Plan for Elk Watching and Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

Prepared for:

- Lumber Heritage Region of Pennsylvania
- North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
- Pennsylvania Game Commission

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Photography by Ted Eubanks
Jon Benner (cover elk)
PA Game Commission Photo/Hal Korber (cover eagle)
TASK 4. Review and assess the availability of suitable visitor services to support elk watching and other nature tourism activities in the Elk Range, and recommend a development strategy to provide appropriate visitor services.

Contents of this section:
- Development Strategy for Visitor Services for Elk Watching and Nature Tourism
- Visitor Centers – Winslow Hill and Sinnemahoning State Park
- Gateway Communities
- Visitor Management: Allegheny National Forest Case Study

“It only takes one or two trips to the Pennsylvania Elk Range to realize that certain services are lacking which would increase enjoyment, safety, and convenience for visitors to elk country” (Mulvihill 2001).

Development Strategy For Visitor Services For Elk Watching And Nature Tourism

Major Findings
Fermata’s three major findings are a result of our extensive public involvement efforts, meetings with participating state and local agency staff, and our resource assessment phases of this planning project.

1. The region possesses **exceptional elk and other wildlife viewing**, as well as general nature tourism opportunities including parks, forests, and wild areas that can be significant attractors for nature tourists. Promoting elk viewing along with other nature assets can result in a long-term sustainable tourism and development benefit, including an increase in overnight travelers and the opportunity to bring conservation messages to new audiences. Elk are extremely effective as a portal species that attract “uninitiated” visitors. Our research and the work of others has shown that nature tourism and wildlife watching are profitable and growing rapidly throughout the country, and, as such, we can expect that visitation to the region will continue to grow.

2. There are several **factors that limit the region’s nature tourism potential**. The region has no visibility on I-80 and it lacks a simple concise theme to promote the broad array of attractions. In addition, the region suffers from a lack of effective directional signage, attractive parking and interpretive signage at many of the finest overlooks, natural attractions, and trailheads.

3. **Current viewing has negative impact** on residents, tourists, and elk. Unmanaged elk viewing is taking place near Benezette with illegal parking, trespassing, and spotlighting of animals and residences. People are allowed to get too close to the elk, which habituates the elk and creates a potential safety problem. The region suffers from a lack of facilities, staff, and controlled viewing opportunities, which encourages viewing along roads, causing traffic and safety problems. Presently, there are few efforts to help people enjoy the area, gain access to other sites, or to understand the resource and appropriate behavior.

Development Strategy
Therefore, our development strategy seeks to address the current limiting factors and negative impacts while capitalizing on the exceptional natural resources. Our strategy is divided into
short-term, mid-term, and long-term components. Some of the mid-term actions could begin in the near future, but will probably require three to five years for completion.

**Short-term components (one to three years):**
- Address immediate problems of elk encroachment, traffic congestion, trespassing, and lack of viewing access in order to ensure public safety.
- Continue to improve elk habitat on public lands in order to ensure an on-going presence of a diverse and vigorous herd (on-going efforts described in Task 1).
- Develop the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor to organize viewing sites in a linear fashion, serve as a marketing platform to facilitate access, and reorient visitors from a single-species day-trip to a value-added, overnight destination focus.

**Mid-term components (three to five years):**
- Establish two portal sites (visitor centers) for the region at Winslow Hill and Sinnemahoning State Park.
- Develop a series of smaller enhanced waypoints arrayed along the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor.
- Create an integrated marketing communications campaign, including a web-based component that will bring together the efforts of the various tourism, economic development, and resource agencies in the region (to be discussed in more detail in Task 6 – marketing strategy).

**Long-term components (five to ten years):**
- Establish a gateway to the elk region on I-80.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation - Address immediate problems</th>
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<tr>
<td>Establish a public education and enforcement program to address uncontrolled elk-viewing activities during the peak fall viewing season.</td>
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We believe that it is important to establish a public education and enforcement program to address uncontrolled elk-viewing activities during the peak fall viewing season in Benezette Township. Input at public meetings and discussions with local officials of Elk County and Benezette Township highlighted the need for such a program.

The goals of the program would be to:
- minimize traffic safety problems,
- control trespass and littering,
- minimize feeding, spotlighting and close contact with elk, and
- provide information to visitors on elk-viewing opportunities and proper viewing ethics.

In such a program, we envision PA State Police providing “high visibility” patrols, especially on weekends, and backup enforcement when appropriate. The Township could assist in providing input about priority areas and times for patrols along Rte 555, Winslow Hill Road, Benezette, Medix Run, and any other areas deemed of high importance and potential conflict.

