



## Montana Master Hunter Program Impact 2020

1MT launched the Master Hunter Program to help the State of Montana and private landowners improve wildlife management efforts by restoring the cooperation between hunters, private landowners, and game managers.

The program provides advanced hunter education that hones the participant’s overall aptitude and includes training in conservation and stewardship, natural history, ethics, and specialized ballistics and marksmanship skills, among other topics. The program has three primary goals:

1. Build trust and improve working relationships between landowners and sportsmen;
2. Help landowners and the State of Montana with their wildlife management goals; and
3. Create ambassadors and mentors for the sport of hunting.

In 2020 we graduated another 75 hunters, with an average age of 47, creating a cadre of 165 thoughtful leaders and ambassadors for the sport of hunting. Participants attended a rigorous 4-week program and studied more than 16 different topics addressing hunting, sportsmanship, and landowner relations. After passing an extensive written exam, participants must complete a shooting precision test and prove their orienteering proficiency to graduate. These hunters have the opportunity to hunt on private lands and help landowners with their wildlife management and land stewardship goals. Landowners can expect respectful, thoughtful and knowledgeable hunters who understand the benefit and value of private land to wildlife and to the adjoining public lands. This program is creating more educated, effective and ethical hunters that help to change the negative narrative about sportsmen, and are ambassadors and mentors for the sport of hunting.

### 2020 in Numbers

	2020	Total
<b>Applicants</b>	186	
<b>Graduates</b>	75	165
<b>Classes</b>	3	7
<b>Women</b>	14%	15%
<b>Ranch Partners</b>	23	23
<b>Hosted Service Projects*</b>	8	10
<b>Service Project Volunteers</b>	40+	60+
<b>Service Project Volunteer Hours</b>	240+	240+
<b>Continuing Education Hours**</b>	29	29
<b>MH Volunteer Hours***</b>		232
<b>Counties</b>	16	20
<b>Cities</b>	25	35
<b>NGO &amp; Foundation Partners</b>	20	28

\*includes projects hosted by 1MT with Landowner-led collaboratives and individual landowners.

\*\*Includes game processing, bow hunter safety, training to test for CWD, Hunter Education Instructor training.

\*\*\*Includes projects on private lands (31% of reported hours), mentoring youth hunters (17% of reported hours), public land clean-up projects with BHA, Artemis, Trout Unlimited (17% of reported hours), teaching Hunter Education (9% of reported hours), and teaching for the MHP Program (9% of reported hours). We also just began tracking hours in 2020. People reported all in 2020, but some hours were completed in 2018 and 2019.

## Master Hunters Volunteer to Help Landowners

In the summer of 2020, we reached out to our landowner partners, and landowner-led collaboratives to offer up the assistance of MHP graduates to help with on-ranch projects. What transpired was a summer schedule filled with meaningful work hours and impactful conversations spread across eight projects from Beaverhead County all the way to Phillips County and in between. The volunteer hours that Master Hunters provide may also be counted toward their recertification which is required every three years.

MHP graduates gathered in Big Timber to help remove temporary electric fence, plant trees, and install irrigation at Keewaydin Ranch. Our graduates learned about improving soil health through intensive and managed livestock grazing. Near Helena, we sprayed knapweed. And at Sieben Live Stock, a dozen Master Hunters worked with multiple generations of the Hibbard family to build beaver-mimicry dams to restore the wetland and wet meadows along a creek that runs through the ranch. While working, we learned about what it means to ranch in concert with nature.

1MT also connected Master Hunters with Landowner-led collaboratives including Blackfoot Challenge in Powell County, Ranchers Stewardship Alliance in Phillips County, Winnett ACES in Phillips County, and Centennial Valley Association in Beaverhead County. Master Hunters came from all of the state to learn about the collaboratives and their role on the landscape while removing downed barbed wire fencing, tagging fences with markers to reduce sage-grouse collisions, and spraying invasive weeds. Whether sitting on five-gallon buckets eating sack lunches, enjoying coffee and cookies around kitchen islands, or hiking through the forest, we learned from one another, connected with each other, and found common ground.

**Over 40 MHP graduates volunteered nearly 240 hours working alongside landowners get to know one another and improve wildlife habitat.** These projects are one small way 1MT and the Master Hunter Program is working to bridge the urban rural divide, and connect sportsmen with landowners to increase hunter knowledge about the role of landowners in stewarding wildlife habitat and their livelihoods intertwined with the management of the land.



**The Master Hunter Perspective:** One 2020 Graduate, Pippin Wallace, explains the impact of these interactions. *"I learned more about ranching in a day from the French's than 30 years living in Montana. They gave me a deep appreciation for their role as stewards of the land and its challenges. They shared a vision where the betterment of the land is the long goal and their cattle are just one of their tools used to achieve this. I honestly don't know how this sharing of experiences could be possible outside of One Montana and am deeply grateful for it!"*



**The Ranchers Experience:** Rancher, Conni French, describes her experience. *"Our biggest take-away from the day was how important it is to keep communication open between hunters and landowners as they share the same resource. As we visited throughout the day we came to understand that these hunters were curious, ethical, hard-working, and enthusiastic. We were lucky to have them come out and work with us for a day and we look forward to another work day with the Master Hunter program down the road."*

### Thank you for your support!

Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund, Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad, Montana Grain Growers Association, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation, Montana Stockgrowers Foundation, Montana Wild Sheep Foundation, Mystery Ranch, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ruby Habitat Foundation, Sitka Gear, Weyerhaeuser.

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