

The Montana Hunter Advancement Program

Ethics, Access and Education

A Project of Common Ground

Fall 2017

2017-2018 Sponsors:



Introduction:

In 2010, *One Montana* began facilitating a working group called Common Ground which is a partnership¹ of Montana landowners, outfitters and sportsmen who have been working together over the last several years to solve difficult issues concerning access and land stewardship in Montana. The group's mission is to find win/win/win solutions in which landowners, sportsmen, and wildlife all win. This has not been easy. However, the organizations and individuals who are partners in this effort are moving beyond the contentious nature of these issues and are dedicated to building trust with one another in order to develop viable solutions to the difficult issues they face together.

One of the challenges that the group has discussed is hunter behavior in Montana. Despite the attitude of many hunters, hunting is a privilege and not a right. While hunting has been criticized, it is an important part of our heritage and wildlife management. As land ownership has changed as well as some hunter behavior, hunting access has become limited. Common Ground is now developing a comprehensive, advanced hunter education program designed to put more ethical, educated, and effective hunters in the field. It will increase hunter competencies in the critical areas of:

¹ Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Grain Growers, Montana Wildlife Federation, Montana Bowhunters Association, Montana Sportsmen's Alliance, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and several individual outfitters and ranchers.

- Conservation ethics
- Wildlife biology and habitat
- Farm and ranch management
- Landowner/sportsmen relations
- Hunting skills
- Shooting competencies
- Pre-hunt planning
- After the kill

The program's mission is to provide advanced hunter education that increases hunter competence, ethical hunting behavior, private land access and a knowledge of agriculture and stewardship.

The goals of the program are:

- To educate hunters to a higher level of understanding of landowner issues and concerns, including but not limited to, respect, use of roads, weeds, safety, intrusion on landowner's time, etc.
- To educate hunters regarding the economics of ranching/farming and the impacts that wildlife have on the landowner.
- To increase hunter knowledge of all aspects of the hunt, including ethics, shooting, care of game, woodsmanship, first aid, survival skills, etc.
- To build mutual respect and cooperation between landowners and the sportsmen community.
- To increase the potential for better wildlife management opportunities for landowners and more quality land access opportunities for ethical hunters.

The program's intent is to create a private partnership between landowners and the sportsmen community which will not necessitate regulatory authority from Fish, Wildlife and Parks or the Legislature. But it is assumed that FWP is and will remain an advisory partner to the program.

To develop and implement this advanced hunter education program, *One Montana* is the facilitator and staff for Common Ground. Over \$35,000 has been raised to begin defining and implementing the program (Phase 1). Another \$58,920 is needed to take the program through its pilot implementation (Phase 2), which will include a plan for statewide implementation as described in Phase 3 of this proposal.

The Need:

Why develop this course in the first place? Over the last several years hunter behavior in Montana has come under criticism, both in a series of well-publicized incidents and via

anecdotal reports from landowners. Many hunters today are ignorant of how to behave while hunting on private property. This ignorance often results in conflicts with the property owner who must “clean up the mess” left by hunters, as well as creating negative impacts on the landscape. This has created a situation where many landowners will no longer allow access to hunters they do not personally know. However, wildlife management is a dynamic process and when public access onto private property is lost, that management becomes even more difficult.

While Montana has robust hunting opportunities on public lands, in many hunting districts the capacity for hunting on private lands is a critical component in wildlife management. While Montana’s Block Management Program, administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MT FWP), does a good job of enrolling private land for public access, it’s not for everyone. Many landowners often find themselves in the difficult position of either dealing with the negative impacts and experiences that stem from hunters who introduce noxious weeds, leave trash, interfere with livestock operations etc., or face burgeoning wildlife populations that will have an impact on hay and grazing resources.

There is a MT FWP hunter education program that all residents born after 1985 are required to pass prior to purchasing a hunting license. The course is open to anyone ages 10 and up, and focuses primarily on hunter safety and basic principles of ethics and biology. The department has also implemented a Hunter/Landowner Stewardship Program designed to make hunters more responsible stewards while hunting on private lands. However, this latter program has not been marketed effectively nor aggressively supported by landowner associations. As a result, few hunters have taken the course.

