



Washington Department of
FISH and WILDLIFE

Elk Management in Skagit and Whatcom Counties



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North Cascades Elk Herd

- *Cervus elaphus*
- Commonly referred to as Nooksack elk herd
- Population objective 1,700 - 2,000
- Co-managed with Point Elliott Treaty Tribes



2020 Survey

- Population estimate for survey area:
1,339 ± 313
- # Bulls/100 Cows = **22** (above WDFW objective of 12-20)
- # Calves/100 Cows = **37** (above 30 indicates a likely stable-to-increasing herd; 40 or above is considered excellent)



Herd Management History

- Declined from a high of 1,400 – 2,000 in 1984 to only a few hundred in late 1990s
- Harvest moratorium 1997–2006
- Population augmentations

Recreational Hunting Opportunities

- Currently, GMU 418 and 437 closed to general season hunting (special permit only in 418)
- Elk Area 4941 - special permit only (youth, senior, disabled, and archery, rifle, and muzzleloader)
- Increased permits each year for the last 4 years
- Current state permit levels are 31 for GMU 418 and 49 for Elk Area 4941



2019–20 Harvest

WDFW Harvest*

- Total elk = 108
- Total bulls = 51
- Total cows = 57

*Includes recreational and damage-related harvests from July 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020 in GMUs 407, 418, 437, 448, and Elk Area 4941.

Elk-Related Agricultural Conflicts

- 1999 – Elk area 941 was created to address damage issues on private property.
- Muzzleloader and archery liberal season (Oct 1 – Jan 31)
- 2003- Elk area was renamed 4941 with boundary changes.
- 2003 – general season for archery and muzzleloader
- 2010 – 2014 – limited to Master Hunter antlerless
- 2015 – present - permit only for Master hunters, archery, rifle, muzzleloader, youth, hunters with disabilities, and seniors.

Elk-Related Agricultural Conflicts

- Managed by Enforcement program from 2005–2011
- 2011-2013: 100+ landowner kill permits
- 2013-present: managed by Conflict Program
- 2015-2018: # of damage permits increased each year
- 2018: 75 permits issued with landowner harvest of 33
- 2019: 66 permits issued with landowner harvest of 46

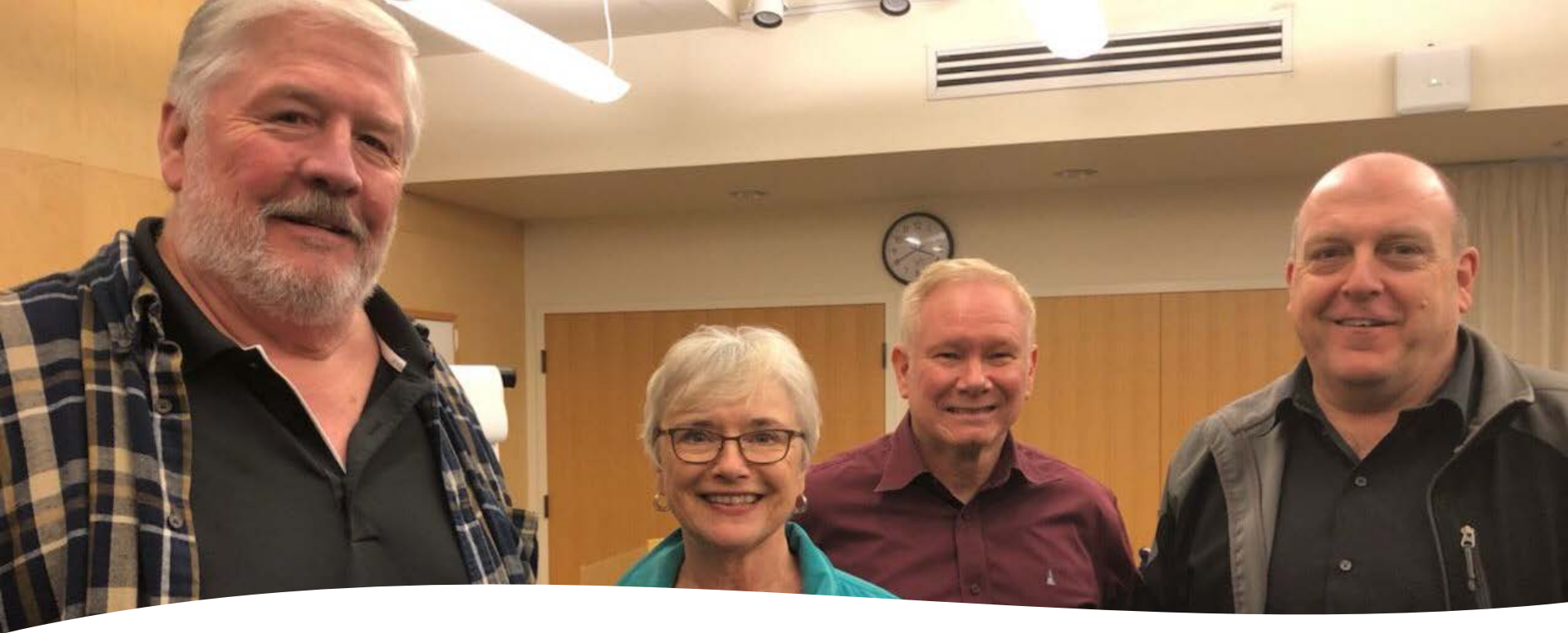
Elk-Related Agricultural Conflicts

2019-20 Season

(July 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020)

Damage Permits Issued:

- 66 Landowner Permits
- 13 Master Hunter Permits
- 46 Elk Harvested (10 Bulls, 36 Cows)
- Success rate of 58%
- Higher 2019 harvest, compared to 2018, may be attributed to targeted neighborhood management



Recent Efforts

- Joint elk capture with Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and WDFW
- WDFW provided 3,150 linear feet of fencing materials to participating landowners in FY2020
- Increased Co-manager discussions regarding damage issues
- Elk discussions with Sedro-Woolley and Concrete School District Boards.
- Field trips with landowners, elected officials, WDFW Commissioners



Action Plan Metrics

- Issue damage permits to qualifying landowners
- Landowner access fees
- Opportunistic hoof disease removals
- Discussions with WDOT on signage, speed limits, outreach, etc.
- Mapping tools
- Targeted neighborhood management

Action Plan Metrics

Revised compensation forms and Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) process

- Worked closely with Representative Eslick to revise forms and process
- Simpler forms
- More input from landowners on public access

Hoof disease removals

- 3 reports of limping elk during 2019-20 season
- WDFW coordinated with landowners but no elk removed
- Three samples collected of suspected hoof disease from hunter-harvested elk

Action Plan Metrics

Elk-Vehicle Collisions along SR 20

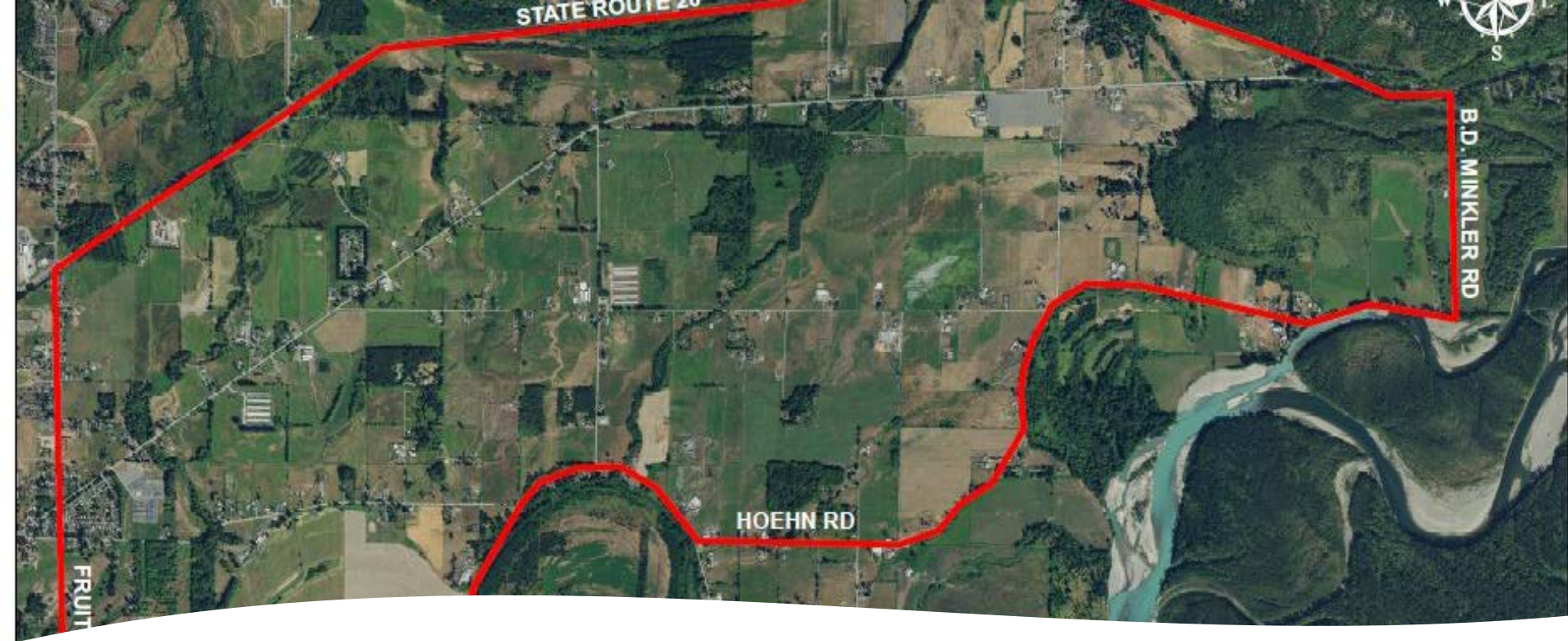
- WSDOT reported 28 elk-vehicle collisions along SR20 in 2019
- WDFW continues to have conversations with WSDOT about increased signage
- WSDOT and the Tribes prepared a cost estimate for proposed wildlife crossings at 2 locations on SR20





Targeted Neighborhood Management

- Identify resident elk groups in agricultural areas
- During the 2019-20 hunting season, some producers were provided damage permits and maps where they could hunt off their property but within their "Neighborhood" (with the neighbor's permission).
- Benefit of increased pressure across multiple surrounding properties



Targeted Neighborhood Management

- Non-lethal and lethal techniques
- DPCAs across multiple properties
- Landowner permission and cooperation
- Seven elk were harvested within Skagit Valley during 2019-20 using the "Neighborhood Management" approach

Crop and Fertilizer Program

- In FY2020, the Skagit Crop Mitigation Program was implemented to reimburse farmers for fertilizer, grass seed, and noxious weed treatment where elk damage had occurred.
- Appropriated from Legislature \$300K for biennium
- Twenty-one farmers signed agreements to participate
- Seventeen contracts were processed totaling \$36,297
- Four farmers did not respond by the June 30th deadline but intend to participate in FY2021
- Program will continue in FY 2021

Next steps

- Increased permits for GMU 418 and 4941 for current hunting season
- Continue to co-manage with Point Elliott Treaty Tribes
- Continue to implement Action Plan for upcoming year
- WDFW and local Tribes will conduct capture and collaring efforts to monitor elk movements in and around Skagit Valley





Questions?