The program would stress education and hospitality as a way to minimize problems and help visitors enjoy their elk-viewing experience. This would require development and distribution of a
brochure on appropriate and enjoyable elk watching, and installation of additional signage along Rte 555 concerning elk watching and safety. In an attempt to minimize traffic problems along Rte 555, the program would:

- limit parking or stopping on the roadway except to avoid elk crossing the highway,
- encourage watchers to pull off the road where the public right-of-way is sufficient and to remain in their cars while stopped,
- eliminate parking in driveways or on private property, and
- encourage watchers to visit Winslow Hill, Sinnemahoning State Park, or other lesser-traveled roads or viewing areas.

Recommendation - Develop the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor

| Organize waypoints into a logical, linear travel platform, the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor, which will give visitors a simple “road map” to help them access the area’s assets and will help manage the flow of visitation through the area.

| Identify the scenic corridor using signage, maps and trail guides, web-based and print information, nature interpretation at waypoint sites along the scenic corridor, audio tapes, direct broadcast radio, video, CD or DVD, and other products to facilitate these experiences. |

Travel into the Elk Range must be nurtured and facilitated. We recommend facilitating travel by providing information that makes the trip easier for a casual traveler and appeals to a broad base of uninitiated wildlife viewers. People in this lifestyle/psychographic demographic demand significant assistance with their forays into the natural world.

The Lumber Heritage Region plays a significant role and should take the lead in developing the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor. We recommend designating and identifying a scenic corridor using signage, maps and trail guides, web-based and print information, nature interpretation at waypoint sites along the scenic corridor, audio tapes, direct broadcast radio, video, CD or DVD, and other products to facilitate these experiences.

The focus of our recommendations is on the “bricks and mortar”/infrastructure development necessary to facilitate travel to the region. The basic premise is that to make travel easy in a difficult area, we need to “connect the dots” of the diverse wildlife viewing and general nature tourism sites in the region. We seek to have visitors to the region become immersed in the nature and wildlife experience of the region. When at one site, a visitor should never be more than 30 minutes drive from another site. We seek to eliminate the chaos of jumping from one site on one end of the region to another site miles distant at the other end of the region. It is our proposal to lead people systematically from one adjacent site to the next.

To accomplish this, we recommend organizing potential destinations into a logical, linear travel platform which will serve to give visitors a simple road map that will help them to access the area’s assets and to help better manage the flow of visitation through the area. To that end, Fermata has assessed a broad selection of potential destinations in the Elk Range (see Tasks 1 and 2). Sites have been assessed for their intrinsic and extrinsic values. Constraints to their development as nature tourism destinations have been weighed. The result of the assessment is the organization of a series of waypoints into this travel platform.
The format for this Elk Range travel platform conforms to a traditional *hub-and-spoke structure*. Refer to Appendix 1 for coordinates of all of the sites on the hub-and-spoke routes. Waypoint numbers, defined in the Appendix, have been assigned to all sites. Marketing brands for the hub could be as simple and directly descriptive as the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor.

The arrangement of waypoints along the hub has also defined the beginnings of a number of spokes that will emanate out from the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor. Each spoke should be an independently branded and marketed portal designed to enrich the entire marketing platform. The spoke structure will ultimately connect with the Lumber Heritage region as a whole, and is the precise means by which the Elk Range will be incorporated into this overarching initiative. The development of these diverse spokes, the need for local community participation in each, and the role for the North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission in leading this effort is addressed in the marketing plan.

<table>
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<th>Recommendation - Develop a series of waypoint sites along the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor</th>
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Fermata has selected a series of waypoints that are arrayed along the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor to serve as destinations for all strata of nature tourists in the region, including the uninitiated. Waypoints that have been typed as elk-viewing destinations will be associated with the Winslow Hill elk portal. Those of a more general nature tourism appeal will be coupled with the Sinnemahoning State Park portal.

Recommendations for signage and viewing improvements and enhancements at some of the sites along the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor are made as part of Task 5. Funding for some of these enhancements was obtained in winter 2001 through a successful TEA-21 grant application ($131,500) by the Lumber Heritage program. The Lumber Heritage Region should integrate the scenic corridor into their interpretive plan and consider development of a series of spokes to the region’s key natural and heritage sites.

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We recommend the development of two portals to serve as visitor centers for nature tourists traveling in the region and to usher the uninitiated into the world of nature. **Portals are interpreted visitor centers**, and are staffed by resource specialists. One portal would focus on elk and elk viewing, and we recommend that the facility should be located on State Gamelands 311 at Winslow Hill. A complete, detailed recommendation for development attributes is in the following section.

