

RESOLUTION ~~2024~~ 2024 -03

Town of Manchester

Jackson County, WI

RE: SUPPORT FOR ELK DAMAGED PROPERTIES

WHEREAS, Jackson County passed Resolution 24-4-99, Re-Introduction of Elk (*Cervus canadensis*) to Jackson County after a lengthy discussion. Said Resolution indicated in part "the management plan will contain appropriate measures to minimize risks to agricultural interests, and control herd distribution;" and

WHEREAS, since that time, the elk have been re-introduced to Jackson County within the designated Black River Elk Range; however, damage to agricultural interests has steadily increased; and

WHEREAS, appraised elk damage has increased from \$153 in 2015 when the elk were first introduced to \$32,271 in 2023. These claimed amounts were from two (2) claimants in the Town of Knapp who received \$10,000 each, per Wis Statute 29.889(7)(b)4, even though their claims far exceeded this amount; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has attempted harassment of the elk, temporary fencing, permanent fencing, repellents, diversion crops and trapping re-location of elk to abate the damage to agricultural interests; and

WHEREAS, the sub-group in the Town of Knapp area continues to grow and has a near 1:1 ratio of bull to cow with approximately 60 – 70 elk with 20 – 25 estimated to calve in 2024, increasing this subgroup to 80 – 95; and

WHEREAS, approximately 330 acres of tillable land in the Town of Knapp has collected damage claims due to the elk and since a hunting season has now opened, Wis. Stat 29.889(7m)(a)(a) indicates "a person who receives wildlife damage abatement assistance or wildlife damage claim payments and any other person who owns, leases or controls the land where the wildlife damage occurred shall permit hunting of the type of wild animals causing the wildlife damage on that land and on contiguous land under the same ownership..."; and

WHEREAS residents have voiced concerns since 2015 about damage and most recently with the DNR at two meetings held in May and June 2024, regarding the requirement to allow public hunting on private property if abatement funds will be requested and due to this requirement, cash crop farming and other agricultural activities are already declining and will no longer occur in the Town of Knapp; and

WHEREAS crops will no longer be planted; therefore, the elk will move to better grazing areas, outside of the designated Black River Elk Range and into other counties and far larger agricultural areas of Jackson County, some of which is beginning to occur already; and

WHEREAS, in the Town of Bear Bluff, a majority of the township is outside the Black River Elk Range; however, they have suffered elk damage. Residents outside of the Elk Range do not receive the same considerations, such as permanent fencing for their cranberry marshes at no cost and as crops are destroyed by the elk and no longer planted, the elk will move on to other desirable sources throughout the area; and

WHEREAS no consideration is given to the non-agricultural damage done by the elk, such as shredded maple trees for the sap, stripped fruit trees and blueberry bushes, broken saplings due to rubbing, an LP gas tank tipped over due to rubbing, picket and other fences destroyed, and garden destruction; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Manchester Board considers it inappropriate that the residents of the Town of Knapp incur excessive costs due to the reintroduction of the elk in the area and the inability to maintain their real and personal property as they see fit; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Manchester Board calls on the county and state oversight committees to investigate this and requests this matter be addressed by reducing the subgroup in the Town of Knapp area. In the alternative, require the Department of Natural Resources to offer a lease of agricultural fields to plant diversionary crops, resulting in the landowners maintaining their agricultural status and income; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to send a copy of this Resolution to the Governor of the State of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Legislators with a constituency within Jackson County, the Jackson County Board, other Municipalities within Jackson County, State Farm Bureau, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, DNR Elk Advisory Board and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Town of Manchester Board

  
Edward Chamberlain, Chairman

  
Kirk Bucholz, Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack Taylor, Supervisor