IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

November 2026 Commission Meeting ***Agenda Item No.:*** *13*
Agenda Item: *Big Willow Elk Depredation Project Summary* ***Supervisor Approval:*** *SR*
Presented by: *Josh Royse*
Position/Title: *Southwest Regional Supervisor*

Background:
Idaho Statute 36-1108 and the Idaho Elk Management Plan 2024-2030 provide management direction to implement measures to minimize, eliminate or compensate for elk depredations. For several years, agricultural producers in the Big Willow drainage in GMU 32 have experienced crop damage from elk that has been unmanageable by typical methods. Over the past several months, staff have been implementing a two-phase project designed to reduce the resident elk herd in the Big Willow drainage. In May, staff captured 37 resident elk from Big Willow and translocated them to the Upper St. Joe River drainage of GMU 7. In July, staff collaborated with USDA Wildlife Services to complete the second phase of the project, which was the lethal removal of 75 additional elk. Meat from the lethally removed elk was processed and distributed to 19 different food banks spanning 6 Idaho counties. Overall, food banks received nearly 9,500 lbs of elk meat. This presentation will provide the Commission with a summary of all 2026 efforts, including costs and lessons learned.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:
The Commission is charged with administering wildlife policy, and through IDFG, is responsible for preserving, protecting, perpetuation and managing the state's wildlife (Idaho Code 36-103). Idaho Code 36-1108 provides direction for control of and compensation for damage caused by elk.

Public Involvement Process:
The Big Willow project was first presented to the Commission during the January 2026 Commission meeting and was shared widely via a press release shortly after that meeting. The Commission was updated on the translocation phase of the project at the July 2026 commission meeting. A press release was issued in August 2026 summarizing the lethal removal part of the project. The Commission and IDFG have received input from the public on this project via social media, email, and phone calls. Public also have the opportunity to comment on this topic at the November Commission Public Meeting.

Justification:
The information presented will inform Commissioners of ongoing elk management actions in the Big Willow drainage in GMU 32 and provide a summary of elk removed and costs associated with the project to date.

Staff Recommendation:
N/A – Informational only.