

RE: Dry Creek and Trail Creek issues
Kujala, Quentin
To: Loveless, Karen; Burt, Howard
Sunday 2/17/2013 20:49 PM

I do think it would be really would be good to start letting Commissioner Vermillion know these are all conversations in the works. I assume the region would want to address that conversation—but let me know if I can help.

To be clear, this is all new.....and I understand Commissioner Vermillion is getting questions and pushes. So a little context update even in these draft stages might go a long ways?

Regards,
Q

From: Loveless, Karen
Sent: Saturday, February 16, 2013 1:14 PM
To: Kujala, Quentin; Burt, Howard
Cc: Flowers, Pat
Subject: RE: Dry Creek and Trail Creek elk issues

Thanks Quentin, and good point that the different situations are stacking up and may be hard for folks at a distance to keep track. Also, realizing that perhaps I should have been including Pat on these updates as well? I want to be sure to include folks who need to be part of the conversation but don't want to unnecessarily clutter inboxes. So, here's a summary on what's currently brewing on elk brucellosis in Paradise Valley to be sure everyone is up to speed. I'm working on narrative justifications and approval forms on each of these, so expect more details over the coming days.

6-mile: This is the ongoing project that has been in place for 3 years, the herder is on the payroll to herd elk away from the Kinkie and Rigler cattle operations, but so far the elk have not been in proximity to cattle so he has not yet put in any hours here. Jim & Stacy Stands sold their cattle and have left the area for the time being, so at present there are only 2 cattle operations potentially affected at 6-mile by elk moving off the WMA.

Dry Creek: This is a cattle operation run by Ben & Bridger Cunningham and Becky Frey

approximately 5 miles south of Emigrant in elk HD314. They have a range of 100-300 head of elk coming down into the haystacks and commingling with cattle on the feedlines. The recommendation here is to replace the dilapidated stackyard fencing in conjunction with sending our herder to push elk back up onto the state section where they have historically wintered. I expect to hear from Ben today after he talks with the adjacent landowner on whether they will agree to elk being herded across their property into the state section.

Trail Creek: This is county commissioner Jim Durgan and his wife Deanne's place on Old Yellowstone Trail just south of the O'Hair Ranch. They have ~300 elk coming into their haystacks for the first time ever. The elk have to pass through the cattle pastures to access the haystacks, but have not yet keyed in on the feedline so at present appear to be mostly passing through the cattle and not lingering there. We agreed that immediate action would be appropriate before elk key in on feedlines. My recommendation here is to fence the stackyard in conjunction with herding, again using our herder to push elk back onto their usual wintering area in the foothills above the ranch. Working on contacts with neighboring landowners, and hoping to implement fairly immediately if possible. Also working with the Durgan's on ideas for how to secure the stackyard within the \$2000 constraint, as this is a sizable stackyard and existing fencing is inadequate.

Mill Creek: This is a multi-landowner effort involving ~500 elk on a small winter range in proximity to numerous cattle operations. I had a sit-down with landowners yesterday, we invited Hayes Goosey to sit-in both for his perspective as the chair of the Park County Rod & Gun Club and his expertise in Range Management with MSU extension. The brief recap is that it was a productive and cordial meeting, and my recommendation coming out of the meeting is to implement a dispersal hunt. There are good reasons why less aggressive measures will not be effective or feasible here, I'll detail this in a narrative justification. All landowners present committed to allowing public access for this purpose. One of the really positive things that came out of the conversation was an agreement to tolerate elk beyond a buffer zone around the cattle operations, rather than zero tolerance for elk anywhere in the vicinity, which is where the conversation started. Still work on the ground to determine where lines could be drawn to buffer cattle and still allow sufficient winter range for elk. There are a few additional landowners that we will need to visit with who were not at the meeting and could potentially be impacted by a dispersal hunt. This is still evolving, lots to do here still but I hope to have a detailed narrative/proposal put together within a week, and will be communicating progress as we go.

Please let me know any questions/concerns or other details that would be helpful.

Thanks,

Karen

From: Kujala, Quentin
Sent: Friday, February 15, 2013 2:37 PM
To: Loveless, Karen; Burt, Howard
Subject: RE: Dry Creek and Trail Creek elk issues

Phew—thanks Karen.

I really appreciate the effort on the ground and the effort to communicate. That said, I fear I'm not keeping up. In that light, I wonder if you could bullet point the different communications you are having? Each elk herd being a different bullet point. OR perhaps we need a phone conversation (all three of us) next week to go over details. To be clear, what I'm worried about is me not keeping up with your information needs/questions. I do appreciate your awareness this is new and we need to go slow—and I just want to match your caution with prompt replies when you seek them.

Thoughts?

Q

From: Loveless, Karen
Sent: Thursday, February 14, 2013 9:44 PM
To: Burt, Howard; Kujala, Quentin
Subject: Dry Creek and Trail Creek elk issues

I've attached a narrative and brucellosis risk complaint form for the Dry Creek problems, please have a look and feel free to edit/comment.

I visited with County Commissioner Jim Durgan and his wife Deanne this afternoon regarding elk haystack depredation and commingling on Trail Creek. They have 300-400 elk that have just discovered their haystacks and are travelling through the cattle pasture to feed on the hay. On their way through they spend time with the cattle, as is evidenced by elk tracks and scat in with the cattle. This all occurs at night so hard to say how much time elk are spending alongside the cattle. So far the elk have not keyed in on feeding time so are not feeding side by side with the cattle. They have had this same stackyard for decades, and this is the first

time elk have come in, no ideas on what's changed to cause the current problem. The stackyard fence is 5 feet high, not a deterrent for elk. Also, the stackyard is quite large, it would be considerably more than \$2000 for materials to enclose the area. We brainstormed a few ideas for how to secure the area and minimize expense, he is going to get back to me with some measurements. I wasn't sure if the \$2000 is a hard line and told him I'd look into it.

We agreed it could be an effective strategy to herd elk back up into the hills where they normally winter, and is certain the neighbor would allow elk to be herded through his property. I went ahead and asked our herder (Gary Francis) to get in touch and go assess whether he thought he could find a way to effectively herd with the fencing that would have to be navigated, and considering it may need to be done at night, but not to initiate any herding until/unless we give him the ok. If all is a go on the ground with herding, we could go forward with that immediately while we figure out what can be done about the stackyard and perhaps avoid the problem escalating if/when elk discover the feedlines.

Thanks,

Karen

Karen Loveless

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