



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Glenwood Springs (Area 8) Service Center
0088 Wildlife Way
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601
P 970.947.2920

August 30, 2021

Elk Springs HOA:

I have reviewed the plans for the fuel reduction project within the Elk Springs subdivision. From my review it appears the fuels reduction projects are primarily aimed at protecting physical property/values within Elk Springs and creating defensible space and fuel breaks to allow first responders to safely access Elk Springs during the initial stages of a wildfire. In addition, the plan will improve safety zones, vehicle access, staging areas, identifying helicopter landing zones in order to assist in wildfire suppression activities.

Overall the plan will not have any measurable impacts on wildlife in the area. Thinning of mature pinyon/juniper stands often improves forest health and habitat for elk and deer. In many parts of Elk Springs and surrounding landscapes, Pinyon/Juniper has expanded and is encroaching on the sage brush communities. These vegetation communities provide important winter forage for deer and elk and therefore thinning these stands will enhance the habitat.

One aspect of tree thinning projects to consider is limiting the amount of disturbance during the winter months. Thinning trees near roads and homes, where human activity is already high, may not be significantly impactful but heavy logging activity in the remote areas of the subdivision during the winter could disturb wintering wildlife that have historically concentrated on the property.

Further, it is also recommended to remove small pinyon and juniper trees on the east ridge of the subdivision overlooking spring valley. This ridge is important for deer and it has been observed that the pinyon juniper complex is slowly encroaching on the brush communities. Left untreated, over time these trees can overtake the brush which deer and elk use as forage and will negatively impact the habitat. Cutting the small trees on this ridge now will help maintain this important habitat and reduce future fire risk.

Finally, as stated in previous letters, it is recommended that the Elk Springs HOA continue to consider managing trail systems in a manner that minimizes disturbance to deer and elk, especially in the winter. This includes ensuring that dogs are under strict control or more appropriately on a leash. It also includes the implementation and enforcement of seasonal



closures or restrictions. These limitations can prevent human activity in areas that wildlife use as sanctuaries. Limiting or eliminating human use in specific areas results in less stress on animals that are already enduring the hardships of winter.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the plan and don't hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Yamashita', with a stylized, cursive script.

Matt Yamashita
Area Wildlife Manager
Colorado Parks and Wildlife