
**ELK HARVEST MANAGEMENT
STRATEGY TEAM**

March 2001

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ELK HARVEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY TEAM REPORT

Executive Summary

ELK HARVEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY TEAM

On January 3, 2001, a special meeting of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission was convened in Holbrook, Arizona. The meeting was held in response to a request from Representative Jake Flake. The purpose of this meeting was for the Commission to take testimony from local landowners concerning depredation/damage to private lands from the presence of elk.

Subsequent to this Commission meeting, the Director established a Team of Department personnel experienced in elk management for two purposes. First, the Team was to develop short-term strategies within existing Commission Rules and Department systems to be brought forward at the April Commission meeting to be included in the fall 2001 hunt Commission Orders. These harvest strategies will be designed to address private land elk depredation and public land resource issues within Arizona and second, the Team was charged with developing long-term solutions that may require changes in Department policies, Commission orders, Commission Rules and Arizona revised statutes necessary for maximum flexibility to elk managers and minimum impact on hunter constituents to relieve private or public land elk issues within Arizona.

The Team has completed “Limited and Winter Elk Population Zone Hunt Strategies, 2001” containing an aggressive private land hunting package with the objective to substantially reduce elk numbers on and adjacent to private land. The proposed hunts are within existing frameworks and are designed to allow for control of hunter numbers on private land. The hunt package is designed to provide some immediate relief from depredating elk, meet other public land resource needs, provide additional elk hunting opportunity, and allow maximum control of hunter distribution on public and private land.

The Team also completed “Proposed Elk Management Guidelines” that will implement a new statewide elk management strategy whereby all areas occupied by elk will be analyzed under standard criteria and classified into one of three separate management zones. These elk management zones include: standard population management, winter range population management, and limited population management. Each management zone will have specific management objectives and harvest alternatives that can be selected from to achieve specific elk population management objectives. The management zones will also have specific goals regarding private land conflict resolution and action alternatives that may be selected to address conflicts. Full implementation of the management zone concept requires review of several Department systems and Commission Rules.

The Team has completed a review of A.R.S. Title 17-239, “Wildlife depredations; investigations; corrective measures; disposal; reports; appeal.” This review discloses alternatives to meeting private land objectives through landowner agreements and/or removal of depredating elk. The review also proposes a new process to be developed that allows for creation of a “hunter pool.” This would allow for selection of elk hunters that can be obtained through a process described in the report that is outside the normal draw process. The creation and implementation of this proposal will require review of existing Commission Rules and perhaps creation of a new rule.

The Team recognizes that these recommendations will create a need to inform and educate the general public, other stakeholders, land management agency personnel, as well as Department employees on the need for elk managers in Arizona to have maximum flexibility in obtaining elk population management objectives. The success of these proposals will rely on understanding and cooperation of elk managers, private landowners and hunter constituents.

LIMITED AND WINTER ELK POPULATION ZONE HUNT STRATEGIES FOR 2001/02 HUNTS

The elk hunts listed below are an amendment to the December 11, 2000 Hunt Guidelines. These hunts are designed to either address private land issues, potential conflicts with other wildlife species, or to direct harvest at resident elk residing yearlong on winter range.

Region I:

Alternative 1:

The hunts listed in the table below are recommended to reduce resident elk populations in Region I where conflicts with private land interests have been documented.

LIMITED POPULATION HUNTS (REGION I)						
Hunt Number	Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Elk	2001 Permits	Legal Weapon
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 17, 2001	(13)	2B	Any	10	General
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 17, 2001	(13)	2B	Antlerless	20	General
	Sept. 28 – Oct. 1, 2001	(13)	2B	Any	10	General
	Sept. 28 – Oct. 1, 2001	(13)	2B	Antlerless	20	General
	Oct. 5 – Oct. 8, 2001	(13)	2B	Any	10	General
	Oct. 5 – Oct. 8, 2001	(13)	2B	Antlerless	20	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(13)	2B	Any	10	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(13)	2B	Antlerless	20	General
	Aug. 10 – Aug. 12, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Bull	5	General
	Aug. 10 – Aug. 12, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	General
	Aug. 17 – Aug. 19, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Bull	5	General
	Aug. 17 – Aug. 19, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	General
	Sept. 28 – Oct. 7, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	Muzzleloader
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 18, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	General
	Oct. 19 – Oct. 25, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	Muzzleloader
	Nov. 9 – Nov. 15, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	General
	Dec. 7 – Dec. 13, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	General
	Dec. 21 – Dec. 31, 2001	(1, 13)	3B North	Antlerless	25	General
	Aug. 10 – Aug. 12, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Aug. 17 – Aug. 19, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Oct. 5 – Oct. 7, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 14, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Oct. 19 – Oct. 21, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Nov. 23 – Nov. 25, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Nov. 30 – Dec. 2, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Dec. 7 – Dec. 9, 2001	(2, 13)	3A West and 4B North	Antlerless	50	General
	Aug. 10 – Aug. 20, 2001 and Oct. 5 – Oct. 22, 2001	(3, 13)	3A East	Antlerless	25	General
	Nov. 23 – Dec. 31, 2001	(3, 13)	3A East	Antlerless	25	General
				TOTAL	780	

Alternative 2:

Includes Alternative 1 hunts along with some spring limited permit hunts, if there is an identified need to continue hunts into early 2002. Possible dates could be January 4 – 13, 2002 and January 18 – 27, 2002 in Unit 3B North, etc. See Recommendation Section for additional comments concerning suggested amendments to R12-4-104.

Region II:

Listed below are the elk hunts being considered in Region II for fall 2001 to address yearlong resident elk on traditional winter range and attempt to eliminate elk on the Kaibab Plateau.

The Forage Resource Study Group (FRSG) proposed new subunit boundaries and hunt structures to address the yearlong elk on winter range in Units 5A and 5B. Region II intends to support the hunts proposed by the FRSG.

LIMITED POPULATION HUNTS (REGION II)						
Hunt Number	Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Elk	2001 Permits	Legal Weapon
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 17, 2001	(4, 13)	Twin Arrows Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	10	General
	Sept. 21– Sept. 24, 2001	(4, 13)	Twin Arrows Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	10	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(4, 13)	Twin Arrows Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	10	General
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 17, 2001	(5, 13)	Two Guns Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	5	General
	Sept. 21– Sept. 24, 2001	(5, 13)	Two Guns Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	5	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(5, 13)	Two Guns Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	5	General
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 27, 2001	(6, 13)	Grapevine portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	25	Archery
	Sept. 14– Sept. 27, 2001	(6, 13)	Grapevine portion of Unit 5B	Bull	15	Archery
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(6, 13)	Grapevine portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	60	General
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 17, 2001	(7, 13)	Meteor Crater Portion of Units 5A and 5B	Antlerless	10	General
	Sept. 21– Sept. 24, 2001	(7, 13)	Meteor Crater Portion of Units 5A and 5B	Antlerless	10	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(7, 13)	Meteor Crater Portion of Units 5A and 5B	Antlerless	10	General
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 17, 2001	(8, 13)	West Sunset Portion of Unit 5A	Antlerless	20	General
	Sept. 21– Sept. 24, 2001	(8, 13)	West Sunset Portion of Unit 5A	Antlerless	20	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(8,13)	West Sunset Portion of Unit 5A	Antlerless	20	General
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 17, 2001	(9, 13)	East Sunset Portion of Unit 5A	Antlerless	20	General
	Sept. 21– Sept. 24, 2001	(9, 13)	East Sunset Portion of Unit 5A	Antlerless	20	General
	Oct. 12 – Oct. 15, 2001	(9, 13)	East Sunset Portion of Unit 5A	Antlerless	20	General
			Other Hunts already scheduled, but where boundaries will be modified to meet the above hunt areas:			
	Oct. 5 – Oct. 10, 2001	(10, 13)	Twin Arrows, Grapevine and Two Guns Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	225	General
	Oct.19 – Oct. 22, 2001	(10, 13)	Twin Arrows, Grapevine and Two Guns Portion of Unit 5B	Antlerless	225	General
	Oct. 5 – Oct. 10, 2001	(11, 13)	Meteor Crater, East Sunset and West Sunset Portion of Units 5A and 5B	Antlerless	400	General
	Aug. 31 – Sept. 13, 2001	(13)	12A and 12B	Any	50	General
				TOTAL	1195	

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Region III:

There has been a small elk herd in Units 17A, 17B, 18A, 18B, and 19B. Given the low elk densities and thick pinyon-juniper cover this herd is not surveyed. In 1997, these 5 units were combined into one hunt, one with “any elk” as the legal animal. The majority of that year’s harvest was comprised of older age class bulls. In subsequent years “antlerless elk” hunts were added to the “any elk” hunt. In 2001 it is planned to offer the following hunts:

LIMITED POPULATION HUNTS (REGION III)						
Hunt Number	Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Elk	2001 Permits	Legal Weapon
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 27, 2001	(13)	17A, 17B, 18A, 18B and 19B	Any	25	Archery
	Sept. 14– Sept. 27, 2001	(13)	17A, 17B, 18A, 18B and 19B	Antlerless	25	Archery
	Sept. 28 – Oct. 14, 2001	(12, 13)	17A(North), 18A, 18B, 19B and Skull Valley and Kirkland Creek Portions of Units 20A and 20C	Any	20	General
	Sept. 28 – Oct. 14, 2001	(12, 13)	17A(North), 18A, 18B, 19B and Skull Valley and Kirkland Creek Portions of Units 20A and 20C	Antlerless	65	General
	Nov. 2 – Nov. 18, 2001	(13)	17A(North), 18A, 18B and 19B	Any	20	General
	Nov. 30 – Dec. 16, 2001	(13)	17A(North), 18A, 18B and 19B	Any	30	General
				TOTAL	185	

Region IV:

A Unit 20C (Kirkland Creek) hunt will be offered in conjunction with the Region III September 28 – October 14 “any” and “antlerless” hunts.

