 2018.

Last year we forever protected more than 13,000 acres of the most vital elk country in eight states. That included two families who fled Texas heat and Big Apple hustle and found an overlooked stretch of Colorado. Neighbors and friends now, their passion led them to ensure their home ground remains magnificent, wild and whole by donating a pair of conservation easements on more than 2,300 acres. In the time-chiseled buttes and canyons of Nebraska's Pine Ridge, three longtime ranching families also used easements to protect 3,600 acres of outstanding habitat for bighorns and elk alike.

Meanwhile, in Montana's southernmost toe, RMEF acquired 960 acres that provides exceptional winter range for up to 700 elk and 450 mule deer. Funded 100 percent by the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, this land is now protected forever under the stewardship of the BLM and a gateway to great public land beyond. All told, that secured more than 3,600 acres of new public access. It also features two cabins that will soon be available for the public to rent through *recreation.gov*—"hunting Hiltons" where those inclined can hike into great country right off the porch.

In 2018, RMEF continued driving to open access to more great elk habitat. In southern Colorado, we helped acquire 24 acres along Middle Creek (see back cover) that is now owned by all Americans and in the stewardship of the BLM. That may not sound like much, but that 24 acres opened access to 8,500 acres of public land where we can all fish for native Rio Grande cutthroats and hunt for abundant elk, mule deer, bighorns, pronghorns and upland birds. In total, RMEF opened or greatly improved public access to 26,566 acres of high-quality habitat.

All across America, we kept up the pace of the down-in-the-dirt stewardship work that has been our signature for 34 years. On McKay Creek in central Oregon's Ochoco National Forest, RMEF provided key funding to burn 750 acres. The flames consumed sick and thickly packed firs and junipers that hogged sunlight and nutrients. That reinvigorated native bunchgrasses, forbs and shrubs—all vital for elk, mule deer, wild turkeys and a host of other wildlife.

While valuable on their own, such projects deliver maximum impact when part of larger, long-term efforts that bring multiple

landowners and partners to the table. That's exactly the case there along McKay Creek where the goal is to greatly improve the health of 45,000 acres throughout the watershed. And this is the kind of work RMEF helped accomplish in 2018 on almost 135,000 acres across 27 of the 28 states that are home to wild elk.

RMEF also sustained its long history of seeking answers to the crucial questions shaping North America's wildlife and wild lands. We invested more than \$700,000 in 2018 to help fund 39 research studies in 14 states, working to find lasting solutions to chronic wasting disease, document crucial elk migration corridors and much more.

People only spend their money to join or sustain their dedication to organizations they believe in. By that measure, confidence remains strong. In 2018, RMEF had almost 235,000 active members, breaking our all-time membership record for the tenth straight year. On top of that, more than 12,000 members held over 500 Big Game Banquets, raising funds for our mission. From pulling dilapidated barbed-wire fences to teaching youth how to shoot a bow, our volunteers proved again they make mission happen.

When it comes to our hunting heritage, RMEF continues to invest in its future thanks to our Torstenson Family Endowment. In 2018, we granted nearly \$500,000 specifically to hunting heritage projects including Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow, Conservation Visions' Wild Harvest Initiative and hunter education programs and camps across the country. Hunting Is Conservation and we continue to grow our impact throughout the organization.

RMEF also deepened our commitment to shaping key conservation issues on both the state and national level. We championed the reauthorization and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, advocated for greater investment in controlled burns vs. out-of-control wildfires, and worked to celebrate the successful recovery of grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem by supporting the lifting of endangered species protections and restoring the species to state management, bedrock of the North American Wildlife Model.

As we have done since 1984, RMEF will keep driving ahead to protect and enhance crucial habitat for elk and other wildlife, open and improve access to our public lands, and sustain the vital connections between people, wildlife and wild places that hunting delivers. We hope what you see in the following pages inspires you to help us do even more for wild elk and all of us whose lives are shaped by them.



HUNTING
IS
CONSERVATION

RMEF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Kent Johnson Big Lake, MN

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Randy Newberg Bozeman, MT

Vicki Peltonen Mason, WI

Bill Pine Visalia, CA

Michael Steuert Roanoke, TX

Dr. Martin Vavra, Ph.D. La Grande, OR

OFFICERS

R. Kyle Weaver President / CEO

Grant Parker Secretary / General Counsel

Shane Cronk Treasurer / VP Finance



HOW WE WORK



The mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage.

In support of our mission, RMEF is committed to: conserving, restoring and enhancing natural habitats; promoting the sound management of wild elk, which may be hunted or otherwise enjoyed; restoring elk to their native ranges; and educating members and the public about habitat conservation and our hunting heritage.

WWW.RMEF.ORG

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

REVENUES

	(thousands)
Net special events	\$14,436
Net merchandise, royalty & advertising sales	3,570
Membership dues	12,100
Donations (excluding conservation easements)	11,284
Conservation easements	16,930
Land sales	3,369
Contract & grant revenue	607
Investment income	(2,651)
Other income (loss)	(378)
Funds available for program & support services	\$59,267

EXPENSES

Program services	50,209
Fundraising	5,934
Administration	3,654
Total expenses	\$59,797
Increase in net assets	(\$530)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS, LIABILITIES & NET ASSET SUMMARY

	(thousands)
Current assets	\$25,444
Investments	51,960
Property & equipment, net of depreciation	11,324
Conservation land holdings	1,845
Other assets	893
Total assets	\$91,466

Current liabilities	5,526
Planned gift liabilities, net of current portion	1,295
Total liabilities	\$6,821

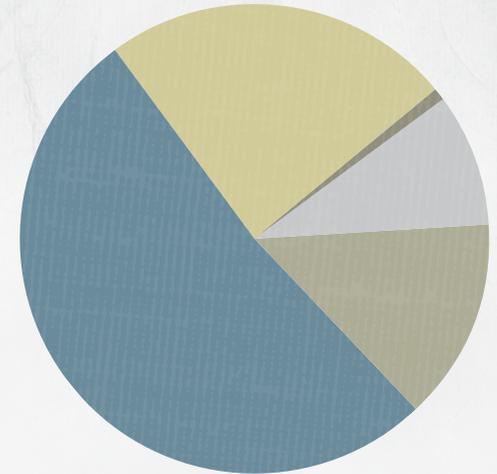
Net assets without donor restriction	41,931
Net assets with donor restriction	42,714
Total net assets	\$84,645

Total liabilities & net assets	\$91,466
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The information above is derived from the 2018 financial statements audited by Clark Nuber P.S. Complete audited statements can be seen at www.rmef.org, or request a copy at (800)225-5355.



