

Decision Notice

and

Finding of **No Significant Impact**

for the

Release of Elk into the Jarbidge Mountains

Jarbidge Ranger District

Elko County, Nevada

An Environmental Assessment is available for public review at offices of the Humboldt National Forest in Buhl, Idaho and Elko, Nevada. This document, which was prepared by an interdisciplinary team, discusses alternative Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management actions regarding reestablishment of elk in the Jarbidge Mountains as proposed by the Nevada Dept. of Wildlife.

It is my decision to approve Alternative D, release of 30-50 elk in both O'Neil Basin and Slide Creek/East Fork of the Jarbidge River with a target population of 250-300 elk. My decision is based upon:

1. An analysis of how effectively proposal implementation addresses public concerns identified through scoping over the 1984-1989 period. Public input was solicited in initial and evolutionary stages of this proposal from County Game Boards to Manage Wildlife, ranchers with operations in and near the proposed elk management area, sportsmens' clubs, and groups and individuals who expressed an interest in Humboldt National Forest wildlife activities.

2. A Six Party Agreement (6PA) has been prepared and will be approved by the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Elko and Boise Districts of the Bureau of Land Management, the "71" Livestock Association, and the Humboldt National Forest, prior to elk being released. Key elements of this mitigation are:

- An alliance of federal, state, and private interests will cooperate in the management of the reestablished elk population.

- Cooperators' obligations to each other are specifically defined.

- Specific cooperator actions are identified to pro-actively manage anticipated elk impacts.

3. The belief that 250-300 head of elk can be managed using two wintering areas (approximately 125-150 elk in each area) compatibly with uses on and adjacent to public lands. Although conflicts between elk and other uses and users could occur, the management of elk as proposed including mitigation measures will effectively resolve them.

4. Elk are native to and present occupants of the Jarbidge Mountains. Data reviewed indicates that the Jarbidge Mountains are within the distribution range of elk.

5. Surveys and estimates by land management agencies indicate that sufficient forage exists in all seasons of the year to support the target elk population.

6. The Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service have approved land and resource management plans which allow for the reintroduction of elk into habitats suitable and capable of supporting them, with the proviso that conflicts with other resources be resolved and/or appropriate evaluation and analysis be conducted. These documents are the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan, p.II-58, Record of Decision dated March 23, 1987; the Wells Resource Management Plan, pp. 10,19,20, Record of Decision dated July 16, 1985; the Elko Resource Management Plan, pp. 3,30, Decision Summary dated March 11, 1987; and the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, pp. IV-5 and IV-73, as approved August 19, 1986. This proposed elk transplant is consistent with direction in these plans.

Alternative A, the No Action alternative with disapproval of the elk reestablishment proposal, was not selected because it fails to take advantage of benefits that a reestablished elk population offers to the public.

Alternative B, 30-75 elk released in East Fork Jarbidge River with 250-300 target population, was not selected because it would not take advantage of the O'Neil Basin wintering area and posed excessive risk of depredation on private lands.

Alternative C, 50 elk released in both Mary's River and East Fork Jarbidge River with 500 target population, was not selected because it would attempt to winter elk in Mary's River, a suboptimal location. Additionally, the 500 initial target population might impact both public and private lands in ways preventable by evaluation of a smaller population.

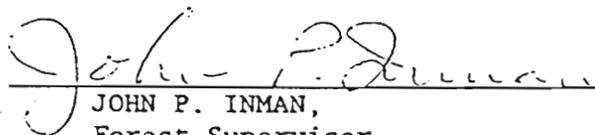
Based on both the analysis presented in the Environmental Assessment for the Release of Elk into the Jarbidge Mountains dated November, 1989 and experience of other professionals, I have determined that this proposed reestablishment of elk will have no significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. My determination is based on the following factors:

1. There is no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.
2. There are no adverse effects to threatened or endangered species.
3. There are no adverse effects to roadless areas or recommended wilderness.
4. There are no adverse effects to floodplains or wetlands.
5. This decision is consistent with Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management resource management plans.

Implementation of this decision may occur after signing and distribution of this Decision Notice.

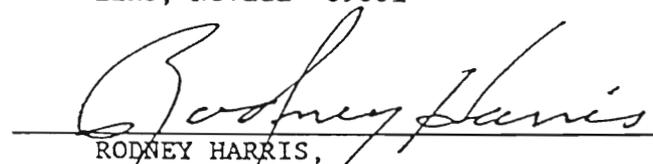
This decision is appealable in accordance with Secretary of Agriculture Appeal Regulations 36 CFR 217 and 36 CFR 251, Subpart C. A notice of appeal must be filed with J.S. Tixier, Regional Forester, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401 within 45 days of the date of this decision, with a copy simultaneously sent to John Inman, Forest Supervisor, 976 Mountain City Highway, Elko, Nevada 89801. If the appeal is made under 36 CFR 217, it must include the information described in 36 CFR 217.9. If the appeal is made under 36 CFR 251, Subpart C, it must include the information in 36 CFR 251.90 (b).

For further information, contact Roderick Howard, Jarbidge District Ranger, 1008 Burley Ave., Buhl, Idaho 83316 (ph. 208-543-4129).

  
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JOHN P. INMAN,

Forest Supervisor  
Humboldt National Forest  
976 Mountain City Highway  
Elko, Nevada 89801

Nov 20 1989  
DATE

  
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RODNEY HARRIS,

Elko District Manager  
Bureau of Land Management  
P.O. BOX 831  
Elko, Nevada 89801

Nov. 21, 1989  
DATE