

Fill its hills with Rocky Mountain elk

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Charles Yates

member, Board of Inland Game and Fisheries

nia to look anew at a management plan involving the Rocky Mountain elk, encouraged by state and local officials are seeking an economic stimulus in the coal-mining territory, where employment flirts with the digits.

think there's a lot of folks who would advocate that elk would enhance tourism and economic activity in the area of southwest Virginia and the coal-mining region," said Charles Yates, a member of the Board of Inland Game and Fisheries.

proposal, scheduled for an initial hearing today, has stirred opposition from farmers and sport from hunters, on hundreds of comments sent to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

restoration could be livestock diseases as tuberculosis and brucellosis, Commissioner S. Haymore of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries wrote to the state.

last known Eastern

elk bagged in Virginia were taken in 1854 and 1855 in Clarke County, in the state's far northern corner near West Virginia. Their skins are stored in the Smithsonian Institution. The species is now extinct.

This wouldn't be the first attempt to return elk to Virginia.

Some 150 Rocky Mountain elk, slightly larger than the native elk, were transplanted from Yellowstone National Park nearly a century ago. They and their offspring were killed off by hunters.

Kentucky now has the largest elk herd east of the Dakotas.

This year, some 46,000 people from across the U.S. paid \$10 each to participate in a Kentucky lottery for 1,000 elk tags in a hunt for up to 250 bulls and 750 cows.

Besides being a prized target for hunters, the

majestic species native to the West has drawn tourists seeking to glimpse and hear the elk. The Kentucky Department of Parks offers elk tours in the fall and winter at three state parks.

"It's going fantastic," Tina Brunjes, big game program coordinator with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, said of the restoration program. "The elk have just thrived. They really seem to like it here."

Michigan, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and North Carolina's Great Smoky Mountains also have successfully brought back elk.

In Virginia, hunters in recent years have legally taken a couple of elk during whitetail deer season. State game officials want to end that practice while they decide whether they should develop a plan to

formally restore elk to the state and establish a distinct elk hunt.

Bob Ellis, director of the wildlife division of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, said if the state opts to restore elk, it must decide how to build a population. That could entail a continued ban on hunting elk to allow the species to multiply or moving more of the animals into the state from the West.

"Kentucky has a herd that looks pretty healthy," Ellis said, adding that the two states haven't talked about shifting Kentucky elk into Virginia.

In developing a management plan, Virginia officials will look closely at the potential spread of disease and the impact on farming. Ranchers in some Western states complain of elk plowing through fences and infecting livestock with brucellosis, which can cause pregnant cattle to abort their young.

In his letter to the game board, Agriculture Commissioner Haymore said keeping Virginia's livestock disease-free is critical

for owners "to move their animals in interstate commerce with minimal individual animal testing requirements."

The Virginia Farm Bureau Federation voiced similar concerns and added another: vehicles colliding with elk. Bulls can weigh up to 900 pounds.

"Imagine the damage they could cause in a collision," said Wilmer Stone-man of the Farm Bureau.

Officials in Kentucky said their elk population is disease free. They report only scattered instances of elk running afoul of farmers, and no deaths related to elk-vehicle encounters.

Jack Blackwell of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation said the group, which claims 500 chapters around the U.S., is poised to help Virginia develop a management plan.

"You've got elk in your state already," he said. "The question now is, what does the state of Virginia want to do?"

On the Net: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation: <http://www.rmef.org/>

BRIEFS

Leon that the technology sector can drive next wave of production and bring services to rural areas.

Business eyeing sea in Bismarck

BISMARCK (AP) — A Bismarck city commissioner says the city is being looked at by an international company wants to expand. Commissioner Mike Harty said representatives of a manufacturing company that employ 300 workers in the area late last year. He won't name the company and said it's also likely won't make a decision for six months.

Seminary said the company's decision will be based on the national and international economy and on pending environmental legislation in Washington.

Governor's mansion celebrating 125th

BISMARCK (AP) — The Former Governors' Mansion State Historic Site in Bismarck is marking the 125th anniversary of its construction.

The State Historical Society of North Dakota manages the site, which has a restored Victorian house and restored carriage house that was built in 1903. The mansion was home to 20 heads of state between 1893 and 1960.

Public Notice

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
BNSF Railway Company
Review of Private Railroad Crossings
Application

Case No. RR-09-651
NOTICE OF HEARING
October 14, 2009

On September 16, 2009, BNSF Railway Company filed an application requesting the Commission review seven private railroad crossings in North Dakota and asked the Commission to issue an order determining whether audible devices warning of a train's approach will be sounded at these crossings under North Dakota Century Code section 49-11-21, effective after December 31, 2009.

A Public Hearing on the application is scheduled to begin December 1, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. in the Commission Hearing Room, State Capitol, 12th Floor, 600 E. Boulevard Ave, Bismarck, North Dakota. The issues to be considered are:

1. Whether the railroad should sound a warning device at private crossing, DOT # 086644R at Cray based on the safety concerns of the public.
2. Whether the railroad should sound a warning device at private crossing, DOT # 093009S at Erie

based on the safety concerns of the public.

3. Whether the railroad should sound a warning device at private crossing, DOT # 093032L at Page based on the safety concerns of the public.

4. Whether the railroad should sound a warning device at private crossing, DOT # 093533R at Heimdahl based on the safety concerns of the public.

5. Whether the railroad should sound a warning device at private crossing, DOT # 081545B at Williston based on the safety concerns of the public.

6. Whether the railroad should sound a warning device at private crossing, DOT # 0876971 at Mandan based on the safety concerns of the public.

7. Whether the railroad should sound a warning device at private crossing, DOT # 087513R at Hebron based on the safety concerns of the public.

For more information contact the Public Service Commission, State Capitol, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505, 701-328-2400; or Relay North Dakota, 1-800-366-6888 TTY. If you require any auxiliary aids or services, such as readers, signers, or Braille materials, please notify the

Commission at least 24 hours in advance.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
Tony Clark, Commissioner
Kevin Cramer, Chairman
Brian P. Kalk, Commissioner
October 22, 2009

PUBLIC NOTICES

A public notice is information informing citizens of government activities that may affect the citizens' everyday lives. Public notices have been printed in local newspapers, the trusted sources for community information, for more than 200 years.

North Dakota newspapers also post public notices that are printed in newspapers on www.ndpublicnotices.com at no additional charge to units of government.

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