MONEY INVESTED BY PROGRAM



52% PERMANENT LAND PROTECTION

24% MEMBERSHIP

14% HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

9% HUNTING HERITAGE & CONSERVATION OUTREACH

1% ELK RESTORATION

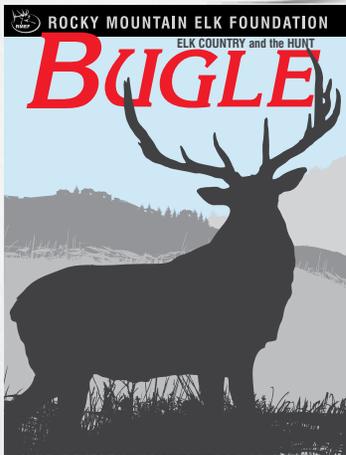
YEAR IN REVIEW

SINCE 1984

7.4 MILLION
ACRES PROTECTED
OR ENHANCED



1.2 MILLION
PUBLIC ACCESS
ACRES



234,982
MEMBERS

In 2018, RMEF carried out 179 habitat enhancement projects benefitting 134,699 acres in 27 states & permanently protected 13,431 acres in 8 states

Lifetime total: 7.4 million acres = roughly 3 ½ times the size of Yellowstone National Park

In 2018, RMEF opened/improved access to 26,566 acres in 5 states

Lifetime total: 1.2 million acres = roughly 2 ½ times the size of Great Smoky Mountains National Park

In 2018, RMEF experienced record membership growth for 10th consecutive year

Membership grew by 3.2% over 2017 & increased by nearly 50% since 2000

SINCE 1984



11,818
PROJECTS



12,000+
VOLUNTEERS

Total Value of RMEF Work
\$1.1 BILLION

In 2018, RMEF carried out 391 conservation & hunting heritage outreach projects

Lifetime: funding supports research, outdoors/conservation events for youth/adults, habitat & access work, predator management & more

In 2018, volunteers in 500+ chapters across 49 states raised record revenue for local and nationwide conservation mission

Volunteers also took part in fence pulls, construction of wildlife water developments & other conservation work

In 2018, RMEF provided funding & volunteer manpower to assist with West Virginia elk restoration

Lifetime: RMEF assisted with successful elk reintroductions in Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin & Ontario, Canada

In 2018, RMEF provided \$715,671 in funding to assist with 46 elk research projects & studies, including 39 in 14 states, and seven projects with national implications

In 2018, RMEF advocated for many issues including forest management reform, public access to public lands, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) reauthorization, wolf delisting in Wyoming & Great Lakes states, wildfire funding, grizzly delisting in Idaho/Montana/Wyoming, chronic wasting disease funding, Pittman-Robertson Act modernization, wildlife corridor protection, conservation easement tax credits, ESA reform & more

Little Sheep Creek, MT
960 acres protected, 3,600 opened to access
Partially funded by Torstenson Family Endowment



TORSTENSON FAMILY ENDOWMENT

RMEF's \$34.26 million Torstenson Family Endowment is one of the largest endowments ever given to a hunter-based, wildlife conservation organization. Each year RMEF uses interest from the endowment (the principal remains intact) to further core mission programs of permanent land protection, habitat stewardship, elk restoration and hunting heritage. This allows RMEF to increase project funding by attracting matching grants from both the private and public sectors, thus aiding our ability to move swiftly when key elk conservation opportunities arise.

In 2018, nearly \$1.8 million from the endowment helped fund 61 projects in more than 24 states, including:

- \$728,406 to permanently protect and open or improve public access to 25,822 acres of vital elk habitat in 4 states
- \$555,409 for habitat stewardship and management projects in 10 states
- \$489,001 to help fund hunting heritage and conservation education projects across the U.S.
- \$24,902 to support Wisconsin elk restoration efforts



BOB TORSTENSON



TORSTENSON FAMILY — ENDOWMENT —



A key focus of the Torstenson Family Endowment is reaching out to young people. This honors the legacy of Bob Torstenson, who was deeply committed to instilling a love of wild places and hunting in future generations. In 2018, the endowment awarded more than \$264,000 to youth and adult hunter education and mentoring programs across the country.

Also in 2018, the endowment funded 12 scholarships for outstanding college students majoring in wildlife biology, the expansion of the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow program that educates wildlife professionals about the vital link between hunting and conservation, and numerous youth-oriented projects and activities aimed at nurturing an interest in hunting and conservation.



BATTLING ATTACKS ON PUBLIC LAND, BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO PUBLIC ACCESS

Our first conservationists were hunters who fought to create millions of acres of national forests, grasslands and rangelands where every American has the freedom to hunt. Those are among the core ideals that define our nation. Now the calls are growing louder to declare those ideas a failure. The solutions proposed: sell public lands to private buyers or transfer them to state or county governments. Nobody has advanced a credible plan for how states would pay to fight wildfires or weeds, maintain roads and trails, or deliver any of the on-the-ground stewardship essential to sustain healthy ecosystems. Breaking up our federal lands that belong equally to all of us is a direct assault on our commitment to *one nation under God, indivisible*.

For most elk hunters, being able to reach healthy land and water without writing a fat check means everything. Access to abundant habitat and thriving wildlife is literally the future of hunting. Without it, our way of life—and all the work we do for elk country—would be a shadow of what we enjoy today.

