

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Why are there so many elk in the Upper Snoqualmie Valley?

Answer: Multiple factors:

1. **Loss of habitat** due to increasing human development and land use in traditional elk territories including Mt. Baker/Snoqualmie National Forests & Seattle and Tacoma Watersheds.
2. **Opportunism.** The valley floor entices elk.
 - Provides lush grasses and forbs.
 - Ideal riparian habitat along rivers.
 - Safety. Sanctuaries abound. No hunting areas.
 - Meadowbrook Farm
 - Three Forks Natural Area
 - Mountain Meadows Farm
 - Hobby farms within city limits
3. **Low mortality.** Very **low predation** and natural disease.
4. **Short hunting seasons** and conservative cow elk quotas.



Upper Snoqualmie Valley
Elk Management Group

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Question: What can we do about elk overpopulation in the valley?

Answer: Multiple Options:

1. **Improve alternative habitat** outside the valley floor.
e.g. EMG's CCC Flats habitat improvement project is expected to draw elk to forage outside the valley floor.
2. **Limit or reduce sanctuaries** for elk on the valley floor.
3. **Fence sensitive properties** to minimize elk damage.
4. **Increase elk (either sex) hunting quotas.**
5. Encourage private and commercial landowners to allow hunting on their properties.
6. Trap elk and transport away. Expensive. Not feasible.



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Question: Who is responsible for managing the numbers of elk in the valley and how do they do it?

Answer: The **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)** has statutory responsibility. Cities and many stakeholders have advisory duties.

Safety concerns and commercial and private property damage often drive the decision-making process.

- Vehicle/elk collisions along SR 202 and 203, and Interstate 90 are of great concern. They cause personal injury and significant property damage.
- Commercial property damage to golf courses, nurseries, and commercial crop entities (Christmas trees and blueberries) can be substantial and may be compensated by WDFW.

WDFW controls animal populations primarily by regulating hunting activity. Over the past two years WDFW has increased the number of cow elk permits from 42 to 52 per year to stabilize herd growth. Hunter success is usually in the 40 to 50 per cent range for special hunts. These numbers and the elk management process is continuously reviewed and changed as necessary.



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Question: How many elk do we have in the Upper Snoqualmie Valley?

Answer: A recent scientific elk survey conducted by the local Elk Management Group concluded that there are about **430 elk in the upper valley.**

- About 300 inhabit the area in and around Snoqualmie.
e.g. Meadowbrook Farm, Three Forks, and Mountain Meadows Farm.
- About 130 inhabit the eastern end of North Bend.
e.g. Edgewick area, Grouse Ridge, MiddleFork/Lake Dorothy Road, Mt Si Road, Cedar Falls Road.

See geographic maps.



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Question: How can I become involved in the Elk Management Group?

Answer: **Attend meetings.** See our website www.snoqualmievalleyelk.org for details and directions.

1. **General meetings** are held the second Wednesday every other month. Our next meeting is *September 21, 2011* in the US Forest Service training room at 6:00pm.

2. **Committee meetings** are especially interesting and afford maximum opportunities to learn about elk, volunteer and become involved in the EMG. Currently, there are three committees:

- *Elk Research and Habitat Improvement Committee:* Led by Harold Erland, a wildlife biologist, who may be contacted at hmerland@comcast.net or 425-698-3180.
- *Education and Public Outreach Committee:* Led by Jen Syrowitz, a wildlife biology student, who can be contacted at ruchjl@gmail.com or 425-785-3555.
- *People and Land Management Committee:* Led by Jim Gildersleeve, a biologist, who can be contacted at jlgbsggild@comcast.net or 425-766-0556.



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Question: Is the Snoqualmie elk herd's population increasing or decreasing in the long term--the next five years?

Answer: We do not know at this point in our research and study.

In the short term, it appears that growth of the elk herd's population has leveled off and may be decreasing slightly. The primary reasons for this are:

- Available winter forage is a controlling factor. The local herd disperses widely to find adequate winter forage. Some migrate out of the valley floor and do not return.
- Increased mortality. Mortality ranges from 140-250 elk per year. Vehicular/elk mortality is very difficult to track but it is estimated that 40 to 100 animals are, or could be, killed on our freeways and local highways each year. The effects of predation, natural diseases, and poaching are equally difficult to document but it is estimated that 50 to 100 animals die each year from these causes. Legal hunting accounts for only 50 animals per year.



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Question: How many elk calves will be born this summer and add to the valley elk population?

Answer: EMG biologists estimate that **approximately 174 calves** will be born to the local elk herd, bringing the total elk population up to about 600 for a short period of time. Wildlife biologists call this process “recruitment.”

Recruitment rates are largely offset by mortality in the herd. It occurs from vehicle/elk accidents, poaching, hunting, predation, disease and other natural causes.

Details:

Of the 430 elk in the valley, about 200 are mature cow elk capable of having calves. Anecdotal information and elk research from this area indicates that about 87% (174) of the cows will have a calf that survives birth.



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