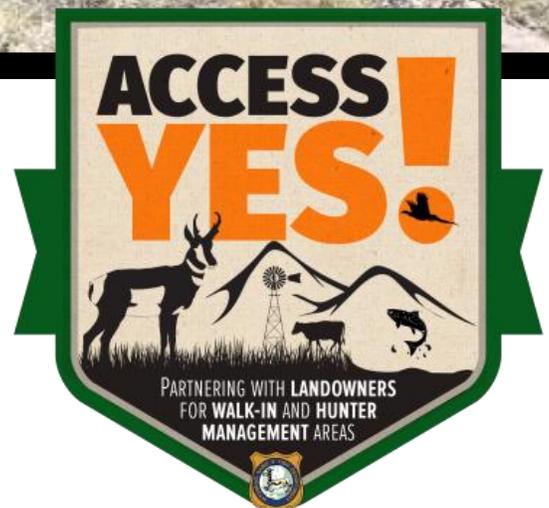




# Access Yes 2025 Annual Report



# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Purpose.....	3
Program Successes .....	3
Hunting and Fishing Access Programs.....	4
<i>Hunter Management Areas</i> .....	4
<i>Walk-in Hunting Areas</i> .....	6
<i>Walk-in Fishing Areas</i> .....	7
Access Yes Funding.....	8
The National Elk Refuge.....	10
Additional Access Yes Programs and Services.....	11
2025 Landowner Survey	12

Information about Access Yes can be obtained from the Department’s website at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>, Cheyenne Headquarters, or any regional office (below). Access information for fishing is updated each December for the following year. Hunting information is updated each July for the fall hunting seasons.

Contact Information	In-State Toll-Free #	Out-of-State Phone #
Cheyenne Headquarters	1-800-842-1934	1-307-777-4600
Casper Regional Office	1-800-233-8544	1-307-473-3400
Cody Regional Office	1-800-654-1178	1-307-527-7125
Green River Regional Office	1-800-843-8096	1-307-875-3223
Jackson Regional Office	1-800-423-4113	1-307-733-2321
Lander Regional Office	1-800-654-7862	1-307-332-2688
Laramie Regional Office	1-800-843-2352	1-307-745-4046
Pinedale Regional Office	1-800-452-9107	1-307-367-4353
Sheridan Regional Office	1-800-331-9834	1-307-672-7418

# Introduction

The Access Yes program is a long-term effort administered by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to improve public access to private and landlocked public lands for hunting and fishing. First created in the 1990s as the Private Lands Public Wildlife pilot program, it has grown into a key tool for providing crucial access for hunters and anglers. The goal of Access Yes is straightforward: work with willing private landowners to open land for public use while still respecting property rights and day-to-day agricultural operations. Participation is voluntary, and landowners decide what kinds of activities are allowed, when access is permitted, and which species may be hunted or fished.

The program includes multiple avenues to provide access. Hunter Management Areas are usually large properties where hunters obtain permission slips, which helps balance the number of people on the land with wildlife and landowner needs. Walk-In Hunting Areas and Walk-In Fishing Areas provide access without individual permission slips, though users must follow posted rules and tailored restrictions. Together, these options create a wide network of access opportunities across Wyoming, ranging from big open rangelands to smaller but very productive wildlife habitats such as creek bottoms and irrigated fields.

Access Yes works well because it offers clear benefits to both landowners and outdoor recreationists. Landowners who enroll can receive payments tied to the amount of land or water they open to the public, and they receive support from the Department in posting property, communicating rules, managing conflicts, and enforcing regulations. State liability protections also help reduce concerns about allowing the public onto private land. Just as important, the program allows landowners to shape participation in ways that fit their goals—whether those goals involve agriculture, ranching, wildlife viewing, or habitat improvement—which has encouraged many to stay involved over time.

The program is funded mainly through donations from hunters and anglers when they buy licenses and conservation stamps, along with contributions from conservation groups and other partners. Those funds go directly toward working with landowners and expanding access, so the connection between donations and on-the-ground results is very direct.

Today, Access Yes opens millions of acres of land, along with lakes and many miles of streams. This significantly increases opportunities for big-game and small-game hunting, upland bird and waterfowl hunting, and fishing across the state. Beyond expanding access, the program helps the Department manage wildlife populations, reduce agricultural damage, encourage responsible outdoor behavior, and build positive relationships between landowners and the sporting public. In doing so, Access Yes supports not only recreation, but also healthy wildlife populations and the long-term conservation of Wyoming's open spaces.



## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Access Yes program is to expand and sustain opportunities for the public to hunt and fish on private lands and on public lands that would otherwise be difficult to reach. This is achieved by working with private landowners to enroll their properties in one or more of the three Access Yes programs: Hunter Management Areas, Walk-In Hunting, and Walk-In Fishing. Landowners and Department staff work together to develop an agreement that outlines the details of participation, including the length of the agreement (one or five years), the species that may be harvested, the specific areas included, the dates when access is permitted, and any additional rules or restrictions.

In exchange for providing access, landowners receive several benefits, such as:

- Financial compensation based on enrolled acreage or stream mileage
- Increased presence of law enforcement officers
- Enhanced wildlife management, including population control and damage prevention
- Assistance with managing sportsmen, reducing calls and interruptions to the landowner (the Department also supplies access maps and provides sportsman with rules and other instructions)

## **Program Successes**

Access Yes assists landowners through management of hunters and anglers, providing sportspersons places to hunt and fish, and reducing agricultural damage through hunter harvest. The Department benefits through increased wildlife management opportunities, increased license sales, reduced agricultural damage, and providing quality hunting and fishing access to the public. During 2025, Access Yes celebrated many successes, which include, but are not limited to:

- Provided hunting access to 2,547,138 acres (1,696,261 acres of enrolled private and state lands, and 855,376 acres of public lands) for hunting within the enrolled boundaries of Walk-in Hunting Areas (WIHA) and Hunter Management Areas (HMA). This includes land in every county within Wyoming.
- Provided additional access to 190,015 acres of otherwise inaccessible public lands adjoining the boundaries of WIHAs and HMAs.

- Provided fishing access to 3,949 lake acres and 96 stream miles through the Walk-in Fishing Area (WIFA) program.
- Issued 20,888 permission slips to 9,878 sportspersons for access to HMAs, the National Elk Refuge, Mule Creek Public Access Area and two Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs).
- Provided free hunting and fishing access on Walk-in Areas to anyone with the proper licenses. Many of the participants are families, contributing to the creation and enhancement of hunting and fishing traditions.
- Translates into improved wildlife population management and decreased agricultural damage through harvest.
- Continued the Access Yes Patrol Enhancement (AYPE) effort. Regional Access Coordinators provided patrol assistance and hunter/landowner contacts to other regions during high use periods on Access Yes areas.