Lack of access to quality hunting opportunities is the single biggest reason people stop hunting. For those just hoping to start hunting, access is the largest hurdle.



Tucannon, WA



The Tool Box

- Buying or exchanging land in areas of checker-boarded public and private ownership creates unbroken expanses of public elk country
- Acquiring small but strategic parcels unlocks large blocks of public land
- Re-routing roads or securing access easements provides legal passage to sweeps of public land beyond
- Seeking innovative ways to partner with landowners, like RMEF's support of Access Yes! programs in Idaho and Wyoming, which open more high-quality private land to public access, as well as create access to landlocked public land

GETTING AGGRESSIVE ON ACCESS

Launched in 2015, RMEF's Access Elk Country Initiative aims to provide public access to at least 50,000 acres per year for five years. After four years, we've eclipsed the total goal, creating access to more than 378,000 acres of public land. All told, RMEF has secured public hunting access to more than 1.2 million acres in 23 states.

It would be easy enough to just run up numbers, but access only matters if the trail leads to flourishing habitat. Our measure of success is whether you have a real opportunity to encounter elk—and to walk out satisfied at the end of the day even if you're carrying nothing more than memories.

EASTERN ELK INITIATIVE

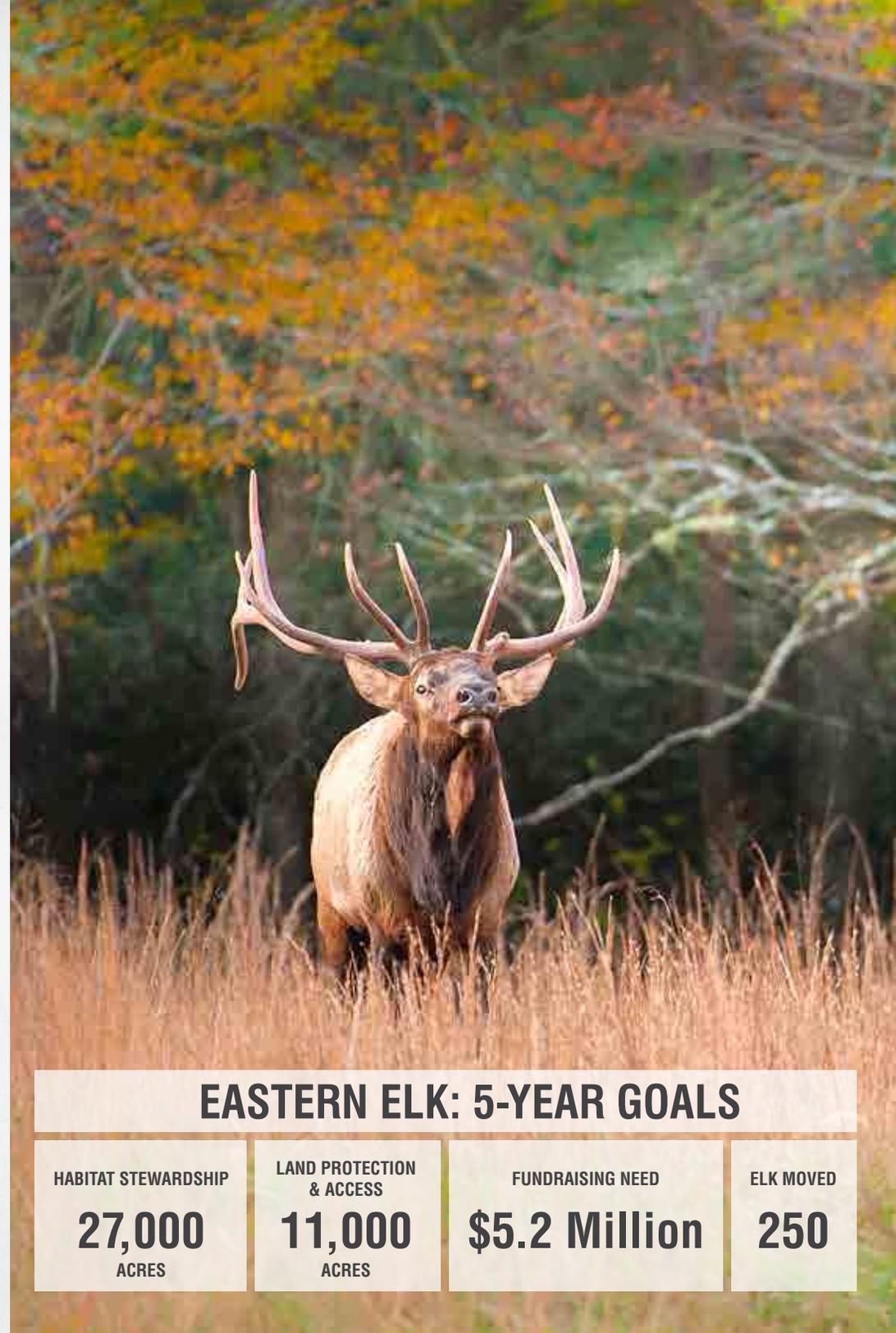
Every bull ringing through the forests of the East on foggy fall mornings is a testament to one of North America's greatest recovery stories. When Europeans came to North America, upwards of 10 million elk roamed the U.S., but unregulated hunting and habitat destruction took a brutal toll. By 1900, there wasn't a wild herd east of the Mississippi. Reintroducing elk to their historic ranges has been a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation goal since 1990, and RMEF is still working hard to help return elk to lands from the Appalachians to the Ozarks.

Wild, free-ranging elk are again roaming their native West Virginia range thanks to cooperative efforts by RMEF and its partners. The initial restoration took place in 2016 but in 2018 RMEF volunteers in Arizona –some 2,000 miles away– pitched in to grow the herd. They assisted the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and Arizona Game and Fish biologists to capture elk in Arizona. The animals were fitted with GPS collars, West Virginia ear tags, metal USDA tags and microchips, and biologists also collected DNA samples. After quarantine, 51 elk (46 adults and five calves) were released in West Virginia. The state also reached an agreement to acquire 17 more elk from the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area in Kentucky.

