



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
Monida Star Rte., Box 15
Lima, MT 59739
406/276-3536, Fax 406/276-3538

Mr. Pat Flowers
Regional Director
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
1400 South 19th
Bozeman, Montana 59715

June 30, 2000

Mr. Bob Brannon
Wildlife Biologist
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
3391 Highway 287
Sheridan, Montana 59749

Dear Mr. Flowers and Mr. Brannon:

I am writing to you to make you aware of changes in the 2000 moose season lengths that Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge will implement this fall in the portion of unit 334 that overlays National Wildlife Refuge. Through many discussions with Bob Brannon (see attached letter) the refuge has attempted to work through the state hunting regulation process and to have proposed changes in the harvest of moose on the refuge reflected in those regulations. Unfortunately, this did not occur, and as such, the refuge is implementing a closure of November 26, 2000.

The refuge is requesting that successful applicants are made aware of these season closures that are not reflected in the regulations and that, if possible, the tags that are issued, reflect that the refuge portion of hunting unit 334 will close on November 26, 2000.

We appreciate your cooperation in this matter and look forward to working with you on a unified approach to managing wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities here on Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

Tom Reed
Assistant Refuge Manager

enc.



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Mr. Bob Brannon
Wildlife Biologist
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
3391 Highway 287
Sheridan, Montana 59749

February 8, 2000

Dear Bob:

I initially telephoned you on December 13, 1999, to discuss reducing the number of moose permits on Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge for the year 2000. What prompted our concern was a number of indices that indicate that the goal of reducing moose numbers on and near the refuge, which was initiated in 1992, has been accomplished.

One of the objectives of harvesting more moose was to retain a healthier willow community on Red Rock Lakes. It appears that through the increased harvest of moose, winter moose browsing has decreased. Both summer and winter browsing has been reduced. Willow leader growth this fall was over one and one half foot in many cases. Based on refuge observations, retention of annual leader growth is now substantially greater than it has been in the recent past.

Historically, five bulls and two antlerless permits were issued in hunting district 334, of which, Red Rock Lakes NWR encompasses a large portion. In 1992, moose harvest permits increased to five bulls and eight antlerless. Moose harvest permits increased again in 1994, to 5 bulls and 15 antlerless, and has remained at this number since 1994 (see attached table). Hunter success has been very good until recently, where it appears success has decreased dramatically (see attached graph).

Hunter success has decreased despite increased hunter effort (days afield). Although, hunter success is related to a myriad of factors, including localized weather, and we agree with you that some moose do not use the lower elevation willow habitats of the refuge in mild winters, another explanation for reduced hunter success is fewer moose.

Early this fall, while conducting law enforcement activities, four Montana Game Wardens and myself, rode into the upper Centennial Mountains. We rode in two separate areas and covered extensive country, yet only one cow moose was observed. This was noted by the wardens as moose observations in the back country are usually common. A similar lack of moose was reported by both moose and elk hunters throughout the fall.

Year	Permits - Anterless	Harvested	Not Harvested	Unknown	TOTALS
1990	2	2			2
1991	2	2			2
1992	8	7		1	8
1993	8	3		5	8
1994	15	13		2	15
1995	15	14		1	15
1996	15	15			15
1997	15	13		2	15
1998	15	11		4	15
1999	15	10	5		15
TOTALS	110	90	5	15	110

MOOSE HUNTING - DISTRICT 334

Antlerless Permits Issued & Harvest #s

