

# Elk Valley Elk Meeting

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**December 12, 2017**

**In attendance:**

- David and John (Southern Rockies Wildlife Coalition)
- Sam (Southern Guides)
- Brian (Fernie Rod and Gun Club)
- Darren (Sparwood Rod and Gun Club)
- Bill (Elkford Rod and Gun Club)
- Tara Szkorupa, Sr Wildlife Biologist
- Holger Bohm, Fish and Wildlife Section Head

**Kootenay-Boundary Region staffing update:**

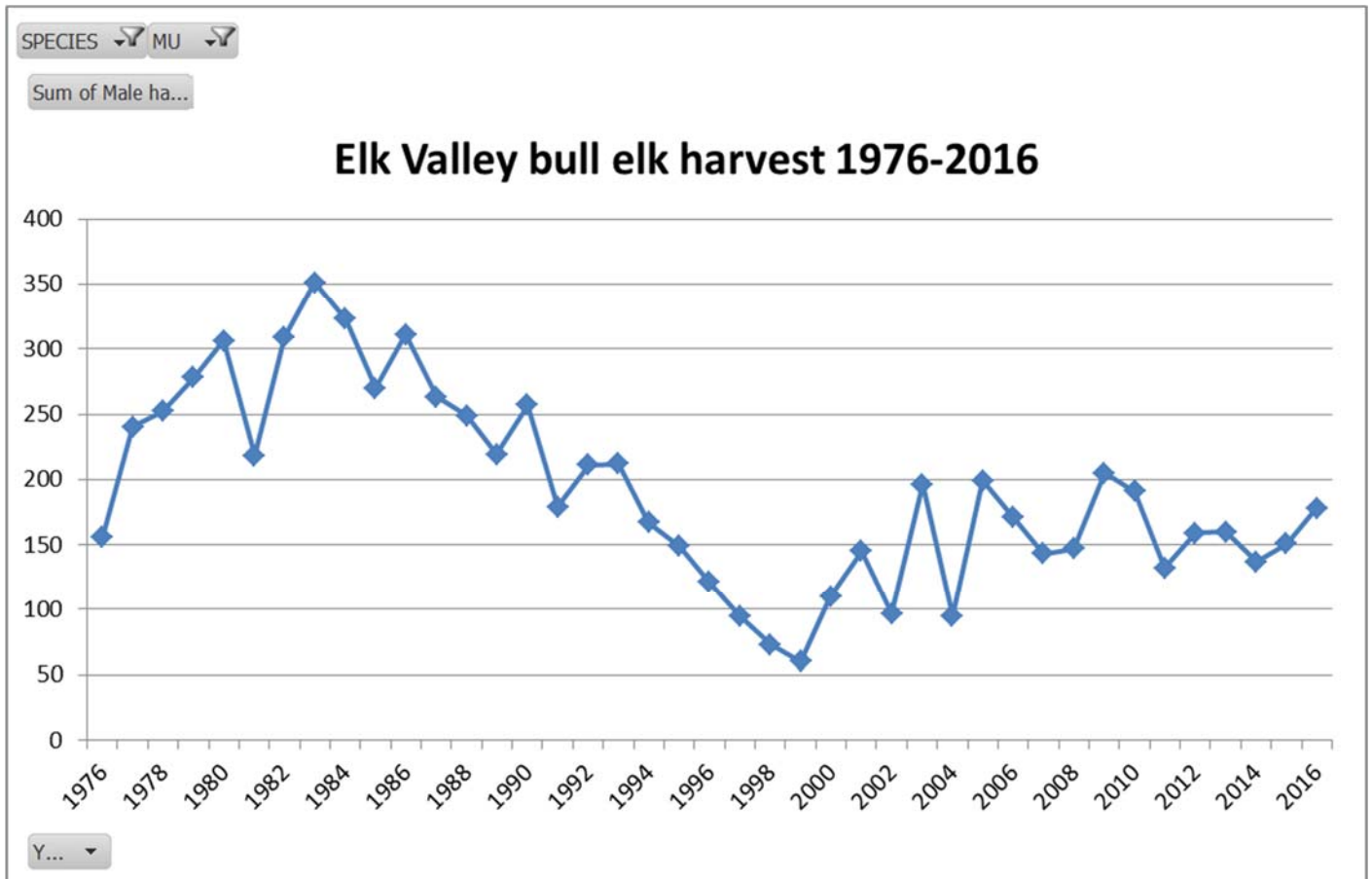
- Garth Wiggill new Regional Executive Director (TA)
- Tara Szkorupa starting a 7 month TA with Branch in January; planning to backfill her position
- Leo DeGroot with caribou program; Aaron Reid filling in for Leo as the West Kootenay Wildlife Biologist
- Two auxiliary wildlife technicians hired in East Kootenay - TJ Gooliaff and Karina Lamy

