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Elk surviving snowy winter

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Contributed photo

A string of elk move up a south-facing slope above the North Fork of the Clearwater River. The south-facing slopes are starting to open up following a long winter of deep snow. Idaho Fish and Game Department/Dave Cadwallader



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A group of about 20 elk hang out on the ice shelf along Kelly Creek in the North Fork of the Clearwater drainage. Idaho Fish and Game Department photo/Dave Cadwallader

By Eric Barker

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Elk along the North Fork of the Clearwater River seem to be faring well despite deep snow and a long winter.

Officials from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game took a quick look at wintering elk there during a three-hour helicopter flight Friday.

"The elk we were able to see appeared to be doing pretty well as far as health," said Dave Cadwallader, director of the Clearwater Region of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Cadwallader was joined on the flight by regional wildlife manager Jay Crenshaw and Fred Trevey, Idaho Fish and Game commissioner representing the Clearwater Region.

"I was very pleasantly surprised for the elk to be in as good a condition as they where," Trevey said.

The men saw modest groups of elk hanging out along the 250 Road and on the ice over Kelly and Cayuse creeks. The south-facing slopes in the drainage are starting to open up and snow in some places was less than a foot deep.

"We are starting to see indications winter is approaching an end," Cadwallader said.

But he said there was more than 3 feet of snow at Kelly Forks, where temperatures reached 50 degrees on Friday. The area likely saw fresh snow this week and the winter is believed to have led to winter kills in some areas.

"It has been a very long winter and we expect to see some impacts because of that." Cadwallader said.

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