Common Ground fully supports Montana’s hunter education program; nevertheless, we believe there is a strong need for advanced hunter education in the state—a program that builds on the basic knowledge and skills taught in the current course—resulting in better prepared and educated hunters who are viewed by landowners as valuable partners rather than a liability.

Because Common Ground is the entity developing this program there must be mutual ownership of this certificate course between sportsmen and landowners in Montana. All agree that it must be landowner-driven. We believe landowner associations that view this program as a source of safe, responsible, and respectful hunters will encourage their members to allow certified hunters to hunt on their property. This would accomplish two things: it would provide sportsmen access to private lands and would give the landowner a pool of trusted, vetted hunters to help with their wildlife management goals. We predict that as more landowners in Montana come to view this program as a source of trustworthy hunters, enrollment in the course will increase and so will landowner participation.

Phase 1 – Developing the Curriculum:

Scott Hibbard, a landowner, outfitter and longtime Common Ground member, was retained as a contractor to help Common Ground members and One Montana staff to develop an implementation strategy, including a course curriculum for the program. After over 35 interviews, subcommittee meetings of just landowners and just sportsmen, draft program materials were presented to Common Ground members for approval on July 12, 2017. It was unanimously approved.

The curriculum by subject matter and agreed upon benefits to landowners, hunters and wildlife are in Appendix A.

This intensive course includes classroom instruction, online instruction and field work. Instructors will include ranchers/farmers/landowners, shooting instructors, first aid personnel and wilderness experts. Each element will have either written, oral or field tests that will require a passing grade of at least 80%. It is anticipated that the entire course will take 40 hours over 6-8 weeks. There will be a fee charge to each participant and a certificate will be issued upon successful completion of the course. The certificate will need to be renewed every 5 years via additional courses and testing.

Eligibility for hunters who want to enroll in the program include:

- A minimum age of 20 at the time of enrollment
- No violations of FWP or state trespassing laws within the last five years
- Proof of having a big game license in Montana for the last five years
- Only Montana resident hunters for pilot implementation phase

A pilot project has been identified as the next phase of the project.

Phase 2 –the Pilot Project

Now that the curriculum and course outline has been developed, all believe this concept needs to go through a pilot phase starting now and going through 2018. An initial task is to finalize the curriculum so that it is in course form which the course instructor can implement. Another goal is to identify two to four relatively large ranches whose owners are willing to participate in the pilot phase. Such land would not be in block management and have limited, if any, access now and would adjoin public land. Work is already underway to identify properties in FWP's Region 3.

It is anticipated that as many as 50 hunters will be recruited to participate in the pilot program. The course will be conducted in Region 3 starting sometime in the first quarter of 2018.. And the pilot hunt will be in the Fall of 2018.

There will be a paid overall program coordinator and instructor, along with subject specialists and landowners involved in teaching the course. We will interview participating hunters and landowners at the end of the hunting year to gather feedback as to how to improve and expand the program going forward.

Phase 3 - Expansion

Assuming success with the pilot program in the 2018 season, substantial work needs to be done to expand both hunter and landowner involvement for the 2019 season. If all is successful in both the 2018 and 2019 seasons our goal is to have the program become statewide in 2020.

To achieve this goal, work will be needed to address who will administer the program for the long term. Will it be an independent landowner/sportsmen entity? What will be the role of Fish, Wildlife and Parks?

How this program will be self-sustainable going forward will also be a critical topic to address for any long term success. A fairly clear directive on this matter needs to be identified as one goes into the 2019 hunting season.

Conclusion

We view the Montana Hunter Advancement program as a new development in sportsmen/landowner relations not only in Montana, but as an innovative model that has applications elsewhere in our country. We strongly believe there is a major need for such a program that is not now being met in Montana. We fully intend this effort to be a model that, if successful, would be replicable in other states.

Finally, while we have emphasized Common Ground's potential to incentivize access on private lands, it is critical to stress that the educational value of the program will stand on its own. This certificate program will be valuable to any hunter, regardless of where they hunt, and it will go a long way in creating a trusted partnership between sportsmen and landowners who are involved in the program going forward.

We are pleased with the work and direction articulated in Phase 1. Now Phase 2 needs to be implemented, following the direction and support of the Common Ground group's actions.