**Discussion:**

- Wildlife coalition - Teck, Canfor also involved.
- Discussions with Ktunaxa re their interest in wildlife coalition. This is on hold till they are on board.
- Minister has given verbal commitment to move forward, but depends on Ktunaxa.
- Major concerns over current state of the elk population in the Elk Valley.
- Want to tie in to regional elk management plan.
- Use elk as an umbrella/keystone species - manage for elk to benefit other species as well.
- CEA - too bad that elk weren't identified as a Valued Ecosystem Component in the Elk Valley.
- This group wants to engage in a regional elk plan. Want the Elk/Flathead to have different objectives than the South Trench, and make sure there is recognition of differences among Population Management Units.
- Since mining is a major factor - should we be working with Teck or Ministry of Mines? Holger suggested both initially.
- They want to know who the contact will be regionally for elk management.
- They want to make sure that we don't wait 2 years for this to be completed!
- EFWEI - want to see something moving on this.
- Could move forward with a 1-day session with a good facilitator to focus on elk management in the Elk Valley:

- Identify issues with elk (wildlife) in the Elk Valley
  - Identify potential solutions
  - Prioritise concerns and issues (stakeholder, FN and gov feedback)
  - Then this goes to government to make decisions
- Take advantage of the fact that there is good cohesion
- Concerns:
  - Urban development
  - Winter range loss, especially at low elevations
  - Condition of winter range
  - Winter range loss due to mines
  - Highway/railway
  - Invasive plants
  - Wildlife exclusion fencing
  - Quality of vegetation
  - Population size and distribution - migration of elk to backcountry; migration of elk from Alberta and Montana
- Ungulate Winter Range. Revise GAR orders. Need to revise what goes in to forestry prescriptions. This is a separate process, but related.
- Potential solutions:
  - Conservation agreements for high priority properties
  - Improve inventory data form Teck - species specific instead of trying to survey everything (e.g., focus on elk one year, sheep the next)
  - Strategically target ecosystem restoration
  - Encourage Teck to purchase winter range at low elevations to offset losses at higher elevations
  - Teck management of conservation lands
- Key players to bring to the table:
  - Ecosystems staff
  - CE staff
  - Ministry of Transportation
  - Ministry of Mines?
  - Ktunaxa - Cathy or Kerri
  - Teck
  - Canfor
  - Rod and Gun clubs
  - The Nature Trust
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - Wildsight
- Long term goal for elk population size and determine the habitat quality and quantity required to meet this.
- Next steps:

- Tara to send Elk Valley elk inventory report
  - [http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wildlife/wsi/reports/5030\\_WSI\\_5030\\_RPT\\_2013.PDF](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wildlife/wsi/reports/5030_WSI_5030_RPT_2013.PDF)
- Tara to send harvest stats for Elk Valley - note that data prior to 1998 aren't comparable because 3-point seasons were in place so harvest was in part higher because of much more liberal seasons



- Tara to send CE report on bighorn sheep - high elevation winter ranges (asked Cassidy for this)
- Holger to set up meeting of key stakeholders (end of Jan, start of Feb)