Region V:

The Region will be offering two hunts to address elk that periodically travel off of the San Carlos Indian Reservation in Units 28 and 31, and a small resident herd in Unit 31. This is the first year that Region V has offered an elk hunt. The hunts start with a September 14 - 27, 2001 archery hunt and end with an October 5 - 21, 2001 General hunt. Both hunts will be for “any elk”.

LIMITED POPULATION HUNTS (REGION V)						
Hunt Number	Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Elk	2001 Permits	Legal Weapon
	Sept. 14 – Sept. 27, 2001	(13)	28 and 31	Any	5	Archery
	Oct. 5 – Oct. 21, 2001	(13)	28 and 31	Any	15	General
				Total	20	

Region VI:

Landowner complaints regarding elk are currently at minimal levels in Region VI except at Canyon Creek in Unit 23. At Canyon Creek, elk impacts on willows have been documented by monitoring efforts. The Region produced an aggressive elk hunt strategy to address those problem elk. It was later agreed through the Payson Natural Resource Committee to table the hunt strategy for the 2001-hunting season. The issue at Canyon Creek is compounded by proximity to the White Mountain Apache Reservation, which elk use as a safe area when hunting begins. The Unit 23 Wildlife Manager has been adjusting permits to address habitat issues in Canyon Creek through the current hunt structure.

Elk hunters have historically not distributed themselves evenly throughout Units 22 and 23, focusing the majority of hunting pressure in the northern portions of both units. Elk populations exist in southern areas of both units that can withstand harvest, but are not receiving much pressure. Antlerless elk tags will be allocated to Unit 22 South and Unit 23 South to better direct hunters to elk herds that have received relatively little harvest. In addition to the traditional Unit 22 South hunt unit, a Unit 22 Mazatzal hunt unit will be created limiting hunters to the wilderness areas.

STANDARD POPULATION HUNTS (REGION VI)						
Hunt Number	Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Elk	2001 Permits	Legal Weapon
	Oct. 19 – Oct. 25, 2001	(14)	23 South	Antlerless	20	General
	Dec. 7 – Dec. 13, 2001	(14)	23 South	Antlerless	20	General
	Oct. 19 – Oct. 25, 2001	(15, 16)	22 Mazatzal	Bull	15	General
	Oct. 18 – Oct. 25, 2001	(17)	22 South	Antlerless	25	General
				TOTAL	80	

NOTES: These notes apply to all the Regional Hunts listed above.

1. Unit 3B North Hunt Unit – That portion of Unit 3B located north of U.S. Hwy 60.
2. Unit 3A West and Unit 4B North Hunt Unit – That portion of Unit 3A located west of AZ State Hwy 77 and that portion of Unit 4B located north of the following: starting at Chevelon Canyon and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest boundary; southeasterly along the forest boundary to F.S.153; south along F.S. 153 to F.S. 95; southeasterly along F.S. 95 to F.S. 88A; southeasterly along F.S. 88A to F.S. 88; southeasterly along F.S. 88 to AZ Hwy 277.
3. Unit 3A East Hunt Unit – That portion of Unit 3A located east of AZ State Hwy 77.
4. Twin Arrows Hunt Unit – That portion of Unit 5B North beginning at the junction of I-40 and F.S. 126 (Twin Arrows road); south on F.S. 126 to Anderson Canyon; northeast along the bottom of Anderson Canyon to it’s junction with Diablo Canyon; north along the bottom of Diablo Canyon to it’s junction with I-40; west on I-40 to it’s junction with F.S. 126.

5. Two Guns Hunt Area – That portion of Unit 5B North beginning at the junction of Anderson and Diablo Canyons; southwest along the bottom of Anderson Canyon to it's junction with F.S. 126; south and east on F.S. 126 to F.S. 9487F (the southwest road leading to Raymond Ranch); northeast on F.S. 9487F to the south Raymond Ranch boundary fence; east along the south Raymond Ranch boundary fence and it's eastern extension fence to Diablo Canyon; north along the bottom of Diablo Canyon to it's junction with Anderson Canyon.
6. Grapevine Hunt Area – That portion of Unit 5B North beginning at the junction of F.S. 69 and the rim of Anderson Mesa (at Chavez Pass); northwest along the rim of Anderson Mesa to F.S. 125; north along F.S. 125 to F.S. 126; east on F.S. 126 to F.S. 9487F (the southwest road leading to Raymond Ranch); northeast on F.S. 9487F to the south Raymond Ranch boundary fence; east along the south Raymond Ranch boundary fence and it's eastern extension fence to Diablo Canyon; south along the bottom of Diablo Canyon to the junction with the Wolfolk Well road; east on the Wolfolk Well road to the Meteor Crater road; south on the Meteor Crater road to the junction of F.S. 69 and the rim of Anderson Mesa (at Chavez Pass).
7. Meteor Crater Hunt Area – That portion of Units 5A and 5B to be described later.
8. West Sunset Hunt Area – That portion of Unit 5A to be described later.
9. East Sunset Hunt Area – That portion of Unit 5A to be described later.
10. Twin Arrows, Two Guns, and Grapevine Hunt Area - That portion of Unit 5B to be described later.
11. Meteor Crater, East and West Sunset Hunt Area - That portion of Unit 5A to be described later.
12. 17A North, Kirkland Creek and Skull Valley Hunt Area – those portions of Units 17A, 20A and 20C to be described later.
13. Units 2B, 3A East, 3A West, 3B North, 4B North, portions of 5A, portions of 5B, 12A, 12B, 17A, 17B, 18A, 18B, 19B, 28 and 31 – Elk occur in low numbers in these non-traditional areas. Hunt success may be very low, to no success.
14. Unit 23 South Hunt Unit – That portion of Unit 23 as described in the 2000/2001 Hunt Proclamation.
15. Unit 22 Mazatzal Hunt Unit – that portion of Unit 22 beginning at the confluence of the East Verde River and Verde River; easterly along the East Verde River to F.S. 406; easterly along F.S. 406 to the junction with F.S. 414; southerly on F.S. 414 to the junction of F.S. 414 and State Hwy. 87 near Rye; south on State Hwy 87 to the junction of State Hwy 87 and State Hwy 188; southerly on State Hwy 188 to the Salt River; westerly along the Salt River to the Verde River; northerly along the Verde River to the confluence with the East Verde River.
16. Ninety percent of the elk located in the Mazatzal Hunt Unit of Unit 22 occur in Wilderness areas. Hunters should be prepared for a wilderness area hunt.
17. Unit 22 South Hunt Unit – That portion of Unit 22 as described in the 2000/2001 Hunt Proclamation.

