

Meeting Date: March 22, 2018

Agenda Item No. 20

Agenda Item: Predation Management in Zones Not Meeting Goals

Bureau Chief Approval:

Prepared by: Jim Hayden

Background:

The Commission requested an overview of the potential for predation management to help manage elk and other big game species where populations are not meeting management objectives. As an example, and to facilitate a discussion including but not limited to elk, this presentation details a statewide summary of where elk objectives are not being met, and the potential for predation management as a tool to help meet those objectives.

Elk Status

Elk populations are surveyed in 22 of Idaho's 29 elk management zones. In the remaining 7 zones, aerial surveys for elk are impractical or too expensive given a scarcity of elk.

Most Idaho elk zones meet or exceed bull elk objectives (Fig. 1).

- 8 are more than 25% above objective
- 5 are 1 to 25% above objective
- 4 are within objective
- 5 are 1 to 25% below objective, and
- None are more than 25% below objective

Most Idaho elk zones meet or exceed cow elk objectives (Fig. 2).

- 3 are more than 25% above objective
- 5 are 1 to 25% above objective
- 9 are within objective
- 3 are 1 to 25% below objective, and
- 2 are more than 25% below objective

Predation Impacts

Total predation of cow elk averaged 3.3% statewide 2014-2016, ranging from 1.7% to 4.7% across elk zone predation impact classifications. Predation by wolves ranked second to that by cougars.

Data from 2002-2009 in the Lolo provide important insight into early calf survival. Calf elk survival from birth through mid-winter averaged 45.6%, with mortality dominated by predation. The most common source of predation during this period was by black bears, followed by cougars, then wolves.

Total 6-month predation of calf elk captured mid-winter (2014-2017) averaged 22.2% statewide, ranging from 14.2% to 26% across elk zone predation impact classifications. Similar to the case for cow elk, predation by wolves ranked second to that by cougars.

Predation Management

Predation management plans have been written and approved for the Panhandle, Lolo, Selway, Middle Fork, and Sawtooth Elk zones.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Code §36-104 authorizes the Commission to establish rules for the taking of wildlife consistent with state policy. IDAPA 13.01.08 - Rules Governing the Taking of Big Game Animals in the State of Idaho dictate rules associated with hunting big game animals. The IDFG Policy for Avian and Mammalian Predation Management (August 24, 2000) provides the Department direction in managing predator populations consistent with meeting management objectives for prey species populations.

Public Involvement Process:

N/A.

Justification:

The Commission has requested information on predation management options in areas not meeting management objectives.

Staff Recommendation:

None. This agenda item is for Commission information.

Action Requested:

N/A.

