



Resolution Regarding Proposed Establishment of an Elk Hunting Season in North Carolina

Whereas, the elk (*Cervus elaphus*) is native to North Carolina but was extirpated in the nineteenth century, and

Whereas, elk were re-introduced into North Carolina beginning in 2001 by the National Park Service (NPS) into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP), and

Whereas, a reproducing population of elk occurs on the GSMNP which serves as a refuge and source for elk to disperse onto surrounding non-federal lands, and

Whereas, elk now occur on public and private lands as well as lands owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), and

Whereas, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has a stated goal of developing a huntable population of elk in western North Carolina, and

Whereas, there is public interest in allowing take of elk through hunting in areas and situations where harvest and the elk population is sustainable, and

Whereas, in response to public interest in establishing an elk hunting season, the Commission took a proposal (H5) to public hearings in January 2016 to conditionally establish an elk hunting season in which take would only be allowed by Commission issued permits, and

Whereas, 284 comments were received from these public hearings and through an on-line portal on proposal H5, 211 (74%) of which were in support, and

Whereas, two organizations including the North Carolina Wildlife Federation and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation have submitted letters in support of establishing a framework for an elk hunting season, and

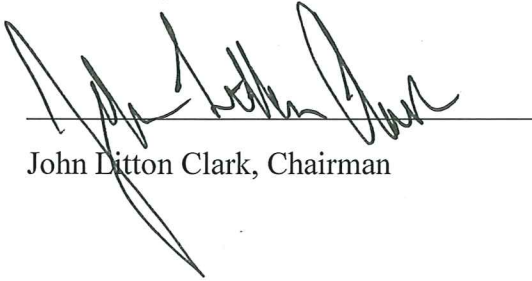
Whereas, the current distribution and density of elk off of the GSMNP is patchy and variable, and the population is sensitive to substantial changes in mortality, and

Whereas, there has been a significant increase in mortality of elk over the past year.

Now, therefore be it resolved, that the Commission approves proposal H5, establishing the framework for a permitted elk hunting season.

Now, therefore be it further resolved that the Commission will delay issuance of any elk hunting permits until such time as the sustainability and allocation of harvest among state, federal, and tribal lands are determined. The Executive Director is directed to collaborate with the EBCI and other stakeholders to determine and recommend clear metrics that can be utilized to determine sustainable harvest goals per year for the population and geo-political harvest allocation.

Approved this the 11th day of February, 2016, in an official meeting by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.



John Ditton Clark, Chairman



Gordon Myers, Executive Director