

## Arizona Game and Fish Commission and Department Wildlife Management Program (Report Highlights)

May 2001

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's Wildlife Management Program manages animals that are actively hunted, such as deer, elk, bear, turkey, quail, and duck. It also works to conserve wildlife populations that are not typically hunted, including threatened and endangered species. Finally, it manages sportfish in Arizona lakes, streams, and urban lakes. The program does not receive any monies from the State General Fund.

**Our Conclusions:** A task force of stakeholders and land managers is needed to address some specific questions on how to manage elk numbers and habitat. In addition, the Department needs to do a better job of managing the \$9.4 million it receives in annual license sales from retail dealers.

### Conflicts over Managing Elk

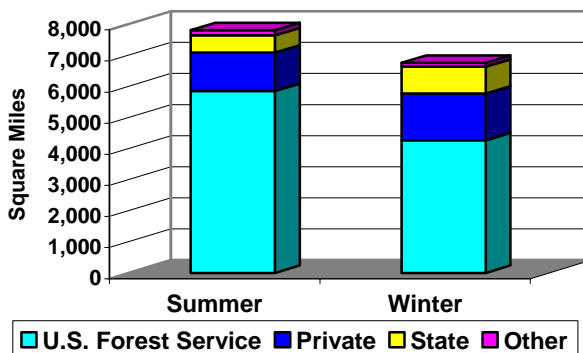
No single agency manages *both* the number of elk and the land they live on.

- As many as 28,000 post-hunt adult elk are managed by the Game and Fish Department.
- 5 million acres of elk habitat are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, State Land Department, and private parties.

### Conflicts arise over managing elk numbers—

- Hunters want larger elk herds for increased hunting opportunities. This also increases Department revenues.

**Elk Habitat Ownership  
(Estimated)**



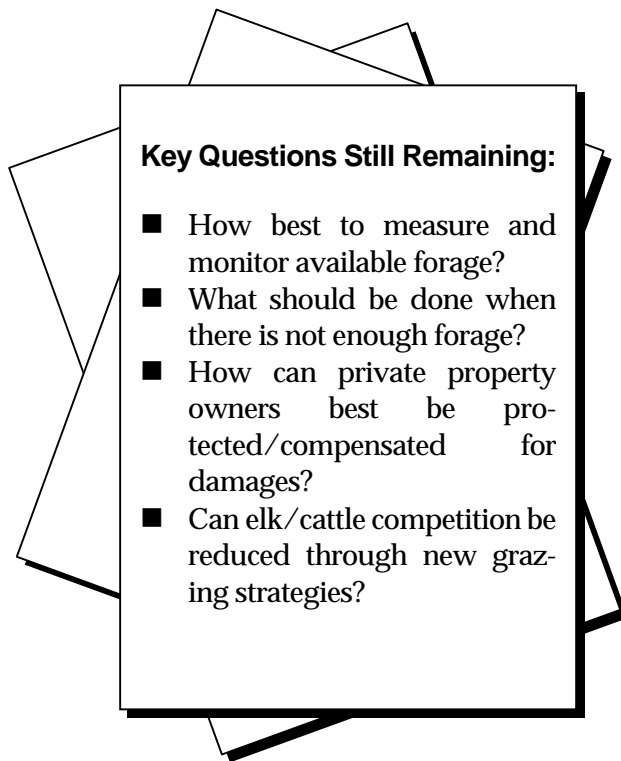
Arizona was originally inhabited by Merriam's elk, which became extinct in the late 1800s. A close relative, the Rocky Mountain elk, was successfully introduced in 1913, and now roams the State's higher elevations.

- Ranchers complain that the elk herd has expanded at the expense of cattle. When forage is limited, the U.S. Forest Service,

which manages most of the elk habitat, can reduce the number of cattle allowed to graze, but not the number of elk.

- Private property owners express concern over elk damage to fences, crops, and gardens.

**Key issues not resolved**—Over the last several years the Governor, Legislature, Game and Fish Department, State Land Department, and others have worked to address elk habitat issues. However, none of these groups have reached agreement on specific key issues.



**Key Questions Still Remaining:**

- How best to measure and monitor available forage?
- What should be done when there is not enough forage?
- How can private property owners best be protected/compensated for damages?
- Can elk/cattle competition be reduced through new grazing strategies?

