



## COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.

C5

For the meeting of: January 23, 2018

Date: January 17, 2018

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Rex Bohn

Subject: Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Commission's letter to the California Fish and Wildlife Department regarding the State Wide Elk and Management Plan

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the Board of Supervisors authorize the Chair to sign the letter

SOURCE OF FUNDING: N/A

DISCUSSION: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is accepting comments regarding the update to the State Wide Elk and Management Plan. The Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Commission (F&GAC) has requested that the Board of Supervisor submit a letter regarding the update on behalf of their commission. The F&GAC voted unanimously on this issue. The letter is scheduled to be sent by January 29, 2018.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: N/A

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: Fish and Game Advisory Board

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS: Letter of Support

Prepared by Tracy Damico

Signature 

**REVIEW:**

Auditor \_\_\_\_\_ County Counsel \_\_\_\_\_ Personnel \_\_\_\_\_ Risk Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE OF ITEM:**

☒ Consent  
☐ Departmental  
☐ Public Hearing  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:**

Board Order No. \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting of: \_\_\_\_\_

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**  
Upon motion of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded by Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes  
Nays  
Abstain  
Absent

**SEE ACTION SUMMARY**

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
**COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

825 5TH STREET, ROOM 111  
EUREKA, CALIFORNIA 95501 PHONE: (707) 476-2390

January 17, 2018

Dear Mr. Joe Hobbs: [ElkManagementPlan@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:ElkManagementPlan@wildlife.ca.gov)

We recently received the following information from the Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission concerning the Elk Herds in Humboldt County.

Commissioner Wes Moore, member and past president of the Humboldt Del Norte Cattlemen's Association reported hearing numerous reports from other cattlemen about the damage the Elk Herds are doing to the cattle industry by destroying fencing and diminishing feed for their cattle by Elk grazing.

As you may be aware, the environmental document regarding Elk Control is up for consideration to be updated. This update is very important so that more elk tags can be made available to the public and/or private landowners.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife will soon be netting cow elk on private land in order to fit them with tracking collars. This will allow them to collect very important data. Negotiations are ongoing.

Commissioner Wesley Moore is also a rancher in the Bridgeville area and a board member of the non-profit group, Yager/Van Duzen Environmental Stewards (YES) dedicated to preserving the heritage of landowners. Part of preserving this heritage is promoting the conservation of wildlife, while maintaining livestock access to grazing areas. YES is a collaborative of ranching landowners and a few of them are supporting at minimum 350 head of elk. In 2007, seven elk were seen on the Cottrell Ranch and approximately three had Fish and Wildlife tags in their ears. This was the first sighting of elk on the property. Currently, the population has grown to groups of 150 to 200 on the ranch at one time. The elk travel back and forth between neighboring ranches and in the past had seemed to leave during the winter. Now, groups are seen year round. As you may not be aware, the exponential growth of elk populations on private lands has threatened landowners' ability to graze livestock, maintain their ranches, and promote a healthy eco-system. The unsustainable rate of growth of elk populations will continue to deplete grazing areas unless steps are taken to keep the population in check. Another issue is the considerable damage they cause to fences and springs. This is also creating a financial hardship for the private landowners.

Commissioner Mike Zamboni reported:

Nine years ago I saw the first herd of elk in the Liscomb Hill area near Blue Lake CA. There were about 11 animals in the herd. Three years later I saw about 34 animals and since then the herd has continued to explode producing 26 calves last season for a total of approximately 90 animals. Those 90 animals are overgrazing the hillsides and destroying everything in their path on about a 3 week interval. See attached pictures.

I grew up on Liscomb hill and have hunted and fished nearly every inch of the Hill as well as Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. From my observations and those of many others, Elk herds have increased dramatically throughout the Northwestern Zone, scattered through most of Del Norte and Humboldt counties, especially in the last 5 years. In fact the Garberville/Alderpoint area is the only area in the county I haven't seen or heard of elk or elk sign. I would estimate the population in the Northwestern zone in the neighborhood of 5000 to 6000 animals – and those numbers have been confirmed to me by 2 non-DFW biologists.

In order to obtain a 7.5 percent increase in elk populations and maximize hunter opportunity, Wyoming is allowing a 12.7% annual harvest rate in many areas on its elk herd (20% antlerless tags and 9.1% bull tags). Were these numbers converted to my population estimate of 5000 animals, it would allow for over 600 tags being issued for the Northwestern Zone. Personally, I feel that's too many tags to be issued initially for our un-hunted herd. However, based on your extremely conservative population estimate of 1600 animals, it would allow for approximately 200 tags which sounds about right.

Back to the Liscomb Hill herd which I'm the most affected by. Our family has traditionally raised beef and or sheep, mostly for subsistence or to offset property taxes. Many of the neighbors did as well. Now there is not a single cow being raised below the Ford Ranch because of the exploding elk herd. Landowners now just leave their gates open and leave their fences broken down because it's impossible to keep up with the elk damage. There're not 100 continuous yards of cattle fencing on our property that isn't damaged to the point it would no longer contain cattle. Anti-elk fencing is far too expensive to install and maintain, and if all land owners were to install anti-elk fencing, it would create a permanent barrier throughout wildlife corridors that would either trap game in or out. Probably not something even the DFW wants. We have tried electric fence – it doesn't work. The herd just stampedes through it.

Besides the damage to fences, they tear established 25 foot apple trees to pieces, rub the paint and wood off the house, dent the sides of cars, eat the potted plants off the front deck and have trampled the 200 lb. Great Pyrenees guard dog to the point she was dragging her back end and now lays on the deck in fear when the herd is in the vicinity.

The only plausible solutions I can see to offsetting damage from this herd is relocating 75 animals and postponing the problem for a few years; the department purchasing and donating 2 beef per affected landowner; or issuing at least 2 antlerless "subsistence tags" to each landowner who can show significant elk damage to their property that makes it impossible to raise the beef they once subsisted on. The latter seems the most feasible and it would seriously reduce the frustration of dealing with the never ending elk problems.

On behalf of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors I would like to thank you for taking the time to consider the recommendations of our Fish and Game Commission.

  
Ryan Sundberg, Chair

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

Cc: Chuck Bonham: [Director@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Director@wildlife.ca.gov)



Attached: Photos of Elk Damage