## Hunting and Fishing Access Programs

Hunter Management Areas – Walk-in  
Hunting Areas – Walk-in Fishing Areas

### *Hunter Management Areas*

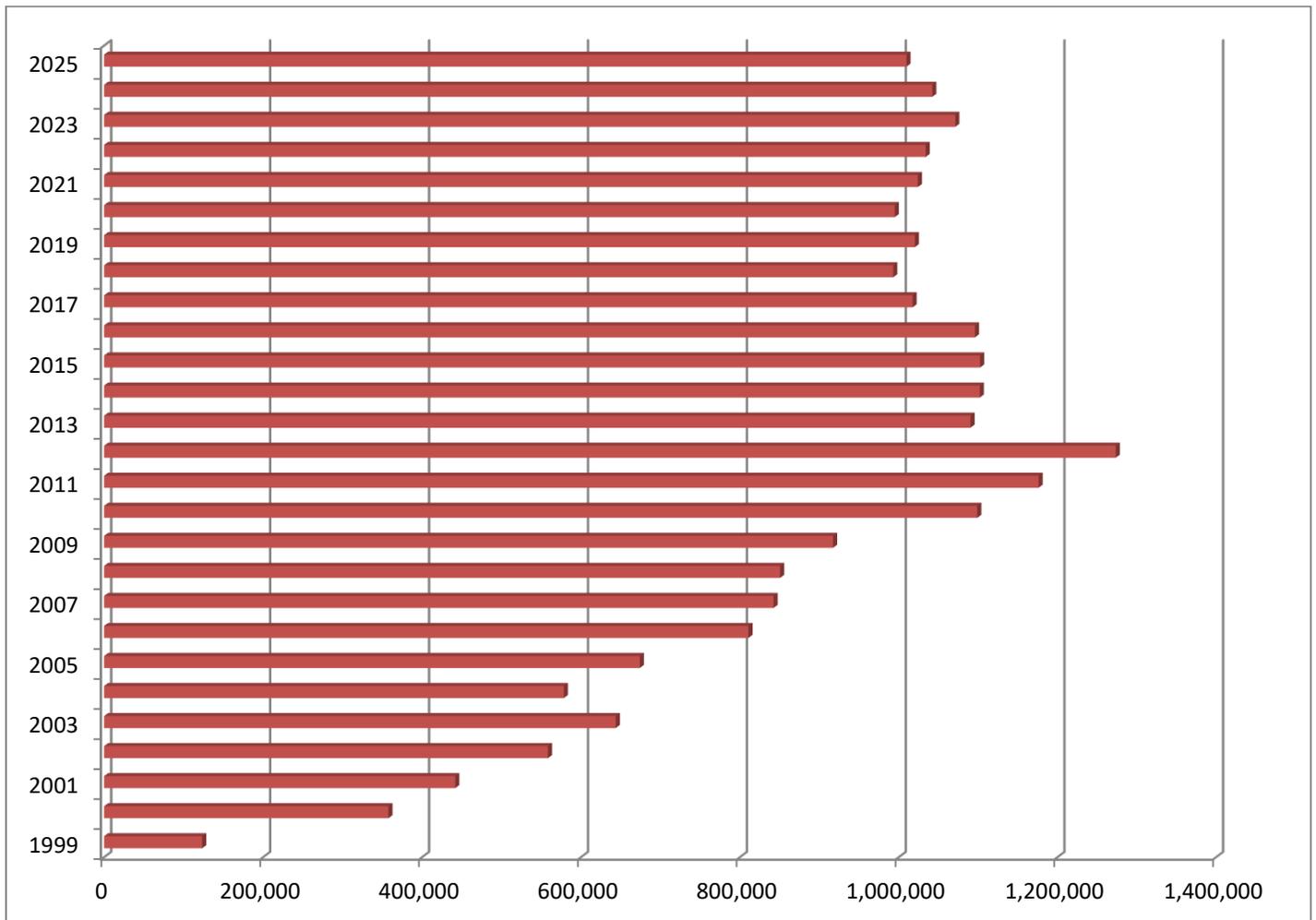
Hunter Management Areas are access areas where each hunter must first obtain a free permission slip from the Department prior to hunting. These areas are generally larger than WIHAs, and often provide some level of vehicle access. Permission slips are issued through the Department’s website, and this method has proven to be a fair and efficient way to distribute hunter access. For HMAs with limited access and high demand, random draws are used to assure a fair distribution of permission slips. Website distribution of permission slips is popular with nonresident hunters as they can obtain permission for HMAs prior to coming to the state to hunt. Regional office personnel and game wardens/biologists provide extra assistance to hunters needing help obtaining a permission slip. HMAs can provide: unlimited, limited first-come first-served, or limited random draw hunter access permission slips. The type of HMA depends upon several factors such as desired harvest levels, hunter participation, wildlife population numbers, landowner preference, and agricultural damage.



For 2025, there were 63 HMAs with 134 participating landowners encompassing 1,009,856 enrolled acres for hunting primarily big game species, but also small game and upland game birds (Figure 1).

Also, in past years, Access Yes had not counted the acres of the National Elk Refuge (NER) and Mule Creek HMA, even though the program issues permission slips, conducts law enforcement, creates ranch rules, documents and signs for hunters to use these areas and displays them on our website. Access Yes brought these 32,182 acres into the totals for 2023 due to these areas being primarily managed by Access Yes.