Budget for Phase 2*:

REVENUE	
Individual Donors	10,000
Foundations	25,000
Sportsmen’s groups	5,000
Corporate sponsors	20,000
Course fees (\$175 x 50 hunters)	8,750
TOTAL REVENUE(Projected)	\$68,750
EXPENSES	
<i>One Montana</i> Personnel	23,600
Contract fees	5,000
Course materials and marketing	5,000
Instructors	18,000
Travel, Meals, and Meeting Fees	5,000
Infrastructure (20%)	11,320
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$67,920

*Note: Phase 1 is not included as it is already completed. Phase 2 began in July 2017. Phase 3 is not included as we don’t know at this time what it will entail.

Contact information:

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APPENDIX A

ADVANCED HUNTER EDUCATION – CURRICULUM DELIVERY BY SUBJECT AREA

1) The Big Picture

- Political framework - *online*
 - North American Model
 - Montana constitution - game held in the public trust
 - Property rights of private landowners
 - Pittman-Robertson Act (hunting 1937) & Dingell-Johnson Act (fish 1950)
 - Farm Bill – segments relevant to wildlife on farm and ranch lands
- Conservation framework
 - History of wildlife conservation - *online*
 - Hunter as conservationist - *online*
 - Landowner and sportsmen cooperation (livestock grazing on wildlife management areas, hunter as tool in elk management) – *classroom*
- Legal framework
 - Trespass, shooting from county road, etc. - *online*
 - Game laws and why we have them - *online*
 - Presentation by game warden - *classroom*
- Hunting culture - *classroom*
 - Hunter as conservationist
 - Trophy hunting, meat hunting, game management
- Social awareness - *classroom*
 - Public perception of hunters and hunting
 - Importance of being positive influence on youth
 - Set the right example as a quality hunter
 - Understand the responsibility hunters have (safety, hunter as tool in game management, developing positive relationships with landowners, etc.)
- Wildlife management
 - Elk, deer, and antelope management (quantity and quality, effect of different season types) - *classroom with online homework*
 - Carrying capacity and population control - *classroom with online homework*
 - Carrying capacity of hunters (a pressure point beyond which animals leave, hunting success, safety) - *classroom*
 - Ratio benchmarks (bull-to-cow, buck-to-doe, calves-to-cows, fawns-to-does) - *online*
 - Brucellosis and financial risk to rancher - *classroom*

2) Farming and Ranching

- Ranching and farming – macro - *classroom*
 - Civics lesson (property taxes landowners pay to support schools, roads, etc.)
 - Open space and habitat
 - Competitive global economy
 - Why cattle and wheat (why ranchers and farmers raise what they raise)
 - Importance of agriculture in Montana’s economy - *classroom*
- Ranching and farming – micro - *classroom*
 - Economics
 - Seasonal flow (what happens when - haying, calving, fencing, irrigating, harvesting, weaning, shipping, etc.)
 - Cost to agricultural operation (landowner's time, impact on forage and livestock carrying capacity, impact on fences, impact of driving on seeded field, etc.)
 - Lease or outfit to recover cost of wildlife
 - Cost of noxious weeds
- Grazing management and impact elk have
 - Financial cost to landowner - *classroom*
 - Ecological impact and cost (lost productivity, planned rest disrupted) – *classroom with field component*
 - Fencing, problem of elk taking out fences - *classroom*
 - What landowners provide for wildlife - *classroom*

3) Landowner/sportsmen relations

- Landowner relations - *classroom*
 - Hunter perceptions of landowners
 - Landowner perceptions of hunters
 - How landowners perceive elk (A cost? A benefit? A liability? A value to the ranch and to the ranching experience?)
 - The wrong way and the right way to approach landowners
 - Appearance, attitude, timing, manners, etc.
 - Why landowners close their property to public hunting
 - Ask what the rules are if not provided
- Landowner issues - landowner panel - *classroom*
 - Weeds, off-road driving, road maintenance, trespass, etc.
 - Opening and closing gates - *field*

