

Sept 12, 2012

To: WDFW

From: Randy Hein DVM, MS
East Wenatchee

re: SEPA comment Whiskey Dick Winter Closure

I wish to express my thoughts regarding winter usage by motorized vehicles in the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Management Area. I am adamantly opposed to any winter usage of the Whiskey Dick area by motorized vehicles.

I was heavily involved with the Musser & Bracken elk captures for their study regarding elk ranges, habitat usage etc. We captured elk in the Whiskey Dick, Quilomene, Takison and Tarpiscan drainages during winter. Elk and deer are most vulnerable to stress during winter. Motorized vehicle access in those drainages during any season will cause them to move away from the disturbance. With cold temperatures the ungulates often burn more fat derived calories than they consume on winter range. The Whiskey Dick area is a "banana belt" compared to higher elevation range and cheat grass will green-up in fall and winter. Provided there is not significant snow cover, the early cheat grass will aid in sustaining the elk during winter. The last thing the WDFW should allow is motorized usage on elk winter range that would move the animals away from any forage. Also, if motorized vehicles are permitted in the Whiskey Dick during winter, elk will either swim the Columbia or more into private land to the west in Kittitas County.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Randy Hein
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