**Figure 1. Hunter Management Area Acres by Year**



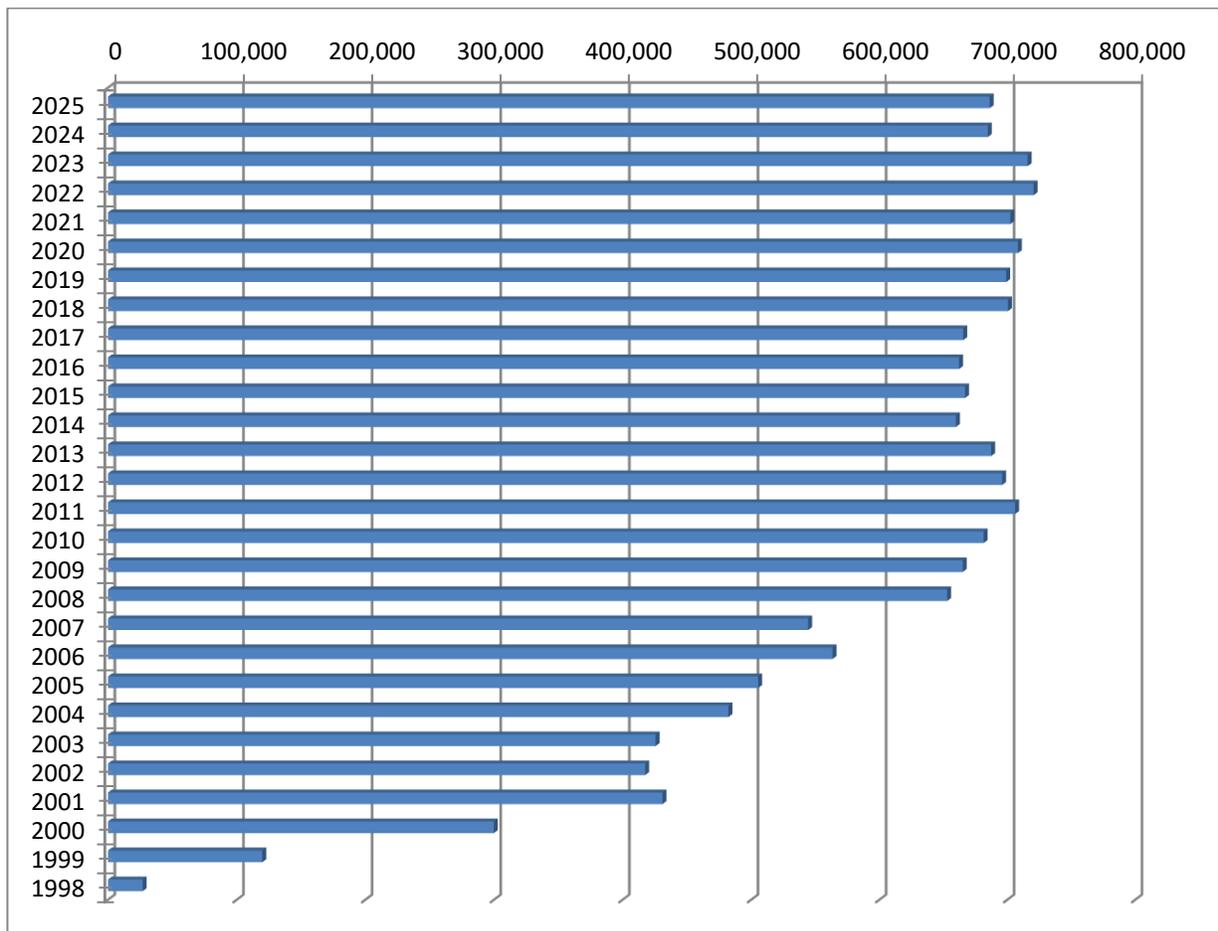
## *Walk-in Hunting Areas*

Walk-in Hunting Areas are parcels of land open to anyone who has a valid hunting license for the species allowed to be hunted on the WIHA; no permission slip is required. These access areas are usually smaller than HMAs and, as the name implies, typically require hunters to walk in to hunt.

WIHAs are similar to HMAs in that landowners determine which species can be hunted and when access will be granted. The state acres counting toward the totals are owned by the Wyoming Military Department, the Office of State Lands and Investments and Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources. These state acres are enrolled in Access Yes so that specific rules can be implemented that allow the public to hunt or fish these areas. For 2025, the Access Yes Program enrolled 686,405 private and state acres involving 427 landowners in WIHAs (Figure 2). This was an increase from 2024 of 1,534 acres due to additions of new walk-in areas.



