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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 03/05/15  
 LAST UPDATED 03/11/15    HM 114/aHAWC

SPONSOR Gomez

SHORT TITLE Elk Population Management    SB \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST Sanogo

### ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY15	FY16	FY17	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
<b>Total</b>	NFI	NFI	NFI			

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files  
 Department of Game and Fish (DGF)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of HAWC Amendment:

The House Agriculture, Water and Wildlife Committee (HAWC) requests that the Department of Game and Fish (DGF) consider an additional 20 percent increase in elk-hunting licenses through the DGF elk private land use system, in license year 2016-2017.

#### Synopsis of Original Bill

This memorial requests that the Department of Game and Fish (DGF) consider a 100 percent increase in landowner hunting tags issued to ranchers and farmers who currently receive tags and who have experienced significant economic losses to crops and rangeland. DGF is requested to consider new rules to allow small landowners to receive landowner tags in sufficient quantities to help offset their economic losses. The memorial requests DGF provide balance in the elk population and available forage resources, and formally confer each year with federal land management agencies and landowners to allow a more inclusive process of elk management.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

No direct fiscal impact. See, “significant issues,” for contingent fiscal impacts.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Department of Game and Fish (DGF) indicates that landowners are already permitted to take an animal that presents an immediate threat to property (including crops, under Section 17-2-7.2.

NMSA 1978). The agency argues that elk populations are below their ecological carrying capacity, and do not have the potential to adversely impact other wildlife species.

Unlike cattle, elk populations cannot be “restocked” once habitat conditions improve and forage resources increase. DGF argues that elk require years to recover and return to pre-reduction levels because natural reproduction is the only feasible way of recovery.

HM 114 requests the consideration of new rules to allow small landowners to receive landowner tags in sufficient quantities to help offset their economic losses; DGF, however, notes that landowner elk hunting licenses are not intended to provide compensation for economic losses – they are in recognition of the contribution private deeded lands make to benefit elk.

There are no fiscal impacts, unless the state game commission chooses to increase “landowner hunting tags.” In such an event, DGF provides the following assessment of fiscal impacts:

While this large-scale increase in licenses would initially increase revenues and result in decreased elk populations, the higher levels would not be sustainable. The elk populations would decline, leading to significantly reduced numbers of licenses being issued, quickly increasing levels of public dissatisfaction, and a measurable decrease in the economic value of elk and elk hunting in the state which is currently estimated to be over \$100 million annually. In addition, as the quality and quantity of the elk herds declines, the value of the “landowner authorizations” [tags] will create a cascading downward economic trend.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

DGF recently revised the elk rule (Section 19.31.14 NMAC) for the 2015-2018 hunting seasons. A significant component of this process was seeking and taking into consideration comments and concerns from private landowners, federal and state land management agencies, and the general public who chose to participate. If the state game commission elected to take action on the considerations in this memorial, it may require amendments to current rules such as 19.30.5 and 19.31.14 NMAC.

AIS/je/bb/je