

Local Agricultural Landowner Survey:
Summary of survey results for the period
April, 2016 – September 2017

Lake Huron-North Shore Elk Advisory Committee
September 29, 2017

Please direct questions or comments to:

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If you would like to complete the survey, an updated version will be posted on the St. Joseph Island Hunters and Anglers web site (www.sjiha.ca/) or contact Rob Routledge via the contact information above.

The Lake Huron – North Shore Elk Advisory Committee (LHNS EAC) was established in early 2015 to assist the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), Sault Ste. Marie District, with a population objective setting exercise for the regional elk herd. This committee advises the MNRF on planning for the elk herd in this area and ensures that MNRF's approach to managing the elk herd is reflective of the broad spectrum of interests. The LHNS EAC consists of members representing a broad spectrum of interests from the following areas:

- Indigenous Communities
- Academia
- Agriculture
- Anglers and Hunters
- General Public
- Local Citizen's Committee
- Municipalities
- Naturalists
- Elk Restoration Committee
- Tourism Industry
- Trappers

Goals of the Local Agricultural Landowner Survey:

1. Assess nuisance activity of Elk and other wildlife
2. Determine methods used to deal with nuisance Elk activity (and other wildlife) and assess their effectiveness
3. Determine the number and composition of Elk harvested within the past two years
4. Determine if Elk activity has changed after one or more Elk have been harvested

Local Agricultural Landowner Survey sampling:

- 17 landowners were surveyed in the Laird area between April and December, 2016 (includes one mail-in)
- NO surveys have been received thus far in 2017
- Active farms and some local residents located within the core Elk range were targeted (see Fig. 1 on p. 3 – Tarbutt [includes Tarbutt Additional] and Laird Townships)
- Door-to-door surveys conducted by: Rob Routledge and Sault College Natural Environment and Outdoor Studies students (Eric Harper, John Rankin, Maxime Gerin-Ouellet, Riley Stoebe, Victoria Arfo, Zackary Ralph)

Initial questions asked prior to conducting the survey:

Where is your property located? Provide Township ONLY:

Laird Township	7
Tarbutt Township	7
St. Joseph	1
Unknown	2

- **How large is your property (or properties) in acres?**
- **Do you have a farm? (if YES, answer question on next line; if NO, go to question #1)**

My farm's primary function is:

- < 1 acre, not a farm (Tarbutt)
- 2 acres, not a farm (Tarbutt)
- 32 acres, not a farm (Laird)
- 70 acres, farm - rented, hay (Laird)
- 80 acres, farm, cattle, horses, hay (Laird)
- 90 acres, farm - hay and grain (Laird)
- 98 acres, hobby farm (St. Joseph)
- 372 acres, farm - beef, hay (Laird)
- 470 acres, farm- hay & pasture fields (Tarbutt)
- 640 acres dairy farm (Laird)



Figure 1. Area surveyed east of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. An elk sub-herd maintains most activity within Laird and Tarbutt Townships.

1. Have you ever observed Elk on your property?

	Number of respondents
YES	16
NO	1

2. a) Which season have you seen Elk on your property (circle all that apply) and what is a typical number seen at any given time? (n = 16 respondents). See Appendix A for raw data.

	Number of Elk seen by season			
	<i>winter</i>	<i>spring</i>	<i>summer</i>	<i>autumn</i>
median	11.8	6	6	15
mean	13.6	11.9	11.1	15.2
maximum	40	40	40	40

2. b) Have you noticed a change in the number of Elk seen in the past year (2015) when compared to the previous two or three years (circle one response)? n = 15 respondents

Perceived change in Elk seen in 2015	Number of respondents
large decline	2
small decline	1
no change	6
small increase	2
large increase	3
<i>no response</i>	<i>1</i>

2. c) How do you feel about having Elk on your property? Note: some respondents selected multiple options.

	Number of respondents
dislike	9
neutral	6
enjoy	4
<i>no response</i>	<i>1</i>

The responses to the previous question were placed into context with Questions #2b and #4.

		How do you feel about having Elk on your property?		
		dislike	neutral	enjoy
Have had nuisance issues with Elk		8	5	2
Have had NO nuisance issues with Elk		1	1	2
Elk seen in the past year (2015) when compared to previous 2 – 3 years	large decline	1		1
	small decline	1		1
	no change	3	4	
	small increase		1	1
	large increase	3	1	

3. Would you willingly participate in keeping a record of future Elk sightings on your land even if you haven't seen Elk in the past?

