

SB

43

DIVISION OF LEGAL SERVICES

**LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY
STATE OF ALASKA**

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MEMORANDUM

January 19, 1993

SUBJECT: Sectional Summary: SB 43; An Act establishing a grant program relating to transplantation of elk

TO: Senator Robin Taylor
ATTN: Joe Ambrose

FROM: George Utermohle *GU*
Legislative Counsel

You have requested a sectional summary of SB 43; An Act establishing a grant program relating to transplantation of elk.

A sectional summary of a bill is not an authoritative interpretation of the bill. The bill itself is the best statement of its contents.

Section 1 of the bill amends AS 16.25 by adding a new section providing for elk transplantation grants. The elk transplantation grant account is established in the general fund and is funded through legislative appropriation. The Department of Fish and Game may award matching grants to nonprofit organizations to pay up to 50 percent of the cost of transplanting elk to suitable habitats. An organization receiving a transplantation grant may match the grant in cash or in kind. An application for a transplantation grant shall be made on a form provided by the department. The department shall adopt regulations to implement the transplantation grant program.

If I may be of further assistance, please advise.

GU:gc
93-039.glc

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

POSITION PAPER

Bill No: SB 43
Sponsor: Senator Taylor
Division: Wildlife Conservation
Bill Title: An Act establishing a grant program relating to
transplantation of elk

Background/Legislative Intent: The purpose of this bill is to encourage the introduction of elk to locations within Southeast Alaska and establish a population of these animals for sport hunting and recreation. This bill would provide authorization for future transplants and encourage private participation using monetary incentives.

Analysis of Bill/Program Effects: The department is concerned about authorization of a transplant program at this time for the following reasons:

1. The Forest Service has expressed the following concerns over future elk introductions into the Tongass National Forest: (1) elk are not an indigenous species and are an "ecological exotic"; (2) impacts on designated wilderness areas may result from invasion of elk introduced in other locations; (3) potential negative impacts on indigenous flora and fauna have not been studied; and 4) dispersal from Etolin Island (the previously authorized transplant site) is well documented.
2. Organizational interest in obtaining state funds to implement a transplant program appears to be very limited (i.e., only one organization has expressed interest).
3. The most recent transplant effort to Etolin Island is still being monitored to determine success. Attempting to establish elk herds in other locations at this time would be premature.
4. Elk introduced into the state should be monitored, and the department has no funding to undertake such an effort.
5. Recent outbreaks of disease, include bovine tuberculosis, in elk and other cervids in some westerns states and provinces has resulted in reevaluation of translocation of such animals. Most states and provinces are tightening their import/export regulations in an effort to protect native wildlife populations.

6. Transplanted elk in Southeast Alaska will negatively impact deer populations where critical habitats overlap.
7. The department's *Species Management Policies* generally oppose introductions of elk because transplants often have unforeseen detrimental effects. These policies state that "proposed transplants must meet the following minimum requirements to be approved: 1) the proposed transplant site must provide sufficient and suitable habitat to support a viable population of elk as determined by comprehensive study; 2) prior study must establish that the introduction of elk will not adversely affect the numbers, health, or utilization of resident species; 3) protection of the proposed transplant population must be assured; and 4) future public use of the resource must be guaranteed." The currently proposed legislation does not provide the funding or means for meeting these requirements.

Commissioner's Signature *P. J. ...* Date 1/20/93

Alaska State Legislature

Chair, Special Committee on Oil & Gas
Vice Chair, Transportation Committee
Member, Resources Committee
Rules Committee
Committee on Committees
Western States Legislative Forestry Task Force

District A
Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Saxman
Hyder, Meyers Chuck, Kupreanof



Senator Robin L. Taylor

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SPONSOR SUMMARY SB 43

The purpose of this legislation is to augment an already successful elk transplantation program I initiated during my tenure in the Fourteenth Alaska Legislature. This bill would provide the opportunity for further enhancement of the existing herds in the area by organized non-profit sportsman groups.

The elk transplantation grant account is established in the general fund and funded through an appropriation. The bill allows the Department of Fish and Game to award matching grants to nonprofit organizations to pay up to 50 percent of the cost of transplanting elk to suitable habitats. The organization receiving the grant may match it in cash or in-kind. The application for a transplantation grant would be on a form prescribed by the department. The department will adopt regulations to implement the program.

The herds, planted in 1987, have expanded their range from Etolin Island, to Zarembo Island. There have also been unconfirmed sightings on Bushy, and Deer Island near the Cleveland Peninsula as well as the Cleveland Peninsula.

There were two different transplanted groups. The first was 33 Roosevelt elk from Jewell Meadows in Oregon; the second was 17 Rocky Mountain Elk From Oregon's Elkhorn range.

In a five year period the elk have expanded their numbers from the original 50 to 75 - 120 animals.

The creation of this fund will aid in bolstering the present herd numbers and accelerating the first hunting opportunity date.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1993 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB 43

Revision Date: _____

Department Affected: Fish and Game

Title: An Act establishing a grant program relating to the
transplantation of elk

BRU: Wildlife Conservation

Component: Wildlife Conservation

Sponsor: Senator Taylor

Requestor: Senate Resources

COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 0473

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES:

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99
PERSONAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL	0	0	0	0	0	0
CONTRACTUAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUPPLIES	0	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0	0	0	0	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPERATING	0	0	0	0	0	0

CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
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REVENUE FUND SOURCE:	0	0	0	0	0	0
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FUNDING:

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0
1003 GF Match	0	0	0	0	0	0
1004 GF	0	0	0	0	0	0
1005 GF/Program Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0
1006 GF/MHTIA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

Estimate of current year (FY93) impact: \$ 0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

No additional costs are anticipated to adopt regulations required under this bill; see attached page for other costs.

Prepared By: Larry Jones *Larry Jones*

Phone: 465-6085

Division: Administration

Date: 1/20/93

Approved by Commissioner: *[Signature]*

Agency: Department of Fish and Game

Date: 1/20/93

PREPARER TO F

FIVE OFFICE

The implementation of SB 43 would be purely administrative, and costs would thus be minimal. However, should an elk transplant take place, there would be significant costs associated with the venture.

Prior to any actual transplant the department would want to spend two years gathering baseline data. After a transplant occurred the department would want to monitor the health of the animals and the effect of the transplanted animals on the animal community into which they had been transplanted. This would involve the use of radio collars and tracking.

Costs for a five year program to accomplish the above goals would range from \$200.0 to \$250.0 per year. The department estimates that one additional full-time employee and one to two seasonal employees would be necessary to perform the work.

Taylor's elk, 5 years later: Ready to hunt?

by Robin Taylor
Alaska editor

PETERSBURG — It took 24 years according to Robert Dewitt, president of the Ketchikan Sportsmen's Association (225-4002), but one fine day in 1987, a small group of 33 Roosevelt elk found themselves alone on Etolin Island. Joined a few months later by 17 Rocky Mountain elk, the animals have eked out a living, and have finally begun to expand to other islands in Southeast.

This year, ADF&G is considering the request of the Ketchikan Sportsmen's Association to approve the herd's first permit hunt in 1993.

This hunt, if approved, will herald the first elk ever taken by an Alaskan sport hunter in southeast Alaska.

"The project started with a bill in the legislature calling for not less than 30 and not more than 100 elk on Etolin Island," says Petersburg ADF&G biologist Charlie Land (772-3801). "A companion piece got \$50,000 to pay for it."

The bill was sponsored by now-Senator Robin Taylor (father of the *F&H News* Alaska editor). It met with stiff resistance from ADF&G who feared that elk could not co-exist with deer on Etolin Island.

Thankfully those fears have not been born out. Video footage of deer lingering near the elk, assumedly for protection from the wolves did a lot to assuage fears that the two species might not mix. Similarly, that same footage showed the elk grazing on grass, a type of foliage basically ignored by Sitka blacktail deer, calming concerns that the elk and deer might compete over food.

Taken from the Jewel Meadows in Oregon the first 33 elk were paid for with goats captured near Ketchikan. Each goat brought two elk apiece. The first release was in January of 1987.

Two months later, 17 more elk, this time Rocky Mountain elk from Oregon's Elkhorn range, came to Alaska in exchange for a small number of otter. These otter became the linchpin of a 5-state deal that eventually carried Alaska's furbearers all the way to Nebraska.

By March of 1987 ADF&G had released 50 elk onto Etolin Island. Of these, 28 had radio collars.

"We monitored the deaths of over half the elk with collars within 18 months," says Land. Wolf and bear predation was blamed for cutting the population down to as little as 1/2 or 1/3 its original size. "From there they've reached 75 or 100 animals."

From a low reached approximately two years after the first implants, the elk have become acclimated to their predators, and have begun to expand quickly.

Different people put the actual size of the herd today at numbers ranging from 75 to 120 animals.

The larger figure comes from a census taken by Dennis Blackenbeckler, who estimated the herd at 120 animals, 34 of which should be bulls.

Doug Larsen of the Ketchikan office, who puts the herd at a more conservative 100 animals says that monitoring of the elk has been entirely op-

portunistic. This generally means that little effort is made to actively find the elk. Overflights will pick up the occasional radio collar as they did on Oct. 12 of this year, and sometimes non-collared elk are spotted on beaches and in open areas, but little active counting of the elk goes on.

"About the only way we can find them is by following the radio collars," says Larsen.

Larsen confesses that recent estimations of the herd size have had to be extrapolated from a low number of sightings and the very few radio collars that are still in operation. The collars were given a 3-year battery that theoretically should have expired in January 1990. Larsen believes there are 6 still in operation.

The behavior of the two subgroups released on Etolin 5 years ago differs greatly. The Roosevelt subgroup has stayed within a few miles of its release point in Dewey Anchorage throughout their stay on the island. Land reports that over the last year or so the herd has begun to migrate up and down the hillsides with the change of seasons — typical of their Oregon ancestors.

The Rocky Mountain subgroup, by contrast, has practically grown wings. Reports of elk have come from differing points on Etolin, Bushy, Shrubby, Mitkof, Deer, Brownson, Zarembo, and the islands of Three Way Passage. Amazingly, some of these islands are separated by stretches of water over a mile wide at their narrowest point.

The latest report places a small group of elk on the south side of Cleveland Peninsula, in Spacious Bay. Almost assuredly Rocky Mountain Elk, this group was reported to Robert Dewitt in Ketchikan (225-4002).

"They're going like gangbusters," he says. According to Land, the Rocky Mountain elk have established themselves on both Etolin and Zarembo. The elk on Zarembo had two radio collars going for a time and sightings are regularly reported by passing fishermen.

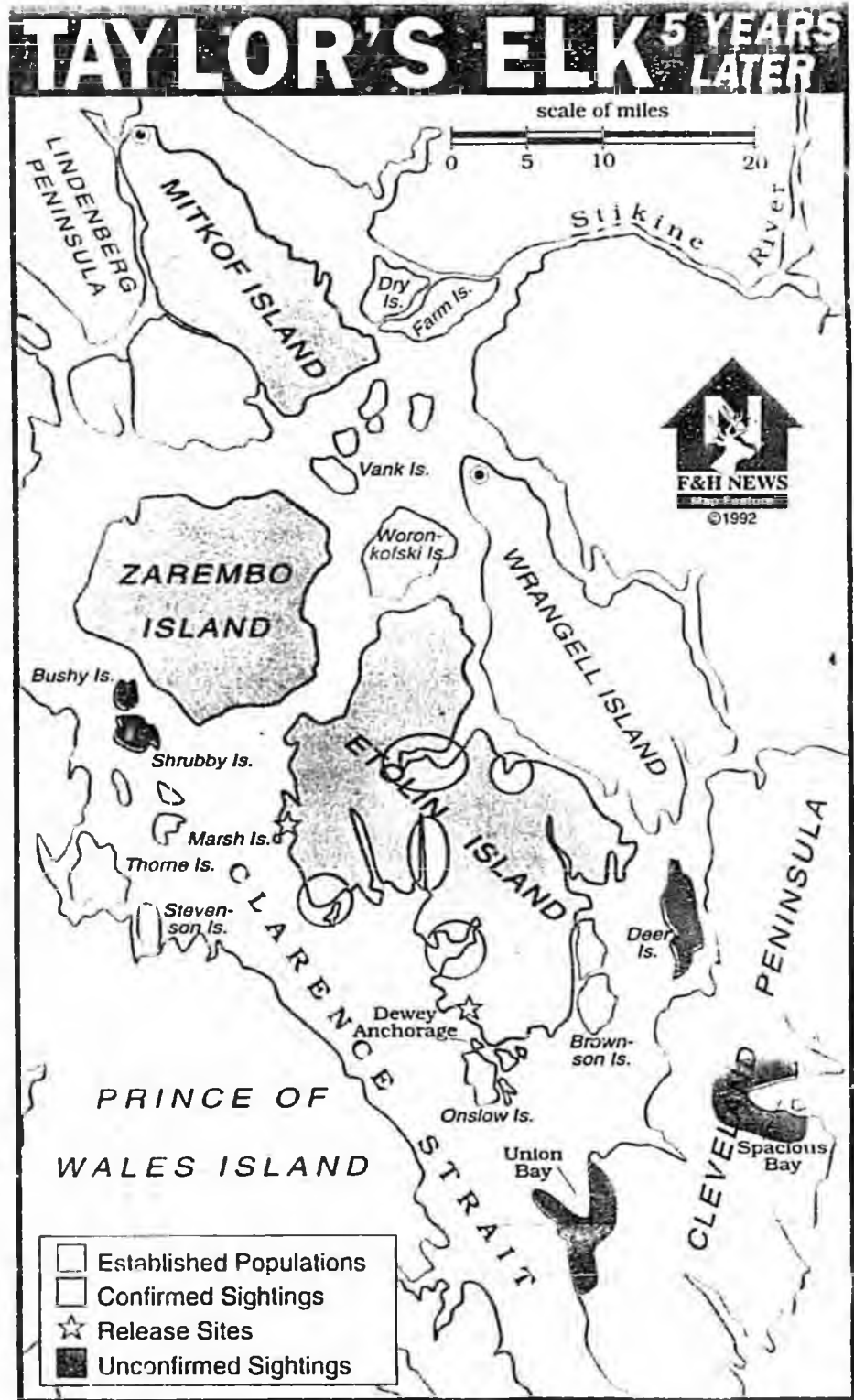
On the accompanying map, the locations of some of the different sightings are colored in. Reports from fishermen come in to Land's office, and to Dewitt's home regularly, some accompanied by fuzzy photographs or a distant video image. To be a confirmed sighting, a location needs either multiple reports from separate sources or a single report by an ADF&G observer or citizen secured with a conclusive photograph. Unconfirmed reports are sightings without a conclusive photograph that have not been confirmed by separate reports.

The Taylor elk herd has come into the limelight once again with the discovery of a cow elk poached on the north side of Zarembo.

Another elk was found dead under suspicious circumstances along a road on the south end a few weeks previously, this one wearing a radio collar.

This is the second time ADF&G is aware of that the herd has been attacked by poachers. The last time, in 1988, two Ketchikan residents pulled into a harbor in Ketchikan with the racks of two bulls flying in the rigging. One of the pair received a stiff fine, the other is a fugitive from justice.

The Stikine Sportsmen's Association, based in



Wrangell, posted a \$1,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of the persons responsible for killing the elk on Zarembo. Since its introduction, the purse has quickly skyrocketed to around \$4,000 thanks to monies donated by a dozen or more Wrangell citizens.

The investigation has been stymied by a lack of information, leaving Fish and Wildlife Protection Trooper Greg Hamm (874-3215) desperate for clues.

If you have any information regarding this case do not hesitate to call Officer Hamm and leave a message.

If the herd is lucky enough to get a mild winter, the numbers of elk in southeast may jump dramatically. According to Land, the elk have calved each year giving the herd a significant younger population. If this younger population survives the winter's large numbers, many more viable pairs will be available to breed next year.

Summit lakers hit Pixees

PAXSON — Late December should be a great time to hit Summit Lake, thanks to overflow earlier in the month.

According to Larry Smith of the Summit Lake Lodge (822-3969) standing water on the ice covers some fine lake trout.

"Sam Zaspro got two nice lakers a couple weeks ago," he says.

According to Smith both fish were in the 7- to 9-pound range, and had excellent flavor. More fish like these will be available in the weeks ahead.

assuming the weather holds.

"The lake is beautiful, it has a couple inches of water on it. It's 15 below so it should freeze up solid soon," reports Smith.

Zaspro took his two fish on a Pixee spoon with either a pink or red center, reports Smith. Jigging spoons of this type "seems to do the trick" for Summit's lake trout.

Most of Summit Lake lays within 10 miles of Paxson heading north along the Richardson Highway.

Mirror Lake continues to produce

ANCHORAGE — Fishing in Mirror Lake remains good according to Marvin Schmidt of Northern Recreation (376-8087).

"Fishing at Mirror Lake and Finger Lake has been good. It's also pretty good on Big Lake," he says.

The Chinook that blew through a few weeks ago hasn't left any enduring marks on the ice. As a result fishermen armed with a Swedish Pimple or two can get into some good schools of landlocked kings.

In recent years Mirror Lake has had trouble with excessive algae. Luckily that problem hasn't raised its head this year.

"The lake has cleared up, fish there are tasty and clean," says Schmidt.

A confessed bait fisherman, Schmidt prefers to use shrimp over other baits. Jigging fans tend toward the Swedish Pimple.

Mirror Lake lays about halfway between Wasilla and Anchorage just off the Glenn Highway. Take either the Eklutna or Peter's creek exits.

POW steelhead abound

KLAWOCK — If you live on Prince of Wales, or really love to fish steelhead, now is the time to blow the dust off your gear and head to Klawock.

Bob Anderson of the Fireweed Lodge (755-2930) reports that the steelhead have hit not just the Klawock River, but Eagle River, Harris Creek and Twelvemile Arm Creek as well.

"They've been real hot. I expect they'll be there for the next month or two, into January," says Anderson.

The winter steelhead run doesn't get publicized as heavily as the spring run for sev-

eral reasons. First, it's smaller and won't accommodate as many fishermen. Second, but most importantly, the weather is too unstable to predict. As a result, low fishing pressure allows a fishermen to get into some good angling just outside of downtown Klawock.

"I hesitate to market it due to the inconsistencies in the weather," testifies Anderson, "If anybody's interested they're there right now."

A few fly-in fishermen have already been testing the water, which so far remains free of ice.

Admiralty deer move high again

ANGOON — Deer hunting around the south end of Admiralty Island got a little more difficult early this month but should improve as snow pushes the animals back down the hills.

Ed Lecaux of Whaler's Cove Lodge (788-3123) says that deer on Admiralty were a bit hard to find.

"I just came in from deer hunting and the deer have moved up again," he reports. "They'll be coming down with the snow."

Butch Young of the Sitka ADF&G office (747-5449) was not nearly as optimistic.

"Hunting on south Admiralty is not good," he says. "They could be up high, or they could be gone, we don't really know."

Kurt Abell, also of Whaler's Cove Lodge tells *F&H News* that the south end of Admiralty Island holds a good population of deer. While he does not recommend hunting near the village, areas like upper Eliza Harbor and Pylus Bay can yield bucks.