ELK MANAGEMENT IN THE EAST KOOTENAY SUB-REGION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA VIA HUNTING REGULATIONS AND LIMITED ENTRY SEASONS

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Abstract: Rocky Mountain elk (Cervus elaphus) have been steadily increasing in the East Kootenay Sub-Region of British Columbia, from approximately 7,900 elk in 1974 to approximately 19,000 elk estimated post-winter population in 1984. The dramatic increase in population has been attributed to maintenance of the sex ratio despite (a) increased pressure on bull elk hunting through the implementation of specific antler regulations; (b) the use of Limited Entry Hunting (LEH) seasons on antlerless elk including calf-only permits; (c) a series of mild winters in the late 70's and early 80's; and (d) an increase in spring, summer and fall elk habitat through new logging practices and improvements in livestock grazing systems on Crown land. However, the gradual loss of winter range through forest succession, industrialization and human settlement, and the competition for winter forage with other ungulates both domestic and wild, require the implementation of management techniques to ensure that elk numbers do not exceed the carrying capacity of the major winter ranges. Thus, an increase to 6,800 calf-only L.E.H. permits and 2,255 cow/calf-only L.E.H. permits have been proposed for the 1984 hunting season in order to slow the increase and to begin stabilizing the East Kootenay elk population at approximately 25,000 elk.