In Wisconsin, 2018 was a year to remember. The state hosted its first-ever managed elk hunt. More than 38,000 people applied for ten tags which generated more than \$270,000 for elk conservation efforts in Wisconsin. RMEF raffled off one tag with proceeds earmarked specifically for elk management. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources since unveiled regulations for its 2019 elk hunt. Wisconsin's elk herd will grow even more in 2019 as the state's multi-year agreement will come to a close after a batch of elk is trapped in Kentucky and relocated to Wisconsin.

To date, RMEF has also sponsored all 22 Eastern Elk Management Workshops, events which bring together leading Eastern cervid managers and scientists to facilitate discussion and collaboration. The 22nd such workshop took place in 2018 in Lewiston, Michigan. Additionally, RMEF sponsored the International Deer Biology Congress in Estes Park, Colorado.

Looking ahead to 2019, RMEF will host the Elk Summit III at its headquarters as well as the 12th Western States and Provinces Deer and Elk Workshop in Marfa, Texas.



EASTERN ELK: 5-YEAR GOALS

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

27,000
ACRES

LAND PROTECTION
& ACCESS

11,000
ACRES

FUNDRAISING NEED

\$5.2 Million

ELK MOVED

250

EASTERN ELK STATES THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2018

STATE	LAND PROTECTION & ACCESS		HABITAT STEWARDSHIP	
	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	ACRES PROTECTED	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	ACRES ENHANCED
AR	2	514	33	79,516
KY	0	0	14	4,452
MI	8	1,638	35	4,339
MN	2	943	63	75,689
MO	0	0	7	9,484
NC	5	1,925	12	1,794
PA	13	9,803	42	17,338
TN	2	74,169	22	4,144
VA	0	0	9	1,259
WI	7	1,950	32	5,143
WV	3	32,371	5	936
TOTAL	42	123,313	274	204,094

STEP 1: Rebuilding Numbers

A cause close to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's heart, RMEF has worked to secure habitat and increase elk numbers in the East since 1990. Making it a priority will strengthen the work that's already been done and expand future efforts. RMEF endorses combined state goals leading to an Eastern elk population of 17,000.

- RMEF has already helped restore wild elk to seven states and one Canadian province: Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada.
- RMEF also has invested in feasibility studies in Illinois, New York and Maryland. State wildlife agencies use the data to help decide whether it's prudent to restore elk to their area.

STEP 2: Enriching Habitat

Increasing elk numbers is only part of RMEF's vision. Restoring healthy habitat is the equally critical second phase to help herds thrive. RMEF is focused on increasing early successional habitats in the East to help create diverse landscapes where elk and other wildlife flourish.

- RMEF has helped to complete 274 habitat enhancement projects on Eastern lands.
- Habitat enhancement methods include prescribed fires, mechanical treatments and vegetation plantings to create landscapes that support numerous native plant and animal species.

STEP 3: Protecting Land

RMEF has improved public access and protected vital elk habitat on thousands of acres across eight Eastern states. As elk herds grow, protecting key habitat areas is critical to mitigating crop depredation and agricultural conflict.

- RMEF has forever protected nearly 123,000 acres in the East, land that is valued at more than \$22 million.
- RMEF protects lands by establishing conservation easements, facilitating land exchanges and conducting acquisitions that allow strategic parcels of private land to be protected from development and open to the public. Focus areas may include key habitats such as National Forest System lands and private mine lands.

STEP 4: Honoring the Hunt

Protecting our hunting heritage remains an important goal for RMEF. The East offers many hunting opportunities for a variety of species, including elk, and there are still many chances to improve those hunting experiences.

- In 2018, seven eastern states allowed elk hunting and allocated approximately 1,300 licenses: Arkansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Wisconsin.
- Every Eastern state to receive RMEF funding for restoration plans to establish an elk hunting season once the population can support it.

MANAGED LANDS INITIATIVE

BECAUSE GREAT ELK NEED GREAT HABITAT

Bourgeoning elk herds and big bulls require large swaths of healthy forage. But a startling amount of America's elk country is being besieged by noxious weeds, unnaturally dense forests, lack of dependable water and other threats to wildlife.

RMEF is fighting back with a Managed Lands Initiative that aims to improve an average of 115,000 acres of habitat annually wherever elk and hunters need it most. The five-year goal is to improve 575,000 acres—an area larger than Great Smoky Mountains National Park and more than twice the size of Rocky Mountain National Park. To do that with maximum efficiency, we partner with federal and state agencies, private landowners, industry, universities and other conservation organizations to multiply the money RMEF is able to put on the ground to ensure the future of elk and other wildlife. RMEF is well on its way to exceeding its goal. In 2018 alone, RMEF restored or enhanced more than 134,699 acres in 27 states.



