

**Summary of Public Comments
Statewide Draft Elk Management Plan
December 2013**

Comments have been an important step in developing the elk management plan. Public comments provided guidance that helped the department document what is acceptable and highlight areas of the plan that need to be clarified or corrected. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game released the Draft Statewide Elk Management Plan for comment from August 22 through September 2013. Comments were solicited from the general public, nongovernmental organizations, federal land management agencies and tribal entities. Comments were collected using the department website, hard copy and by email.

Written Comments from Nongovernmental Organizations and Citizens

We received 19 written comments, separate from the website, 8 were from agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs,) 10 from citizens and one of the citizen letters was signed by 27 individuals. The groups included:

USFS Payette National Forest	Idaho Department of Lands
Idaho Outfitters and Guide Association	Rock Mountain Elk Foundation
Idaho Cattle Association	Nez Perce Tribe
Idaho for Wildlife	Living with Wolves

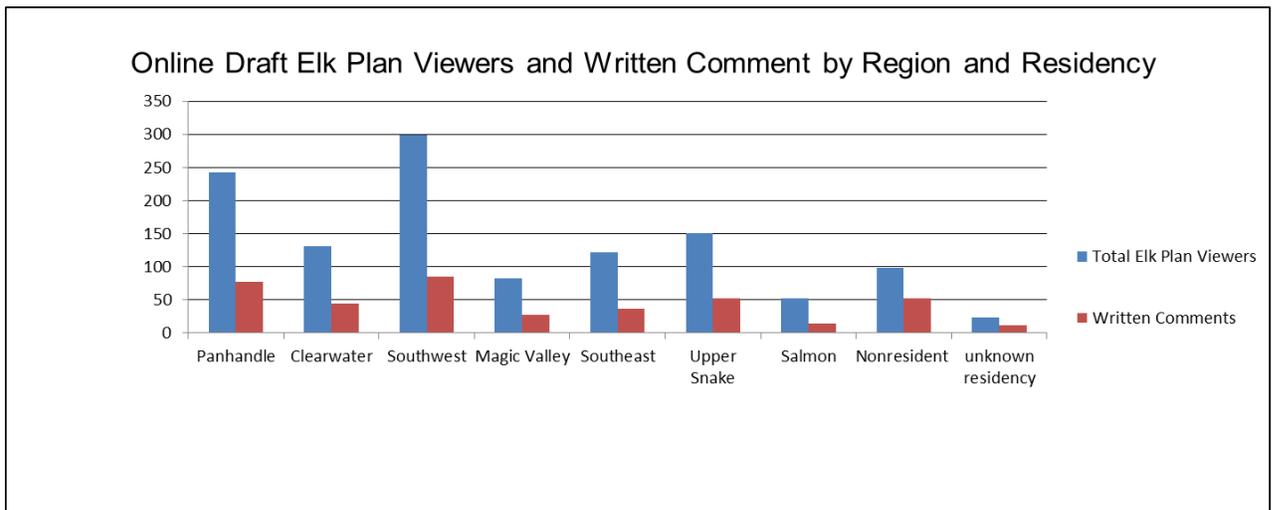
Nature of the Written Comments

The general tone of the written comments was support for the plan. Each group stressed the importance of elk management and several mentioned the importance of managing predation to benefit elk in some areas. Idaho Outfitters and Guide Association promoted restoring elk numbers in the traditional areas that have seen significant elk population decreases. The Idaho Cattleman's Association comments included supporting increased levels of manpower by the department to help manage depredation issues and ways to help reduce the threat of the transmission of brucellosis to cattle. The sportsmens group, Idaho for Wildlife supported the need for more predator management and increased population objectives. The USFS Payette National Forest supported a continued collaborative working relationship to help benefit elk on their managed landscapes. The Nez Perce Tribe comments included working together to manage elk to benefit tribal harvest and did not support predation management as a method to achieve increased elk numbers. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation supported the Department's effort to manage elk, reduce the effects of predation and restore declined populations.

The 11 citizen letters focused on predation both pro and con, multiple tag option and habitat. Some of these letters contained very helpful editorial comments that will increase the clarity of the plan and pointed out several areas where the plan lacks clarity and continuity.