**Figure 2. Walk-in Hunting Area Acres by Year**

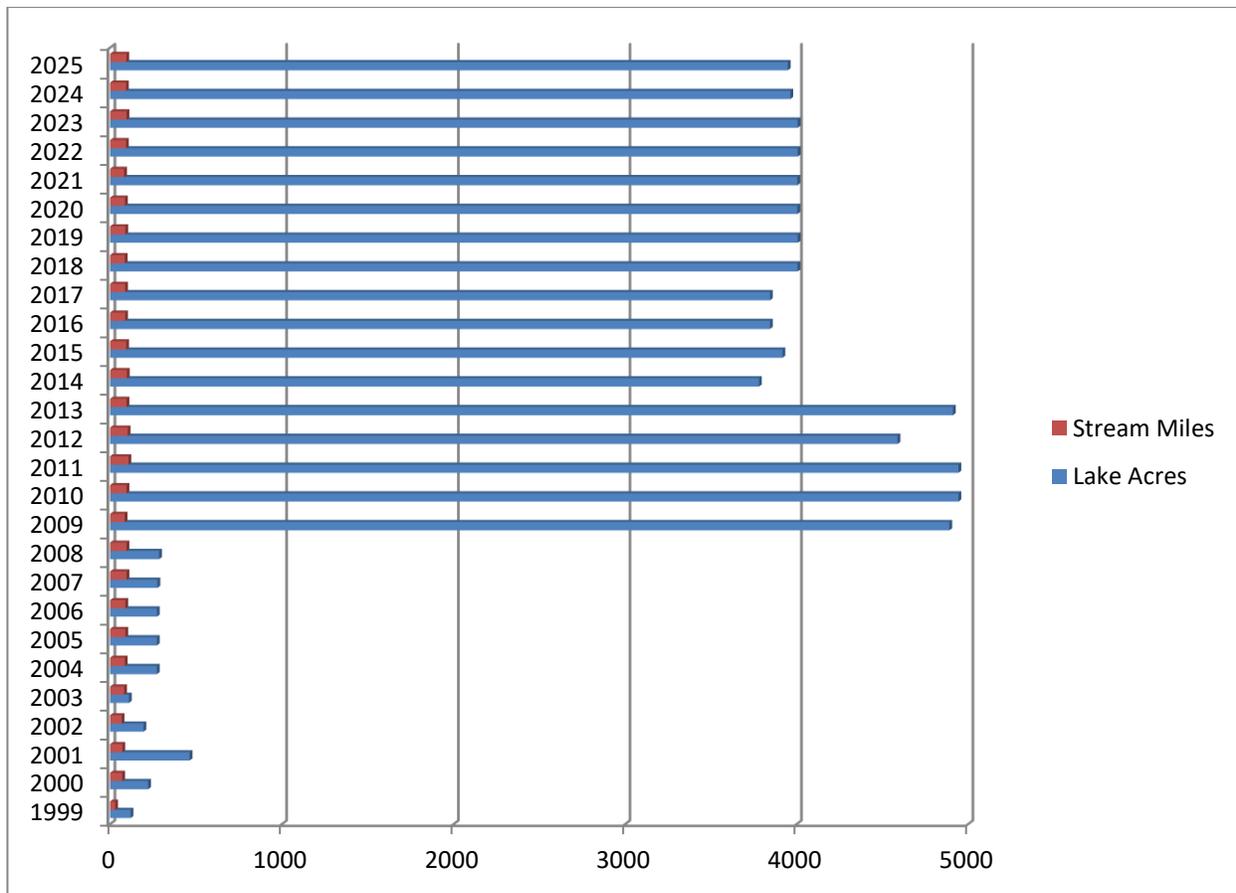


## *Walk-in Fishing Areas*



Walk-in Fishing Areas are similar to WIHAs in that anyone with a valid fishing license may enter the property to fish. Unless otherwise specified within Department publications, WIFAs are open year-round. WIFAs in Wyoming are not as prevalent as hunting areas simply because fewer water sources exist compared to hunting areas. Nevertheless, WIFAs provide valuable fishing access, particularly during the summer months. For 2025, a total of 3,949 lake acres and 95 stream miles were available for anglers, thanks to the 66 landowners enrolled in the WIFA program (Figure 3). This was a reduction of 15 lake acres from 2024 due to one area being removed and an increase of 2 stream miles due to one area being added.