- Ethics – do the right thing when no one is looking – *classroom with online homework*
 - Case studies - online discussion and class presentation of ethical situation (e.g., What do you do when you wound an animal and it goes onto a neighbor?)
 - If you make a poor choice in an ethical situation there will be consequences – no negative consequences if you make no bad decisions
 - Practice sportsmanship, not greed
- Hunter behavior and etiquette - *classroom*
 - Appearance, conduct, courtesy, attitude
 - Play by the rules, don't impose, report out
 - Know and practice a proper way and time to ask for permission
 - Respect landowners and private property rights
- Respect property rights and landowners - *classroom*
 - Respect that landowner may have outfitter in part to deal with hunter calls and the time demands hunter management takes
 - Understand that to hunt on private property is a privilege

4) Hunting

- Hunting skills and knowledge
 - Wind and scent (human), sound, tracking - *classroom*
 - Behavior of game, game habits - *classroom*
 - Equipment (knife, saw, optics, etc.) - *classroom*
 - Optics, range finders, determining distance - *classroom with field component*
- Map skills and technology
 - Proficiency needed in using online apps (Montana Cadastral - *classroom with online homework*)
 - Know how to read a topo map - *classroom with online homework*
 - Know how to use a GPS - *classroom*
- Be prepared
 - Compass, GPS, map app - *classroom with field component*
 - Clothing and gear for weather changes (space blanket, matches, lighter fluid, etc.) - *classroom*
 - Fire starters (matches/striker, etc.) - *classroom*
 - Gear for game treatment and retrieval (ropes, saw, pack frame, etc.) - *classroom*
 - Back-up plan if lost - *classroom*
 - Learn about the area before hunting it (digital map, Google Earth, talk to hunters who have hunted there, develop realistic expectations, etc.) - *classroom*

- Physical fitness and physical capabilities (match ability to terrain and demands of the hunt) - *classroom*
- Basic survival skills - *field*
 - Emergency shelter
 - How to make, start, feed, and extinguish a fire
- Hunter safety – *classroom*
 - First aid course
- Biology of major species hunted
 - Diseases - *online*
 - Breeding seasons and habits, calving/fawning season - *online*
 - Horn and antler growth and shedding - *online*
 - Longevity - *online*
 - Aging from teeth - *classroom*
- Elk behavior
 - Seasonality – what elk do in different seasons - *classroom*
 - Response to predators - *classroom*
 - Grazing, forage selection and impact – *classroom with field component*
- Tracking – *field*

5) Making the shot

- Shooting
 - Ballistics, ammunition, caliber, game damage - *online*
 - Shot placement - *online*
 - Marksmanship, shoot pulse - *field*
 - Know your weapon (where it shoots at what distance, what its capabilities are) - *classroom*
 - Sighting in - *field*
 - Know the distance (range finders) - *classroom*
 - Know your capabilities and stay within those (don't take a shot you can't make) - *classroom*
 - Follow up on shot - *classroom*
 - Firearm safety - *classroom*
 - Different field shooting positions - *field*

6) After the kill

- Field dressing - *field*
 - Field care of the animal

- Minimize waste
- Game retrieval - *field*
 - Quartering
 - Boning out – without field dressing
 - Packing out (pack frame)
 - Dragging (ropes, knots, etc.)
 - Cart, bicycle, four-wheeler, snowmobile
 - Horses/mules
- Follow up with landowner - *classroom*
 - Report out
 - Thank you note, etc.

Benefits to Landowners:

- A well-trained, qualified pool of hunters to draw from when considering who to allow on their property. Currently, many landowners may not wish to allow general public hunters onto their property as they have no way of knowing the competence or ethics of those individuals.
- Opportunity to meet with selected hunters prior to hunting to discuss the ranch boundaries, rules, etc.
- Ability to develop a schedule to minimize the “hassle factor” of dealing with hunters asking for permission via phone or in person on a daily basis.
- Landowners select the species and sex of the animals to be hunted; the time periods that hunting is allowed; the areas of the ranch that hunting is allowed; the number of hunters allowed; what, if any, roads may be used; requirements for road use such as washing for weed control, retrieval, etc. Landowner may still grant access to other hunters.
- Opportunity to control wildlife populations under strict guidelines in a safe environment with well-trained, respectful hunters.

