

Todd Smith

I want to share my views, and would appreciate that they be shared with the Wolf Advisory Board members. My comments are based upon my knowledge and experiences of growing up camping, and hunting deer and elk in the Blue Mtns, in the southeast corner of the state (GMU 169) I started hunting when I was 14 yrs old and am 52 now. I have hunted mule deer and elk from the same camp, and have hunted the same basins, canyons, and ridges for 38 yrs. I have logged thousands of miles and hours in this beautiful country and I am familiar with the ebb and flow of the populations of ungulates as weather and predators have taken their toll. Years ago when no wolves were accounted for in the area, I saw tracks and scat... and each year over the last 6 years I have seen more and more tracks, scat, and heard them howling. The elk over the last 6 years have become more scarce, spread out, smaller herd sizes, I've noticed less bugling and vocalization, the bulls seem to be found more often in the steep cliff areas where I never used to see them, or deep timber pockets, not on the more open ridges with feed and water close by. I believe that this is caused by the presence of the wolves. Mule deer used to be seen frequently and in numbers, in the last few years almost non-existent. I in the last 3 years have introduced my son to elk and deer hunting in these same canyons, and we have not seen a spike elk to harvest, or mule deer to harvest, we have seen plenty of wolf tracks and scat and watched as three wolves ran two mule deer bucks through ridges of blown down timber until only one deer emerged. The ungulate population is dropping fast, that is a fact. This elk season, I covered over 65 miles of wilderness in 6 days, deep timber and steep pockets looking for the elk, small herds of less than 6 cows with either a big bull or righthorn is all I found. Others in my camp had similar results. The area I hunt usually holds elk and deer, some of the areas didn't even have fresh tracks. On two separate occasions was woke up to wolves howling near our camp, track crossing the road were found within 250 yards of camp. Haunting sound that equated to no elk in the nearby basins. I try to keep an open mind but the disregard for the deer and elk population for the sake of the wolf, I just don't understand. The wolf is a top level predator, that breeds, has pups, and needs to feed on ungulates to survive. I watch your population estimates and can only say you are under estimating. There are way more wolves out there, than you are accounting for. Myself and others that hunt this area can tell you first hand of the impact that the wolves are having on the ungulate populations, this is real info from people in the field, in the woods, beyond the hiking trails, deep in the wilderness, and have far more real information and facts than the opinions of a few board members sitting in a meeting room. I am disappointed that the elk and deer that I love to see and pursue are less important than some non-native dogs. Wildlife conservation please. Other states such as Idaho have gone through this and it hasn't been very good for deer and elk and moose. Why does this state have to make the same mistake. Why is the reintroduction of the wolf so necessary? Frustrated and disappointed.

Thank you for the opportunity to express myself.

Todd Smith