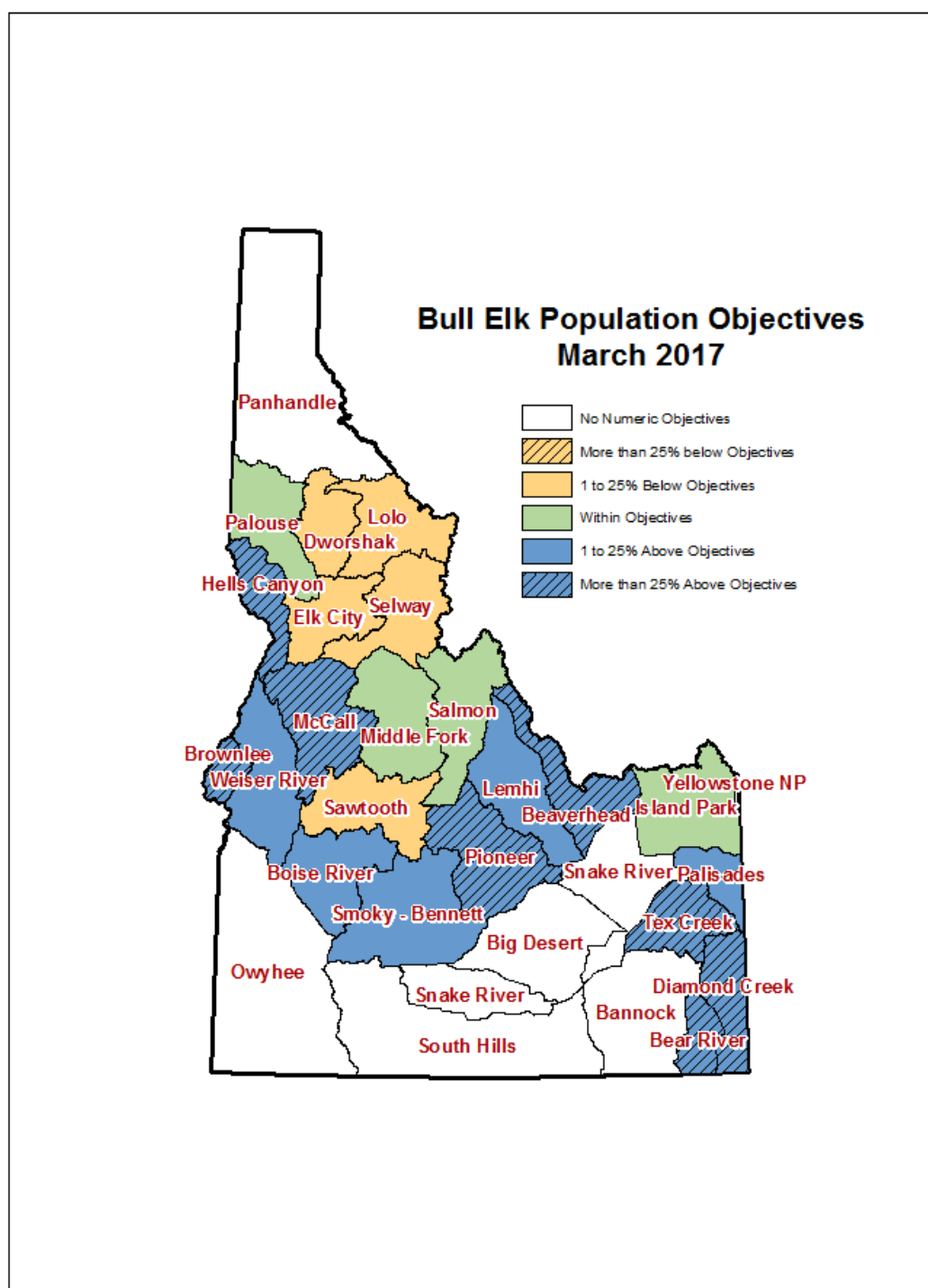


Figure 1. Attainment of bull elk population objectives in Idaho, March 1, 2018.

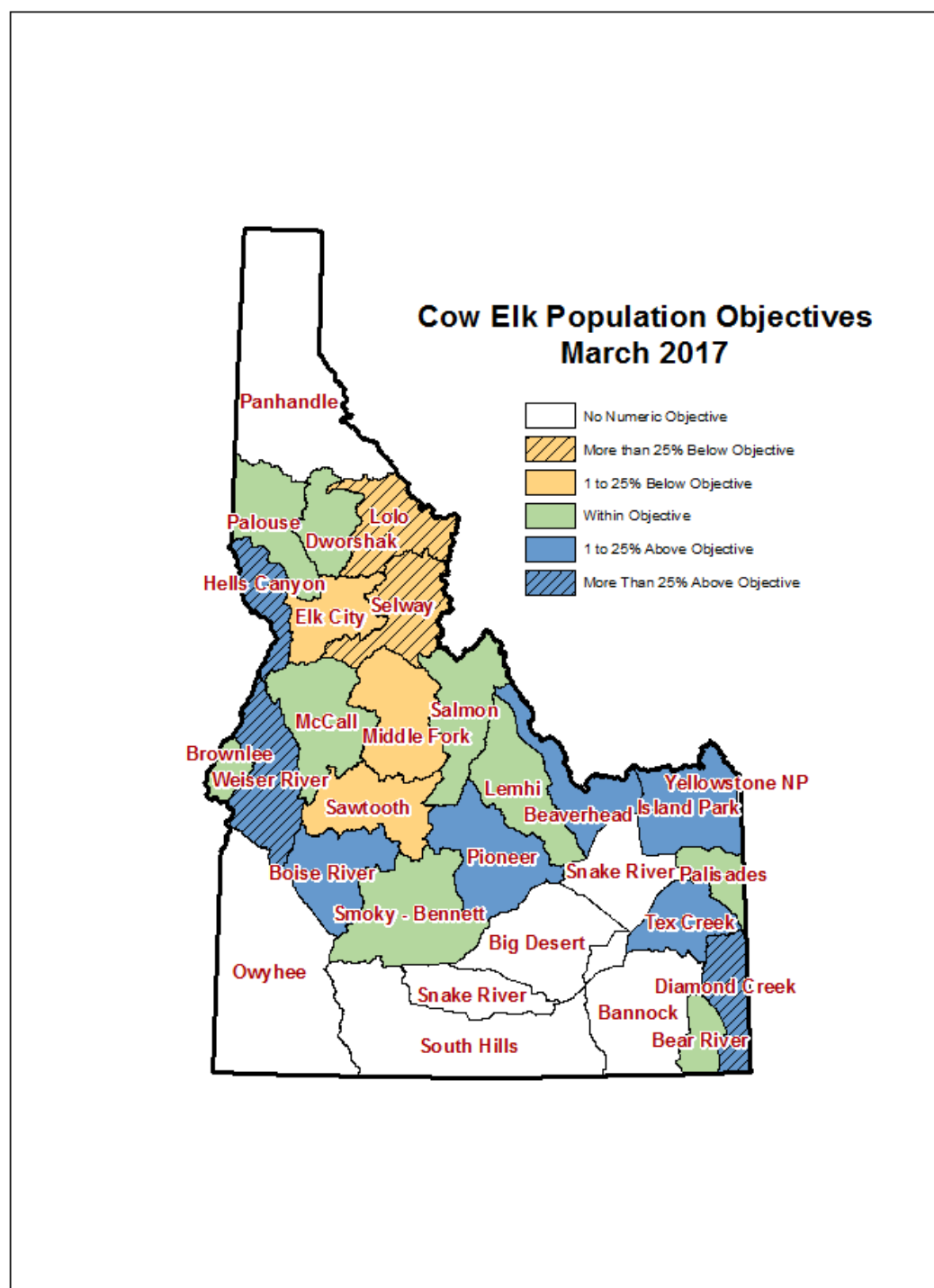


Figure 2. Attainment of cow elk population objectives in Idaho, March 1, 2018.