	Number of respondents
YES	13
NO	3
<i>no response</i>	<i>1</i>

4. Have you experienced any nuisance issues with Elk on your property? If YES, proceed to #4a (if NO, proceed to #5)

	Number of respondents
YES	11
NO	5
<i>no response</i>	<i>1</i>

4. a) Have you experienced any nuisance issues with Elk on your property in the past year (2015)?

Summary: Nuisance issues with Elk in the past year (2015).

Damage description	Number of respondents
fence damage	2
summer / fall crop damage	5
winter silage / hay bale damage	2
fruit trees / garden crops / landscaping	2

4. b) Have you experienced any nuisance issues with Elk on your property in the past two to five years?

Summary: Nuisance issues with Elk in the past two to five years.

Damage description	Number of respondents
fence damage	3
summer / fall crop damage	5
winter silage / hay bale damage	2
fruit trees / garden crops / landscaping	2

4. c) Have you noticed a change in nuisance Elk activity occurring over the past year (2015) when compared to the previous two to five years (circle one response)?

Note: one respondent having reported elk nuisance activity (Q 4) did not provide a response

Perceived change in nuisance Elk activity over past year	Number of respondents
large decline	1
small decline	2
no change	4
small increase	1
large increase	2
<i>no response</i>	7

Comment 1: Small decline since fencing vegetable plot

5. Have you experienced any nuisance issues with other wildlife on your property? If YES, proceed to #5a (if NO, proceed to #6)

	Number of respondents
YES	12
NO	4
<i>no response</i>	<i>1</i>

5. a) Have you experienced any nuisance issues with other wildlife on your property in the past year?

Summary: Nuisance issues with other wildlife in the past year (2015). Nuisance activity was largely restricted to damage to garden crops, germinating crops, and standing crops.

Nuisance wildlife reported	Number of respondents	% of all species reported
sandhill crane	3	17
black bear	3	17
raccoon	3	17
wolves and/or eastern coyotes	3	17
white-tailed deer	2	11
geese	1	6
moose	1	6
porcupine	1	6
striped skunk	1	6

5. b) Have you experienced any nuisance issues with other wildlife on your property in the past two to five years?

Summary: Nuisance issues with other wildlife in the past two to five years. Nuisance activity was largely restricted to damage to garden crops, germinating crops, and standing crops but also livestock injury or death.

Nuisance wildlife reported	Number of respondents	% of all species reported
sandhill crane	4	20
raccoon	4	20
black bear	3	15
wolves and/or eastern coyotes	3	15
white-tailed deer	2	10
geese	2	10
porcupine	1	5
cougar	1	5

6. Have you ever called MNRF with a complaint about nuisance ELK or other nuisance wildlife? If YES, proceed to #6a (if NO, proceed to #7)

	Number of respondents
YES	5
NO	12

Comment 1: Would they do anything about it?

6. a) Have you ever called MNRF with a complaint about nuisance ELK? If yes, please indicate how long ago you last called and describe the nature of the nuisance complaint reported.

	Number of respondents
YES	4
NO	1

Comment 1: yes, about tag, wanting info on the permit (no complaint)

Comment 2: yes, did not like natives shooting elk in the dark

Comment 3: Complaint made about elk

Comment 4: 2014/15

6. b) Have you ever called MNRF with a complaint about other nuisance wildlife? If yes, please indicate how long ago you last called and describe the nature of the nuisance complaint reported.

	Number of respondents
YES	3
NO	2

Comment 1: yes, 4 yrs ago for crane permit (now online)

Comment 2: Canada Geese, Sandhill Cranes

Comment 3: 2014 - bull moose - breaking fences - charged me was after horses

7. How many hours of labour would you estimate that you have spent due to Elk damage?

n = 11 respondents having reported elk damage on property

- 8 hours - \$200 annual
- 1 hr/wk (summer)
- 10 Hours
- 20 hours repair, 45 hours prevent
- no response on hours, estimated cost tens of thousands of dollars
- not applicable
- no record kept (**n = 2**)
- zero (**n = 3**)

8. Have you received any compensation for Elk damage?

	Number of respondents
YES	0
NO	17

9. Do you have insurance to protect against wildlife damage?

	Number of respondents
YES	2
NO	14
<i>no response</i>	<i>1</i>

Comment 1: yes, on cattle, not crop

Comment 2: yes, on bison

10. Are you aware of the Policy for Protecting Agricultural Property from Elk (for individuals seeking authorization from the MNRF to harass or kill Elk)?