**Figure 3. Walk-in Fishing Lake Acres and Stream Miles by Year**



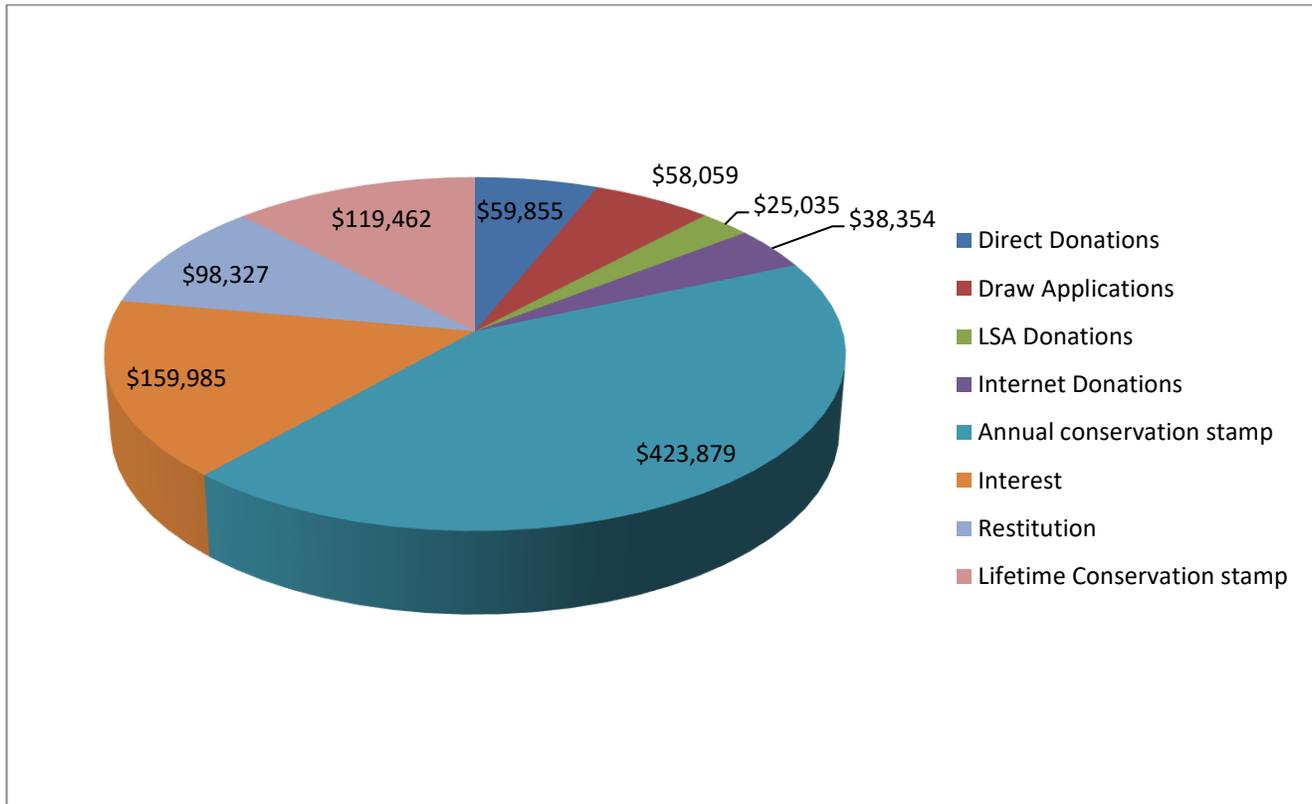
# Access Yes Funding

Access Yes is funded by Department and donated funds. Department funds, primarily from license sales, fund the daily operations including personnel. Revenue for the Access Yes account is generated from the sale of lifetime and annual conservation stamps, donations from organizations, individual hunters and anglers, state wildlife restitution amounts from court-imposed sentencing of wildlife violators, and interest, totaling \$982,956 in 2025 (Figure 4). With few exemptions, every hunter and angler must purchase either an annual conservation stamp or a lifetime conservation stamp. A portion of the sale of these stamps is deposited into the Access Yes account (\$3.00 per annual stamp and half of each lifetime stamp). These two sources generate the majority of the funds each year, and in Fiscal Year 2025, they generated \$543,341.

Easement payments made to landowners are funded through the Access Yes account. Authorized by state statute, funds collected through Access Yes may only be utilized for acquiring easements with landowners. In 2025, Access Yes paid \$1,323,734 to landowners for hunting and fishing access. Every dollar spent provided approximately 2 acres of access.



**Figure 4. Access Yes Funds Received Totaling \$982,956 in Fiscal Year 2025**





Donations decreased slightly from conservation groups and organizations in Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025) to \$59,855, a decrease of \$4,798. Access Yes donations vary year-to-year based on large donations from conservation groups. Thanks goes out to National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Muley Fanatic Foundation, Fremont Beverages, Quail Forever and Wyoming Fire Chief's Association for their significant 2025 Access Yes donations.

Hunters and anglers can also donate to Access Yes when applying for or purchasing licenses, in person at a license-selling agent or through the Department website. Sportspersons contributed \$121,448 in Fiscal Year 2025, a 3% decrease from 2024 donations. Overall, during Fiscal Year 2025, the Access Yes Program received \$982,956, a decrease of \$48,762 (-5%) from 2024 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Access Yes Funds Received Each Fiscal Year**

