



Siskiyou County Fish and Game Commission

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Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors
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6/14/22

Siskiyou County Supervisors,

The Siskiyou County Fish and Game Commission (SCFG Commission) is recommending the Board of Supervisors work with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to take the following actions in regards to the Siskiyou Elk Management Unit (EMU) located in central Siskiyou County.

- 1) Increase the number of elk tags available to hunters in the Siskiyou EMU from 26 bull and 26 antlerless elk to 30 bull and 30 antlerless elk tags beginning in the 2023 season.
- 2) Immediately begin the process to supplement the current “Final Environmental Document regarding Elk Hunting” (2010) to include and make available additional management techniques that can be used to reduce the incidents of human-elk conflicts on private property, enhance opportunities for the public to use and enjoy elk (e.g. hunting and wildlife viewing), and improve elk habitat and population levels by the 2024 season.
- 3) Schedule a meeting between the County and Department to review the Elk Conservation and Management Plan Goals, Objectives, Action items (and timelines) to determine the needed staffing levels necessary to complete these activities within the timelines established by the Department, or timeline for implementation of the Plan with the current staffing levels.

Wildlife plays an important role in the lifestyle, quality of life and economics of Siskiyou County. The Siskiyou County Fish and Game (SCFG) Commission has been working with local Department staff to identify ways to implement the management goals, objectives and actions identified in the “Elk Conservation and Management Plan, Siskiyou Roosevelt Elk Management Unit” (Siskiyou EMU). Our efforts began in response to a reported growing elk population within the Siskiyou EMU, the availability of new data collected by the Department on elk populations, and depredation concerns expressed by landowners within the EMU.

At the request of the SCFG Commission, the Department made a presentation on July 20, 2021 sharing information on the current management situation within the Siskiyou EMU, the most recent information collected on elk populations within the EMU. Since that presentation the Department and Commission have worked together to identify possible partnerships opportunities, projects, and management actions.

On May 10, 2022 the SCFG Commission hosted a public “Workshop”, featuring a presentation by the Department on ongoing elk studies being conducted in the EMU and the best information available on elk populations within the Siskiyou EMU. The meeting was attended by interested public members, Department staff and SCFG Commissioners. A robust question and answer discussion followed the presentation identifying a number of issues that need to be addressed including elk depredation of private lands, hunting opportunities, the available management opportunities allowed within the current Elk Management Plan / Environmental Document, elk population data collected and to be collected (timeline and detail), vehicle collisions with elk, public safety, and elk predation. Since that time the SCFG Commission and Department have both continued to collect public input on possible management actions going forward in the Siskiyou EMU.

During our conversations with the Department about possible management options within the Siskiyou EMU we consulted the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (2018) and the Final Environmental Document regarding Elk Hunting (2010) which provided an assessment of the possible impacts of hunting related management actions. The Elk Management Plan outlines 4 main Goals for the Siskiyou EMU: 1) Improve elk habitat conditions and population levels; 2) Establish positive working relationships with local tribes; 3) Enhance opportunities for the public to use and enjoy elk (e.g. hunting and wildlife viewing); and 4) Alleviate human-elk conflicts and elk depredation complaints. There are also 13 Objectives and 36 Action Items identified within those Goals, and timelines for completing those actions.

Within the Environmental Document regarding Elk Hunting for the Siskiyou EMU, the proposed action recommended that from 0-30 bulls and 0-30 antlerless could be harvested with a rifle each year, during a season that runs from the Wednesday preceding the first Saturday in September and continue for 12 consecutive days. Under these proposed actions the Environmental Document concluded that the impacts of hunting elk would not have a “significant impact” to the elk gene pool; social structure; habitat; recreational opportunity; other wildlife species; and the economics or public safety within the Siskiyou EMU. The current tag allocation for the EMU is for 26 bull tags (20 general public tags / 4 “555 program” tags / and 2 SHARE program tags and 26 antlerless tags divided out in the same manner as the bull tags.

In an attempt to move toward implementation of the Elk Management Plan the SCFG Commission recommends that the Department increase the number of elk tags offered in the Siskiyou EMU from the current 26 bull and 26 antlerless tags to 30 bull and 30 antlerless tags in the 2023 elk hunting season, for the 12-day season described. We make this recommendation in response to Objective 3.1 and 4.1 of the Elk Management Plan and supported by the assessment conducted in the 2010 Environmental Document, the most recent biologic information available (female survival rates, pregnancy rates, calf survival rates, and increasing minimum population surveys), and the public input received over the last year. This recommendation can be implemented in the short term by the Department under the existing Environmental Document and with a minimum of effort.

Increasing the current number of elk tags offered from 26 bulls and 26 antlerless to 30 bulls and 30 antlerless elk will not address many of the issues identified during our Workshop or in conversations with landowners and the public. It will however begin to address some of the management concerns and objectives in the Elk Management Plan. To address other important issues identified in the EMU and as a result of public input a range of management actions and techniques must be considered and implemented to address critical issues that both provide for the public benefit and support private landowners who provide elk habitat. Use of the Private Land Management (PLM) program, the “555” program, the SHARE program, the number of tags made available to the hunting public, using a variety of hunting season dates, methods of take, etc. As these management techniques are not currently addressed in the current Environmental Document we recommend that the Department start

immediately to supplement the current Environmental Document to include the opportunity to use these techniques in implementation of the Elk Plan. We also hope that the modification to the Environmental Document can be written in a manner that gives local Department staff flexibility to adapt to changing situations without the need for excessive documentation. Without the ability to supplement the Environmental Document critical issues will not be addressed.

In reviewing the Elk Management Plan and working with the local Department representatives, it has become clear that the Objectives, Goals and Action items listed in the Elk Management Plan for the Siskiyou, Marble Mountain and Northeastern Elk Management Units cannot be implemented within the timelines established by the Department. We would urge the Department to meet with the County to review the necessary staffing levels and resources that would be necessary to implement the actions and timelines described by in the Elk Management Plan and work with all parties to implement the Plan in a timely manner. The SCFG Commission would offer to work with the Department to identify actions and methods that might allow implementation of the Plan to move forward as rapidly as possible.

Lastly, a safety concern was expressed that might be able to be addressed immediately. Elk / vehicle collisions on highway 97 appear to be increasing. The SCFG Commission would be willing to work with the Department and Cal Trans to identify any options (signage, overpass, etc.) that might serve to reduce traffic collisions with elk.

We look forward to working with the Board of Supervisors and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to implement the Elk Management Plan within Siskiyou County.

/s/ K. Mike Ford

K. Mike Ford
Chair, Siskiyou County Fish and Game Commission

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