

Dept. of Natural Resources: Strong partnerships shine in third year of elk translocation efforts

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Madison – Twenty-eight Kentucky elk have arrived at their new home in the Flambeau River State Forest in Sawyer County. Once released into the wild, the “class of 2017” will join the current Clam Lake herd.

The Clam Lake herd resides primarily in Ashland, Price, and Sawyer counties, and was reintroduced to the area in 1995 from Michigan. Adding additional elk from Kentucky to the herd is expected to provide a boost to herd growth and introduce new genetics. These efforts mark the third year of a five-year elk reintroduction program being conducted with assistance from multiple partners.

“We are very excited to be adding more elk to the northern elk herd – working alongside Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources staff has been such a positive experience,” Department of Natural Resources Secretary Cathy Stepp said. “This is yet another milestone we would not have reached without help from Kentucky and our other partners – whether through volunteer hours or donations, their support has led to a true team effort.”

Wisconsin DNR staff have worked closely with Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources staff over the past three years to help make sure trapping efforts in Kentucky are as successful and efficient as possible.

Funding for Wisconsin elk translocation efforts over the past three years is a result of support from the Ho-Chunk Nation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Jackson County Wildlife Fund, Chippewa tribes and others.

Now that the elk have arrived in northern Wisconsin, DNR staff will take special precautions to help make sure these elk become accustomed to their new home in the Flambeau River State Forest.

The elk will be enclosed in a seven acre holding pen to satisfy quarantine and animal health testing requirements and allow the elk to become familiar with their new surroundings. The area surrounding the holding pen is closed to the public during this period. Individuals are asked to avoid the general vicinity of the closed area. Minimizing human disturbance near the release site will allow the elk to adjust and will maximize the success of reintroduction efforts.

During 2015 and 2016, a new elk herd was established in Jackson County where a total of 73 elk were released, and department staff are excited to continue working closely with partners in this region.

“The task of actually bringing elk to Jackson County is complete, and we are now shifting our relocation efforts to the northern herd,” said Kevin Wallenfang, DNR deer and elk ecologist. “Our hope is to deliver up to 75 elk to the Clam Lake area over two years, but we have an option to return for a fifth year if necessary.”

For more information regarding elk in Wisconsin, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword “[elk](#).”