

# Participant Stretch Routine and Fitness Plan

Last Updated: December 2021

## OVERVIEW

Working a season with MCC can be physically and mentally challenging. You often work long hours in harsh conditions doing physically challenging manual labor.

To help with this, MCC has designed and implemented a stretch routine. This is done at the beginning of each work day in the field. It has resulted in a large decrease in common injuries. The protocols are listed below. Please read through it carefully, as we do not want you doing these poses incorrectly. We will thoroughly go through this together at the beginning of the season as well. But getting started on it now will help in numerous ways. It can start to build some of the physical fitness that will be needed for your term of service; it can provide some structure to your day to day life; it can provide mental clarity and dedicated time each day to check in with yourself.

Additionally, to prepare yourself for the season we suggest that you begin to build your fitness before you arrive for your season. Coming into the season already working on fitness can help you be more prepared, more comfortable with the work, and also limit injuries that can be caused by over exertion.

Any fitness activity that you can do before the season will help, whether that is just getting out for a hike, heading to the gym, doing body weight exercises at home, or just going for more walks during the day. **The best way to prepare is simply putting some weight in your backpack and hiking/walking regularly.** If you are someone who needs a little more structure, we have found an exercise program that fits the type of work that we do. The program is called the ELK FIT Program and was originally created for backcountry hunters. The combination of hiking and manual labor that we perform is a very similar physical activity.

The program is a 12-week program that implements hiking and body weight exercises to prepare your body for the upcoming season. If you are less than 12 weeks away from the start of the program, that's okay! The first month or so of the season is more classroom based. You can also shorten each phase by a week or so if needed. You do not need any gym equipment other than a backpack that you can put weight in for hikes. This is not something that is necessary to work for MCC, but it is highly encouraged. The Exercise Program is included below.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to your Program Manager for help, clarification or guidance.

## Stretch Protocol:

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### Stretching Design and Intention:

The morning stretch routine MCC personnel follow has been developed by professionals who specialize in movement science. The sequence of movements was designed to warm up specific areas of the body that are most at risk for injury. Research supports that an appropriate, specific warm up prior to labor intensive work decreases the incidence of work related injuries and decreases the cost associated with lost work time. Injury prevention is our goal and after one year of implementing this stretching routine MCC reported a ~40% reduction in overall work related injuries compared to the previous year.

While the flow of this routine incorporates yoga poses, it is not intended to be a yoga practice nor does it follow a specific lineage. The routine was developed by professionals who specialize in movement science and the choice and sequencing of poses is intentional to warm up specific areas of the body prone to injury risk; the stretches we do were picked because they benefit the muscles we use. This time is set aside to efficiently warm up the body prior to the work day in order to help prevent work related injuries. If there are other stretches which individuals prefer to perform (*"I like this flow better than the one MCC asks us to do"*), there is ample time before or after the work day to perform additional stretches or a yoga practice outside of the established stretch circle. Modifications are provided for more difficult stretches but otherwise alterations to the routine are unnecessary.

### Dynamic Warm-Ups: Morning, Immediately prior to Dynamic Stretching, on "Partner Time"

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- All the Dynamic Warm-Ups should be completed within 5 minutes.
- Dynamic Warm-Ups do not need to be completed "fast". The slower they are completed, the better form used, the better the "wake up".
- Dynamic Warm-Ups must begin with jumping up and down, loosely, for 30 seconds.
- There are eight **required** dynamic warm-up moves. The eight dynamic warm-ups may be completed in any sequence, but you must complete them **all**, as they are designed to wake-up different areas of the body.
- Each exercise should be conducted for 30 seconds total, rotating between extremities as needed.

### Dynamic Stretching: Morning, Immediately after Dynamic Warm-Ups, on "Partner Time"

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Follow the flow exactly as written. Utilize position modifications provided for stretches that exceed your ability or cause discomfort to joints. If you find yourself struggling to properly obtain one of the stretches listed feel free to visit the following links for additional cues. Do your best to maintain neutral spine, engage the correct stabilizing muscles and focus on your breath during the stretches. Mindfulness is a key component to completing the stretches correctly.