Online Comments and Viewing

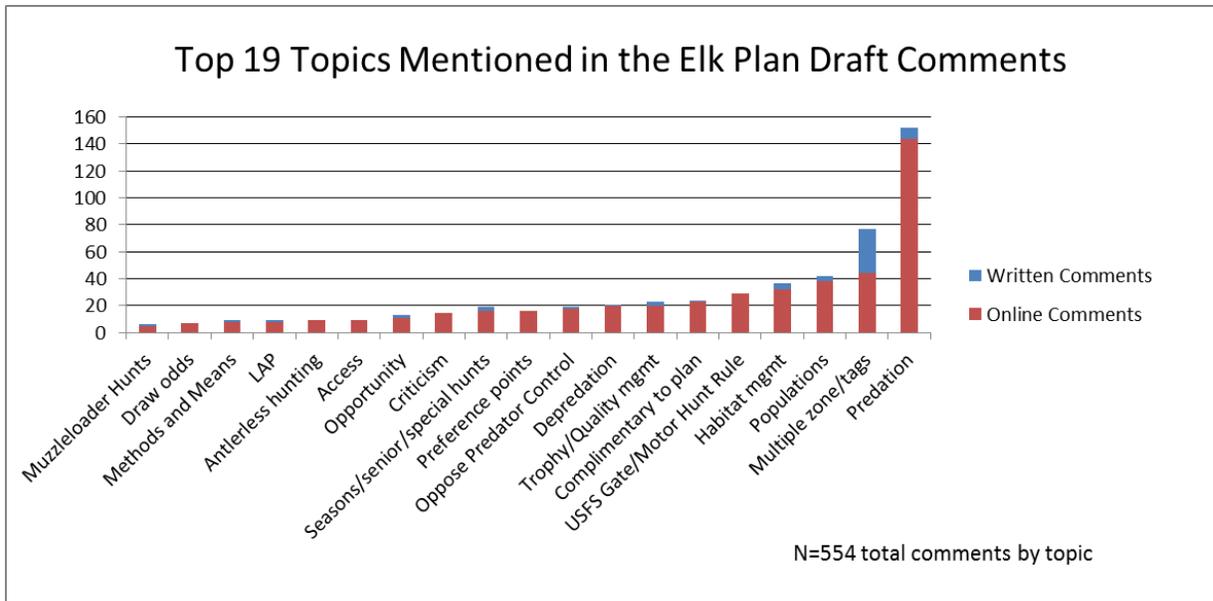
1203 individuals viewed the draft elk plan on the department’s website during the comment period. We received 442 written comments of which 401 were gathered through the website. An additional 802 people registered as viewing the elk plan, but chose not to leave any comments.



The distribution of elk plan comments and viewing was highest in the southwest region with 299 viewers and 82 written comments; Salmon region had the least amount of plan viewers and comments. Nonresidents made up 8% of the plan viewers and made up 13% of the written comments.

Nature of the Online Comments

Comments submitted online were assigned to topic categories for more in-depth analysis. Each comment was given multiple topics (if necessary) in order capture the extent of each comment. In the end, there were 43 different topics assigned to 554 total comments by topic. Of those 43 topics, 19 topics had 5 or more individuals address that specific topic.



The top three topics included predation, multiple zone tag and elk populations.

Predation was the number 1 topic mentioned in the comments was predation, with 171 of the comments. The comments were split with 152 supported predation management and 19 comments were against any predator harvest or control. Comments supporting predator management, primarily centered on wolves, but also addressed black bears, mountain lions and grizzly bears. All of those comments were in favor of increasing the harvest of predators.

The **multiple zone tag** (“C-tag” or 2-Zone) concept was mentioned by 77 of the comments. The comments were 2 to 1 against the multiple zone tag option. The general concerns were that it would increase hunter crowding, increase statewide elk harvest and that it was just about the money.

The topic of **elk populations** was mentioned in 42 comments and encompassed several subtopics which included: specific season changes (21), question about elk estimates (3), vague objectives (3), judged elk management as poor (5), thought plan implementation was going to be difficult (3), antler restrictions to increase bull quality (2) and how antlerless hunting is counterproductive to population growth (2). People with comments about specific season changes gave us real example of changes they wanted to see or felt the plan meant little to them without any specific proposed changes to review.

Changes to Result from Comments:

- Make changes to all the noted typos and errors.
- Revise the predation section to be more action oriented.

- Continue to develop and evaluate options to provide expanded elk hunting opportunity
- Revise the habitat section to include more specific goals and objectives.
- Modify the agricultural conflict section to use more constructive terms and to clarify the depredation section to reflect state statute
- Edit the disease section to provide better clarity.
- Review the population monitoring section and clarify as needed
Edit the executive summary as needed to reflect the changes made in the plan document.