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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Summary, the Wyoming Game & Fish Commission requested continued use of improvements (feedgrounds) at Dell Creek and Forest Park for long term (20 yrs) for winter elk feeding/management activities.

I support keeping these feed grounds open 100%. It will destroy our western Wyoming elk herds without them. Is CWD real? Absolutely. But what is the rattlesnake hiding in the weeds???

I have spent the past two years on the "Elk Feedground Task Force" with the Game and Fish. During this time I was educated on all angles of feed ground management. This balance is absolutely tough. I had my eyes opened to so many complicated matters the G&F has to manage. But a few things that stuck out for me was, if we shut these feedgrounds down we will lose 80% of our elk in Western Wyoming, 80%!!

Why? Because of elk starvation and land owner conflict. Ranchers will be pushed into a corner and have to request these elk to be killed due to brucellosis and crop/hay damages. The G&F hands will be tied and they will have to do what's necessary to appease the landowners. I'm not claiming to be an expert, I just ask you what's worse? A few elk dying with CDW here and there? Or to eliminate 80% of our elk herds in western Wyoming?? The answer is easy for me. This is our lives, these animals belong to us, this in my opinion will be considered mismanagement of our wildlife.

Then we can dive into the other angles, I will only list a few. Winter closures will follow for snowmobilers, why? Because the elk will now be navigating natural winter ranges and the pressure from snowmobiles will be identified.

Then, grazing permits for ranchers... the agency(s) will stop issuing those because the elk need the natural landscape more than our cattle to survive. Mark my words.

The last one I will mention of several dozen items, is the mule deer competition. Our Mule Deer are at a record low. If elk navigate more on natural landscapes, they will now encroach our Mule Deer winter ranges heavier than ever. Elk are more resilient than Mule Deer, the deer will fall to the elk, completely sealing the deal on the Mule Deer mess at hand.

In closing, these feed grounds are Wyoming. They are the right thing to have and operate, I please ask we issue these 20 year continued permits to the Game and Fish of Wyoming. I'm more than willing to continue this conversation further if requested.

Sincerely,

Zachary Key - 38 year Wyoming Native