Forest/Rangeland Thinning



Prescribed Burning



Noxious Weed Control



Aspen Restoration

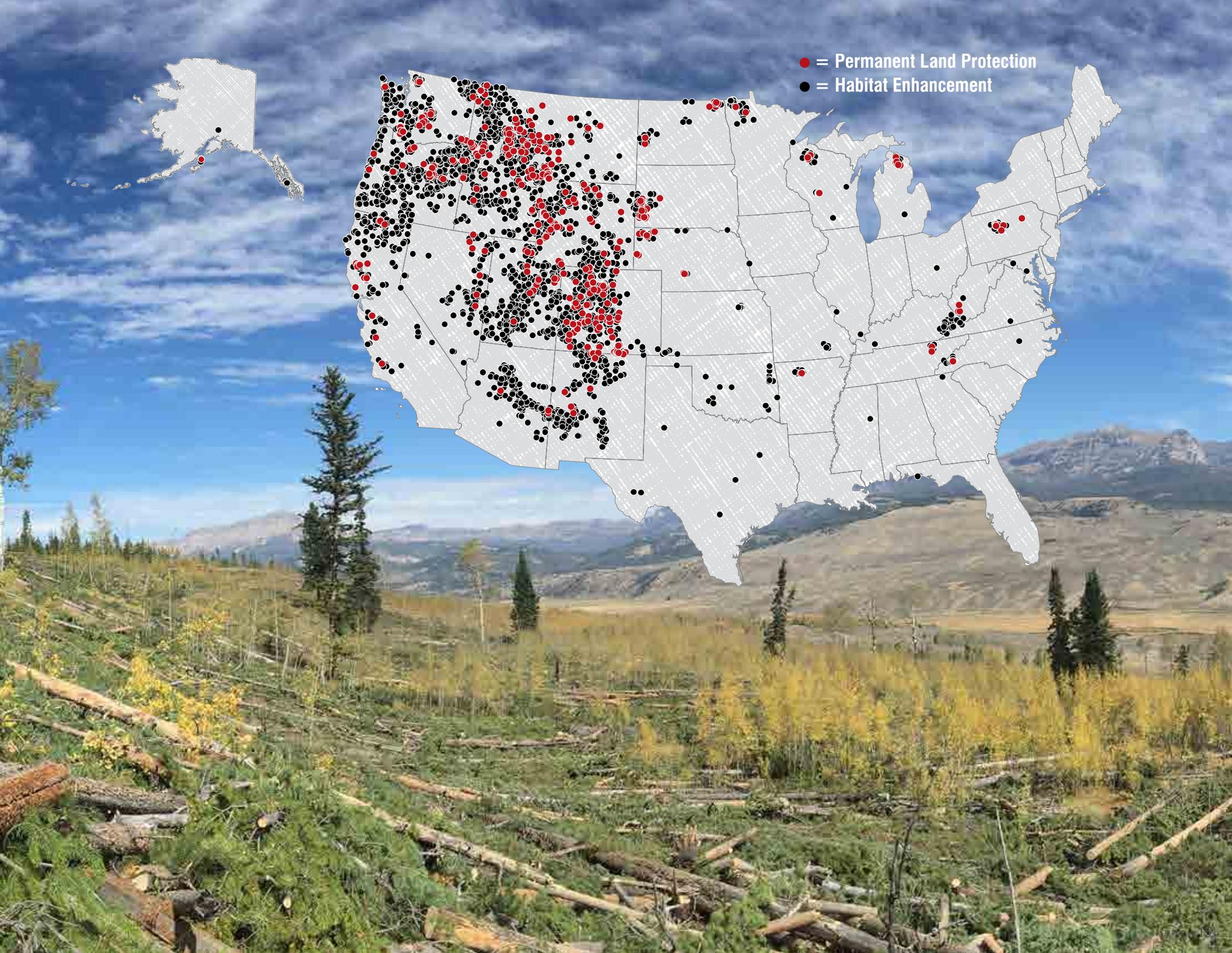


**Installation and Maintenance
of Wildlife Water Sources**

Since 1984, RMEF has completed more than 4,000 projects to improve habitat across 28 states with free-ranging wild elk populations. The majority of this work on public lands is in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state wildlife agencies and other land managers.

