

Wind Cave Elk Reduction FAQs

Q: How do I apply to help harvest elk in Wind Cave National Park?

A: Volunteers will be used to harvest elk as part of an operation to reduce the elk population in Wind Cave. If interested in volunteering for this opportunity, please apply at the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks website. Applications will be accepted from January 3 – 10, 2018

Q: What is the deadline for applying?

A: January 10, 2018

Q: Are there costs associated with being a volunteer?

A: There is no fee to apply as a volunteer. There is an application process and associated random drawing to select volunteers to work with National Park Staff to harvest elk in Wind Cave. Volunteers will be responsible for their own expenses (food, lodging, transportation, firearm, ammunition, etc.)

Q: When will the drawing be held?

A: Soon after the January 10 application deadline.

Q: When will the elk harvest take place?

A: The operation will take place during two weeks in February. The first week will be February 5-9 and the second week will be February 12-16.

Q: Can I shoot a bull?

A: National Park Staff will direct volunteers as to which elk to shoot. The focus will be to remove both cows and bulls based on the needs of the study, which are dictated by sex, age, and elk location in the park.

Q: Do I get to keep any elk I shoot?

A: No, all elk taken will be tested for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Test results will take about a week to be returned. Meat from any elk testing positive for CWD will be destroyed. Volunteers who participate will have the opportunity to accept elk meat from an animal which has tested "not positive" for CWD. The remaining elk meat will be distributed through Feeding SD.

Q: Which part of the park do I get to hunt in?

A: Park staff will direct the team, made up of two volunteers and the park staffer, to the location where they will be working to remove elk. This could be in different parts of the park, depending on where the elk are located.

Q: Can I return home as soon as I shoot an elk?

A: No, this is a week-long commitment by the volunteer. Monday will be an orientation and qualification day. Tuesday through Thursday will be days that volunteers harvest elk and pack them out to a processing location in the park. Friday will be a clean-up day for the volunteers and staff. Volunteers will need to be there Monday through Friday.

Q: If I am not selected as a volunteer this year, do I build preference for following years?

A: No, there is no license associated with this volunteer opportunity and no preference will be applied for this drawing to assist as a volunteer.

Q: Will I be issued an elk tag if selected?

A: There is no tag. This is a volunteer operation to remove elk in the park.

Q: If I can't get off work for the whole week, can I still volunteer for 2 days?

A: No. Because of the time commitment to train volunteers weekly, the requirement will be for volunteers to participate all week (Monday through Friday).

Q: How much in advance will I be notified?

A: Volunteers who are selected in the drawing will be notified by Wind Cave staff in late January.

Q: Can I use a horse to retrieve harvested elk?

A: No. Volunteers will work with, and under the direction of, Wind Cave staff to retrieve elk that are harvested. Some of the retrievals may require volunteers to pack out animals on foot.

Q: Can I volunteer to help with this project in other ways if don't want to shoot an elk?

A: No, volunteers will be involved in all aspects of the project, including shooting.

Q: Why don't non-residents have an opportunity?

A: The people of South Dakota have the biggest stake in the long-term health of deer and elk in the Black Hills.