

2015 Private Lands with Possible Agreements Allowing Licensed Hunting Outfitters to Map Fact Sheet

Map Background:

- The Montana Board of Outfitters recently published a map titled 2015 Private Lands with Possible Agreements Allowing Licensed Hunting Outfitters to Operate.
- The map has been historically produced by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on behalf of the sports women and men who hunt in Montana.
- The data used was the most recent data afforded to the Department of Labor & Industry as required by Montana Administrative Rules 24.171.408 and 24.171.520 and prescribed by Montana Code Annotated 37-47-201. ARM 24.171.408.
- It is the sole responsibility of licensed outfitters to provide true and accurate data to the Board of Outfitters.
- The data was supplied from the Montana Board of Outfitters as maintained by the Business Services Division of the Montana Department of Labor & Industry. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks provided technical assistance in creating the map.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks assisted the Board of Outfitters using the same methodology used for previous maps.

Map Disclaimer Information:

- The Montana Department of Labor & Industry noted the data was likely to be inflated due to systemic issues associated with upgrading from the old database to a newer and more nimble system.
- It was also noted that advances currently being undertaken to upgrade the Department's reporting system will result in digital reporting of statutorily required information by outfitters and a more verifiable map as early as February 2017.

Map Methodology:

- The Montana Board of Outfitters provided the outfitter data to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in 2015 as a list of townships, ranges, and quarter-quarter sections representing private land where licensed hunting outfitters are possibly authorized to operate.
- The Montana Board of Outfitters also provided a separate list of townships, ranges and quarter-quarter sections that were fish only outfitters and requested that Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks remove these from the comprehensive list, which was accomplished.
- Duplicate quarter-quarter section records were removed from the dataset provided by the Montana Board of Outfitters by grouping the quarter-quarter sections into unique values.
- The resulting count of unique quarter-quarter sections was then multiplied by 40 (quarter-quarter sections were assumed to represent 40 acres).

Technical Background:

- The 2015 map uses outfitter provided data maintained in an antiquated database (HFSS) that doesn't communicate with the current database (Accela) used by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry.
- Because of this technological incompatibility, the data supplied to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks had errors which were reflected in the 2015 map.
- Department priorities include updating Accela to integrate the already required information from Outfitters into the current system by reconfiguring records, developing new functionality and eliminating the use of HFFS. Development of functionality requires planning and time for future maps. This is expected to result in easier reporting of land access agreements and more precise mapping of those agreements.
- The department is investing in continued improvement of its online licensing system and away from an antiquated paper-based recording system to a streamlined real-time digital system for outfitters to provide information.

Right-to-Know and Public Involvement:

- The Montana Board of Outfitters takes Montana's Right-to-Know laws seriously and provided this map under the public's right to know.
- Sportsmen and women have become accustomed to the map being produced. Many of these citizens appeared before the board on numerous occasions, made numerous phone calls, and sent numerous emails requesting that an updated map be produced.
- Requests from the public began in 2014 after two years from the release of the last map.
- Public appearances at board meetings and communications to the board from various interested parties continued for the next two year until the recent map was generated in March 2016.

Current Statute and Rule regarding data collection of outfitter information:

- Montana Administrative Rules 24.171.408 and 24.171.520 and prescribed by Montana Code Annotated 37-47-201. ARM 24.171.408
- Outfitters shall maintain current, true, complete, and accurate records at all times, submit the records to the board with application to renew licenses, and make the records available at all times at the outfitter's main base camp or business office to enforcement or investigative personnel authorized or appointed by the board.
- In general, submitted outfitter records, including but not limited to the operations plans, shall be maintained as confidential information and shall not be released to any person or organization without written permission of the outfitter, subpoena or order of a court, or written request of a state or federal agency for law enforcement purposes.
- While total acreage of private lands where any outfitter is authorized to operate is a matter of public record, where a particular outfitter is authorized to operate is a confidential matter between the landowner and the outfitter.
- The Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks or the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council may use board data to create a map depicting all private land where any outfitter is authorized to operate.
- All inquiries for outfitter records shall be reviewed and considered in relation to this rule and the competing interests between the public's right to know and the rights of privacy involved in the particular records requested

For more information, please contact the board or directing contact Steve Gallus, Executive Officer at 406.841.2370 or through email at sgallus@mt.gov or Jake Troyer, Communication Director at the Montana Department of Labor & Industry at 406.444.1674 or jtroyer@mt.gov

Montana Board of Outfitters

www.outfitter.mt.gov

301 South Park, 4th Floor

P.O. Box 200513

Helena, MT 59620-0513

Fax: (406) 841-2305

E-mail: dlibsout@mt.gov