ACCESS- SUMMARY OF FUNDS RECEIVED									
Fiscal Year	Total Access fund Receipts	Direct Donations F06 6246 4R20	LSA collections F06 6245 4R20	License Draw Donations F06 6245 4R20	Internet Sale donations F06 6245 4R20	State Restitution F06 3301 4R20	Lifetime C-stamp F06 2633 4R20	Annual c-stamp** F06 2607 4R20	Interest* F06 4601 9990
FY2025	982,956	59,855	25,035	58,059	38,354	98,327	119,462	423,879	159,985
FY2024	1,031,718	64,653	27,876	57,563	39,491	124,389	115,288	462,360	140,099
FY2023	896,410	26,814	24,488	59,486	21,430	94,504	127,995	467,614	74,080
FY2022	945,689	22,197	15,043	91,617	14,095	112,866	157,304	502,478	30,089
FY2021	1,026,302	2,779	19,008	104,245	17,815	98,796	133,004	581,877	68,779
FY2020	1,170,839	63,795	26,590	133,542	20,073	193,476	93,863	591,696	47,804
FY2019	975,880	15,177	22,075	127,345	12,496	84,909	85,052	565,300	63,526
FY 2018	1,036,675	32,996	22,982	115,941	15,031	50,059	98,700	654,112	46,854
FY 2017	913,366	28,630	25,023	112,586	19,504	64,379	76,983	545,267	40,994
FY 2016	897,877	35,025	20,396	103,786	15,174	67,311	77,705	541,337	37,143
FY 2015	895,524	19,909	19,990	101,951	15,163	79,701	72,110	542,534	44,166
FY 2014	960,314	76,570	25,705	92,402	15,280	109,955	71,207	534,508	34,687
FY 2013	908,837	37,827	23,347	88,058	14,426	58,135	82,308	530,694	74,042
FY 2012	924,801	16,675	22,232	97,032	12,244	82,578	53,789	589,691	50,560
FY 2011	897,862	13,744	18,100	85,332	10,305	96,226	52,887	513,977	107,291
FY 2010	909,072	31,215	20,697	85,962	11,541	122,591	51,051	528,037	57,978
FY 2009	882,935	32,032	27,545	90,255		87,859	57,098	539,559	48,587
FY 2008	879,512	45,261	27,350	104,025		104,962	95,674	444,805	57,435
FY 2007	761,297	20,078	25,952	97,362		74,916	63,662	442,699	36,628
FY 2006	710,736	7,466	26,213	92,281		71,340	48,385	432,820	32,231
FY 2005	645,468	4,862	24,894	89,118		50,295	36,965	409,151	30,183
FY 2004	654,354	7,697	25,922	91,481		62,721	12,975	429,776	23,782
FY 2003	607,282	11,648	26,250	105,393				443,172	20,819
FY 2002	632,814	12,690	31,831	106,000				460,009	22,284
FY 2001	312,003	6,862	35,296	97,361				161,601	10,883
	<b>\$ 21,460,523</b>	<b>\$ 696,456</b>	<b>\$ 609,839</b>	<b>\$2,388,183</b>	<b>\$ 292,422</b>	<b>\$1,990,295</b>	<b>\$ 1,783,467</b>	<b>\$ 12,338,953</b>	<b>\$ 1,360,908</b>

## The National Elk Refuge



Access Yes has administered permission slips for elk hunting on the National Elk Refuge (NER) since 2008. Wild bison hunting access opportunity was added in 2014 and white-tailed deer opportunities were added in 2022. The permission slip application process is on the Department's Access Yes HMA web page. Hunters from across the country are able to apply and print out their permission slips regardless of their location.

The application period starts in July each year and continues through the end of the elk and wild bison hunting season. There are initial draws for permission slips in September, with additional weekly alternate permission slip drawings during the hunting season in October for elk hunters and November - December for wild bison and elk hunters. The application process is more complex than other HMAs throughout the state due to weekly drawings, but it allows hunters maximum opportunity to increase their chances of a successful hunt.

In 2025, wild bison permission slips were issued on a first-come, first-serve basis in January from the Jackson Regional Office and the NER office due to the uncertainty of a hunting closure on the NER. The NER allows hunting for wild bison through January or until the feeding of elk on the refuge begins, whichever comes first.

During the 2025 NER hunt, there were 42 permission slips issued for wild bison, 417 permission slips issued for elk and 41 permission slips issued for deer

## Additional Access Yes Programs and Services

Access Yes continues to adapt its programs to better serve landowners, hunters, anglers, and the Department. The ongoing Hunter/Landowner Assistance Program was created to help landowners increase the harvest of big game animals on their private property without requiring them to enroll in one of the existing Access Yes options (such as HMA or WIHA). Under this program, landowner contact information is posted on the Department's website, allowing hunters to contact landowners directly to arrange access. Landowners do not receive compensation from the Department, and all details regarding entry and use of the property are negotiated between the landowner and the hunter. Once a landowner reaches the desired level of harvest, their information can be removed from the website upon request. Landowners may be added or removed throughout the hunting seasons. This program has been highly successful in assisting landowners and expanding hunting access. Some landowners choose not to participate in later years because game numbers return to acceptable levels or because returning hunters are able to meet the necessary harvest objectives.

