



ELK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

When Cordillera was first planned and designed the local elk herd was an important consideration. A series of “Wildlife Agreements” were developed between Cordillera, the Colorado Division of Wildlife and Eagle County. These agreements established guidelines so that the elk herd could continue to live and migrate in and around Cordillera. Cordillera remains committed to these agreements.

The local elk population has grown and will continue to grow. The ever growing elk population creates challenges above and beyond the Cordillera Wildlife Agreements. Cordillera is not the first, nor the last Community or entity to deal with this situation. History has shown that best management tool available for humans to affect these elk herd numbers is hunting.

Cordillera’s PUD prohibits the killing of wildlife but allows for the CPOA Board to authorize specific action, i.e. hunting. The Cordillera Wildlife Agreements recognize that hunting may be needed as a tool to affect population size.

Discussion

Wildlife experts confidently say that with no human intervention, elk herd numbers in and around Cordillera will grow.

Most elk will live twenty to thirty years. Elk start reproducing around the age of two and tend to have one or two calves every year. The survival rate for calves is very high. This means that the elk population has the ability to grow very large.

In Colorado, Elk experience limited natural mortality due to predators and winter. Few animals are capable of preying on an animal as large as an elk. There is limited predation on young, old and sick elk from Mountain Lions, Coyotes and perhaps bears, but not enough to affect herd size. Wolves can affect herd size but there are no wolves in Colorado. Very few winters are severe enough to impact the elk. Elk have diseases but again, diseases do not account for significant mortality except in the older animals.

Determining the appropriate herd size and how many elk the land can support is difficult. In order to have any accuracy this type of study would take many years. The size of the elk herd and the carrying capacity of the land can adversely affect each other. The Colorado Divisions of Wildlife conducts arial surveys to monitor the elk and deer populations and distribution. CDOW believes that the size of the herd in the Cordillera area is too large. It varies depending on the time of year. During hunting season, because there is no hunting in Cordillera, the numbers could rise between 700 – 800.



Excessive numbers of elk and deer affect vegetation. In and around Cordillera many stands of aspen are in decline; the trees are old, not in good health and growth is stunted. Aspen regenerate from their roots. If you look amongst many of Cordillera's aspen stands there is little to no re-growth. In Colorado there is a phenomenon called SAD (Sudden Aspen Decline). No one knows for sure why the aspen are dying but SAD is a common occurrence. Large populations of deer and elk are not helping the situation as they browse on new growth. If the aspen are continually over browsed stands of Aspen could eventually die off.

Cordillera was designed to allow room for herds of elk. A fund was established by Kensington Partners to assist CDOW conduct habitat management to support elk. Unfortunately, supporting an ever growing herd of elk will not solve the problem of a growing elk herd.

Hunting is the main tool that man has to affect the size of the elk herd. Other tools have been tried with limited success at greater expense. Cow elk can be given contraceptives. This is expensive and requires getting very close to the elk. Elk can be relocated. Relocation of an animal of this size is generally reserved to establishing new or re-establishing older populations. No one within a reasonable distance needs elk and the cost to relocate is very high. CDOW does not support either option.

Knowing when to take action or how many elk should be removed can be difficult. Waiting until it becomes obvious that the herd size should be reduced is counter-productive. At that point the elk will have over browsed their food supply, which in Cordillera would affect private property, and over browsed vegetation may not rebound quickly. At that point a larger number of elk would need to be removed to interrupt the exponential growth cycle. Taking action before the herd size is detrimental to the environment and the health of the herd would require less drastic action as fewer animals would need to be removed. CDOW estimates that ten percent of the herd should be removed in order to maintain the size of the herd. Studies have shown that predation, or hunting, changes behavior and cause elk to move about naturally, which is beneficial to the vegetation.

Hunting is allowed on the public lands around Cordillera. During the hunting seasons, which begin around the middle of August for Archery and last as late as January 15, large numbers of elk move into Cordillera and Diamond Star Ranch, where there is no hunting.

Cordillera has issued some communication in preparation for a hunting program.

