

**STATE OF NEVADA
BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS**

Commission Policy Number 26

Amendment No. 1

Number: P-26

**Title: Re-establishing, Introducing,
Transplanting and Managing
Pioneering Rocky Mountain Elk**

Reference: NRS 501.181

Effective Date: December 9, 1988

Amended Date: December 2, 1995

PURPOSE

The Nevada Division of Wildlife will identify and work toward re-establishment and introduction of elk in formerly occupied ranges and in new ranges where establishing elk populations is desirable for the greater public benefit. Pioneering elk populations will be identified and managed in conformance with established land use plans after public review and concurrence by the Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

BACKGROUND

Historic records document the occurrence of elk in Nevada. These elk were not numerous and appear to have become extinct coincidentally to the settling of the State. Elk from Yellowstone National Park were reintroduced into the Schell Creek Mountains of White Pine County and the Spring Range of Clark County in 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 varies 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 throughout Nevada. Recent elk population growth in adjoining states appears to have contributed to an increase in such sightings in the State during the past few years. Evidence now exists indicating that these dispersing elk have established permanent populations in several non-target areas.

Elk are recognized as highly adaptable ungulates which could voluntarily pioneer or colonize many available habitats in Nevada. The potential for elk pioneering could increase if established populations slowly continue to expand and new releases are made. This eventuality should be anticipated through policy to insure appropriate environmental planning and that both 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 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 and inform the land management agencies and the public on the re-establishment and introduction of elk, and the management 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 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 will observe all pertinent Nevada State laws and Federal regulations concerning importation and release of wildlife, including elk.
3. The Division 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 will monitor potential habitat for pioneering elk populations.
5. If, in the best professional judgement of the Division, an elk population successfully colonizes previously unoccupied habitat, the Division 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 agencies and public being sought by the Division.
 - b. Disapproval with elimination of the pioneering elk population being initiated through actions deemed appropriate by the Division 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 Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS IN REGULAR SESSION,
DECEMBER 2, 1995.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mahlon Brown', written over a horizontal line.

Mahlon Brown, Chairman
Board of Wildlife Commissioners