- [Mountain](#)
- [Prayer Hands](#)
- [Forward Fold](#)
- [Plank](#)
- [Plank Modification: Dolphin Plank](#)
- [Up Dog](#)
- [Up Dog Modification: Sphinx](#)
- [Down Dog](#)
- [Modification: Dolphin](#)
- [Lunge](#)
- [Chair](#)







# Morning Stretch Cheat Sheet



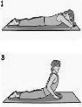

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## WARM-UPS: Five Minutes

*Accuracy over speed. Slower is more effective in waking up the body.*

- 1) **Begin: Jumping Up & Down, Loosen Body: 30 seconds**
- 2) **Dynamic Warm-Ups, 30 seconds for each move, switch extremities where necessary.**
  - Hackysacks
  - Butt Kicks (don't let back arch or ribs flare)
  - Leg Swings, Forward & Back (practice leading w/ heel, then leading with toe)
  - Leg Swings Side to Side
  - Hip Circles (switch up directions)
  - High Knees (don't let your back round)
  - Arm Crosses (don't let ribs flare too much)
  - Shoulders Swings (palms back)
- 3) **Stretching: 20 minutes , see order and poses below.**

	Stretch	Intention & Cues	Image
1	<b>Jump &amp; Land Naturally</b>	Indicate the beginning of focused stretching. Notice how you land and what needs to shift to attain Mountain Pose.	
2	<b>Mountain Pose Three Breaths/30 Seconds Total Completed in unison</b>	Initiate 3-4 breathe cycle to establish group timing. Distribute weight evenly on the ground, find neutral spine, engage pelvic floor, and make yourself taller. Palms should be open, facing forward. Complete a body scan to assess how you feel.	
3-7	<b>Upper Extremity Nerve Flossing Total: 3 circuits Completed in Unison</b>	Stretches 3-7 present a nerve flossing flow. There are five positions; move between each position using breath cycle. Be aware of neutral spine, correct bracing sequence, and breathing in all poses. Complete a total of three circuits.	
3	<b>Prayer Hands: exhale</b>	Should feel in wrists, forearms, hands, and shoulders. Keep shoulders relaxed. Elevate elbows and spread fingers to enhance stretch. Round your spine and bow down to your hands for one full breath.	
4	<b>Shoulder Stretch: inhale</b>	Should feel in your shoulders, not your back. Keep shoulders relaxed, away from the ears, elbows can slightly bend, keep chin parallel to the ground.	
5	<b>Median Nerve Glide: exhale</b>	<b>Nerve Floss:</b> Exhale as you press palms away from torso, straight elbows, finger tips up. Shoulders relaxed.	
6	<b>Radial Nerve Glide: continue exhale</b>	Tuck your thumb into your palm then roll each finger over it to make a fist, roll palms down.	
7	<b>Chest Stretch: inhale</b>	Should feel in your chest (pectorals), not your arms. Stay in neutral spine to feel this opening up your chest. You should not feel pain in your lower back. If you do, reestablish neutral spine.	

8	<b>Forward Fold</b> <b>Three Breaths/20 Seconds</b> <b>Total</b> <b>Completed in Unison</b>	Should feel in your hamstrings, not your back. Keep a neutral spine as you bend forward. Lead with the chest and hinge at the waist. You can modify by bending knees or placing your hands on your legs.	
9-11	Stretches 9-11 represent a “flow”. There are three positions, held for three breaths each, and the cycle is repeated three times. Go at your own speed while maintaining a three breath cycle that is comfortable for you. Assume child’s pose when you’re done and wait for everyone to finish the flow.		
9	<b>Plank/Dolphin Plank</b> <b>Three Breaths/20</b> <b>Seconds Total</b>	Should feel in your core, not your lower back. Focus on neutral spine, correct bracing sequence, and making yourself taller/longer. If you cannot maintain these principles and breathe easily, perform the move on your knees. Focus on form and breath	
10	<b>Up Dog/Sphinx</b> <b>Three Breaths/20</b> <b>Seconds Total</b>	This is a gentle backbend, using your arms for support. Keep arms aligned with shoulders. Move slowly to feel each vertebra versus hinging at one segment. Picture a head lamp on your chest that you are trying to shine out in front of you. Keep legs engaged, squeeze glutes, knees lifted off the ground from quad engagement.	
11	<b>Down Dog/Dolphin</b> <b>Three Breaths/30</b> <b>Seconds Total</b>	Should be felt in your hamstrings, calves, and shoulders. Shift weight backwards, leading with butt, and keep knees slightly bent to achieve	