**The Legislature should:**

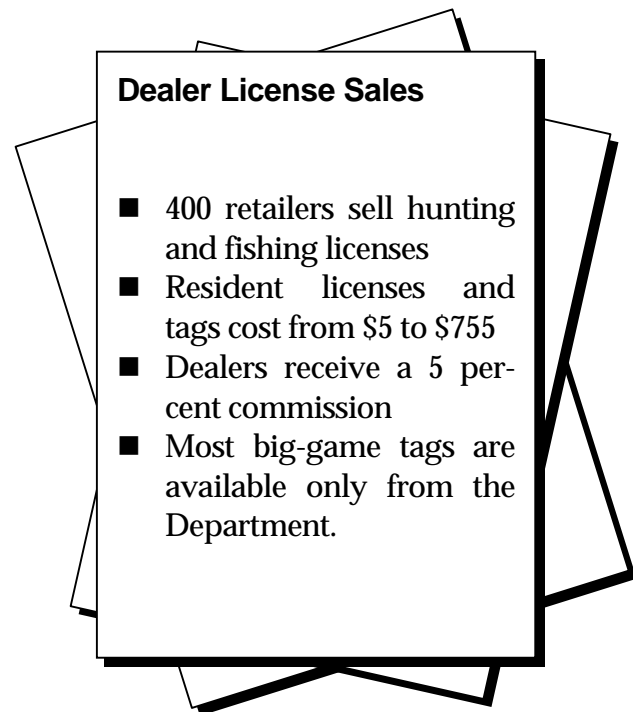
- ✓ Consider establishing a formal ongoing task force, composed of:
  - Legislators
  - U.S. Forest Service
  - State Land Department
  - Game and Fish Department
  - Landowners
  - Ranchers
  - Sportsmen
  - Scientists

The task force should be given direction to address the specific key issues still unresolved in managing the elk herds.

### **Dealer License Sales Need Better Management**

The Department receives about \$9.4 million from annual license, tag, and stamp sales through retail stores.

Although these revenues are significant, the Department does not efficiently manage these dealers.



**Dealer License Sales**

- 400 retailers sell hunting and fishing licenses
- Resident licenses and tags cost from \$5 to \$755
- Dealers receive a 5 percent commission
- Most big-game tags are available only from the Department.

**Poor recordkeeping**—There is not a single source of information in the Department about retail sales. Consequently, annual statements are manually compiled and can be confusing.

Sample of an Annual Statement

THE STATE OF ARIZONA  
**GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT**  
 1111 West Broadway Blvd, Phoenix, AZ 85003-4199  
 (602) 943-3000 • www.azgfd.com

23 March 2000      Audit Year 1999      79 Opnd

Dealer # [redacted]      Name [redacted]      Provider

10508 17	Licenses	\$ 99,244.20	10403.87
5703.33 paid	Two Pals	\$ 125.10	125.40
	Trot	\$ 1,987.62	1387.40
4804.84 balance	Waterfowl	\$ 729.42	109.62
	Tops	\$ 7712.55	471.37
	Nevada	\$	
	California	\$	
	Billing Stmt	\$ 1635.09	1635.09
	Total	40495.98	10508.17

Dear License Dealer:  
 We are enclosing a copy of your Dealer Annual Audit, with supporting documents for any charges or credits.

(1) Completion of your audit indicates a balance due of \$10,508.17. If the listed licenses have been sold, you may reduce the amount of the audit by submitting the GAD or Dealer copy of the license(s). Please mail payment, and if applicable, license copies no later than 10/10/00. Upon 10/10/00 receiving your payment and/or license copies, we will conduct another audit of your account. Full payment concludes the audit; therefore, refunds will not be awarded for inventory found at a later date. **ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED SEPARATELY FROM YOUR MONTHLY REPORTS.**

( ) Completion of your audit indicates a refund in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (refund check is attached).

( ) Completion of your audit indicates a - 0 - balance as evidenced by the enclosed audit.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dealer Service

By Eileen, OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

Worse yet, different Department records often show different information. For example, for one dealer:

- The file showed a balance due of \$266
- The computerized billing statement showed \$171 due
- The manual payment log showed “zero balance”

**Failure to timely collect monies due**—Dealers are supposed to report sales and turn in the money every month. At the end of the year, dealers have until January 10 to pay all remaining money and return all unsold licenses for the previous year. The dealer must pay for any unsold licenses not returned.

However, when dealers do not make the year-end payments, the Department does not always take timely action. For example:

- A dealer who owed \$10,000 in January 1999 was permitted to make partial payments until September 1999.
- Another dealer never returned about \$9,500 of unsold licenses in January 1999. The Department sent more licenses the next year, which the dealer also did not return. The Department finally began collections action in April 2000 for more than \$15,600.

Part of the problem may be that the Department cannot impose penalties or late fees on dealers. Also, the Department lacks policies for collecting late payments from dealers.

**The Department should:**

- ✓ Develop its database to provide complete payment and billing information.
- ✓ Seek authority to assess penalties or late fees against dealers who do not meet revenue reporting deadlines.
- ✓ Program its database to identify delinquent dealers.

**To Obtain More Information**

➤ A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling (602) 553-0333 or by visiting our Web site at:

[www.auditorgen.state.az.us](http://www.auditorgen.state.az.us)

➤ The contact person for this report is **Melanie Chesney**.