Benefits to Hunters:

- Opportunity to access previously inaccessible private and/or public lands.
- Creates an opportunity for a higher quality hunting experience.
- Increased knowledge level on all aspects of hunting.
- Opportunity to develop positive, mutually beneficial relationships with landowners.

Benefits to Wildlife Management:

- Creates an environment for managing wildlife to desired levels without creating a “free for all” that is unsafe and/or unethical.

Appendix B

Proof of *One Montana's* Tax Exempt Status

 **IRS** Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service
P.O. Box 2508
Cincinnati OH 45201

In reply refer to: 0752255928
June 11, 2014 LTR 4168C 0
84-1645549 000000 00
00046239
BODC: TE

ONE MONTANA
2066 STADIUM DR STE 202
BOZEMAN MT 59715-0640



14063

Employer Identification Number: 84-1645549
Person to Contact: GLORIA MCCOVERY
Toll Free Telephone Number: 1-877-829-5500

Dear Taxpayer:

This is in response to your June 02, 2014, request for information regarding your tax-exempt status.

Our records indicate that you were recognized as exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code in a determination letter issued in December 2004.

Our records also indicate that you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because you are described in section(s) 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provisions of sections 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

Please refer to our website www.irs.gov/eo for information regarding filing requirements. Specifically, section 6033(j) of the Code provides that failure to file an annual information return for three consecutive years results in revocation of tax-exempt status as of the filing due date of the third return for organizations required to file. We will publish a list of organizations whose tax-exempt status was revoked under section 6033(j) of the Code on our website beginning in early 2011.

Appendix C

Biographies of Bill Bryan and Zach Brown

Bill Bryan, President:

Bill founded *One Montana* (formerly known as the Cook Center/ Rural Landscape Institute) in 2004, leading the organization as its Executive Director. Bill has over 42 years of experience in startup and organizational development of for-profit and nonprofit businesses at both a regional and national level, including 25 years' experience in agritourism planning, education, and promotion. Furthermore, he is the only person in Montana serving on both Presidential Advisory Councils of the flagship universities. He is the co-founder of Off the Beaten Path, a premier travel planning service for destinations in the western half of the Western Hemisphere. Bill holds a Ph.D. in resource planning and conservation from the University of Michigan.

Bill created the Common Ground program in 2010 after a request from a regional FWP supervisor to try and build trust thru a productive working relationship between landowners and sportsmen. Bill has been directly involved in most all Common Ground meetings since its inception and is one of the originators of the Montana Hunter Advancement program.

Zach Brown, Program Director:

Zach is a native Montanan from Bozeman and a lifelong hunter and fisherman. He graduated from the University of Montana in Environmental Studies and has been working at One Montana for over three years. He is a member of the Montana House of Representatives and is on the House Committee on Fish, Wildlife and Parks. He is a member of the Governor appointed Private Lands Public Wildlife Council. And he has been a full time staff person at One Montana since 2014.

Appendix D

The Role of *One Montana*

One Montana is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to moving Montana forward through rural-urban partnerships. We do this by managing what most nonprofits and communities often do not have the time or resources to do – the collaboration of likely and unlikely partners to build large-scale initiatives to solve our state’s challenges. We are firm believers that we are far more connected than divided.

We focus on the rural-urban divide because it is one that permeates our state and our country—despite the fact that rural and urban are actually very interdependent and connected. It also speaks to the roots of our organization which began as the Cook Center/Rural Landscape Institute in 2004 with an emphasis on the economic viability of Western agriculture and rural communities. We learned that our efforts for rural areas would only have long-term success when the natural interdependence of rural and urban was recognized, promoted, and acted upon.

Our unique position as a collaborative entity whose mission is to bridge the rural-urban divide enables us to be the appropriate catalyst and facilitator of this work. Our rural-urban networks allow us to ensure that a diverse group of voices are heard and engaged in productive actions and solutions for Montana.

Over the life of our organization we have successfully launched and managed a number of other programs that build new rural-urban partnerships while also addressing key state needs including: entrepreneurship training and career readiness for high school students; an undergraduate ranch management program for a land grant university; and new potential revenue opportunities within local food processing.

We have demonstrated the capacity to successfully manage a variety of projects and collaborations and are confident that with your investment, the Common Ground program will continue to develop grassroots, long term solutions for the future.