

## **Strategic Elk Management Plan Advisory Group Organizational Meeting Summary**

An organizational meeting of the Strategic Elk Management Plan Advisory Group was held on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, at the Quality Inn conference center in Harrison, AR. Hosted by AGFC Elk Program Coordinator Cory Gray and the Elk Management Team, the meeting began at 6:30pm with a catered dinner. Wildlife Chief Doyle Shook welcomed and thanked the invited guests. Cory Gray introduced the Elk Management Team members present and noted the presence of former AGFC Commissioner Dr. Ralph Bowers.

After emphasizing the meeting theme, Cory handed off to meeting facilitator John Sunderland who finalized the agenda and began the first interactive task. Participants were asked to introduce themselves and state their interest in the elk resource. The comments below capture the statements made by the invited advisory group members, elk management team members and AGFC administrators present.

### Statements of Interests by Attendees

- Damages sustained by landowners
- A good, fair plan to let landowners have a say in permitting
- Overlapping (competition) of elk with cattle and deer
- Address the problems while preserving the elk herd
- A professional interest in filling data, management information gaps
- Farm Bureau representative supporting landowner interests
- Involved in original elk stocking
- Prior interest in quality deer management. Hated elk as a direct competitor. Some local population balance now. Don't upset with more elk.
- Has sustained some livestock damage (horses). Probably too many elk in Boxley Valley. Local cattlemen need consideration. I do like to see them.
- Non-resident Boxley Valley landowner. Enjoys viewing, twice too many elk.
- Feeding 25-99 elk in Boxley Valley
- Tremendous tourism benefit, landowners do need help
- Work in Pulaski County, own land locally. Serious equestrian trail rider. Want to be able to ride equestrian trails and view elk.
- Cow/hay operation on Bear Creek. Long-time deer club cooperator. Fixing lots of fences.
- Successful management requires a relationship between government and landowners which does not now exist.
- Bear Creek cattleman. Elk pay no attention to fences.
- Non-resident farmer (Augusta) but local landowner and elk enthusiast. Need a mix or compromise that works.
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation representative and cattleman so I understand. Need a sustainable solution
- Conservationist/hunter perspective
- Elk guide perspective
- Hope I and some of my city friends will get permits in future

- ❑ Elk a problem sometimes but have not seen a deer/elk conflict. Some folks just want to get a permit (witness a drawing). AGFC needs local help to manage. We see lights and guns
- ❑ Elk have provided a significant source of habitat management and research funding
- ❑ Like to see herd/habitat expansion if we can
- ❑ Elk Management Team member and cattleman. Have tried to represent landowners. Have seen some happy hunters, can show where money has been spent.
- ❑ Administrative oversight – want to see effective implementation
- ❑ Attempting to get an overview of perspectives (NPS representative)
- ❑ Interested in managing for a wide range of species (USFS representative)
- ❑ Hunted elk and conducted research in Tennessee. We need to know where we are going with elk management
- ❑ Trying to improve elk habitat on AGFC lands
- ❑ Interested in helping with public involvement and public information
- ❑ Loss of county tax base resulting from elk habitat acquisition, need in-lieu payments to offset revenue loss

Cory then presented background information on the history of elk management, concluding with a summary of the current plan and the need for a new strategic plan developed with effective public involvement. John and Cory then led a discussion of the advisory group charter which clarifies roles and mutual responsibilities of the advisory group, elk management team, and the decision role of the Commission.

Cory then explained the planning process steps by providing a process outline and a list of public meetings with specific time, place and directions information.

The next activity was a discussion of what AGFC needs from the advisory group and an opportunity for invitees to state how they will commit to helping strategic plan development. The following comments were received.

Responses to question – How can you (Advisory Group members) help us (AGFC)?

- ❑ I will keep an open mind
- ❑ We can facilitate partnerships
- ❑ We can give the private landowner perspective – living with elk year around
- ❑ I would provide private land for research if needed
- ❑ I will represent the county political perspective
- ❑ I will represent the business owner/tourism perspective
- ❑ We have the ability to communicate with local people influenced by elk

The final interactive activity was an attempt to define success. After noting that perfect agreement was not anticipated, John stated that the elk management team and the advisory group should strive to achieve substantial informed consent. The following success statements were contributed.

Responses to question – How will we define success?

- ❑ Improved public image for AGFC and NPS. It is very poor now
- ❑ Preserving the elk resource for youth of today and tomorrow
- ❑ By delineating a boundary line defining where elk are welcome and where they are not
- ❑ By reaching a balance between land owners and elk enthusiasts – defined in the plan
- ❑ By structuring in an avenue to deal with private land issues and keeping a balance between landowner and elk interests
- ❑ If AGFC works with private landowners

The meeting was adjourned on schedule. \_\_\_\_ individuals attended and provided contact information. In general, positive and considerate attitudes prevailed. Many stayed after adjournment to visit and discuss elk management.

Handouts:    Agenda  
                  Elk Management Summary  
                  Advisory Group Charter  
                  Planning Schedule/Process Outline  
                  Meeting Time/Place Details