



STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE
Game Division

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#10

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 3, 2017

To: Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners, County Advisory Boards to Manage Wildlife, and Interested Publics

From: Brian Wakeling, Game Division Administrator

Title: Commission Policy 26, Re-establishing, Introducing, Transplanting and Managing Pioneering Rocky Mountain Elk – First Reading

Description: The Commission will conduct a first reading of Commission Policy 26, Re-establishing, Introducing, Transplanting and Managing Pioneering Rocky Mountain Elk, and may take action to revise the policy. The Commission may advance the policy to a second reading for possible adoption at a future meeting.

Summary:

The Department has updated Commission Policy 26.

The Administrative Procedures, Regulations, and Policy (APRP) Committee reviewed the revisions to Commission Policy 26 on September 22, 2017. The Committee voted to approve the revisions to Commission Policy 26 as presented by the Department.

Recommendation:

The Department and APRP Committee recommend that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION POLICY 26 AS PRESENTED AND MOVE IT TO A SECOND READING AT THE JANUARY COMMISSION MEETING.**

**STATE OF NEVADA
BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS**

Commission Policy 26

Number: P-26

Title: ~~Re-establishing, Introducing,
Transplanting and Managing~~
~~Pioneering~~ Rocky Mountain Elk
Populations in Nevada

Reference: NRS 501.181

Effective Date: December 9, 1988

Amended Date: December 2, 1995 and
January 26, 2018

PURPOSE

The Nevada ~~Division~~ Department of Wildlife will ~~identify and work toward re-establishment and introduction of~~ manage elk ~~in formerly occupied ranges and in new ranges where establishing elk populations is desirable for the greater~~ for the benefit of the public ~~benefit by maintaining healthy elk herds and habitats on which they depend. Management decisions will consider specific wildlife health concerns like chronic wasting disease.~~ Pioneering elk populations will be ~~identified and~~ managed in ~~conformance with~~ consideration of established land use plans, ~~after~~ public review, and concurrence by the Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

BACKGROUND

Historical records document ~~the occurrence of that~~ elk ~~in~~ are a wildlife species native to Nevada. These elk were not numerous and appear to have become ~~extinct~~ extirpated coincidentally ~~to~~ with the settling of the State. Elk ~~from Yellowstone National Park~~ were first reintroduced into ~~the Schell Creek Mountains of White Pine County and the Spring Range of Clark County in~~ Nevada during the early 1930's by Nevada sportsmen. ~~The State of Utah released elk at Pilot Peak on the Nevada-Utah border in 1944 and augmented that release in 1979. The Nevada Division of Wildlife released elk in the Monitor Range in Nye County in 1979. An augmentary elk release was made in the Spring Mountains of Clark County during the winter of 1984. The Goshute Indians released elk on their reservation in eastern White Pine County in 1987. An augmentation release was accomplished in the south Egan Range in the spring of 1988. Elk have been released in the Jarbidge and Bruneau areas.~~

~~The status of these released elk populations vary widely. Since 1932, six hundred twenty elk have been released at eight sites in Nevada. The statewide population is estimated to be about 3,300 in 1995. The success of elk populations varies widely, but is best in White Pine where most of the elk occurring in Nevada now reside. Populations are growing well in Elko County. The Schell Creek and Monitor populations, following an initial rapid growth phase, have grown relatively slowly and steadily with occasional dispersing animals attempting to voluntarily pioneer nearby mountain ranges. Elk have established in most ranges in White Pine in recent years. A permanent population has established in the north Monitor Range. The Utah introduced Pilot Mountain elk have pioneered westward and established permanent populations in new areas in the vicinity of Wells. Similarly elk have~~

~~become permanent residents in the Wilson Creek Range of Lincoln County, although their origin is not clear. The Spring Mountain elk have wandered widely including into California, but have been resident only at the target release area. The Goshute Reservation release is too new to determine its status.~~

Since the 1930's, ~~numerous sightings of~~ wandering elk have been ~~reported~~ sighted throughout Nevada. ~~Recent e~~Elk population growth in adjoining states ~~appears to have~~ contributed to ~~an increase in such~~ elk sightings in the State Nevada, and population growth and expansion from within Nevada also contribute to ~~during the past few years. Evidence now exists indicating that these dispersing elk have~~ established ~~permanent~~ populations in several ~~non-target~~ areas where releases have not occurred.

