

ELK MANAGEMENT PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

Although this document is called an Elk Management Plan, it is really the plan of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (hereafter called the Department) for managing the many and varied impacts of people upon wildlife and wildlife habitats. This is our third plan, and many changes in format have been made to clarify presentation. Room remains for even more changes, and we appreciate your comments regarding improvements for future plans.

Department personnel have a professional, as well as statutory, responsibility to be the chief advocates for wildlife in Idaho. Others may choose to sacrifice some wildlife values to achieve other goals, but the Department cannot make such decisions and must advise those who do of the tradeoffs they are making.

The basic reason for most management efforts is to ensure long-term annual returns from the wildlife resource to the human population. Most such management efforts benefit the wildlife populations. A gamut of "products", including direct consumption (harvest), recreational opportunity, nonconsumptive use, scientific value, social and cultural value, genetic value, etc., can accrue from any wildlife population. These varied products are not always compatible nor easily reduced to a common denominator (e.g., economic value) so decisions regarding their relative importance are often subjective, thus open to challenge. The Department believes the greatest return to society from the wildlife resource occurs when the maximum variety of products is provided and that maximizing a single product (e.g., harvest) is not necessarily desirable. We will encourage and promote nonconsumptive use of elk. We also recognize that the people of Idaho "own" the wildlife resource and are, therefore, the ones who ultimately decide which mix of products is most desirable.

Throughout this plan we have attempted to be reasonable, but aggressive, about what is possible within biological, economic, social and manpower constraints. If problems exist which we think are impossible to correct, we have discussed the consequences of adjusting to these intractable problems. If problems exist which could be corrected by more manpower or money being devoted to them, we have so recommended. If problems exist which can be solved by action of other agencies, we have pointed this out. If we can correct a problem, we have outlined our proposed course of action.

We have constantly reminded ourselves, and stress to you now, that all animals have the basic needs of food, water, shelter, space, security and social contact. No wildlife population can be sustained unless the components of habitat, the first four basic needs listed above, exist in suitable proximity to each other.

This management plan follows the same basic format as our "Policy Plan." Under each segment, we estimate the available resource (supply) and the recreation provided by that resource. Unfortunately we have few estimates of appreciative or other demands and their omission does not suggest that we consider such demands unimportant. Next we identify our

management goals and the issues which we foresee as affecting our ability to achieve those goals. Strategies are proposed to deal with these problems and our management priorities are noted. Finally, we spell out our specific recommendations for seasons allowing consumptive use of the resource.