



# SCOTT WALKER

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Scott Walker Announces DNR Partnership to Boost Wisconsin's Elk Population**

**Madison** – In collaboration with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Resources and a number of stakeholder groups, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has finalized an agreement that will help bolster Wisconsin's elk population, Governor Scott Walker's office announced today.

"This is the next step in re-establishing the elk population in Wisconsin," Governor Walker said. "Elk were once common here, and we want that again. A healthy and thriving elk herd is a benefit to the state, increasing tourism in northern and central Wisconsin, where a limited herd is already a draw for elk viewing."

"We are so excited to be working with Kentucky, and so thankful for the commitment to success by our many partners," said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. "We have an incredible opportunity to help Wisconsin's elk herd flourish."

According to DNR big game ecologist Kevin Wallenfang, Wisconsin elk were first introduced to the Clam Lake, Wis. area in 1995 as a gift from the State of Michigan, but only as an experimental herd. Since then, the herd has grown to approximately 160 animals. This new effort will add elk to the existing herd, as well as start a new herd in Jackson County.

Beginning this month, wild elk will be trapped in Kentucky and tested for disease before being transported to Wisconsin later this spring.

"The value of great partners cannot be overstated," said Al Jacobson, a Wisconsin Conservation Congress delegate and Jackson County Wildlife Fund board member who has been hoping to see elk in their county for over a decade. "Thanks to the combined efforts of several partners, the dream of a generation will finally be fulfilled for the people of Jackson County."

Wisconsin and Kentucky will work cooperatively in this effort, and Wisconsin DNR staff is assisting with trapping and disease testing efforts in Kentucky, as well as providing for animal caretaking while held in quarantine. In exchange, Wisconsin will assist Kentucky financially in the development of habitat projects in Kentucky that will benefit wildlife, with a special emphasis placed on ruffed grouse.

"There's so much excitement and hard work wrapped up in this project," said Karen Sexton, wildlife biologist for the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Natural Resources, who are among the many partners working on this effort. "When I reflect upon it all, I immediately see how each partner is so committed to

complete it together - strength among partners is one of the most unique and thrilling aspects of the project.”

Bringing additional elk into the state will create an opportunity to promote population growth of a species native to Wisconsin for current and future generations, while also providing for recreational opportunities through viewing and hunting for Wisconsin citizens and tourists from other states. The Jackson County herd’s proximity to Madison and Minneapolis is expected to be a boon for the local and regional economies.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation continues to be a very active partner in elk reintroduction efforts throughout the country, and regional representative Kurt Flack says they are proud to continue their long-standing support in Wisconsin. “This project is an important next step toward Wisconsin’s efforts to have a thriving elk population that can be enjoyed by all,” said Flack. “We’re thrilled things are finally moving forward!”

Funding for Wisconsin’s elk translocation efforts is a result of partnerships with stakeholder groups, and the department has committed to using only funds received from partner groups.

For more information, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search keyword “[elk](#).”

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