		desired results. Goal is a straight back and a neutral spine. You may straighten your legs and drop your heels as your hamstrings lengthen.	
12	<b>Childs Pose / Yogi Squat</b>	Assume only after completing three cycles of Plank/Up Dog/Down Dog. Ok to have knees wide. Gently stretches spine back, hips, and quads.	
13	<b>Transition out of flow, into Lunges Completed in Unison</b>	Return to standing in the following order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Begin in Childs Pose</li> <li>✓ Keep hands on ground, rise to Down Dog</li> <li>✓ Step forward to Forward Fold</li> <li>✓ Stand straight into Mountain Pose</li> <li>✓ Move back into Down Dog</li> <li>✓ Lower into Plank, step forward into lunge</li> </ul>	 
14-1 5	<b>Simple Lunge &amp; Lunge Twist 3 Breaths in Simple lunge 3 Breaths in Lunge Twist Right Leg Lunge/Twist First Left Leg Lunge/Twist Second Completed in Unison</b>	Should feel in hips and upper torso, not in lower back. Keep pelvis level. Front knee should be over your foot. Both hands should be on ground prior to the twist, “inside” the feet. Switch forward foot to plank to transition sides. Maintain neutral spine and pelvic floor. Work to lengthen body, become “taller”.	 
16	<b>Transition out of flow into chair Completed in Unison</b>	Return to standing in the following order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keep hands on ground, rise to Down Dog</li> <li>✓ Step forward to Forward Fold</li> <li>✓ Stand straight into Mountain Pose</li> </ul>	 
17	<b>Chair Three Breaths/30 Seconds Total Completed in Unison</b>	Should feel in glutes, calves, and upper torso, not in lower back. Keep shoulders down and relaxed, may need to bend arms. Feet just wider than hips. Focus on neutral spine and pelvic floor. Arms and shins should be parallel.	
18	<b>Transition to completion Completed in Unison</b>	Conclude the stretch session in the following order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Complete Forward Fold to release back</li> </ul>	

		✓ Return to Mountain Pose for three breaths	
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### Suggested Fitness Program:

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The ELK FIT Program- Designed for hunting but applicable to the work we do. Please use google if you are unsure of what a specific movement is.

**FOR BEGINNERS:** Use body weight and resistance bands to complete exercises.

**FOR EXPERTS:** Add 25-45 lbs. in your pack with either a sandbag or weight plate.

### **PHASE 1 • 3 DAYS A WEEK 16 TOTAL MOVEMENTS**

Whether it's your first time out west or you're a veteran elk hunter, phase 1 will challenge your body, and increase your stamina.

### **PHASE 2 • 3 DAYS A WEEK 16 TOTAL MOVEMENTS**

Taking the same 45 minute, 3 days a week approach, you'll now be implementing "rest-pause" sets. A rest-pause set requires you to push to failure for 3 sets with a short period of time in-between, usually 30-60 seconds. You'll decrease in reps per set, but the stamina gains and lean muscle growth will be worth the effort. Remember, each day still starts with 20 minutes of cardio focusing one day on distance, the next on elevation, and of course HIIT cardio regimen. Remember to keep pushing, challenge yourself and never EVER quit.

## PHASE 3 • 3 DAYS A WEEK 16 TOTAL MOVEMENTS

We saved the best for last - Phase 3 is the final and the most challenging stage to the Program. Keeping the same staple exercises, we've used in the first 2 phases, we'll now be incorporating another form of HIIT training known as Tabata. Tabata is a high-interval training that will require both your strength and endurance. Each exercise will be broken down into 8 sets. Each set is performed for max reps in 20 seconds with 10 seconds of rest in-between. As soon as the rest period is over, you're right back into the next set.

### PHASE 1 – 3 days a week for 4 weeks

#### DAY 1 • LOWER BODY

Start Day 1 off with 20 minutes of cardio for distance. Go as far as you can!

	MOVEMENTS	SETS x REPS
#1	SQUATS	4 sets x 20 reps
#2	STEP UPS	4 sets x 20 reps [10 each leg]
#3	BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUAT	4 sets x 20 reps [10 each leg]
#4	LUNGES	4 sets x 20 reps [10 each leg]
#5	CALF RAISES	4 sets x 30 reps [each leg]
#6	TIC-TAC TOES [ABS]	4 sets x 20 reps [10 each leg]

#### DAY 2 • UPPER BODY

Start Day 2 off with 20 minutes for elevation. Get as high as you can!



	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>	<b>SETS x REPS</b>
#1	<b>BENT OVER ROWS</b>	4 sets x 20 reps
#2	<b>PUSH UPS</b>	4 sets x 20 reps
#3	<b>SHOULDER PRESS</b>	4 sets x 20 reps
#4	<b>TRICEP DIPS</b>	4 sets x 20 reps
#5	<b>GOOD MORNINGS</b>	4 sets x20 reps
#6	<b>WEIGHTED SIT UPS</b>	4 sets x 20 reps

### **DAY 3 • CORE**

Start Day 3 off with 20 minutes of HIIT for distance or elevation (1 minute normal, 1 minute high intensity).

	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>	<b>SETS x REPS</b>
#1	<b>PLANKS FRONT</b>	4 sets x 30 seconds holds
#2	<b>SIDE PLANKS [BOTH SIDES]</b>	4 sets x 30 seconds
#3	<b>LEG LIFT HOLD</b>	4 sets x 30 seconds
#4	<b>HILL CLIMBERS</b>	4 sets x 30 seconds

## **PHASE 2 – 3 days a week for 4 weeks**

### **DAY 1 • LOWER BODY**

Start Day 1 off with 20 minutes of cardio for distance. Go as far as you can!

	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>	<b>SETS x REPS</b>
#1	<b>SQUATS</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#2	<b>STEP UPS</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#3	<b>BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUAT</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#4	<b>LUNGES</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#5	<b>CALF RAISES</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#6	<b>TIC-TAC TOES [ABS]</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]

### **DAY 2 • UPPER BODY**

Start Day 2 off with 20 minutes for elevation. Get as high as you can!

	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>	<b>SETS x REPS</b>
#1	<b>BENT OVER ROWS</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#2	<b>PUSH UPS</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#3	<b>SHOULDER PRESS</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
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#1	<b>PLANKS FRONT</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
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#3	<b>LEG LIFT HOLD</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]
#4	<b>HILL CLIMBERS</b>	3 sets to failure [rest 30-60 seconds]

## **PHASE 3 – 3 days a week for 4 weeks**

### **DAY 1 • LOWER BODY**

Start Day 1 off with 20 minutes of cardio for distance. Go as far as you can!

	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>	<b>SETS x REPS</b>
#1	<b>SQUATS</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]
#2	<b>STEP UPS</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]
#3	<b>BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUAT</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]
#4	<b>LUNGES</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]
#5	<b>CALF RAISES</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]
#6	<b>TIC-TAC TOES [ABS]</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]

### **DAY 2 • UPPER BODY**

Start Day 2 off with 20 minutes for elevation. Get as high as you can!

	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>	<b>SETS x REPS</b>
#1	<b>BENT OVER ROWS</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]
#2	<b>PUSH UPS</b>	8 sets x 20 seconds [10 sec. rest between]
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Reach out if you need clarification or guidance with any of this.