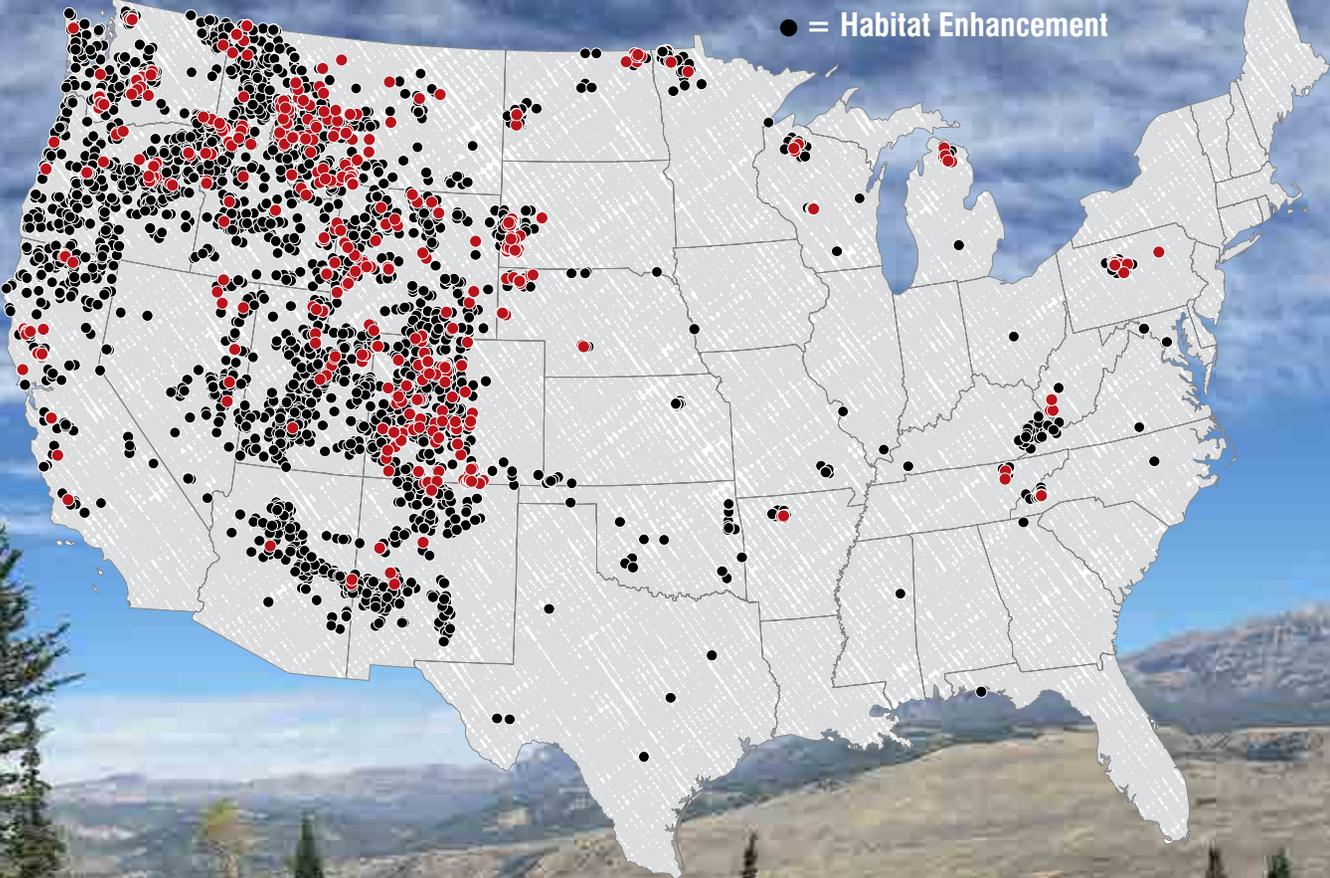


**Shoshone National Forest Aspen and
Early Seral Habitat Enhancement**



● = Permanent Land Protection

● = Habitat Enhancement



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

ELK RESEARCH

Good decisions about wildlife don't happen in a vacuum. From its earliest days, RMEF recognized the need for a steady and dependable flow of information about elk and other wildlife, and for more than 30 years, we've co-funded hundreds of research efforts by state and federal agencies. This hard data allows managers to make informed decisions that sustain strong herds. In 2018 alone, RMEF helped fund 39 research projects and studies in 14 states, plus 7 national projects that increase the understanding of elk habitat use, nutrition, diseases, genetics, population dynamics, predation and habitat management.



PREDATOR MANAGEMENT

RMEF has long advocated for state management of wolves, grizzly bears and other predators, which has proven vastly effective and efficient time and again for sustaining populations of both predator and prey at healthy and manageable levels. But RMEF also puts its money where its mouth is to support predator conservation and control efforts, providing grants for research to evaluate home ranges and population sizes, to address livestock depredation and to help assure elk and other wildlife aren't overburdened. In addition, RMEF delivers public comments that encourage state-based predator management and the delisting of wolves and grizzly bears, and works with members of Congress, federal and state wildlife agencies, state and local lawmakers, and sportsmen and women to do the same.



ISSUES & ADVOCACY

RMEF advocates for hunting, land management and conservation-related programs, issues, legislative and regulatory matters that further mission priorities by actively working with Congress, federal and state agencies, state legislatures, the judicial system, RMEF members and sportsmen organizations.

RMEF constantly monitors and engages in legislative activity in Washington D.C. and state legislatures across the nation to keep members informed and for the betterment of elk, elk country, conservation and hunting.

Specific 2018 priority topics at the federal level included advancing forest management reforms, wildfire funding, sportsmen's access and predator delisting legislation as well as reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Last year was a remarkable year for RMEF's priority issues. Congress passed the Omnibus Appropriations Act which included a fire funding solution that will ease pressure on federal agency budgets and allow for more active land management. The legislation also included some meaningful forest management reforms, as did the Farm Bill that was signed into law at the end of the year.

Former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke delivered a keynote address at RMEF's Elk Camp in Arizona in March where he discussed the department's plans to increase sportsmen access to public lands and RMEF's partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

RMEF cosponsored and participated in a briefing for members of Congress in June on chronic wasting disease (CWD) bills and also participated in a CWD action planning event in New York. RMEF advised Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) on draft legislation to require a federal study of the spread of CWD vectors and continued to advocate in Congress for passage of the House and Senate CWD funding bills.

RMEF's request for the BLM to change its guidance to state offices for identification of suitable parcels for disposal was accepted. Previously, the agency included many parcels in western states that had significant value for public access and recreation. The new guidance identifies such parcels and removes them from present and future disposal lists.

RMEF participated in the Interior Department's

conservation roundtable in June and also a planning meeting for implementation of the Secretarial Order on wildlife corridor conservation. RMEF Chief Conservation Officer Blake Henning was also named to the secretary's Hunting and Shooting Sports Conservation Council.

RMEF was significantly engaged in Endangered Species Act reforms, including advising Senator John Barrasso on draft legislation, providing hearing testimony and monitoring reform bills in the House of Representatives.

RMEF responded to deaths of several elk during tuberculosis testing of the herd relocated to West Virginia by initiating a meeting with Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agriculture Department leadership to encourage changes to the testing protocol to avoid conducting procedures during periods of high heat and humidity.

RMEF held a meeting with Forest Service leadership in Denver in July to discuss RMEF's planned partnership projects and shared priorities for legislation and agency actions.

Additional priority issues that received significant RMEF engagement in 2018 at the federal level included wild horse and burro management, Interior Department reorganization, Forest Service environmental review reforms and federal regulation of tax deductions for donated conservation easements.

At the state level, RMEF engaged in the California and Tennessee elk management plans; grizzly bear delisting in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and recovery criteria for the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem; raffle rules in California and Washington; restrictive firearms legislation in California; and conservation easement oversight legislation in Colorado.

More than 4,000 RMEF members responded to email requests to contact their members of Congress on priority issues in 2018. These communications were critical for passage of important legislation.

RMEF will continue its vigilance in monitoring and advocating for land and wildlife management and conservation-related issues for the benefit of elk, conservation and our hunting heritage in 2019.



RMEF cosponsored bills advocating for federal CWD study



Former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's keynote address at Elk Camp

HUNTING HERITAGE INITIATIVE

Central to the mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is increasing awareness and educating members and the public about the value of hunting, habitat conservation and wildlife management.

RMEF funds programs to help introduce youth and women to the outdoors, promote hunter safety and responsibility, provide mobility impaired/wounded veteran hunters with hunting experiences, engage kids and adults in conservation and protect and advance sportsmen's interests.