Response has been minimal. The three main issues that arose to date include;

- 1) Killing of wildlife in Cordillera should not be allowed
- 2) Hunting in Cordillera would not be safe and should not be allowed.
- 3) It is not right to harass the elk at the horse barns because of the horses.
- 4) The DOW knows what it is doing. If DOW recommends hunting then we should work with CDOW.



The primary goal of a hunting program would be to 1) Reduce the size of the herd and 2) Change the behavior of the elk herd. This would be done by hunting cow elk. This management program does not contemplate shooting bull elk or either sex deer. Every effort will be made to exercise the program thru out the span of the hunting season so as to pressure the elk a long period.

At the Cordillera Equestrian Center the elk come into the outdoor paddocks for hay and water and in the process tear down the electric fencing. When the fencing is down the horses are free to roam, including Squaw Creek Road. There has been one witnessed conflict between two elk and a horse. Hunting elk above the equestrian center would reduce the number of elk and hopefully have an effect on behavior.

In addition to managing the elk herd, authorized hunting would allow, on a very controlled basis, hunting within the subdivision for nuisance or dangerous wildlife. To date this has not been necessary but there has been an increase of reports in and around Cordillera of coyote activity.

Cordillera will continue to promote proactive community programs to avoid conflicts with wildlife such as the community trash program.

There are pros and cons to managing the types of weapons that may be used for hunting. Archery presents a safer alternative then a rifle as an arrow will not travel as far as a bullet. Because archers must stalk their prey to get closer the chance of making a mistake is reduced. A well placed arrow will normally kill its prey, but animals shot with a bow have a greater chance of wandering longer distances and perhaps onto private property.

CDOW has requirements specifying the minimal size rifle calibers to assure that big game are ethically killed. Bullets from any caliber rifle large enough to legally kill an elk can travel very long distances so even limiting the caliber does not assure safety.

Staff recommends that hunting in Cordillera be conducted thru CDOW's licensed hunter program. Staff recommends against professional hunters removing large number of elk. All hunters must be approved by Cordillera and show proficiency with their firearm. Cordillera Staff will accompany hunters to assure hunting is safe and the hunters follow all guidelines. Only certain areas of Cordillera will be designated for hunting.

The number of elk removed each year will be reviewed annually in conjunction with CDOW. In year one, the goal will be to exercise the program and focus on quality. The goal for year one will be approximately 15 animals.



CORDILLERA HUNTING PROGRAM

1) SAFETY

- a) Safety will be the highest priority of the Cordillera hunting program.
- b) No person shall be authorized to discharge any firearm within the Cordillera Subdivision unless approved by the Healthy Forest Committee for the purpose of participating in this program and in compliance with this program.
 - i) Exceptions: Any law enforcement/CDOW personnel while in the line of duty.
- c) Approved hunters shall at all times be accompanied by a designated CMD staff person whose mission shall be to insure safety.
 - i) CMD Staff must have participated in an approved Hunter Safety program and/or possess a valid Colorado Hunting License, have or have been a hunter with no hunting related infractions, and have exhibited above average level of responsibility.
 - ii) CMD Staff shall have above average familiarity of Cordillera, above and beyond the roads to include all open space.
- d) There will be no shooting at animals that are in view, without the assistance of optics, of any occupied private property.
 - i) Exception: Animals that must be euthanized or nuisance/hazard animal that may have to be removed.
- e) There will be no shooting in direct line of sight of home, road unless the shooting is away from the structure.
 - i) Exception: Terrain features, valleys/hills etc, would allow for shooting.
 - ii) There shall be no shooting within 500 feet of any private residence.
- f) Hunting within one half mile (2,810') feet of the Cordillera Equestrian Center or Bear Cat stables will be coordinated with the appropriate barn manager(s) to assure no person is riding a horse at the time of shooting.
- g) Recreation Trails in zones designated for hunting will be closed to non-hunters when the zone is in use for hunting.
 - i) Recreation trails that are closed will be posted closed at all points of entry.
 - ii) Notice of closure will be posted via the Cordillera Flash (Email)
- h) Firearms shall remain unloaded until hunter is stalking game and is authorized by the assigned spotter to load his firearm
- i) Firearms shall not be loaded while in any vehicle or ATV.