Recognizing landowners who provide access is an important part of maintaining strong relationships between sportspersons and landowners. Access Yes coordinators serve as facilitators for the Access Recognition Program (ARP), a cooperative effort between the Wyoming Board of Agriculture and the Commission that acknowledges landowners who allow access to, or through, their property for hunting and fishing. The state is divided into four quadrants, and Access Yes coordinators work with quadrant committees to select one winner from each region every year. These committees are composed of members of both the Board and the Commission. Each of the four winners is honored at the annual Wyoming Stock Growers Association winter meeting. Award recipients receive a recognition plaque and a \$2,000 monetary prize. The program is funded through Commissioner-donated licenses. The four recipients of the 2025 Access Recognition Program award were Gary and Judy Raymond (Ferris Mountain Ranch) of Rawlins; Jim and Cathy Atkinson (Atkinson Land and Livestock Ranch) of Garrett; James Pike of Casper; and DJ Healy (LU Ranch) of Cody.

For the fifth consecutive year, Access Yes administered permission slips allowing early entry into the Spence & Moriarty Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Inberg/Roy Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA). Early access is primarily used by sportspersons seeking shed antlers on these WHMAs. Using the Access Yes permission slip database, the Department issued 40 permission slips through a drawing to authorize early entry into the WMA and WHMA. Each successful applicant could bring up to two additional occupants in one vehicle into the human-presence closure area one day prior to the regularly scheduled opening. This early, controlled entry is intended to reduce wildlife-human conflicts that Department personnel have observed in recent years. The Access Yes program also administered the issuance of permissions slips for spring turkey hunting on Yellowtail WHMA.

In 2018, Access Yes coordinators initiated the Access Yes Patrol Enhancement effort to increase coordinator presence in various regions of the state during periods of high use. Because hunting season workloads vary



throughout the year and across regions, coordinators from areas experiencing slower seasons are able to assist those with heavier demands. These patrols have been very effective statewide, and landowners have expressed appreciation for the increased presence.

## **2025 Landowner Survey**

During 2025, Access Yes coordinators conducted a survey of landowners enrolled in the Walk-in Area and Hunter Management Area programs. Since 2005, participating landowners have been surveyed at five-year intervals to assess overall satisfaction with the Access Yes program and to provide valuable insight that helps guide future program needs and direction. Surveys were administered through both an online platform and hand-distributed questionnaires. All responses were collected, compiled, and analyzed to produce a comprehensive summary of the results.

Composite Responses from Hunter Management Area, Walk-in Fishing Area, Walk-in Hunting Area, and combined Walk-in Fishing and Hunting Area:

### **WGFD Presence on Enrolled Properties**

- Fishing Walk-in Areas: 63% of landowners reported being satisfied with WGFD's presence, while 29.6% were neutral and 7.4% were dissatisfied.
- Hunter Management Areas: 57.1% of respondents were satisfied, 32.1% were neutral, and 10.7% were dissatisfied.
- Hunting Walk-in Areas: 60.2% expressed satisfaction with WGFD's presence, 32.4% were neutral, and 7.4% were dissatisfied.

### **WGFD Signage Efforts**

- Fishing Walk-in Area signage received very high satisfaction, with 92.3% of landowners satisfied and 7.7% neutral.
- Hunter Management Area signage efforts resulted in 71.4% satisfaction, 25% neutrality, and 3.6% dissatisfaction.
- Hunting Walk-in Area signage showed strong approval, with 73.9% satisfied, 21.6% neutral, and 4.5% dissatisfaction.

### **Overall Program Satisfaction**

- Fishing Walk-in Area Program: 85.2% of respondents were satisfied, while 14.8% reported neutral satisfaction.
- Hunter Management Area Program: 78.6% satisfaction and 21.4% neutral responses.
- Hunting Walk-in Area Program: 79.3% satisfied, 17.1% neutral, and 3.6% dissatisfied.

### **User Behavior on Enrolled Properties**

- Angler behavior on Walk-in Areas was rated positively, with 81.5% satisfaction, 14.8% neutral, and 3.7% dissatisfaction.
- Hunter behavior on Walk-in Areas resulted in 67.6% satisfaction, 25.2% neutral responses, and 7.2% dissatisfaction.

- Hunter behavior on Hunter Management Areas showed lower satisfaction at 53.6%, with 35.7% neutral and 10.7% dissatisfied.

### **Landowner Incentives**

- Fishing Walk-in Area incentives received 77.8% satisfaction and 22.2% neutral responses.
- Hunter Management Area incentives resulted in 67.9% satisfaction, 17.9% neutrality, and 14.3% dissatisfaction.
- Hunting Walk-in Area incentives showed 70.3% satisfaction, 22.5% neutral responses, and 7.2% dissatisfaction.