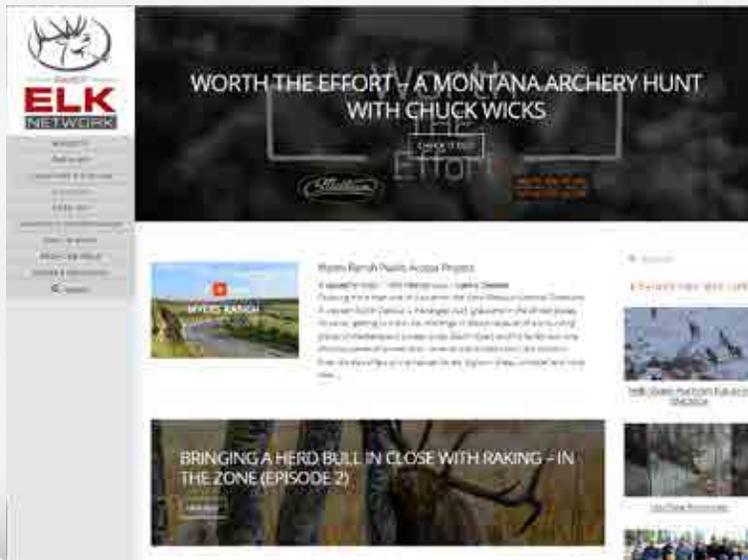
Examples of funded programs include Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow, National Archery in the Schools Program, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, 4-H Shooting Sports and more.

PROJECT SUCCESS

To date, we have invested more than \$12.8 million of RMEF money in our Hunting Heritage Initiative. This, combined with \$72 million worth of partner contributions, has helped fund more than 4,763 projects and assisted in teaching participants about hunting ethics, hunter safety and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.



We're reaching out to members via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, rmef.org, the Elk Network, Amazon Prime Video and other ways. In 2018, we reached 84.5 million people through our social media platforms. We had 822,634 followers and more than 12.8 million video views.



Bugle magazine continues to be the major membership benefit, touting a readership of 587,455.



RMEF produces video content that is aggregated to millions of viewers across the globe through a variety of mediums, including the Elk Network and social media.



In 2018, we delivered 14 elk trunks to educate youth across 10 states ranging from Alaska to Pennsylvania. These elk education trunks—tool kits containing lesson plans, activities, antlers, hides, skulls and much more—are delivered to conservation educators such as teachers, naturalists, scout leaders, agencies and RMEF volunteers to provide hands-on educational experiences for youth. Over its lifetime, one trunk will reach an estimated 2,500 kids.



In 2010, RMEF began to celebrate some of its youngest movers and shakers with an annual Youth Award. In 2018, we presented five awards to outstanding leaders under the age of 18.



The Elk Country Visitor Center (ECVC) in Missoula, Montana, is a state-of-the-art wildlife conservation center that educates the public about wildlife and habitat management, hunting and conservation issues through interactive exhibits, videos, educational programs and tours. In 2018, the ECVC reached more than 41,714 elk enthusiasts.



John McKinney, 2018 Gerald (Jerry) L. Turpin Award recipient

Since 1991, RMEF's Wildlife Leadership Awards have recognized some of our nation's brightest students in wildlife. This scholarship fund grew in 2006 thanks to a memorial given by the family of Gerald L. Turpin, an avid elk hunter killed in a logging accident. In 2013, RMEF's Torstenson Family Endowment boosted it further, continuing the late Bob Torstenson's legacy of conservation education. All recipients get a \$3,000 scholarship and a one-year RMEF membership. Past winners have gone on to

become leaders in their professions, and RMEF is proud to have helped them along their path. In 2018, RMEF awarded 12 scholarships.



Created in 2003, the State Grant Program provides local and state agencies, organizations and sportsmen's groups with financial assistance for events and programs that engage youth and adults in the outdoors and educate them about hunters' role in conservation. Major gifts, grants, and funds raised through our event programs and allocated to the Hunting Heritage Program are used to complete priority projects. In 2018, 388 state grants reached 222,101 participants.



COFFEE
Black of Creamer
Good luck Hunters!
Open

BIGLE

BIGLE

MEMBERSHIP & VOLUNTEERS

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's success as one of the nation's foremost wildlife conservation organizations is rooted in the commitment of our volunteers and the support of our members.

MEMBERS

Members are the lifeblood that keeps RMEF growing. 2018 marked the tenth consecutive year of record membership for RMEF. Members numbered 234,982 strong as of December 31, 2018, up by 3.2 percent from 2017. Membership has increased 56 percent since 2008, and RMEF has had a 95 percent increase in membership since 2000.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the boots-on-the-ground muscle behind RMEF's mission. The size, health, strength and leadership of each chapter's committee are vital to RMEF's success. They and other volunteers give generously of their time and talents to plan and execute banquets and a variety of second events to fundraise for the betterment of elk country. In 2018, volunteers stepped up again to raise money for elk country and also dedicated thousands of hours of labor to on-the-ground habitat stewardship projects, from building guzzlers to tearing down old fence line. These contributions bolster RMEF's mission work both in volunteers' own backyards and across North America.

LOOKING AHEAD

RMEF remains focused on growing our volunteer base along with our membership. Our 12,000-plus volunteers make up less than 1 percent of the active elk hunters in North America. Imagine what we could accomplish with 20,000, or even just 15,000?

Our goal is to recruit 1,500 new volunteers in 2019. We recognize that in order to grow our volunteer base we need to invest in it, so RMEF will continue with the annual Volunteer Recruitment Campaign. Those who recruit or become a new volunteer in 2019 are automatically entered into a drawing for more than 25 prize packages from RMEF sponsors.



IN 2018:

RMEF volunteers numbered more than 12,000 coast to coast

861 new event volunteers stepped up to serve

12,223 event volunteers held 668 events, including 483 fundraising banquets

Approximately 1,200 volunteers from more than 125 chapters in 30 states spent over 16,700 hours bettering elk country, completing 150+ projects including boots-on-the-ground habitat projects, hunting heritage outreach and conservation education

The primary ways individuals, companies and organizations supported RMEF in 2018:

MEMBERSHIPS

Nearly 235,000 supporting, sustaining, sponsor, outfitter and life members from around the world backed the RMEF and its conservation mission to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage.