Commission Recommendations:

1. The Department recommends that the Commission vote to amend the 2001/02 Hunt Guidelines passed at the December 2000 Commission meeting to include the new proposed hunts as presented above in Commission Order Format.
2. The Department recommends the Commission vote to modify Commission Order 4 in the 2001/2002 Hunt Proclamation. Adding a separate hunt type category for these “Limited Elk Population Hunts” will better aid our hunting public in identifying these hunts while filling out their elk permit-tag applications.
3. The Department recommends the Commission vote to exempt “Limited Elk Population Hunts” from the weapons allocation formula and the juniors only hunt allocation. These hunts have a specific management objective to reduce elk populations where conflicts exist with other land uses. Overall hunt success will be much lower than the statewide average, and using less effective weapons (e.g. archery and muzzleloaders) may be contrary to meeting the population objectives.
4. The Department recommends that the Commission vote to increase the bag limit to two elk per calendar year. The second elk tag would be a permit-tag available after first come-first serve through the mail, when permit-tags would be available over the counter. This is consistent with previous bag limit increases for deer. This recommendation requires amendments to the Hunt Permit-Tag Application Schedule and Commission Order 4. The intent of increasing the bag limit is to provide adequate opportunity for hunters to obtain any 2001 permit-tags left after the first come-first serve through the mail. Increased bag limits in the future could allow for a second elk tag to be available as deprecation, over the counter permit and/or non-permit tags. There are potential issues with R-12-104. C.9.c and R12-4-114.C.2.d and a review of the bag limit restrictions and allowance must be made in relation of allowing a bag limit of two elk and restricting at least one elk to be taken by a non-permit tag. The Team believed there might be a conflict with these rules.

Department Action Items:

The Department recommends further evaluation of potential consequences resulting from a spring elk hunt opportunity. A spring hunt may help reduce private land and elk conflicts. However, there are several issues that need further review:

1. Rule R12-4-104 would have to be reviewed if a spring elk drawing took place. Section C.9.b. allows for turkey and buffalo hunters to re-apply in the fall if they drew a tag in the spring and were unsuccessful. Adding elk to that list would be consistent with the other species that have both fall and spring permit-tags.
2. The bonus point issue with offering a point in the spring may cause concern regarding the 10% rule, which may require review of R12-4-107. By offering a spring draw and the potential for multiple bonus points accruing to hunters during a single year, additional public concern may arise in awarding 10% of permit-tags to hunters with the most bonus points.
3. Harvesting cow elk late in pregnancy should be covered in the public information product to reduce potential public criticism.
4. Timeframes for addressing any recommended amendments to R12-4-104 and R12-4-107 begin July of 2002 for normal review process. The normal rule review process would not be completed until February 2004. In accordance with Arizona Game and Fish Department Operating Manual, Section J, these rules could be taken out of the normal cycle and amendments could be accomplished in a minimum of 12 months.

PROPOSED ELK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Abstract: To propose new statewide elk management guidelines whereby all areas occupied by elk will be analyzed under standardized criteria and classified into one of three separate management zones. These elk management zones will include: standard population management, winter range population management, and limited population management. Each management zone will have specific management objectives and harvest alternatives that can be selected to achieve management objectives. The management zones also have specific goals regarding private land conflict resolution and action alternatives that may be selected to address those conflicts.

Management Zone Analysis: Field Operations Division personnel will analyze all occupied elk habitat under standardized criteria. The management zone mapping criteria will be presented to critical stakeholders in a public review process for this management proposal. Stakeholders (e.g. land management agencies, habitat partnership committees, landowners, ranchers, sportsman organizations, etc.) will be provided the opportunity to comment on the zone management mapping criteria during formalized meetings or during informal personal contacts with Department personnel. Zone management maps for those affected Game Management Units (GMUs) will be produced and will delineate those portions of each GMU that will be designated under one or more of the following management zones: standard population management, winter range population management, and/or limited population management. Zone management boundaries will use existing GMU boundaries or will be delineated along major, recognizable and describable topographic features, as these zone boundaries may ultimately become sub-unit hunt area boundaries. Finalized zone management maps will be included in the regional elk operational plans. Finalized elk management guidelines, which would include the zone management criteria, will be incorporated within the elk species management guidelines.

ELK MANAGEMENT ZONES

I. STANDARD POPULATION MANAGEMENT ZONE

- A. Zone Description:** Areas of summer and winter range where the presence of elk is desired for the long-term maintenance of elk populations at levels that provide for diverse recreational opportunities.
- B. Management Objective:** Maintain elk population at levels that provide diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the species, its habitat, or the habitat of other wildlife, and with minimal substantiated depredation complaints.
- C. Harvest Guidelines:** Population surveys will be conducted and the survey data used to determine appropriate annual harvest of elk in standard population management zones. Population surveys will be conducted and harvest recommendations made in accordance with species management guidelines, hunt guidelines, and Regional Elk Operational Plans. Refer to Appendix I for draft hunt guidelines.

D. Private land conflict resolution: The goal for conflict resolution regarding elk damage to private land within standard population management zones will be to reduce conflicts with elk while ensuring continued maintenance of elk populations at desired levels. Conflict resolution alternatives include:

1. Cooperative Stewardship Agreements.
2. In accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-239, The Department shall provide technical advice and assist in anti-depredation measures.
3. If cooperative stewardship agreements and anti-depredation measures are not effective, only then would the Department recommend removal of elk on, or adjacent to, private land by Department personnel, or their agent, in accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-102, A.R.S. Title 17-239, Commission Policy A2.12, and Department Policy C2.5.

E. Harvest Alternatives:

1. Limited permit-tag bull, antlerless or any elk fall hunts.
2. Limited permit-tag bull, antlerless or any elk spring hunts.

As an example, Unit 3A east could have antlerless elk hunts occurring during January or February of 2002. Implementation may be dependent on review of R12-4-104 for spring elk permit draw. Section C.9.b. allows for turkey and buffalo hunters to re-apply in the fall if they drew a tag in the spring and were unsuccessful. Adding elk to that list would be consistent with the other species that have both fall and spring permit-tags.

II. WINTER RANGE POPULATION MANAGEMENT ZONE

A. Zone Description: Winter range areas of standard population management zones where the presence of spring through fall elk populations results in unacceptable levels of conflict with other public or private resources. Winter range population management zones will be managed for winter elk use only.

B. Management Objective: Manage to substantially reduce or eliminate spring through fall (generally April through October) elk populations to enhance habitat quality for wintering elk, and to reduce or eliminate conflicts with other public or private resources during spring through fall months.

C. Harvest Guidelines: Population surveys may not apply in determining appropriate annual harvest of resident elk within winter range management zones. Regional Elk Operation Plans may include alternative methodologies that may be used for indexing populations within winter range management zones. Harvest recommendations will be made in accordance with hunt guidelines and Regional Elk Operation Plans. Hunting seasons for winter range management zones will be listed under limited population management zone hunts within the Arizona Hunting Regulations.

D. Private land conflict resolution: The goal for conflict resolution regarding elk damage to private land within winter range elk management zones will be to reduce or eliminate conflicts with elk during spring through fall months while attempting to reduce conflicts with elk during the winter. Conflict resolution alternatives include:

1. Cooperative Stewardship Agreements.
2. In accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-239, The Department shall provide technical advice and assist in anti-depredation measures.
3. Depredation hunts in accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-239 and R12-4-115.
4. If cooperative stewardship agreements and anti-depredation measures are not effective, only then would the Department recommend removal of elk on, or adjacent to, private land by Department personnel, or their agent, in accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-102, A.R.S. Title 17-239, Commission Policy A2.12, and Department Policy C2.5.

E. Harvest Alternatives:

1) Limited permit-tag bull, antlerless or any elk fall hunts.

2) Limited permit-tag bull, antlerless or any elk spring hunts.

Implementation of spring hunts may be dependent on review of R12-4-104 for spring elk permit draw. Section C.9.b. allows for turkey and buffalo hunters to re-apply in the fall if they drew a tag in the spring and were unsuccessful. Adding elk to that list would be consistent with the other species that have both fall and spring permit-tags.

3) Unlimited non-permit-tag antlerless elk hunts occurring during any portion of the spring through fall (April-October). Refer to Appendix II for an example of general nonpermit-tag elk hunt seasons.

This harvest alternative is feasible without requiring any statute or rule changes. Elk nonpermit-tags would be available at all license dealers and Department offices. Elk nonpermit-tags would be exempt from the bonus point rule (R12-4-107). Management flexibility for hunt season dates is currently limited by the restricted hunt rule, R12-4-309. Modifying R12-4-309 to exclude nonpermit-tag elk hunts would substantially improve season date scheduling opportunities.

Significant advantages for this harvest alternative include:

- ?? Maximum removal of resident elk from winter range areas.
- ?? Facilitates hunting by local area residents who will likely be more effective at locating and taking elk desired for harvest.
- ?? Distributes workload of license and tag sales across all license dealers and Department offices.

Significant disadvantages include:

- ?? Eliminates the Departments ability to control hunter densities.
- ?? Increased Department cost and workload in procuring and distributing nonpermit tags.
- ?? Increased Department workload in conducting law enforcement patrols and investigations.
- ?? No ability for real-time database tracking of nonpermit-tag holders.
- ?? Potential for conflicts with other permitted big game hunts.

4. **“Regional” nonpermit-tag elk hunts** occurring during any portion of the spring through fall (April-October). A Regional elk nonpermit-tag hunt would be similar to the nonpermit-tag hunt described above, except that tags would be limited and would only be obtainable at Department offices, or possibly only at specified Regional offices.

