

Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group

Guiding Document

November 19, 2008

This paper serves as the guiding document for the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group (EMG); it defines the where, why, what, and who of the group. It presents known information, and it sets out a timeline for preparing a long-term elk management plan.

Problem Statement, Assumptions, Goals

The resident elk herd (Rocky Mountain subspecies, *Cervus elaphus nelsoni*) in the Upper Snoqualmie Valley is causing damage to private and commercial orchards, tree farms, landscape vegetation, and other commercial and recreational lands. Additionally, the presence of the elk near roads and highways poses a safety hazard. A group of stakeholders has convened to collaboratively address how to manage the elk herd to reduce property damage, establish safe elk viewing areas near roadways, provide educational opportunities, and identify and address any additional issues associated with the elk herd. The group is operating under these six assumptions:

1. Elk are present in the Upper Snoqualmie Valley, and their presence is valued by the community.
2. Evidence suggests the elk population in the valley is not native; however, there is no intent to remove the entire population.
3. The size of the elk population in the valley is increasing.
4. Elk are associated with damage and loss of personal property and elk-vehicle collisions.
5. Management of the elk herd is necessary to reduce or minimize elk damage to personal property.
6. Management of the elk herd is best accomplished through a collaborative effort among all stakeholders.

These two final assumptions are the reasons a varied group of stakeholders, the Elk Management Group (EMG), convened in July 2008. The purpose of the EMG is to make recommendations to the city governments of North Bend and Snoqualmie and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife concerning ways to manage for a healthy elk population in the valley while balancing the interests of the stakeholders in the upper Snoqualmie valley. Recommendations are expected to come in the form of short-term discrete management actions as well as a comprehensive, adaptable, long-term elk management plan to be finalized in future months. Stakeholders that have been identified include:

- Valley residents/citizens
- Farmers and agricultural and commercial businesses
- Hunters
- Educational groups
- State and local agencies
- Native American tribes

Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives

The mission of the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group is to work collaboratively to minimize property damage and public safety risks associated with elk and to manage elk for a variety of recreational, educational and aesthetic purposes including hunting, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, wildlife viewing and photography.

The first goal of the EMG is to develop an adaptable, sustainable long-term elk management plan for the upper Snoqualmie Valley. Certain objectives will assist the EMG in reaching this goal:

- Continue annual surveys to document elk numbers, the types and location of habitat being used, and possibly the types and location of habitats being avoided.
- Work with landowners and cooperators to designate and promote areas for public viewing of elk.
- Identify key elk use areas that could benefit from establishing protection through lease agreements, easements, landowner incentives, fee purchase, or other means.

The second goal of the EMG is to educate the public and to work with the public to create solutions to issues associated with elk-related property damage. The following objectives are intended to help the EMG reach this goal:

- Provide clearly written materials for property owners seeking state or other assistance dealing with elk damage.
- Create an Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group website as both a source of information for stakeholders and to provide a tool providing public educational opportunity.

The EMG supports the policies of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the laws of the State of Washington and King County. The EMG does not make binding decisions for any level of public government.

Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group Committees

The Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group consists of committees whose responsibilities are outlined below. Group members may be on more than one committee. Note that committee responsibilities will presumably evolve over time; the outline below is intended to provide a good idea of what each committee will focus on in both the short and long term.

Elk Management Committee

Chair: Harold Erland hmerland@comcast.net

- Document and map seasonal movement of elk and estimate population size.
- Determine carrying capacity of the upper Snoqualmie Valley habitats and estimate how many elk the area can reasonably support, as well as the minimum number needed to manage a biologically diverse and sustainable herd.
- Document and track elk damage issues, and assess nonlethal and lethal means of managing elk population size. Identify unknowns and assumptions.
- Recommend elk harvest options and mechanism to assure public safety during hunts.

- Assist with the development of a sustainable, adaptable long-term elk management plan.

Public Awareness, Outreach and Education Committee

Chair: Kalli Wilson Kalli@xwillson.com

- Create outreach materials and press releases to make reasonably sure all interested stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved in the EMG process.
- Help the community understand elk management concepts/efforts and that management of elk in the valley is a community responsibility.
- Work with the local schools to involve them in the process of elk management (e.g., policy education, citizen science).
- Create and maintain the EMG website, with the goal of providing an objective and unbiased site with credible information.
- Assist with the development of a sustainable, adaptable long-term elk management plan.

Land and People Management Committee

Chair: Dave Kimmett David.Kimmett@kingcounty.gov

- Review and make recommendations regarding elk/land use issues to city planners.
- Map all known incidents of elk/vehicle collisions.
- Describe and document negative impacts to recreation (e.g., sports fields, golf courses, public trails) that elk may create in the area.
- Describe recreation benefits (e.g., elk viewing, tourism) that elk may bring to the area.
- Assess public perspectives concerning the valley elk herd and management options.
- Assist with the development of a sustainable, adaptable long-term elk management plan.

Steering Committee

Chair: Russell Link Linkrel@dfw.wa.gov

- Create agendas and facilitate monthly meetings.
- Schedule and document votes on pertinent issues and actions.
- Record and distribute minutes.
- Oversee, guide, and coordinate the committees.

Voting Board – Who, How, Why

Each Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group (EMG) member's interests are represented by a stakeholder on the voting board.

- EMG members identify who their particular committee representative is and provides their concerns and comments to that representative in appropriate format on a timely basis.
- This procedure streamlines the decision-making process and the EMG is able to move towards its goals in a more efficient manner.
- Voting board members summarize comments, ideas, and other input from his or her constituents.