ANNUAL GIVING PROGRAM

Generous RMEF members and volunteers donated more than \$4,230,000 through annual giving. Many of those donations came from our direct mail program. Last year, we sent out 1,878,160 pieces of mail, directly generating more than \$3.3 million for elk country.

WORKPLACE GIVING

Contributing a little each month through payroll deduction adds up to big benefits for wildlife at year's end. Workplace giving programs generated more than \$90,000 for RMEF in 2018. The Combined Federal Campaign, which allows federal employees and military personnel to support their favorite charities through payroll deductions, is one of the most beneficial workplace giving programs for RMEF.

MATCHING GIFTS

Many employers will match an employee's cash donations, volunteer hours, auction item purchases (above fair market value) or portions of sponsor or life memberships through corporate matching gift programs. In 2018, nearly 70 companies matched employees' gifts to RMEF, contributing more than \$48,000 to further the mission.

MEMORIALS & HONORARIA

RMEF creates memorials and honoraria at the request of families and friends who wish to remember or honor their loved ones through a gift for wildlife habitat conservation. In 2018, donors contributed more than \$50,000 through this program.

TRAILS SOCIETY

In 2018, RMEF received \$1,275,000 through planned or testamentary gifts. Created in 1999, the Trails Society recognizes donors who include RMEF in their will, life insurance policy, retirement accounts, trusts, annuities, etc.

HABITAT PARTNERS

The Habitat Partner program recognizes donors for their cumulative giving beginning at \$2,500. Individual and corporate Habitat Partners donated more than \$2 million to conserve elk country in 2018.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Corporations stood shoulder-to-shoulder with RMEF through sponsorships, *Bugle* magazine advertising and affinity partnership programs. These businesses also donated products and services, contributed royalties through licensing agreements and sponsored RMEF events, totaling \$3.6 million to RMEF in 2018.

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Private, corporate, state and federal foundations supported habitat enhancement projects, permanent protection of critical elk range and programs that educated thousands of children and adults about conservation and North America's hunting heritage to the tune of \$570,000 in 2018.

"The Robert D. Fisher Foundation was established by my dad, a man who loved the outdoors and wildlife conservation. It's easy to write a check, but even easier to make a donation to such a worthy cause. And he strongly believed in the conservation mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation."

Kerry Fisher (Robert's daughter), Habitat Partner and Habitat Council Member

"The peace, joy and connection with Spirit I feel when I am in the natural splendor of elk country transcend the successes life has bestowed upon me. That I am fortunate enough to have built the financial assets to contribute more to our mission now expands the legacy that I can help create with our RMEF family for the benefit of our children's children and beyond."

Bryan Morse, *Life Member, Habitat Partner, Habitat Council and Trails Society member*



HABITAT PARTNERS

The Habitat Council, RMEF donors who cumulatively donated \$10,000 or more, gathered in La Crosse, Wisconsin, for the Summer Habitat Council Meeting and Retreat in June 2018. They joined their fellow dedicated conservationists as ambassadors for RMEF. New attendees paired up with mentors to show them the ropes and provide them insight into the weekend's activities and into the Habitat Council as a whole.

The event opened with a reception and dinner on the banks of the Mississippi River. The business meeting featured various presentations including "the State of RMEF," a financial update and mission overview, Trails Society presentation, a preview of upcoming events, information about the Wisconsin elk restoration and a question and answer session. The group also toured the Elmaro Winery and had dinner with an opportunity to sample specialty wines.

Without question, the highlight of the retreat was a trip to Wisconsin's elk country. Habitat Council members boarded motor coaches and headed to the Black River State Forest where they walked through elk pens used for Wisconsin's elk restoration work. They also took part in a dedication ceremony for the Morrison Creek Acquisition, a project that permanently protected and opened access to 360 acres of prime elk habitat. The experience gave participants the opportunity to witness first-hand how their dollars are used to further RMEF's conservation mission.

The weekend continued with burgers and brats at a brewery that featured Bugler Brown Ale, a special brew that donates a portion of its proceeds toward elk reintroduction. The closing activity featured dinner on board a paddlewheel river boat that cruised through the locks at Lake Onalaska.

"We give to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation because, to us, it is all about relationship—just like the fact that cow elk constantly talk to/instruct calves and protect the bulls with which they are in relationship. With any relationship, there is an ingrained responsibility to nurture and even manage that relationship. As hunters and conservationists we have a duty to manage our relationship with the creatures God has put in our charge. RMEF gives us that vessel to help make sure our donations are used most effectively to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage."

Bill and Sue Hallinan, *Life Member, Habitat Partners and Habitat Council Members*

A Magic Carpet Across Middle Creek

It's easy to spot **Middle Creek** on a land ownership map. A narrow finger of private land and a gravel county road follow it for eight ruler-straight miles as it flows south from the Continental Divide into Colorado's San Luis Valley. Just a quarter mile beyond it lies a sprawling paradise of national forest and BLM lands that grow ever sweeter as you go north. But until recently all most folks could do was stare longingly until they reached a public trailhead at road's end. From there, anyone hoping to hunt, hike or ride horseback in the aspen and sage of the Bear Creek Roadless Area faced miles of steep backtracking.

Fast forward to 2018, when RMEF purchased a 24-acre parcel two miles south of the road's end. It creates a new public access point to 8,500 acres on both sides of Middle Creek, opening the gate for people to fish for native cutthroats and hunt for the elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorns and upland birds that roam this area. Here is a report back from one RMEF member who went there that fall:

"Just wanted to say thank you to RMEF for the access we were able to use this hunting season ...near Saguache, Colorado...The entire river bottom is gridlocked with private property, making it difficult to access public land. This allowed us to get into some beautiful public land, where we saw a herd of elk the first morning. As members of RMEF, it made us feel proud to support such a wonderful organization and to see the results first-hand!"

Eric L. Kahle, Colorado Springs, Colorado



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