This harvest alternative is not immediately feasible. Review of R12-4-114B would be required to limit Regional elk nonpermit-tag sales to only Department offices. Review of definitions in R12-4-101 may also be required to define this Regional nonpermit-tag. Management flexibility for hunt season dates is currently limited by the restricted hunt rule, R12-4-309. Modifying R12-4-309 to exclude nonpermit-tag elk hunts would significantly improve season date opportunities. Modification of R12-4-115, or creation of a new rule, would increase flexibility for this harvest alternative by creating a pool of Regional hunters that may be contacted on short notice for unplanned harvest opportunities (see section implementation of and alternatives to A.R.S. Title 17-239 pages 22-24).

Significant advantages for this harvest alternative include:

- ?? Maximum opportunity for removal of resident elk from winter range areas.
- ?? Provides for timely response to unplanned harvest opportunities.
- ?? Provides for Department control of hunter densities.
- ?? Provides for greater control of tag sales by limiting sales to Department offices or to individual Regional offices.
- ?? Allows for real-time database tracking of nonpermit-tag holders.

Significant disadvantages include:

- ?? Increased Department workload in developing hunter pool list, contacting hunters from that list, and distributing Regional nonpermit-tags.
- ?? Increased Department workload in conducting law enforcement patrols and investigations.

III. LIMITED POPULATION MANAGEMENT ZONE

- A. Zone Description:** Areas where the presence of elk is not essential to the long-term maintenance of elk populations or management of other wildlife species is a higher priority. Elk populations within limited population management zones will be managed for minimum levels of conflict with other public or private resources.
- B. Management Objective:** Manage elk populations to reduce or eliminate conflicts with other public, private or wildlife resources by maintaining low population densities, or eliminating populations, as deemed appropriate.

C. Harvest Guidelines: Population surveys may not apply in determining appropriate annual harvest of elk within limited management zones. Regional Elk Operational Plans may include alternative methodologies that may be used for indexing populations within limited population management zones. Harvest recommendations will be made in accordance with hunt guidelines and Regional Elk Operation Plans. Hunting seasons for limited population management zones will be listed under limited population management zone hunts within the Arizona Hunting Regulations.

D. Private land conflict resolution: The goal for conflict resolution regarding elk damage to private land within limited population elk management zones will be to reduce or eliminate all conflicts with elk. Conflict resolution tools include:

1. Cooperative Stewardship Agreements.
2. In accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-239, the Department shall provide technical advice and assist in anti-depredation measures.
3. Depredation hunts in accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-239 and R12-4-115.
4. If cooperative stewardship agreements and anti-depredation measures are not effective, only then would the Department recommend removal of elk on, or adjacent to, private land by Department personnel, or their agent, in accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-102, A.R.S. Title 17-239, Commission Policy A2.12, and Department Policy C2.5.

E. Harvest Alternatives:

1. Limited permit-tag bull, antlerless or any elk fall hunts.

2. Limited permit-tag bull, antlerless or any elk spring hunts.

Implementation of spring hunts may be dependent on review of R12-4-104 for spring elk permit draw. Section C.9.b. allows for turkey and buffalo hunters to re-apply in the fall if they drew a permit-tag in the spring and were unsuccessful. Adding elk to that list would be consistent with the other species that have both fall and spring permit-tags.

3. Unlimited non-permit-tag elk hunts occurring concurrent with other permitted big game hunts in specified Game Management Units authorized by Commission Order. These elk nonpermit-tags would be available for hunters possessing permit-tags for other big game species and would be valid concurrently with the other big game species hunt.

As an example, Unit 12A permitted deer hunters could purchase an elk tag and hunt elk during their permitted deer hunt. This harvest alternative may not be immediately feasible. This strategy may require a rule change allowing for distribution restrictions of these elk tags to Kiabab hunters drawn for the appropriate other big game tags. This recommendation requires a review of R12-4-104, R12-4-114 and R12-4-309.

Significant advantages for this harvest alternative include:

- ?? Facilitates the use of an existing pool of hunters to harvest elk.
- ?? Provides for the opportunistic harvest of elk, specifically in areas of sparse elk populations.
- ?? Reduces the need for separate elk hunts thus reducing enforcement related workload.
- ?? Facilitates questionnaire access to hunters to determine elk harvest.

Significant disadvantages include:

- ?? Potential for hunter dissatisfaction as elk hunting opportunity may be limited to hunters who drew permit-tags for other big game species.
- ?? Increased Department cost and workload in procuring and distributing nonpermit-tags.

4. **Unlimited nonpermit-tag antlerless elk hunts** occurring during any portion of the year. Refer to Appendix II for an example of general nonpermit-tag elk hunt seasons.

This harvest alternative is feasible without requiring any statute or rule changes. Elk nonpermit-tags would be available at all license dealers and Department offices. Elk nonpermit-tags would be exempt from the bonus point rule (R12-4-107). Management flexibility for hunt season dates is currently limited by the restricted hunt rule, R12-4-309. Modifying R12-4-309 to exclude nonpermit-tag elk hunts would significantly improve season date opportunities.

Significant advantages for this harvest alternative include:

- ?? Maximum removal of elk.
- ?? Facilitates hunting by local area residents who will likely be more effective at locating and taking elk desired for harvest.
- ?? Distributes workload of license and tag sales across all license dealers and Department offices.

Significant disadvantages include:

- ?? Eliminates the Departments ability to control hunter densities.
- ?? Increased Department cost and workload in procuring and distributing nonpermit tags.
- ?? Increased Department workload in conducting law enforcement patrols and investigations.
- ?? No ability for real-time database tracking of nonpermit-tag holders.
- ?? Potential for conflicts with other permitted big game hunts.

5. **“Regional” nonpermit-tag elk hunts** occurring during any portion of the year. A Regional elk nonpermit-tag hunt would be similar to the nonpermit-tag hunt described above, except that tags may be limited and would only be obtainable at Department offices, or possibly only at specified Regional offices.

This harvest alternative is not immediately feasible. Review of R12-4-114B would be required to limit Regional elk nonpermit-tag sales to only Department offices. Review of definitions in R12-4-101 may also be required to define this Regional nonpermit-tag. Management flexibility for hunt season dates is currently limited by the restricted hunt rule, R12-4-309. Modifying R12-4-309 to exclude nonpermit-tag elk hunts would significantly improve season date opportunities. Modification of R12-4-115, or creation of a new rule, would increase flexibility for this harvest alternative by creating a pool of Regional hunters that may be contacted on short notice for unplanned harvest opportunities.

Significant advantages for this harvest alternative include:

- ?? Maximum opportunity for removal of elk from limited population areas.
- ?? Provides for timely response to unplanned harvest opportunities.
- ?? Provides for Department control of hunter densities.
- ?? Provides for greater control of tag sales by limiting sales to Department offices or to individual Regional offices.
- ?? Allows for real-time database tracking of nonpermit-tag holders.

Significant disadvantages include:

- ?? Increased Department workload in developing hunter pool list, contacting hunters from that list, and distributing Regional nonpermit-tags.
- ?? Increased Department workload in conducting law enforcement patrols and investigations.

6. Removal by Department personnel or their agent in accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-102, Commission Policy A2.12, and Department Policy C2.5.

This harvest alternative is feasible without requiring any statute or rule changes.

Significant advantages for this harvest alternative include:

- ?? Maximum controlled removal of elk from limited population areas.
- ?? Facilitates removal of small populations of elk in isolated areas where removal by hunters may be inappropriate or ineffective (e.g. within city limits).

Significant disadvantages include:

- ?? Potential for adverse public opinion to removal of elk by Department personnel, especially when occurring on public lands.
- ?? Increased Department workload in removal of elk and salvage of carcasses.

ACTION ITEMS

The Department recommends the Commission vote to direct the Department to adopt the following actions to implement the Zone Management Guidelines.

- 1) Draft management zone mapping criteria, scope management zone mapping criteria through public review, and produce management zone maps.
- 2) Incorporate management zone objectives within hunt guidelines.
- 3) Incorporate management zone criteria within species management guidelines.
- 4) Incorporate management zone maps within regional elk operational plans.
- 5) Incorporate new survey protocol within the elk species management guidelines when the Big Game Survey Team finalizes this new protocol.
- 6) Solicit an opinion from the Attorney General on the legality of holding depredation hunts under Commission Rule R12-4-115 on public lands to address conflicts occurring on adjacent private lands.

The Department recommends further evaluation of the following actions to determine what amendments may be necessary to completely implement the proposed Elk Management Guidelines.

