

Alberta Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
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June 29, 2017

Colleen Arnison
Resource Management Officer II
Elk Island National Park

Dear Ms. Arnison,

The Alberta Backcountry Hunters and Anglers welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Hyperabundant Ungulate Management Plan for Elk Island National Park. The thousands of North Americans who belong to Backcountry Hunters and Anglers believe first and foremost in the importance of healthy wildlife habitat as foundational to our shared passion for hunting and angling. Put simply, robust populations of fish and wildlife are directly linked to the health of their habitats, and we are committed to working with public and private landowners across jurisdictions to promote scientifically sound, conservation-focussed wildlife and landscape management practices.

Our national parks should be managed for ecological integrity above all; however, given the exceptional circumstances at Elk Island National Park, maintaining a full complement of predators does not appear to be realistic or feasible. Therefore, given the available options, we believe that a well-controlled hunt on an as-needed basis is the most appropriate solution for managing hyperabundant ungulate populations. As hunters and anglers who value quality habitats and wildness, we feel strongly that well-managed hunting supports Parks Canada's mandate to "protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations." Done right, Parks Canada has the opportunity to showcase traditional muscle-powered, fair-chase hunting both as a part of our cultural heritage as Canadians, and as a valuable wildlife management tool that is vital to the long-term ecological integrity of Elk Island National Park.

Regarding specifics of how a hunt would be conducted, at this early stage our primary concerns are that the safety of all park visitors, including hunters, is ensured through proper controls; age/sex quotas of target species are based on achieving science-based population objectives; and that the hunt is conducted equitably, with opportunities for both First Nations and the general public to participate.

On behalf of Alberta's Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, thank you for the opportunity to contribute our comments to this draft management plan to ensure the continued ecological health of Elk Island National Park.

Sincerely,
Tom Habib, Alberta BHA Treasurer