	Number of respondents
YES	8
NO	9

11. What solutions to Elk nuisances would you recommend?

Categorized comments	Number of respondents
<i>[allow a licensed hunt]</i>	5
<i>[remove them all]</i>	4
<i>“fencing (based on neighbour’s experience)”</i> ; <i>“help farmers with fence cost”</i>	2
<i>“farmers should get a tag or two”</i>	1

12. Have harassment methods or aversion tactics been utilized to deter nuisance Elk activity on your property?

If yes, please describe harassment methods used and if they worked to solve nuisance problems.

	Number of respondents
YES	4
NO	12
not applic	1

Comment 1: no, finds them aggressive
Comment 2: yes, chasing them with horses and sleigh; not at as long as there was food
Comment 3: yes, chasing with four wheelers
Comment 4: no, but have used on other properties
Comment 5: yes, firing a shot gun to scare elk once
Comment 6: Bear scarers - mainly no effect in summer against individuals, effective against ~20 in winter

13. Would you allow licensed hunters on your property to hunt Elk if a regulated hunting season was established?

	Number of respondents	
YES	10	
NO	6	
not applicable	1	only 2 acre property

14. Have you called First Nations to remove nuisance Elk from your property?

	Number of respondents
YES	1
NO	15
not applicable	1

Comment 1: they asked but we said no
Comment 2: Should be land owners / we feed them!!
Comment 3: No, they contacted us

14. a) If yes, how many have been removed

Comment 1: 0

14. b) Do you know the approximate sex and age of the Elk removed?

No responses

15. If one or more Elk have been legally harvested on your property (First Nations), did other Elk stay and did nuisance Elk activity continue? Explain.

	Number of respondents
YES	0
NO	0
not applicable	4
<i>no response</i>	<i>13</i>

16. Other than removal of Elk, how can your situation be improved to help you co-exist with the Elk?

Comment 1: don't like them being hunting, would like to see more of them
Comment 2: limited hunt, other than First Nations hunters
Comment 3: continue to let my sheep dog roam my farm; elk and field crops are not economically compatible
Comment 4: fencing of fruit trees
Comment 5: open to putting up fences to keep them out
Comment 6: if someone put it up and took it down maybe a rat bail; does not like the idea of a fence, it is a hassle and makes daily work tough
Comment 7: no response
Comment 8: no issues yet
Comment 9: not really an issue now cause stopped growing corn
Comment 10: can coexist with them; assistance to put fence around pumpkin field and other veggies
Comment 11: no response
Comment 12: Farmers compensated for all losses; at the ministry's expense- build prison type fences around all acreage to keep elk out
Comment 13: no response
Comment 14: Help with high tensile electric fence cost
Comment 15: No response

17. If Elk are currently present in your township, what population size do you feel could be acceptable?

Comment 1: 0 - Should have never been introduced to the area
Comment 2: Unknown- what does the biologist MNRF staff think?
Comment 3: 0
Comment 4: 15-20
Comment 5: 100

18. In your opinion, has your farm been devalued due to the presence of the Elk?

	Number of respondents
YES	2
NO	13
<i>no response</i>	<i>0</i>
not applic	2

If yes, in what way has the farm been devalued?

Comment 1: just out the cost of my [fruit] trees
Comment 2: lost potential to having more cows; losing money to hay (moldy hay causes cow abortions); large increase in cow abortions over the last 10 yrs; moldy hay comes from air exposure, the elk do that
Comment 3: Feed quality/quantity have been compromised

Appendix A. Raw data.

2. a) Which season have you seen Elk on your property (circle all that apply) and what is a typical number seen at any given time?

	Resp. #1	Resp. #2	Resp. #3	Resp. #4	Resp. #5	Resp. #6	Resp. #7
winter --- typical no. of Elk		15-20	7	1-2	30+		25
spring --- typical no. of Elk			24	15-25	30+		least likely
summer --- typical no. of Elk			19	20	30+	15	25
autumn --- typical no. of Elk	21	1-2	19	12	30+	15	25

	Resp. #8	Resp. #9	Resp. #10	Resp. #11	Resp. #12	Resp. #13	Resp. #14
winter --- typical no. of Elk	0	28	15-18	no response	40+	15-20	4.-6
spring --- typical no. of Elk	1-2	18-20	6	no response	40+	15-20	4.-6
summer --- typical no. of Elk	1-2	0	6	no response	15-30	15-20	4.-6
autumn --- typical no. of Elk	2-3	0	12	no response	40+	15-20	15-20

	Resp. #15	Resp. #16
winter --- typical no. of Elk	N/A	<20
spring --- typical no. of Elk	0-26	<20
summer --- typical no. of Elk	2.-3	<20
autumn --- typical no. of Elk	0-26	<20