- 1) Commission review and action on pertinent rule changes, potentially including R12-4-101 (definitions), R12-4-104 (spring draw), R12-4-107 (bonus points), R12-4-114 (nonpermit-tag sales), and R12-4-309 (restricted hunts). Timeframes for addressing any recommended amendments to R12-4-101, R12-4-104, R12-4-107, R12-4-114 begin July of 2002 for normal review process. The normal rule review process would not be completed until February 2004. In accordance with Arizona Game and Fish Department Operating Manual, Section J, these rules could be taken out of the normal cycle and amendments could be accomplished in a minimum of 12 months. Currently R12-4-309 and R12-4-609 are in the rules review process.
- 2) Review of A.R.S. Title 17 for legality and compatibility of proposed rule changes.
- 3) Evaluate the potential for Commission review of R12-4-102 to reduce fees for elk nonpermit-tags should the current fee structure impede the ability to achieve management objectives.
- 4) Evaluate the option of developing pre-established hunter pools to address unplanned harvest opportunities. This evaluation would include review of Commission Rules R12-4-115 and R12-4-609.
- 5) Develop a Department policy describing situations that would warrant the declaration of an emergency season under Commission Rule R12-4-609B.
- 6) Evaluate the potential for increasing the bag limit for elk to two per calendar year, with the restriction that one elk may be taken with a permit-tag and one elk with a nonpermit-tag.

SUMMARY:

The following chart summarizes management zone descriptions, management objectives, harvest alternatives and private land conflict resolution alternatives.

ZONE	STANDARD POPULATION MANAGEMENT	WINTER RANGE POPULATION MANAGEMENT	LIMITED POPULATION MANAGEMENT
DESCRIPTION	?? Summer and winter elk range. ?? Desired range for providing diverse recreational opportunities. ?? Manageable levels of conflict.	?? Standard population winter range areas where yearlong resident elk cause unacceptable levels of conflict.	?? Areas that are not essential for the maintenance of elk populations. ?? Managed for minimum levels of conflict.
MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE	?? Provide diverse recreational opportunity. ?? Avoid adverse impacts to habitat. ?? Reduce substantiated depredation complaints.	?? Reduce or eliminate spring through fall elk population. ?? Provide quality habitat for wintering elk. ?? Reduce or eliminate conflicts during spring through fall.	?? Manage populations to reduce or eliminate conflicts by maintaining populations at low densities, or eliminating populations, as appropriate.
HARVEST ALTERNATIVES	?? Limited permit-tag fall or spring hunts.	?? Limited permit-tag fall or spring hunts. ?? Limited or unlimited nonpermit-tag hunts during spring – fall.	?? Limited permit-tag fall or spring hunts. ?? Limited or unlimited nonpermit-tag hunts during any time of the year. ?? Removal by Department personnel.
PRIVATE LAND CONFLICT RESOLUTION ALTERNATIVES	?? Cooperative stewardship agreements ?? Department removal on or adjacent to private land.	?? Cooperative stewardship agreements ?? Depredation hunts ?? Department removal on or adjacent to public land	?? Cooperative stewardship agreements ?? Depredation hunts ?? Department removal on or adjacent to public lands

IMPLEMENTATION OF AND ALTERNATIVES TO A.R.S. TITLE 17-239

Background:

When the Department receives elk complaints, they are typically handled in one of two ways, as a nuisance wildlife or depredation call. Complaint calls that involve residential land go through a “nuisance wildlife” channel and are typically resolved by a Department employee recommending deterrents. These recommended deterrents include everything from commercial scent bags, radio speakers or other harassment type strategies.

If the call involves damage or depredation to croplands or pastureland, the call is considered a “depredation” complaint. These complaints also take one of two paths (see process map in Appendix III). A depredation complaint call normally includes a site visit by the Wildlife Manager. At the initial site visit (in accordance with A.R.S. 17-239), the Wildlife Manager will make a recommendation depending on the desires of the landowner. If the landowner does not object to the presence of elk, but wishes to address the impacts, the Wildlife Manager usually recommends a stewardship process. The stewardship process allows the Department to attempt to resolve the complaint by providing for the wildlife benefit that is realized from the private land. It may include the Department providing seed for crops, fertilizer to increase production, fencing alterations, other means to manipulate elk use seasonally, or a combination of these.

If the desire of the landowner is to not have elk on the private land, the Wildlife Manager will recommend anti-depredation measures. These recommendations are based on the nature of the depredation and the relief needed by the landowner. For instance, elk use of a haystack during winter months can be resolved by placing fencing panels around the haystack during the period elk are present and removing the panels after elk have moved. Other temporary or short-term solutions have included hazing or temporary fencing of cropland. The Department maintains a supply of anti-depredation materials and loans these materials to landowners for use to determine effectiveness. Examples of these materials include: cracker shells, propane cannon, fence panels, plastic netting fencing material, and electrical fencing. The loan of these materials is to either resolve a short-term depredation event or to allow the landowner to test certain anti-depredation material for his eventual acquisition and use. In accordance with A.R.S. Title 17-239, this is the usual technical assistance provided by the Department to resolve depredation complaints.

However, there are depredation complaints where the landowner’s need for a long-term solution is not met by the technical assistance alone. In these instances, the Department has suggested a combination of the above resolutions coupled with hunt recommendation strategies to reduce the impacts to private land over time. For example, the Wildlife Manager may recommend a stewardship agreement, a loan of fencing material to manipulate elk, and a specific harvest strategy to reduce local elk numbers. This may be drafted into a three-year agreement between the landowner and the Department.

The private landowner and the Wildlife Manager analyze the resolution process at the end of three years. For some of these agreements, notices are sent to hunters that were drawn for the landowner's unit to contact the landowner for permission and assistance in locating elk. In other instances, the Department has provided a list of permitted hunters to the landowner. This allows the landowner to encourage or determine those hunters that would be allowed on their private land. Resolution occurs when elk numbers and use of specific areas on private land (in combination with stewardship agreements) meet both Department and landowner needs.

Existing Requirements (17-239) and Process (R12-4-115):

If these strategies fail to meet expectations and the individual suffering damage has met the administrative requirements in ARS 17-239, the Department can recommend that the Commission establish a "depredation hunt." The Commission has the option of implementing a depredation hunt using one of the following strategies as currently allowed for in A.R.S. 17-239 if harvest of animals is found to be necessary to relieve damage.

1. The Commission may establish special seasons or special bag limits, and either set reduced fees or waive any or all license fees required by this A.R.S., to crop that wildlife. Current Department systems can conduct a special draw for depredation tags and the application is contained within the existing hunt proclamation. The R12-4-115 implementation process will require an expenditure of Department resources above the annual hunt permit draw to conduct an additional draw. There are several factors to consider regarding the effectiveness of this method. If the bag limit remains at one, applications will certainly be less than if conducted outside of the general big game draw, because of the potential for low hunt success and it would impact individual bonus points. Such depredation hunts are not complicated by R12-4-309 (Restricted hunts) or R12-4-609 (Commission Orders). This process allows for the determination of hunt seasons and hunters rapidly without encumbrances of these and some other rules.
2. The Commission also has the option to issue a special permit for the taking of such wildlife to the landowner, lessee, livestock operator, or municipality suffering damage. This requires that edible portions are surrendered as prescribed by the Commission and delivered to a charitable organization.
3. The Commission can also order the Department to remove the offending animals (through trapping and relocating). The Commission can in accordance with A.R.S. 17-102, other applicable statutes, and policies order the Department or an agent of the Department to take wildlife.

Once the Commission has established a depredation hunt, the following must be adhered to in accordance with Commission Rule (R12-4-115):

- ?? The purpose of the hunt is to remove depredating wildlife pursuant to A.R.S. 17-239.
- ?? The Department maintains an annual file of applicants, however, applications can be accepted at any time. "Group" applications are not accepted.
- ?? The random drawing requires notification of the successful applicant at least three times within a 24-hour period.
- ?? The draw continues until the numbers of depredation tags established by the Commission have been issued.

?? The applicant may not receive a hunt permit-tag and depredation tag in the same year unless the bag limit is greater than one for that species

Alternative Hunt Structures

The alternatives for conducting non-traditional elk hunts contained within the guidelines and requirements of R12-4-115 and R12-4-609 provide the following potential options.

I. Use of the Commission Public Review Process

The Department can recommend to the Commission that a hunt be established in an area that will likely have a high elk impact. The recommendation would be approved through the Commission public review process and would establish a specific hunt area to reduce elk numbers adjacent to or on private land. In this alternative, the Commission authorizes the hunt, even if the numbers and timing of the hunt are not known at the Commission meeting. However, the boundaries of the hunt area would be described during a regular Commission meeting. The Commission Order opening the season must be consistent with A.R.S. 17-234 and the hunters are determined by a draw process, as outlined in R12-4-115.