Elk are ~~recognized as~~ highly adaptable ungulates which ~~could~~ can voluntarily pioneer or colonize ~~many~~ available habitats in Nevada. The potential for elk ~~pioneering to expand into new habitats could increase if~~ increases when established populations ~~slowly continue to expand and new releases are made.~~ Population expansion ~~This eventuality~~ should be anticipated ~~through policy to insure~~ and appropriate ~~environmental~~ planning should be undertaken when new populations pioneer new habitat. ~~and t~~ That planning should both include consideration of public and private interests ~~are adequately considered before decisions are made.~~

~~Difficult and thorough planning for elk reintroductions in the Jarbidge and Bruneau areas were completed recently. New planning for elk is underway in Elko, White Pine and Lincoln counties in cooperation with the appropriate land management agencies and affected parties. The 1995 Nevada State Legislature requested that the Nevada Division of Wildlife develop a comprehensive statewide elk management plan. An elk depredation hunt intended to remove elk is being conducted in the East Humboldt and Ruby Mountains of Elko County.~~

DEFINITIONS

1. Pioneering: The act of wildlife species colonizing new habitat voluntarily, whether planned or not by the appropriate resource managers.
2. Established Elk Populations: All elk populations ~~presently occupying management units 072, 074, 076, 077, 079, 081, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 221, 222, 162, and 262 as defined in NAC 504.210 as amended April 18, 1990 and~~ that occupy habitats incorporated within or managed in accordance with elk subplans ~~the Goshute Indian Reservation~~ are considered established populations for the purposes of this policy.
3. All other appropriate definitions are contained in Commission Policy ~~Number 22, as amended December 2, 1995,~~ "Introduction, Transplants, and Exportation of Wildlife."

POLICY

This policy is established to guide the ~~Division~~ Department and inform the land management agencies and the public on the ~~re-establishment and introduction~~ management of elk, ~~and the management~~ and of pioneering populations. ~~To set forth a policy for guiding the Division in its work to establish and manage elk in Nevada.~~

1. The ~~Division~~Department will conform to existing Commission Policies and ~~the Policy Plan in planning future elk releases. When completed,~~ the Nevada State Elk Species Management Plan ~~shall guide the Division also.~~

2. The ~~Division~~Department will ~~observe all~~ comply with pertinent Nevada State laws and Federal regulations concerning importation and release of wildlife, including elk.

3. The ~~Division~~Department will include all reasonably anticipated potential elk pioneering sites located immediately adjacent to planned elk releases in future ~~environmental~~ planning processes. The public and private industry recommendations for these potential pioneering sites will be considered.

4. The ~~Division~~Department will monitor potential habitat for pioneering elk populations.

5. If, in the best professional judgement of the ~~Division~~Department, an elk population successfully colonizes previously unoccupied habitat, the ~~Division~~Department will apprise the Commission and recommend an appropriate course of action.

6. Actions recommended may include:

a. Approval of the colonization with acceptance from the land management agencies and public being sought by the ~~Division~~Department.

b. Disapproval with elimination of the pioneering elk population being initiated through actions deemed appropriate by the ~~Division~~Department and Commission.

7. The Commission will retain ultimate authority on the course of action to be taken following identification of successful elk colonization.

This policy shall remain in effect until amended, repealed, or superseded by the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS IN REGULAR SESSION,
~~DECEMBER 2, 1995~~ JANUARY 26, 2018.

~~Mahlon Brown~~Grant Wallace, Chairman
Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners