



Action Plan for the North Cascades Elk Herd 2019-2020

Metrics:

- **Reduce number of elk damage complaints from 2018 levels in designated neighborhoods**
- **Focus the majority of harvest associated with damage complaints in target neighborhoods. Increase number of requests to Tribal Co-managers to participate in neighborhood harvest or hazing**
- **Provide response time of within 7 days for all limping elk reports, with timely removal if Treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) is suspected (per protocol)**
- **Include most current report number for elk-vehicle collisions on State Route 20 in all press articles**
- **Increased focus on providing accurate elk management information to public through attendance and presentations at public meetings and media outlets (television, radio, and newspaper).**

Public Safety

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Tribal Co-managers recognize the importance of public safety in relation to elk crossing State Route (SR) 20. WDFW will request a meeting with the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to evaluate options to reduce elk-vehicle collisions on SR 20 between Sedro-Woolley and Rockport. Agreed upon actions will be implemented as soon as possible, dependent on available funding and constraints outlined in any applicable Revised Code of Washington (RCW) or Washington Administrative Code (WAC).

2019–2020 Actions:

- WDFW will formally request that WDOT participate in elk conversations with Co-managers and the local community to improve safety along SR 20.
- WDFW and Tribal Co-managers and WDOT will discuss increased lighting and signage, decreased speed limits, and greater public outreach regarding elk crossing SR 20.

Damage

WDFW and Skagit County have discussed numerous options to minimize elk numbers on private property and increase elk use of public and state lands. WDFW will continue to work with landowners to find non-lethal and lethal solutions to elk-related damage concerns. WDFW will issue damage permits to qualifying landowners after consultation with a WDFW Wildlife

Conflict Specialist. WDFW does not have a set number of damage permits for distribution. Damage permits are issued based on property conditions, the conditions of the Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA), and numerous other factors. A landowner may provide a hunter with a WDFW-issued Damage Prevention Permit (DPP) and charge a fee for hunting access to their property. A hunter that is hunting under a valid DPP must have a valid hunting license and Damage Tag and hunt within the designated area indicated on the DPP.

2019–2020 Actions:

- Provide damage permits, pre-emptively, to known high-damage areas based on the 2017–2019 damage seasons (July 1–March 31). These property owners will be encouraged to harvest as early as possible in the season under the assumption that early deterrence is more effective.
- Inform property owners of the revised DPCA which more clearly states that public access is not required of the owner in order to receive a DPP.
- Inform property owners that although they may not sell any WDFW-issued permit, they may charge an access fee to their property to any hunter allowed to use the landowner’s permit.
- Explore the fertilizer bank concept, which would provide grass fertilizer for qualifying landowners.

Targeted Management

WDFW will focus non-lethal techniques on specific areas where resident elk groups continue to cause damage. The specific areas WDFW is targeting include, but are not limited to, Day Creek, Hamilton, and Burmaster Road.

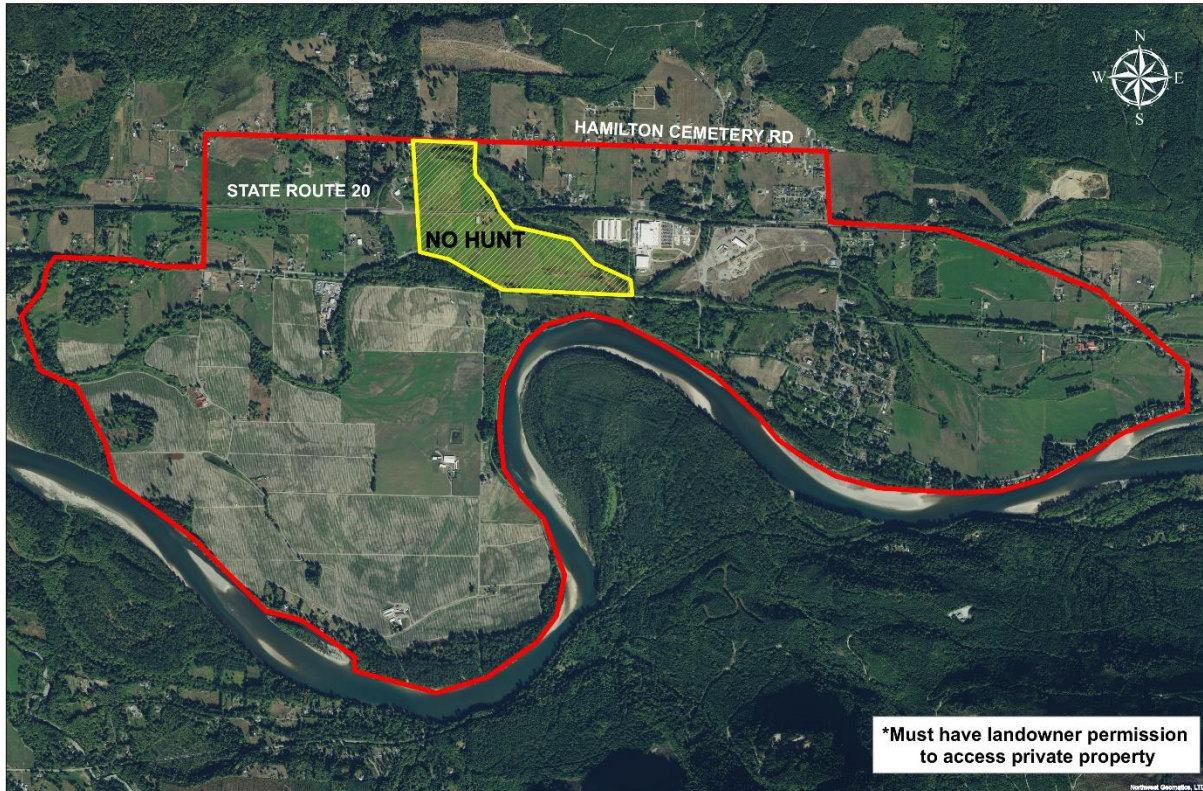
2019–2020 Actions:

- WDFW and Swinomish Tribe are collaborating on a mapping project to assist co-managers in effectively mitigating elk damage. Specifically, the project will produce a map of properties within Skagit and Acme Valleys that are currently under DPCAs, properties that have constructed elk fencing, and properties that prohibit hunter access and therefore provide elk refugia. WDFW and Swinomish Tribe will also map known highway crossing locations and possible damage hotspots. Co-managers can use the products from this project to mitigate elk damage more effectively and efficiently by focusing lethal and non-lethal efforts in specific neighborhoods or hotspots.
- Where appropriate, WDFW will focus efforts by recreational hunters, conduct hazing actions, and harvest elk from these groups.
- WDFW will also work with landowners to identify neighborhood hunting opportunities.
 - WDFW will allow qualifying landowners with an active DPCA to use WDFW-issued, damage permits to hunt elk on their property and identified nearby properties with landowner permission. This action may increase damage permit

harvest success in resident elk groups that move among and cause damage on multiple properties, including that of the DPCA landowner.



2019-20 Hamilton Hunt Area Master Hunter, Kill Permits & Damage Prevention Permits



Example of neighborhood hunting concept which would increase the huntable area across multiple properties with landowner permission and signed DPCAs.

Fencing Projects

Dependent on available funding, WDFW and Tribal Co-managers will continue to work on fencing projects throughout the North Cascades elk herd area, with emphasis on areas of greatest damage concern. Cooperative fencing projects are planned for the upcoming season with an appropriation of \$200,000 per year for the 2019–2020 biennium. Several projects have been identified.

2019–2020 Actions:

- Provide fencing materials and assistance to interested property owners
- Respond to Concrete School District concerns regarding fencing and/or hazing efforts

- Introduce the Concrete School District to possible citizen science opportunities involving students and elk (i.e. Project Cat model)
- Provide landowners with non-lethal deterrents and hazing support

Process Improvements

WDFW has completed a revision of the DPCA and deer/elk damage compensation forms to simplify the process.

2019–2020 Actions:

- Work with Skagit County and other partners to ensure accurate information is available to property owners
- Develop and distribute one page information document about management of the NCEH.
- Develop one page information document for distribution to interested property owners experiencing elk-related damage

Hoof Disease

WDFW will continue to opportunistically remove, via lethal methods, potential hoof disease infected animals. This past year WDFW and Tribal Co-managers removed five (5) limping elk suspected of having hoof disease. Hoof samples were sent to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (WADDL) for diagnostic tests.

2019–2020 Actions:

- WDFW will follow the WDFW lethal removal protocol and will increase efforts to remove potentially infected elk. Hoof samples will be sent to WADDL for diagnostic tests.
- Any removals will be evaluated for donation to the Tribes and Community Food Banks, if feasible.

Hunting Access

WDFW and Tribal Co-managers will work to increase hunting access throughout the herd area, with emphasis placed on areas with high elk-related damage. This will include discussions and potential access agreements with the Skagit and Whatcom Land Trusts, area landowners, and Puget Sound Energy.

Public Outreach

WDFW and Tribal Co-managers will hold a public meeting to provide accurate information related to elk population survey results, the damage mitigation and compensation process, hunting options, and hoof disease issues.