To implement this alternative, the Department and Commission must determine the legality of using the Depredation draw process (R12-4-115) outside of standard big game draw. In other words, can the Commission conduct additional draws without having the hunt permit-tag application schedule published annually by the Department (see R12-4-104), or must they keep the two processes separate, operating either a depredation (private land hunt) or “standard” big game season. This will need to be clarified as each draw process contains separate requirements for application forms, hunters per application, and requirements for notification of hunters. There does not however, appear to be a restriction on the timing of these hunts other than the notice of permit-tag application schedule as contained in the annual hunt proclamation.

II. Establishing a “Hunter Pool”

A second alternative is for the Commission to authorize dates in the hunt proclamation that would include draw dates for short notice hunts if recommended by the Department and authorized by the Commission. However, R12-1-104 and R12-4-115 could be amended to allow for the establishment of a “hunter pool” that could be drawn from for management purposes, other than depredation per A.R.S. 17-239 and outside the requirements of noticing such draw dates in the hunt proclamation. The need to authorize additional hunters could arise when a hunt conducted in accordance with current rules does not meet wildlife management objectives. Additional hunters would be obtained from a “pool” and authorized for an additional hunt on a short and pre-determined time frame to complete management objectives. Since current Department systems are capable of producing a “hunter pool,” the additional draw for this type of permitted hunt could be conducted with minimal expenditure of resources. In addition, this “hunter pool” could be used to provide hunters on very short notice for emergency hunts authorized under R12-4-609. Emergency hunts may be used in extreme drought conditions when land management agencies request elk removal, or in locations where traditional harvest objectives are not met during regular seasons and additional harvest is needed quickly to alleviate private or public resource issues.

Process for Hunter Pool

The Team's preferred alternative to establishing non-traditional elk hunts outside of depredation hunt structures, is for the Commission adopt a Rule that delegates the Commission's authority to the Director to initiate hunt units covering selected areas (e.g. those listed as limited population elk management zones in each Region) that have been established by Commission Order. The hunt units would be established with maximum numbers of tags or take quotas and a long season. Further, the Director's authority would be extended to allow him to specify when and where to use these hunts allowing each Region to have a hunter pool, and pre-randomized by a draw process available to immediately address situations as they arise.

The process to remove elk would then consist of several steps:

1. The landowner, land management agency, and Region would review the on-the-ground situation and explore options.
2. If population reduction is collectively viewed as the only viable option, the landowner, land management agency, and Region would agree to an area where the hunt would be most effective, agree on a number of animals to be removed, and agree on a timeframe for removal. The landowner could specify conditions for hunter access, as private property owner, but would have to agree to open his private land to these hunters.
3. The Region would develop a proposal in consultation with the Game Branch.
4. The Region would submit the proposal to the Assistant Director of Field Operations for review.
5. If the Assistant Director for Field Operations concurs with the proposal, the hunt would be recommend to the Director for approval.

With the use of fax and e-mail, these steps could be completed in one day.

If approved by the Director, the Department would begin calling the required number of hunters from the pre-randomized list (calling each three times before moving down the list) until the required number of hunters agree to hunt in the specified location, during the specified period. The hunter would then go to the Regional Office or other Department facility to pick-up his or her tag for the hunt, a map of the hunt sub area, and other details of the hunt.

This process would require the creation of a new rule, or significant amendment to an existing rule, most probably R12-4-115 or R12-6-609. If the Commission was to address several rules simultaneously, a pool of hunters could be created annually (amended R12-4-115), a draw date determined that would not require prior annual publication (R12-4-104) allowing for immediate hunter determination. If the hunter was not successful, they could re-enter the annual draw (R12-4-104.C.10.)

IV. Nonpermit Elk Tag and Hunt

The creation of nonpermit elk tags and hunts could be developed to address the issues as well. Nonpermit tags (R12-4-114) are issued by both the Department and license dealers. The Commission can authorize a nonpermit-tag elk hunt, establish seasons, and although a hunt number is not assigned, may establish a quota for elk harvest in the order. This would be similar to nonpermit bear seasons. A non-permit elk hunt can be conducted within current rules and would allow for the taking of an elk without affecting bonus points (R12-4-107). The nonpermit-tag season would require the determination of a hunt area and approval by the Commission. However, within current rules this hunt structure requires the sale of nonpermit-tags at all license dealers. The Commission could amend R12-4-114 approving a nonpermit-tag for elk available only at Regional offices and only during specific time frames, allowing better control and administration of a nonpermit elk hunt. The control of nonpermit elk tags through distribution at certain times and at certain Regional offices will be important to address potential landowner and land management agency concerns over high numbers of hunters in the field at one time. The number of elk to be removed by a non-permit hunt could be controlled by setting a take quota, adjusting season length, and narrowly defining open areas.

ACTION ITEMS:

The Department recommends further evaluation of the following items necessary to implement alternative hunt procedures to R12-4-115.

1. Further evaluate A.R.S. Title 17-239 to determine if it would allow depredation hunts on public land to assist in alleviating damage to private land. In some private land damage cases, elk are only present during darkness and they move to public land during daylight hours. Evaluation of whether depredation hunts to address private land damage can be conducted on public land per A.R.S. 17-239 needs to be completed by the Attorney General's Office. There are instances where the harvest of animals by hunters is only practical if hunters are allowed access to the deprecating animals on public lands.
2. Development of a Rule allowing the Commission to delegate the authority to the Director to establish hunt units covering selected areas within limited population elk management zones. Further, the Director's authority would be extended to allow him to specify when and where to utilize these hunts and establish tag numbers or quotas and time frames. Other rules that may need to be reviewed include R12-4-104, R12-4-107, R12-4-114, and R12-4-609. Timeframes for addressing any recommended amendments to R12-4-104, R12-4-107, R12-4-114 begin July of 2002 for normal review process. The normal rule review process would not be completed until February 2004. If these rules could also taken out of the normal review cycle, amendments could be accomplished in a minimum of 12 months. Currently R12-4-309 and R12-4-609 are in the rules review process.
3. Establish procedure for what constitutes an emergency under R12-4-609 to provide a framework for the Director to use in situations requiring fielding hunters on short notice to address habitat or private land issues should normal hunting seasons not meet objectives.

Outreach Plan

Background:

It is the Department's goal to manage elk to provide for diverse recreational opportunities while significantly reducing substantiated depredation complaints. The Elk herds causing cropland depredation are a small percentage of the statewide elk populations (estimated to be less than 5%). The Department is spending vast amounts of time and money dealing with these problem situations, but the impacts to other land uses remain in some cases. The cost is greater than the benefit to continue addressing these issues with tools that have, to this point, been met with limited success. Regions throughout the state have recommended more aggressive hunt structures to address these specific elk herds in recent years. Despite more aggressive management efforts, conflicts still exist in some areas. If new tools (hunt strategies) were developed to reduce or eliminate these peripheral elk populations, the number of substantiated complaints about elk would decrease drastically. Most importantly, Department elk managers recognize that significant reduction or elimination of these elk would not affect the Department's ability to manage for top quality elk hunts on a statewide basis and would minimize conflicts.

It is the policy of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to recognize the value of multiple uses of state and public lands. Small numbers of elk in certain areas are causing conflicts with other public and private resources. For example, good winter range is a critical component to the lifecycles of elk and deer throughout most of the northern half of Arizona and this range can be negatively impacted if elk utilize it year-round. Despite the creative and innovative hunt strategies implemented by the Department in recent years, the need still exists to do more in some areas to facilitate multiple uses of the land. Therefore, the Commission directed the Department to generate harvest alternatives for elk that would be more effective in addressing problem areas.

Team Product:

To comply with the direction of the Director, the Department formulated the Elk Harvest Management Strategy Team (Team), which was comprised of Department personnel experienced in elk management from throughout the state. The formal goal of the Team was to develop viable elk management recommendations that will delineate management efforts in the future. As a result of the Team's efforts, the Department is seeking Commission direction to implement a new statewide elk harvest management strategy.

If Commission direction is given, the Department recommends the following road map for implementing the new strategies: Field Operations Division personnel will analyze all occupied elk habitat statewide under standardized criteria. The management zone mapping criteria will be presented to critical stakeholders in a public review process for this management proposal. Stakeholders (e.g. land management agencies, habitat partnership committees, landowners, ranchers, sportsman organizations, etc.) will be provided the opportunity to comment on the zone management mapping criteria during formalized meetings or during informal personal contacts with Department personnel. Finalized zone management maps will be included in the Regional Elk Operational Plans and reviewed by Habitat Partnership Committees and the public. Finalized elk management guidelines, which would include the zone management criteria, will be incorporated within the elk species management guidelines.

