

# ELK HARVEST ALLOCATION SYSTEM

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## INTRODUCTION

The goal of Ontario's elk management program is to support sustainable elk populations and the ecosystems on which they rely, for the continuous provision of ecological, cultural, economic and social benefits to the people of Ontario. One of the objectives of Ontario's *Elk Management Plan (2010)* is to provide recreational harvest opportunities where self-sustaining populations exist.

Implementing an elk hunt, premised on the sustainability of the elk herd requires a rigorous elk management and harvest regime consisting of a number of processes, including population objectives, harvest strategies, an allocation system and associated regulatory oversight to aid in compliance efforts. The elk harvest allocation system outlines the process for allocating elk hunting opportunities to hunters. This is a necessary component of elk harvest management, given the need to equitably distribute limited hunting opportunities to a relatively large number of interested hunters.

The elk harvest allocation system is intended to provide fair and equitable distribution of hunting opportunities to resident hunters, and is consistent with the *Elk Harvest Management Guidelines*. It includes a process for applying for an elk seal and a draw system to fairly allocate elk seals amongst applicants.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the elk harvest allocation system. It is recognized that the elk harvest allocation system may evolve as elk populations and hunter interest change over time.

## PRINCIPLES

The elk harvest allocation system is based on the following principles:

1. **Fair and equitable:** hunting opportunities will be provided in a fair and equitable manner.
2. **Ecologically and socio-economically balanced:** opportunities will be allocated in a manner that contributes the greatest ecological, social and economic benefits to the people of Ontario.

3. **Fair value for the availability of the resource:** the cost to enter an elk draw and purchase an elk license will reflect fair value for the resource and also be affordable. Unlike current systems for other big game species, only those successful in the draw will be able to purchase a license and hunt.
4. **Scale of Harvest Allocation:** to meet population objectives, hunting opportunities may be allocated at different scales, such as Cervid Ecological Zone [(CEZ), sub-zone, Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) or sub-WMU (i.e. portions of a WMU or herd level). The scale of allocation may change over time as elk populations expand. Harvest quotas will be set for each geographic area where hunting is permitted.
5. **Responsible Hunting Practices:** harvest and allocation management approaches will be consistent with the values of Ontario's hunting heritage such as the principles of fair chase and promoting responsible and safe hunting practices.
6. **Simple:** entering the draw and applying for a seal will be as simple as possible to support implementation and enhance applicant understanding of the system.
7. **Adaptable:** the allocation system will be reviewed periodically to ensure it is responsive to changing circumstances.
8. **Aboriginal Considerations:** existing Aboriginal and treaty rights will be accommodated.
9. **Modified Party Hunting:** successful applicants are allowed to hunt in a party made up of no more than four members in total. Multiple parties may not hunt cooperatively.

## ELK HARVEST ALLOCATION SYSTEM

Ontario's elk harvest allocation system was developed with consideration of programs in other jurisdictions across North America and in consultation with the public.

### General Information

- A valid Ontario Resident Outdoors Card (hunting version) plus an elk licence and elk seal is required to hunt elk. The elk seal and license will specify the sex, age and geographic area that it is valid for.
- Elk seals may be issued for geographic areas smaller than WMUs (i.e. sub-WMU, township or other geographic area). Geographic areas will be identified in the Hunting Regulations Summary as part of the application process.
- Elk seals are distributed to applicants through a random draw and licences are purchased after the draw takes place.

### Applicant Eligibility

- Any resident of Ontario who has a valid hunting version Outdoors Card may apply to the draw for an elk seal (as per Ontario Regulation 665/98).
- Non-residents are not eligible to participate in elk hunting in Ontario. Non-resident opportunities may be introduced in the future.

### Application Process

- Any individual interested in applying to the elk draw must submit an application and pay an application fee, as specified in the Hunting Regulations Summary.
- Applicants may only submit one application to the elk draw (either as an individual or as part of a group). Each applicant will be entered into the draw and if an elk seal is allocated to a member of a group, the rest of the group members are removed from the draw.
- Draw applicants who wish to hunt in a party together will need to apply as a group rather than as individuals. Hunters may only party hunt with an elk seal holder if they applied to the draw in a group with that person. The maximum number of hunters who can apply as one group and party hunt together is four.
- Applicants can apply to receive a seal for the Wildlife Management Unit (or sub-WMU) of their choice (including their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice), as identified in the Hunting Regulations Summary.
- Applicants are not able to specify a preference for the type of elk seal (i.e. bull or cow). Elk seal types will be randomly assigned according to the annual quota for a Wildlife Management Unit (or sub-WMU).
- Elk licences are not required to be purchased prior to the draw taking place. Only hunters who are successful in the draw or members of a successful hunter's group are able to purchase an elk license.

### Successful Applicants

- Applicants that are successful in the elk draw will have the option of either accepting or rejecting the elk seal within a specified period of time. If the successful applicant accepts the elk seal, they will be required to purchase an elk licence.
- Any members of a successful applicant's group will also be required to purchase an elk licence if they wish to party hunt for elk with the seal holder.
- Successful applicants who accept an elk seal are not eligible to receive another elk seal in their name for a period of five years (except in cases where an elk seal transfer occurs – see below for details). Other members of

their group are still eligible to receive an elk seal in following years (i.e. only the seal holder is affected). The successful applicant may still apply to the elk draw as a member of a group and party hunt for elk.

### Elk Seal Transfers

- An elk seal transfer<sup>1</sup> may be permitted between hunters that applied in the same group/party provided the following criteria is met:
  - a. The seal has not already been transferred. Groups may only conduct one seal transfer per year and the seal cannot be transferred back to the original recipient.
  - b. The hunter must not have conducted an elk seal transfer the last time they received an elk seal. A hunter who has previously transferred a seal must accept a seal in his/her name before he/she is permitted to perform another transfer as consecutive elk seal transfers are not permitted.
  - c. The elk season for which the seal is valid has not yet opened.
- If the above criteria is not met, an elk seal transfer within a group will only be considered under the following circumstances:
  - injury, illness or death of the hunter preventing participation in the hunt.
  - injury, illness or death of an immediate relative<sup>2</sup> of the hunter.
  - change in employment or cancellation of vacation time of the hunter.

Note: In these situations, the hunter must provide supporting documentation with respect to the circumstances described above. In addition to the circumstances above, the individuals seal transfer history will be considered. Hunters with a history of performing numerous seal transfers could have their transfer request denied.

- If elk seal transfer occurs, the hunter receiving the seal will not be eligible to receive another elk seal in their name for a period of five years. The hunter transferring the seal will maintain their eligibility to receive an elk seal.

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<sup>1</sup> "elk seal transfer" refers to the re-issuing of an elk seal received by one hunter to another hunter within the same group by the Ministry of Natural Resources

<sup>2</sup> "immediate relative" means grandparent, parent, spouse, child, sibling or grandchild.