

WDFW responses to public comments received during the public review of the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan draft under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) from January 31, 2018 until February 23, 2018.

#	Comment	WDFW Response
1	Many comments expressed concern over public safety issues related to elk/vehicle collisions along Highway 20.	We are currently working with WSDOT to explore increased signage and outreach to the public regarding elk/vehicle collisions and increasing reporting. Included additional language in the herd plan. See Objective 4 for strategies.
2	Please make the facts available to the public related to elk damage to agricultural crops.	See Table 4 in the Herd Plan
3	What diseases have been tested for on this Herd, how often has the herd been tested for those diseases, and what are the results of testing over time? Has chronic wasting disease been tested for or discovered in the Nooksack Elk Herd? Citizens Alliance for Property Rights	All elk that were relocated to the area were tested for brucellosis and were negative. Chronic wasting disease has not been detected in deer, elk, or moose in Washington State.
4	WDFW's first listed objective is still to increase the North Cascades elk population to numbers in the range of 1700-2000. With all the serious problems being encountered with the current number of these animals, it seems totally illogical that the situation would improve with more. Regardless, the fifth listed objective is to do exactly that: "While attempting to achieve the population objective, reduce the number of elk caused damage complaints on private lands in the North Cascades elk herd area over the next five years." Citizens Alliance for Property Rights	WDFW goals are to limit elk in the Skagit and Acme Valleys and encourage elk on Federal and State land.
5	Property owners who have suffered because of the elks' presence, often complain that compensation for loss is too little and too late.	WDFW encourages property owners to engage in the compensation process. . Process steps and limits on compensation are described here: https://wdfw.wa.gov/living/damage/ .

WDFW responses to public comments received during the public review of the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan draft under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) from January 31, 2018 until February 23, 2018.

6	1. In the plan itself (line 567), there is a reference to combined cooperative efforts of the public and private land managers developing suitable elk habitat. What role would private land managers have since they're all in the valley, the area of conflict? Further, is this an admission that WDFW is acknowledging that the elk can not be displaced back onto public lands at higher elevations and will remain a fact of life for rural residents between Sedro-Woolley and Marblemount? Citizens Alliance for Property Rights	Private land managers include Timber Companies and large landowners outside of the Valley.
7	The SEPA link was broken during the comment period	WDFW extended the comment period by 2 weeks after the link was repaired.
8	Please provide a target population number for the valley floor and keep that number constant by creating sub units and increase hunting.	WDFW does not support a target number in the valley floor. This is problematic due to how to count, when to count, etc.
9	Add in language related to RCW 77.014.012	Completed
10	Add more details on hoof disease.	Completed
11	We urge you to resist the demands of a small, vocal group of anti-wildlife farmers and instead to consider the desires of a much larger constituency of landowners, residents and visitors who enjoy and benefit from thriving herds of elk in the valley. Put science ahead of politics.	Thank you for your comment.
12	Where is the management related to this herd?	Please read the strategies and objectives
13	Immediately remove all elk from the valley floor using money in the Proviso.	There was no funding provided in the Proviso and the objective in the Herd Plan is to limit elk in the Skagit and Acme Valleys.
14	Consistent hunting pressure on its own will not effectively decrease the elk population in these two problem areas unless the number of elk harvested actually exceeds the natural recruitment rate. We support the use of agency staff or USDA Wildlife Services staff to maintain the necessary harvest levels to ensure enough elk are taken each year to exceed natural recruitment.	WDFW is looking at all tools (damage hunts, recreational, non-lethal, etc) to limit elk in these areas.

WDFW responses to public comments received during the public review of the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan draft under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) from January 31, 2018 until February 23, 2018.

15	Master hunters are never there when needed. Master hunters have little success over changing elk distribution.	See comment 14
16	Future elk population #'s should be determined by legislative madate.	WDFW disagrees
17	Private landowners should not be forced to shoulder the economic hardship from this elk herd.	WDFW agrees.
18	Please revisit the grass compenstation process.	There is currently a group looking at the grass compensation process. Members include government representatives, Farm Bureau, WDFW.
19	Please include local governments in the coordination of this plan and add language.	WDFW agrees and added language reflecting that.
20	Include language to comple public land management agencies to develop habitat enhancement projects to hold elk away from private agricutltural lands.	WDFW has added langugue similar, but disagrees with the word choice of compel.
21	Allowing year round cultural and ceremonial harvest of the elk herd creates hunting pressure that drives into elk into the valley.	WDFW works with Tribes as co-managers to manage the North Cascades elk herd. The Tribes set their own hunting seasons.
22	Why are there so few hunting permits?	WDFW has increased state permits the last 3 years.
23	Please describe habitat management plans.	See Objective 5 and Table 5
24	Include language related to economic losses.	See Economic Values page 13
25	Skagit Valley should have four additional sub areas at minimum open for hunting.	WDFW disagrees, the objective is to limit elk in the Skagit and Acme Valley and already has Elk Area 4941 in place for that reason.