In summary, it is important to recognize that the list of recommendations generated by the Team is to be viewed as tools in a toolbox. Some of the tools generated by the Team are very aggressive, but provide important flexibility to manage elk issues on a case-by-case basis. While all occupied elk habitat will be designated as Standard Population Management, Winter Range Population Management, or Limited Population Management, not all harvest strategies will be used in all units or subunits. These designations will be used to help identify and delineate areas that require extra management measures, and to facilitate public input on these issues. In fact, harvest and management strategies will not change significantly from current management in Standard Population Management Zones. The majority of occupied elk habitat in the state will be designated Standard Population Management. The net result will be a drastic reduction in substantiated elk depredation complaints in peripheral areas while maintaining the top quality elk herds for which Arizona has become famous.

Outreach Recommendations

The Team brainstormed a list of stakeholders and critical customers for the Department's elk management efforts. The team reached consensus that this list should be targeted for outreach efforts on this topic along with other venues the team identified. The Team recommends to I&E division that the following stakeholders and venues, at a minimum, be targeted for outreach efforts:

Hunters

Guides

Arizona Legislature

Ranchers/Farmers

Arizona Farm Bureau

Arizona Cattle Growers Association

Land Management Agencies

Nature Conservancy

Audubon Society

Sierra Club

All Department Employees

Species-oriented sports groups (i.e. Arizona Mule Deer Association, Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Arizona Bow Hunters Association etc)

Local Governments

License Dealers

General Public

Arizona Department of Transportation

Arizona Department of Public Safety

The Team generated a Gantt chart for dissemination of Team-related information to stakeholders. The chart provides a timeline for upcoming outreach opportunities, and opportunities that have already been exploited (Appendix IV).

During its 2001 tour of the state to conduct public hunt meetings, Game Branch floated the concept of a revised elk management strategy that included elk-free zones. The public had a variety of input. Appendix V lists the comments.

Outreach Implementation

On the “Alternative Elk Management” proposals, there is actually have an outreach dichotomy. The first time line and accompanying strategy is from now through the April 21 Commission meeting (and even that is split because of alternatives are being brought before the commission in March). The second outreach strategy is for the long term.

During the short term, the overwhelming need is to:

1. Achieve general sportsman and public awareness about what is being proposed.
2. Achieve good awareness and understanding by our stakeholders of what is being proposed, and why.

To accomplish the short term (and also some of the long term), we need the following informational tools:

1. A clear and concise overview piece for the stakeholders, media and the general public explaining what is being proposed, and why.
2. Provide specific on-the-ground examples of elk-whatever conflicts, and how those conflicts will be addressed through what is being proposed.
3. Need a contrast-and-comparison between what is being proposed now, and what was originally taken before the public during the January-February hunt meetings.

Action Items Include:

1. Using the “overview” in conjunction with the detailed proposals, conduct a mass mailing to our stakeholders.
2. Arrange to do presentations to key stakeholders prior to the April meeting. The demonstration area should also be used for these presentations.
3. Do an article on the alternative management proposal in the weekly Wildlife News (WLN) as soon as possible, reviewing the March Commission meeting.
4. Do an article in the subsequent weekly WLN providing the demonstration area example.
5. Do an article following the March meeting on what is being proposed, and the public reaction to the proposal.
6. Get with key media and conduct a field trip to the demonstration area site before the April meeting.
7. Post the “Overview” piece and the proposal on the Department’s Internet Home Page. Also, make sure the WLN article on the proposal remains on the home page, rather than being replaced after a week.
8. Do an article in the WLN in early April outlining what is coming before the commission at its April 21 meeting.
9. Make sure the “overview” and the proposals are available at all department hunt open houses.

10. For internal awareness, make presentations at all Game Branch/Regional hunt meetings in March. Also do a brown bag special.

Post April Game and Fish Commission Meeting

1. Do a Wildlife Views article on the alternative management proposal.
2. Do an Arizona Wildlife Views Television show on the alternative management proposal, using the “poster child” site as its focus.
3. Get “Wild Moments” or some other national outdoor television show to do a segment on the Total Quality Management creative approach to elk management.
4. Do follow up articles next year in the weekly Wildlife News and the “Wildlife Views” magazine, when we have sufficient data, on whether the efforts appear to be a success (will probably need to qualify that one year’s worth of data is insufficient for a true analysis). We should probably say up front how many years worth of data would be necessary to make a determination on whether the alternative management approaches were successful. Continue doing follow ups in successive years as necessary
5. Maybe put a half-page article on the success of the alternative elk management efforts into the Hunt Regulations themselves for 2002-03.
6. Incorporate the on-the-ground portion into a Wildlife Conservation Workshop.

For internal understanding, do a class during the Department school (possibly as a TQ success).

Appendix I

Commission Order 4: Elk

Guidelines:

1. At least two game management units within the standard population management areas will be open for early bull muzzleloader hunts. These units will rotate annually.
2. “Antlerless” or “any” elk hunts may be recommended in any game management unit or sub-unit where the resident elk population needs to be reduced or stabilized.
3. Recommended season dates for “antlerless” and “any” elk hunts may be altered to better achieve population objectives.
4. Hunts will be stratified in units or sub-units where the number of hunters required for the desired harvest is in excess of desirable hunter concentrations.
5. Habitat-based management objectives will be included in the determination of elk population objectives, using forage use monitoring results per Department protocol, for individual elk herd units where this data is available.
6. Five percent of the elk permit tags will be allocated to Juniors-only hunts as antlerless permit tags within the standard population management areas. The remainder of the elk permit tags will be allocated among hunt types according to a formula considering application pressure and hunt success. The allocation formula for hunt types **WILL NOT** be used for hunts in Limited and Winter Range Management Zones.
7. Private land depredation hunts may be recommended on a case by case basis in accordance with A.R.S. 17-239 and R12-4-115.

The Department’s Elk Management Goal is to maintain elk populations at levels that provide diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse impacts to the species, its habitat, or the habitat of other wildlife, and while minimizing substantiated depredation complaints. Management criteria are:

- ?? Antlerless elk will be harvested in accordance with population objectives in Regional Elk Operational Plans.
- ?? For standard population management areas: Bull permits should be decreased if pre-hunt Calf:Cow ratios are below 35:100 and/or Bull:Cow ratios are below 20:100. Bull permits should be increased if Calf:Cow ratios exceed 40:100 and/or Bull:Cow ratios exceed 30:100.

- ?? For standard population management areas: Bull:Cow ratios in Game Management Units 3A/C, 9, 10, 22, and 23 may be managed for higher than 30:100 when in accordance with Regional Elk Operation Plans.
- ?? Bull:Cow and Calf:Cow ratios do not apply in game management units or sub-units designated as limited population areas in accordance with Regional Elk Operational Plans.
- ?? Bull:Cow and Calf:Cow ratios may not apply to resident elk within game management units or sub-units designated as winter range population areas in accordance with Regional Elk Operational Plans. Wintering-migratory elk within these areas will be managed in adherence to standard population management area guidelines

Appendix II

EXAMPLE OF GENERAL NONPERMIT-TAG ELK SEASONS

Limited Population Management Area Hunt Open Areas include Sub-Unit(s) in Accordance with A.R.S. 17-303 and 304, and R-12-4-108, 301, 309, 802 and 803

 The limited population management area hunts are designed to address those units and sub-units that the Department has designated for very-low densities of elk.

Hunters may experience extremely low hunt success within these hunts.

HUNTERS – Contact the Department’s Regional offices for maps and landowner contact information to assist in determining locations to hunt. Maps and landowner contact numbers will be available for your use.

Season Dates	Notes	Open Areas	Legal Elk
Aug. 1 – Aug. 23	(31 & 32)	2A, 2B, 3A and described portions of 3B and 4B	Antlerless
Oct. 5 – Oct. 18	(31 & 32)	2A, 2B, 3A and described portions of 3B and 4B	Antlerless
Oct. 26 – Dec. 31	(31 & 33)	2A, 3A East and described portions of 3B	Antlerless

LAWFUL TAKING METHODS: Any firearm or bow and arrow as prescribed in R12-4-304.

LICENSE REQUIRED: Class F or G license plus Limited Area Elk nonpermit-tag.

BAG LIMIT: One elk per calendar year.

