WADE WEST INCENTIVE
TAGS 2016

NDOW - REPORTING BIOLGIST
SCOTT ROBERTS
As you are all aware, the difficulty of this program is that a large portion of it is subjective. It is not based on a concrete number like the deer and antelope program, it depends on monitoring year round use on all private holdings of a landowner.
An issue that makes the implementation of this program difficult is that Mr. West owns over 40 parcels, of which many are small and quite spread out. It is important to note that because a majority of the parcels are small they do not provide much if any bedding habitat. Due to time constraints and other responsibilities we have to make assumptions on elk use by looking at tracks, pellet piles, and bedding areas.
2015 HABITAT

• The biggest draw to Mr. West’s private property is the fact that many of the parcels contain water sources.
• There are numerous other water sources throughout this unit group as well as numerous guzzlers that have been built in the more arid sites.
• The summer of 2015 was marked with above average precipitation that led to a significant increase in water availability. The monsoonal moisture also led to excellent grass and forb growth that kept the uplands green well into the fall.
• These conditions led to elk being more spread out and less dependent on private land.
HUMAN PRESENCE

• Another issue that leads to decreased use on Mr. West’s holdings is that almost every parcel has a road on it or near it. Big game seasons in the area run from August 1st – November 30th, and lead to increases in traffic, camping spots, and hunting pressure. These factors inhibit elk from staying for long periods of time at these private waters.
2015 HUNTING SEASON

- Many of Mr. West’s parcels are part of, or are near popular hunting/camping spots.
- Pronghorn Seasons run from August 1-October 4 in this area.
- Deer Seasons run from August 8-November 30 in this area.
- Elk Seasons run from August 1-November 20 in this area.
## ELK HARVEST 2010-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Antlered</th>
<th>Antlerless</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cumulative</strong></td>
<td><strong>176</strong></td>
<td><strong>294</strong></td>
<td><strong>470</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is included to show that there has been a large increase in the pressure that these elk have been subjected to.
2015 SURVEY EFFORT

- There were 11 man days dedicated to surveying Mr. West’s private holdings, and numerous other days spent in the unit group.
- There were an additional day spent by myself and Brian meeting with Mr. West in an effort to come up with a more agreeable monitoring program. The use of trail cameras was brought up and we offered to place them at the parcels of Mr. West’s choice. Mr. West declined to take us up on that offer.
- There were 8.9 hours of helicopter time dedicated to surveying elk in February, 2015
- There were 9.4 hours of helicopter time dedicated to surveying deer in March, 2015
- There were 12.7 hours of helicopter time dedicated to surveying deer in November, 2015
SURVEY FINDINGS

• With few exceptions, the properties that were surveyed throughout the year had very little to moderate elk use.
• With the assumptions associated with this program I think that we all err on the side of caution and give the landowner the benefit of the doubt.
• With this in mind Mr. West was credited with 275 elk for 3-4 hours a day throughout the summer and early fall even though it is atypical for elk to spend that much time at a waterhole daily.
PAST PROJECTS

• I just want to take a moment to give a brief overview of some of the actions that the department has taken in recent years to expand our knowledge of the elk in this unit group.
2011 COLLARED ELK

- **Objectives:** This project was initiated in an attempt to quantify and monitor elk use on private land in the Cherry Creek Range. A secondary objective of this collaring project is to monitor seasonal elk movements between the Cherry Creek Range, the Butte Range, the Medicine Range, the Maverick Springs Range, the North Egan Range, and potentially Spruce Mountain.

- **Project Details:** On January 23, 2011, 3 store-on-board GPS collars, 1 satellite collar, and 2 standard VHF collars were deployed onto adult cow elk in units 121 and 104. The store-on-board GPS collars were slated to come off in approximately 300 days, which corresponded to late November of 2011 and the satellite collar was due to fall off in August of 2012. I’ll concentrate on the GPS collars because they were taking a point every 2.5 hours.
VHF 160.942 - Ear Tag #6, Store On Board GPS, Cow was collared on the north end of Palomino Ridge out of a group of 8 cows. During the March follow up flight this cow was found in the same general area as where she was collared. During the July and August flights this cow was located in the upper elevations of Cottonwood Creek on the east side of the Cherry Creeks.
VHF 160.274 - Ear Tag #14, Store On Board GPS, Cow was collared on the west side of Long Valley at the toe slope of the Maverick Springs Range out of a group of 3 elk (she had a calf with her). During the July and August flights this cow was located near Carlson Canyon, on the west side of the Cherry Creeks. During the December flight it was determined that this collar dropped off on the ridge north of Carlson Canyon.
• VHF **160.956** - Ear Tag #9, Store On Board GPS, Cow was collared 2.19 miles due east of Maverick Spring in the Maverick Springs Range out of a group of 12 elk. Collar 160.956 stayed on the eastern slope of the Maverick Springs Range for the spring. During the July and August flights this cow was located near Carlson Canyon, on the west side of the Cherry Creeks. During the December flight it was determined that this collar had fallen off in the burn southeast of White Rock Spring in the North Buttes.
2011 COLLARING PROJECT FINDINGS

As illustrated by these maps the elk use on his properties was quite limited. The collared elk spent large portions of the year outside of Unit 121 and never stayed in one place for too long.
2012 COLLARING PROJECT

• In February of 2012, 4 cow elk were radio collared on Palomino Ridge in Unit 121 and 2 cow elk were collared at the base of Spruce Mountain in Unit 105.

• The intent of this project was to further our understanding of winter habitat utilization between these 2 herds. A secondary benefit of the project was that it would assist us in documenting elk use on Mr. West’s northern parcels between February, 2012- May, 2014
2012 COLLARING PROJECT FINDINGS

- The map in front of you shows the very limited amount of use by the collared elk on Mr. West’s properties that are shown in red.
- While the utility of this information is limited as it pertains to these properties, it does clearly illustrate that a large portion of the Unit 121 elk herd does not utilize Mr. West’s holdings with any frequency.
In January, 2016 five cow elk were collared at the south end of the Cherry Creek Range. The primary objective of this project is to document elk use on Mr. West’s southern parcels. The data from these collars is not applicable to the tags in question, but they will help fill in some information gaps in the future.
• It is important to note that this is a cooperative program between the department and the landowner, with the landowner providing the agency field notes as to observed elk numbers and elk use.
• This was the third year in a row that I did not receive any phone calls pertaining to elk use.
• I did request his use of logs in 2 different emails in February but did not receive any response.