

Clam Lake Elk News—October through December, 2010; Vol. 10, Iss. 3

Current Status: NO OBSERVED ELK MORTALITY DURING THE 4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER) OF 2010.

This means our estimate of **162 elk** still stands. From the start of the 2009/2010 elk year, that began in mid May 2009, we had lost 18 elk by December 31, 2009, 5 of which were due to wolves. During the same period this year we lost 4 elk, only one due to wolves.

Elk Research on the Clam Lake Herd: UWSP graduate student, Scott Roepke, continues processing genetic samples we've collected for him and is doing his lab work at this time. He has also procured 160 elk samples from Michigan. In addition to other genetic studies conducted all across North America, Scott plans to take an "in-depth" look at the population genetics of the Clam Lake elk and compare them with the Michigan samples (the original 25 elk for the Clam Lake elk herd came from Michigan in 1995). We will continue to collect samples this winter during our trapping and "assisted dispersal" effort and later during next spring's calving season for Scott.

During this coming winter's elk trapping effort, elk project staff will be marking new orange radio collars with black numbers identifying individual elk. Using trail cameras, project staff will seek to collect information that may allow an independent population estimate, along with other demographic characteristics, such as calf to cow and bull to cow ratios. We hope to use this information to strengthen our population estimates.

Elk Health Issues: No elk losses observed this quarter. On December 14th we met with Drs. Ed Metcalf, Peter Letinski and Allen Pederson, and by phone, with Tami Ryan and Nancy Businga of Wildlife Health Section of the Bureau of Wildlife Management. During this meeting we developed a working understand on how we were going to deal with wildlife health issues associated with this winter's elk trapping and assisted dispersal effort.

Assisted Dispersal Project: During this quarter, elk project staff worked closely with the private landowner to formulate and get signed a cooperative agreement that details the arrangement to hold wild Wisconsin elk on their property until release to the wild this coming May.

During October and November elk project staff, with the help of DNR staff from Spooner, Ashland, Ladysmith and Park Falls erected a 2.3 acre acclimation pen on the 20 acre private property where we have permission to temporarily hold the elk. The "acclimation pen" is a 9 foot high woven wire enclosure, with 9 foot high black fabric around the entire perimeter.

On November 2nd we briefed the Sawyer County Forestry Committee on our "assisted dispersal" project.

DNR supervisory staff met again with the Voigt Task Force on December 7th, who voted unanimously in support of the assisted dispersal project. They also arranged for involvement in elk trapping assistance by the Great Lakes Indian Fishing and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). NOR supervisory, elk project, United States Forest Service (USFS) and GLIFW staff met to discuss "assisted dispersal" cooperative efforts. At this meeting USFS district and Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest hierarchy established their support for the "assisted dispersal" project.

Elk Trapping: On December 9th we began prebaiting for elk trapping at a site north of Lower Clam Lake for the combined 208/1029 cow/calf group, and December 20 we began prebaiting a site north of Clam Lake for the Day Lake Group. We set up the elk trap on the first site on December 14th.

Population Monitoring and Elk Education: During the last 3 months we made 806 telemetry location determinations and 1,846 telemetry mortality checks. During this quarter we gave 3 elk presentations to a total of 41 participants. We also gave 4 print and 2 radio interviews and prepared a public service announcement asking deer hunters to be careful hunting deer on the elk range. This announcement was given several times on 3 major radio stations servicing the Clam Lake area.

Partnerships: As mentioned above we worked with UWSP, GLIFWC and USFS on elk related projects this past quarter.

Upcoming Events: During the next quarter we will initiate elk trapping and moving elk to the “acclimation pen” for the “assisted dispersal” project.

Laine Stowell & Matt McKay, February 11, 2011