

Elk Restoration Update

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The Summer 2010 edition of the Virginia Forest Landowner Update included a story on the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries' (VDGIF) Elk Restoration plan. The initial recommendation was to reintroduce elk into Buchanan, Dickenson and Wise Counties, with a goal of establishing a herd of 1200 animals. On August 17, the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries approved the establishment of a pilot program to reintroduce elk into Buchanan County only. This compromise would introduce 75 elk into the county, with a goal of establishing a herd of 400 animals. As part of this program, the VDGIF will organize a damage response team, which will respond to damage calls within 24 hours.

Currently, elk hunting is permitted in Virginia. However, the Board has requested that elk hunting be prohibited until stocking is completed, with a resumption of hunting in Buchanan County within 4 years of the last elk stocking. If this request is approved, the Game Law Digest, which publishes hunting regulations in Virginia and has already been printed for the 2010-2011 hunting season, will be incorrect, as it currently says elk hunting is permitted.

Stocking of Rocky Mountain elk will probably not begin until the winter of 2012. Landowners in the county need to be contacted and Rocky Mountain elk for stocking need to be located. This pilot program will cost Virginia approximately \$3 million over the next 12 years.

The revised plan is available for public comment at www.dgif.virginia.gov.