

ELK

Concern

The community needs more information about elk.

Elk in the Braeburn area (Figure 11) are highly visible to residents and highway travellers throughout the year. Local residents are interested in knowing more about the status of the elk population and herd management.

Specific questions raised by local residents included: How many elk are there in this area? How many elk are too many elk? Do the Braeburn elk mix with elk in the Takhini valley as one large herd, or are they two smaller herds? How are elk affecting moose populations — are they crowding moose out of the area? Are there studies in other areas where elk and moose co-exist to look at competition between the two? Could a hunt manage elk numbers? Has there been a determination of what herd size could sustain a harvest? Better information needs to be provided to the community to address these important questions.

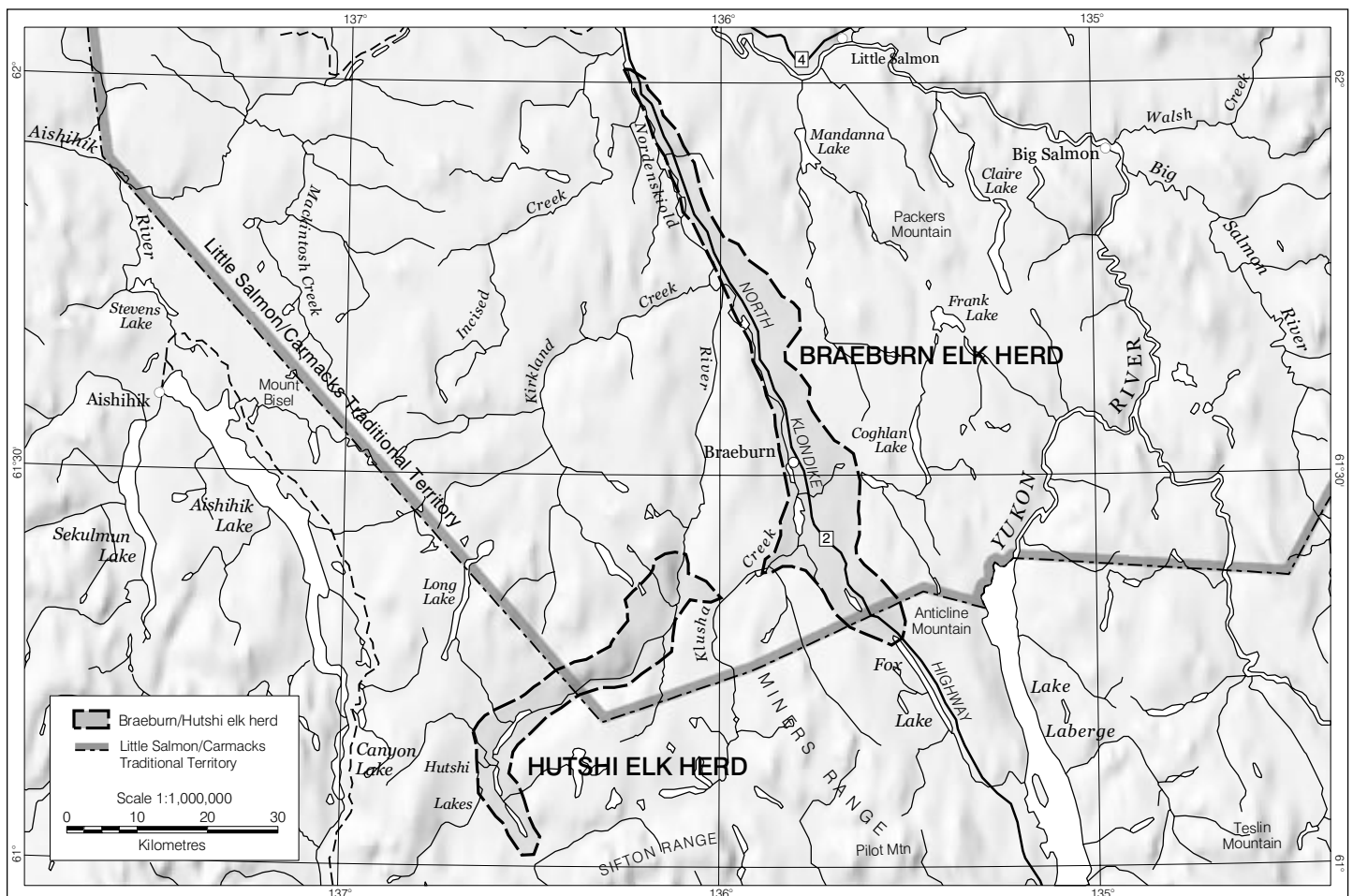


Figure 11. Braeburn/Hutshi elk herd range.

Solution Provide information to the community to address community concerns and questions about elk.

A management plan prepared by YTG in 1990 summarized some of this information, and some new information is available. In 2004, a new elk management plan for both the Braeburn/Hutshi and Takhini Valley elk herds was in the early stages of development. That process provides the opportunity for a community presentation about elk.

Commitment

By who? By when?

CRRC, LSCFN
2004

Recommend to the elk management plan process that an information session be held in Carmacks to address community concerns and questions. [21]

A community meeting with the appropriate YTG staff could address many of the community's questions and concerns.

CRRC, LSCFN
2004

Recommend that elk planning participants hold a meeting in Carmacks to collect local information and concerns about management. [22]

This would enable local people to directly participate in planning and gain an understanding of the process.

CRRC, LSCFN
2004

Recommend to YTG that CRRC and LSCFN participate on the planning team. [23]

This would ensure that Carmacks area residents have a direct ability to participate in the process and discussion of elk management.

Concern

Braeburn area elk feed on agriculture crops of local residents.

Elk range in the Braeburn area overlaps with some agricultural land dispositions. Elk have been grazing on commercially planted fields and have consumed oats, timothy, clover and wheat. The properties are not fenced and elk can be seen in the fields during the summer and winter. Also, the elk range map needs to be updated to reflect current range use by elk in the Braeburn area, and information should be made available to land managers and persons considering agriculture land applications in the area. Requests to YTG for compensation from elk damage are assessed case by case.

Solution Update elk range maps for use by YTG Lands Branch to avoid elk-crop conflicts.

Avoiding future land dispositions within the elk range would help to minimize these conflicts.

Commitment

By who? By when?

YTG
2004-2009

YTG will update range maps with known distribution of elk in the Braeburn area. [24]

This will be an ongoing requirement so that accurate information on elk habitat is available when considering land dispositions in the area.

Concern

Many local residents do not support expanded numbers and range of elk unless people can hunt elk.

Many locals believe that elk numbers in the Braeburn area are increasing. People have seen more elk along the North Klondike Highway in recent years, and residents report seeing a number of calves also. The potential impacts of a larger herd are a community concern in Carmacks. These elk also pose a danger to travellers on the North Klondike Highway.

Residents noted that the benefit of hunting the herd is a potential trade-off for some of the impacts of having the elk herd resident in the area. Along with a hunt, however, one resident commented that bringing a focus on an elk hunt to this area would also bring a need for added restrictions on hunters to manage access and the other impacts of an elk hunt. Residents also noted the value of wildlife viewing of elk is a competing interest with an elk hunt.

Solution

Recommend to the elk management plan that a harvest be considered as a tool to manage expanding elk herd range.

This recommendation will go to the elk management planning team to consider. The social interactions between elk and other wildlife (e.g., moose, caribou) are not well understood. Until they are, limiting the expansion of elk range could help manage unknown impacts. An elk hunt could change the way elk use range in the Carmacks area, but research needs to be done to monitor changes caused by hunting. Hunting may discourage elk use of road corridors for grazing and reduce travel hazards on the North Klondike Highway.

Commitment

By who? By when?

CRRC, LSCFN
2004

The CRRC and LSCFN will bring this recommendation to the Yukon elk management team. [25]

This recommendation from the Carmacks Fish and Wildlife Plan should be considered in the development of a new elk management plan beginning in 2004.

Concern

Elk are a serious road hazard on the North Klondike Highway near Braeburn.

Elk are often seen grazing in the ditches and on the North Klondike Highway, and are habituated to traffic. Vehicle-elk collisions have increased and highway travellers have seen more and more elk along the highway corridors. The Fox Lake burn in 1998 might have improved elk habitat. In addition, brome grasses were planted along the highway corridors, which attract elk to the road, especially during winter.

Solution Make the North Klondike Highway corridor less attractive to elk.

Vegetation has been plowed up and alternate cover has been planted along the Alaska Highway to discourage bison from the Alaska Highway corridor between Whitehorse and Haines Junction with some success. Similar tactics could be used to discourage elk from staying near the North Klondike Highway.

Commitment

By who? By when?

YTG, LSCFN, CRRC
EARLY IN PLAN

Work with YTG's Department of Highways and Public Works to make the highway corridor less attractive to elk. [26]

A joint meeting between YTG, LSCFN, CRRC and the YTG Department of Highways and Public Works should consider ways to make the roadside habitat less attractive to elk.

Bryan Tom checking a fish trap

