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Juniper, Idaho
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Attachment 13
2/17/16
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Dear Big Game Policy Makers of Idaho,

I understand that there is currently discussion going on as to how the elk are becoming a significant problem for agricultural producers and what some of the solutions might be. I am sending this letter to inform you of the impact the elk have had and currently have in our operation in and around Juniper, Idaho. Our farm is made up of about 4000 acres of dry farm around Sweetzer Summit, some additional leased land in Juniper, and about 320 acres of irrigated ground on the flat south of Juniper (near the Utah State Line).

I feel that it is important to start with some historical background of the elk in our area in Southern Idaho. My grandfather and great grandfather farmed and ranched in the Clear Creek, Black Pine, and Sublett areas their entire lives. My great grandfather never saw a single elk in the area his entire life, and my grandfather never saw one until around 1998 (he was born in 1919). I saw them show up at this time, and we had not seen any elk before this. With just a few animals in the area in the beginning, their impact was not too substantial. However, that changed as the herd sizes increased. Since about 2009, their impact on our operation has been very substantial. I have heard many ideas as to how exactly the elk came to this area. I know the fish and game was expressing an interest in bringing them here in the late 1980s.

We currently have about 40 elk that frequent our dry farm in the summer. About the 1st of September, they move and spend more time in the irrigated hay on the flat. When they head to the flat, the herd meets with additional elk, become a herd of well over 100 animals. This field is in quite open country so the elk spend their days in cedar tree patches within a few miles and trail in and out of the field each night. Depredation hunts are challenging because the country is open so hunters struggle to sneak up on them, and they are typically only in the field at night. Typical damage to the dry farm include trailing through the winter wheat as it is ripening, trampling it and they graze the seed heads off our safflower as the seeds are forming. On the irrigated crops, our 3rd crop alfalfa has substantial damage from grazing and trampling. When it snows, they aggressively dig to the winter wheat to eat it and root around in it, which stunts the crop going into the next year. We also have had increased costs to deal with the additional weeds that they spread through their droppings, particularly field bindweed. A couple of other additional costs are the cost of scaring elk out at night and other fence repair costs associated with elk caused damage.

The habitat for elk on public land in our area is marginal, and so they heavily rely on farmers crops for food and ranchers water supplies for water. Just to give some typical numbers as to what this is now costing our operation on an annual basis:

- 80 acres Dry farm wheat affected; went from 40 to 35 bu/acre (5 bu/acreX80 acresX\$6.00/bu=\$2,400)
- 40 acres Dry farm safflower affected; went from #800 to #400 (400#/acreX40 acresX\$.20/#=\$3,200)
- 200 acres Irrigated 3rd crop Alfalfa affected; went from 1.6 to 1.4 ton/acre (.2ton/acreX200 acresX\$175/ton=\$7,000)
- 80 acres Irrigated winter wheat PVP certified seed affected; went from 100 bu/acre to 90 bu/acre (10 bu/acreX80 acresXcertified pvp seed prem. price of \$10.00/bu=\$8,000)