- j) Hunter(s) and guide must wear blaze orange vest and hat in accordance with State Regulation.
- k) There shall be no shooting of a firearm within 2,600' of any golf course when the course is open.

2) **AUTHORIZATION**

- a) The Cordillera Healthy Forest Committee shall review and authorize each individual hunter.
 - i) Authorization will be based on safety, ethics, experience, ability and interview.
- b) Authorize hunters must show appropriate hunting tags/license.
- c) Hunters must demonstrate a high level of familiarity/competence with firearms and shooting.
 - i) Hunters will be required to place at minimum four shots in a twelve inch group at 100 yards.
- d) CMD reserves the right to deny any person, including property owners, hunting privileges.
- e) CMD reserves the right to change/modify/ cease the hunting program at any time for any reason.
- f) Hunters will be required to sign an agreement to abide by CPOA rules and Release/Hold Harmless CPOA.
- g) The Healthy Forest Committee or the General Manager may authorize a private company to euthanize terminally ill or injured wildlife or to remove dangerous wildlife.
 - i) Contractor must provide proof of insurance and name CMD/CPOA as additional insured.
 - ii) Contractor must sign Hunters Release and Indemnification
 - iii) Designated CMD Staff must accompany Contractor at time of removal.
- h) Any person who violates any rule, agreement, law or instruction will be asked to leave the program and prohibited from hunting on Cordillera property.
- i) Any person who is dismissed from the program will be prohibited from future participation.
- j) Any person who violates any law will be reported to CDOW or ECSO as appropriate.



3) **PRIVATE PROPERTY**

- a) There shall be no hunting on private property unless a private property owner has given written permission and the property lies within or adjacent such that it could be included in a designated zone.
- b) There will be no scouting or travel across private property for the purpose of hunting except where a Metro District Trail or Easement exists or the property owner has given permission and the property lies within or adjacent to a designated zone.
- c) In the event a wounded animal travels onto private property Public Safety shall make reasonable effort to contact the property owner or their local representative prior to entering onto the private property.
- d) Public Safety shall coordinate covering and removing the animal by the most discrete means possible.
- e) There shall be no shooting of a firearm within 200' of any private structure except when necessary to euthanize a wounded animal and after effort has been made to contact the property owner or their representative.

4) **ZONES**

- a) Management zones will dictate where hunting is authorized and/or prohibited and what type of firearm/weapon will be allowed.

5) **NUMBERS**

- a) There shall be no more than person hunting at one time at any given day.
- b) Number of elk removed shall be reviewed annually by the Cordillera Healthy Forest Committee in conjunction with CDOW.

6) **CARCASS**

- a) Dead animals within 2,500 ft of any private residence will be removed and taken to suitable location.
- b) No carcass, meat or animal will be carried in any vehicle where the carcass or any blood is visible.

7) **FIREARMS**

- a) Rifle calibers size 30-06 and below will be allowed to hunt in Cordillera unless otherwise approved.

8) **CDOW**

- a) Any and all hunting must abide by State Statute.



- b) Any and all violations of State Statute will be reported to CDOW.

9) DANGEROUS WILDLIFE

- a) Every effort will be made to prevent dangerous wildlife by controlling access to food, controlling pets and using harassment techniques whenever possible.
- b) Removal of dangerous wildlife must be authorized by the General Manager and done according to State statute.
- c) Requests and approvals to remove dangerous wildlife shall be in writing/electronic for record keeping.
- d) Management of Dangerous Wildlife will be coordinate and communicated to CDOW.
- e) Removal of Dangerous Wildlife shall abide by all Colorado State Statute.
- f) Hunting Zones will not apply to removal of dangerous wildlife.

10) TERMINALLY SICK OR INJURED WILDLIFE

- a) Cordillera Public Safety will be authorized to euthanize animals that are terminally sick or injured.
 - i) CPS will investigate and document all reports of sick or injured wildlife.
 - ii) CPS will report any cases of possible life threatening/determining injuries to CDOW.
 - iii) Zone maps for hunting will not apply to terminally sick/injured wildlife.