Two elk per calendar year if restrictions

SEE DISCUSSION ON BAG LIMITS ON PAGE 8

NOTES:

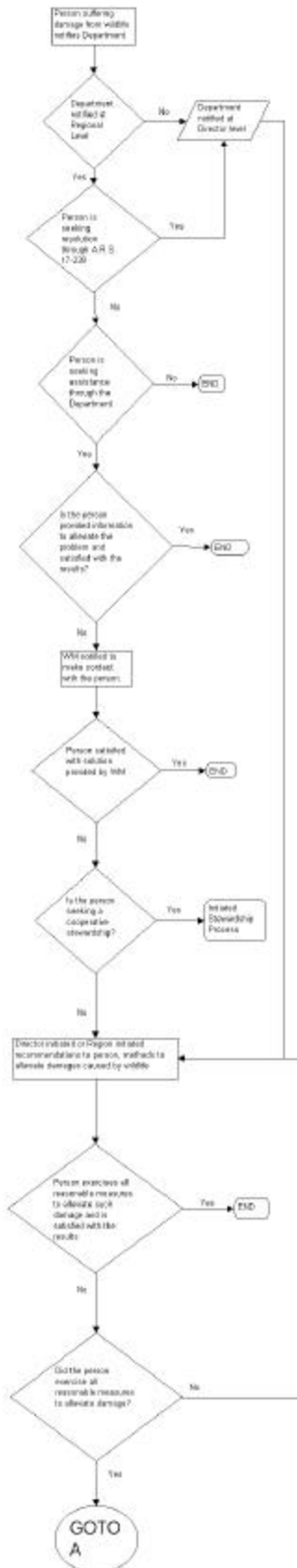
(31) That portion of Game Management Unit 3B – Beginning at Snowflake; southerly along AZ Hwy 77 to (name of road) easterly on (name of road) across Black Mesa to Apache County Road (name of road); easterly on (name of road) to AZ Hwy 61; northeasterly on AZ Hwy 61 to AZ Hwy 180A; northerly on AZ hwy 180A to Concho-Snowflake road; westerly on the Concho-Snowflake road to Snowflake.

(32) That portion of Game Management Unit 4B located north of the Sitgreaves National Forest.

(33) That portion of Game Management Unit 3A located east of Highway 77.

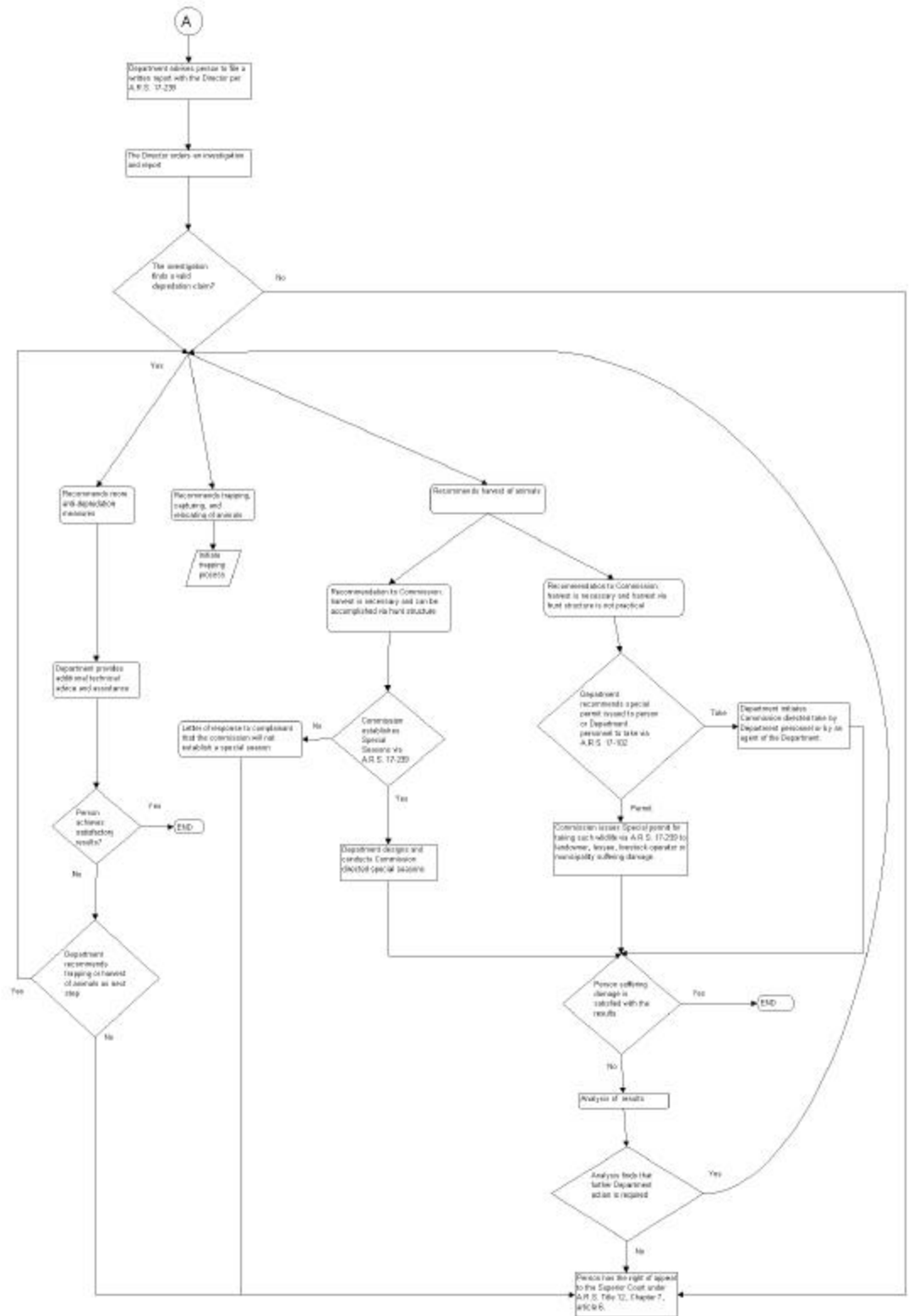
APPENDIX III

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
WILDLIFE DEPREDATION FLOW CHART



APPENDIX III (Cont)

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
WILDLIFE DEPREDATION FLOW CHART



APPENDIX IV

**ACTIVITY MATRIX
Information Dissemination**

Activity	Fall 2000	Jan 2001	Feb 2001	Mar. 2001	April 2001	May-Aug 2001	Aug-Dec 2001	Dec 2001	Jan 2002	Spring 2002
FRSG Coord. Reg. II	X									
Commission Meeting		X		X	X	X (Aug for spring hunt)		X 2002 hunt guide Lines		
Public hunt meetings		X	X						X	
FS Coord. meetings			X							
HPC meetings			X	X						
Commission/landowner meeting			X						X Eval.	
Game Branch/Region hunt meetings				X						
Wildlife News Article				X						
Web Page				X		X	X	X		
Mailings to stakeholders				X	X					
Wildlife Conservation Workshop						X				
Department School						X				
Mailing to hunters after draw						X	X	X		
Evaluation								X		
Page in Hunt Regulations publication				X						
Wildlife Views success stories										X

Information concerning the recommendations presented to the Commission in March would be rapidly disseminated to stakeholders with the Game Branch mailings. Recommendations presented to Commission in April for 2001/02 hunts would be disseminated after the meeting. This information would be distributed via Wildlife News articles and the Department web page for explanation to constituents on hunt success expectation and landowners concerns. In some hunt areas, limited population management zones, specific letters would be mailed to each hunter drawn for hunts as to where to go, how to hunt, landowner, and Department contacts. There would be expanded efforts for landowner/hunter contacts on some hunts. There would be coordination with land management agencies during the hunts and follow up evaluations.

APPENDIX V
Public Comments Relevant to Maintaining Elk-Free Zones

I support the idea of limitless elk tags for areas where the Arizona Game and Fish Department does not want elk.

In these instances, use an application process that will guarantee tags.

At the Sierra Vista public meeting, there was a consensus to keep 12A /12B “elk-free.”

Set up juniors-only hunts of 1-2 months in length in areas where elk reductions are desired.

Use over-the-counter tags that are outside the draw process.

I would like any tag for low density areas to be an additional elk, in other words additional to the current bag limit of 1 elk per calendar year.

I think over-the-counter tags would be very high in the demand.

If you have over-the-counter tags, have a mandatory checkout for within the open unit.

Hunts designed to reduce elk density to low levels need to be a long season.

80-90 elk (as there may be on the Kaibab) may increase quickly.

Set up a system for permitted deer hunters on the Kaibab to buy an elk tag that is only available to t

Rifle hunt opportunities and success in Arizona strongly supports current management; raise elk numbers when habitat is good.

Condition of elk is tied to habitat and total numbers. Elk must be kept in balance with habitat. I don't have a problem with elk on the North Kaibab!