Elk as a stand-alone attraction aren’t sufficient for a sustainable industry. Still, they are an effective portal species for the uninitiated visitor. Our strategy is to move people into the region
with elk and then hold them in the region through promotion of other things to see and do along the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor.

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<th>Recommendation - Establish a portal site at Sinnemahoning State Park</th>
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<td>Develop an interpreted visitor center for general nature tourism at Sinnemahoning State Park.</td>
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A second portal should be situated at Sinnemahoning State Park. The focus of this visitor center should be more general nature interests rather than the elk-oriented focus at Winslow Hill. A complete, detailed recommendation for development attributes is in the following section. The same philosophy of luring people to the region and then encouraging them to extend their stay as described for the Winslow Hill visitor center applies here – only the hook is general nature experiences (including elk).

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation - Establish a welcome center on I-80</th>
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<tr>
<td>Further study of gateway welcome center development on I-80 should be done outside of the present Fermata contract and in partnership with Clinton County and PennDOT staff.</td>
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Development of the gateway should proceed only after the visitor centers at Winslow Hill and Sinnemahoning State Park have been completed, and once the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor and associated waypoints have been appropriately identified.

Entrance to the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor hub would be gained through a welcome center facility that would serve as a gateway, established along I-80. We believe that the development of the gateway welcome center is critical to the future success of the larger Lumber Heritage initiative.

The specific location of the welcome center should only be determined after completing detailed assessments of all potential sites as well as discussions with the affected communities – tasks which are outside of the scope of the current Fermata contract. **We recommend that this development proceed only after the visitor centers at Winslow Hill and Sinnemahoning State Park have been completed, and once the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor and associated waypoints have been appropriately identified through signage, guidebooks, maps, or other means.**

We recommend that particular attention be paid to the areas near the intersection of I-80 and PA 153 as possible locations for the new welcome center. A welcome center located near here and associated with Moshannon State Forest and S.B. Elliott State Park would appear to be especially inviting. The gateway welcome center would be staffed by general tourism information specialists who would receive near real-time sightings and condition updates from site managers at the two portal sites on Winslow Hill and Sinnemahoning State Park.

As part of the gateway concept, Fermata also recommends an eastern “entrance” to the elk region. Pennsylvania probably cannot afford to build two new visitor centers. However, an
entrance indicator, perhaps highway directional signage, would facilitate visitor access to the
area.

The gateway, established along I-80, would promote the entire gamut of resources within the
Lumber Heritage region, rather than be limited to the natural resources that are the focus of this
report. The same methodology that Fermata has adopted for designation of natural resource
waypoints and portals in this report is also applicable to cultural or historic sites. Therefore, we
recommend that gateway development be tied directly to the unfolding Lumber Heritage plan.

Research conducted by the Ketron Division of the Bionetics Corporation for PennDOT’s
Research Division in the early 1990s found that a welcome center of this nature could have a
positive economic impact on the state’s economy through increased travel expenditures by
tourists (Knoebel 1992). To increase tourist revenue, the study recommends actively marketing a
welcome center that makes it easy for visitors to locate information, obtaining feedback from
guests, and improving facilities.

It is our understanding from the preliminary information we have received that PennDOT has the
long-term goal of establishing a new welcome center along I-80 somewhere near the center of
the state, perhaps in Clinton County. Local economic development interests in the Clinton
County area reported at one of our public meetings that they are in favor this, as well.
Visitor Centers

Fermata assessed a range of visitor center options. These ranged from developing a number of small local information centers in gateway communities to developing one large center that would be the focus of all visitation to the area. We specifically analyzed the option of a modest visitor center at the State Gamelands 311, Winslow Hill Elk-viewing Area.

Given that one of the needs for visitation management identified as a result of our resource assessment and public meetings was to distribute visitation across the elk region, it would appear that placing all visitor services in only one place is not a reasonable solution. Therefore, our recommendation (outlined above) is:

- Develop two portals (visitor centers) – Winslow Hill and Sinnemahoning to introduce visitors to the natural resources and related recreational opportunities of the region.
- Seek the involvement of gateway communities on the ends of the spokes leading out from the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor hub as tourist information sources for lodging, dining, and cultural attractions that will encourage visitors to extend their stay.
- Develop an interpreted welcome center on I-80 to introduce visitors to the region.

Case Study Key Findings

As part of our resource assessment, Fermata studied elk-viewing portal sites in other parts of the country. The full case studies are included as an appendix to this report. A summary of the relevant key findings are provided here.

Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon

1. Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area serves as an excellent example of planning for wildlife viewing as the primary attraction for visitors. A management plan in 1993 outlined a 50-year vision for viewing, enhancement, and education.
2. With a well-developed viewing area, the challenge remains to ensure that the habitat will support the elk. Unexpected circumstances can threaten the viability of the site.
3. A short frontage road with two pullouts takes visitors off the main highway and provides a safe place for viewing and interpretation.
4. Viewing facilities are designed both for elk and for wetland wildlife observation. The elk lure people in to appreciate a broader spectrum of animals and birds.
5. Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area appears on several Internet sites, including L.L. Bean’s outdoors online section. A similar marketing and promotional partnership could be pursued for Winslow Hill.

Forest Learning Center, Weyerhaeuser, Mt. St. Helens, Washington

1. Interpretive material should also target uninitiated tourists—those who have never before seen an elk, and who may not be sure what an elk actually is.
2. Viewing sites that give a more distant view of elk can be effective, especially if there are mounted spotting scopes and volunteers on hand to help spot the animals and interpret their behavior.
3. A successful volunteer program is integral to a positive wildlife-viewing experience.
4. A mounted elk or statue gives viewers new to elk a sense of the animal’s size and proportions. It also serves as a photo opportunity for tourists.

**Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon**
1. Positive elk-viewing experiences depend on elk approaching people in designated areas rather than people initiating close contact with the animals.
2. Dedicated radio broadcasts provide updated information.
3. Signage can enhance visitor compliance with viewing regulations by careful placement, moderate size, and explanation of the reasons for the proscribed activity.
4. Volunteer involvement throughout the viewing season enhances public awareness, enhances visitor compliance with viewing rules, and builds strong local support for elk viewing.
5. Trails are ineffective for obtaining prolonged looks at elk, but have some usefulness as an alternative to the mass tourism experience of traditional venues during peak season.

**Mackinaw State Forest, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan**
1. Food plots at viewing areas only work for enhancement if elk watchers don’t pursue the animals.
2. Peer pressure can be a successful way to self-enforce viewing ethics.
3. Horseback riding offers another elk-viewing experience. Any program of this sort needs to carefully address responsible viewing for riders.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area, Washington Department of Wildlife, Washington**
1. An elk cam can be a good viewing tool, particularly during peak seasons.
2. An elk website that provides more extensive, real-time, interactive features increases the effectiveness of education, outreach, and marketing efforts.
3. Daily staffing during peak seasons is highly beneficial.
4. Large parking areas should have a flow-in, flow-out design.
5. An indoor viewing center is critical to winter viewing. The center should blend in with the site and offer general nature interpretive messages in addition to elk.
6. Elk feeding detracts from the aesthetics of the viewing experience, and although it can be enjoyable for viewers, it could intensify current habituation problems.
7. Flush toilets are an essential addition at viewing areas.
8. Uniformed volunteer interpretive specialists add authority to volunteer programs and can help create an atmosphere that encourages viewers to follow elk-viewing ethics and guidelines.
9. Guidelines should address disruptive antler-hunting behavior.
10. Oak Creek enjoys significant popularity in winter.
Recommendation - Establish a portal site at Winslow Hill

1. Develop a seasonal (August 15- November) interpreted visitor center with a focus on elk and elk viewing located on State Gamelands 311 at Winslow Hill. Develop the facility in conjunction with the Porcupine Hollow mine lands reclamation activities.

2. Construct an all-weather visitor center building with an adjacent freestanding viewing platform and indoor permanent restroom facilities.

3. Restrict all vehicular traffic into the habitat itself and develop a 40-car paved parking area with adjacent overflow parking for peak viewing days. Use passive barriers such as low fences to separate viewers from the habitat.

4. Construct additional enhancements including viewing blinds or platforms linked with a trail system that includes interpretive signage along the trails and at the blinds. Design and install permanent indoor and outdoor interpretive exhibits as well as some seasonally themed or rotating exhibits.

5. Construct a network of screened walking trails for elk viewing that will also be conducive to other wildlife-watching activities such as birding.

6. Staff the visitor center seasonally with a special elk interpreter who would be a permanent Game Commission or DCNR employee. Additional interpretive services could be furnished by volunteers, members of the proposed Friends group, or other agency or non-profit staff.

7. Use new technology such as a webcam site, spotting scopes with digital (CCD) chips, sound amplification, dedicated radio broadcasts, and touch screen database-driven web-based information kiosks.

8. Dedicate space in the visitor center for local crafts people to show their art or products.

9. Work with Benezette residents, local small business owners, members of non-profit organizations, and others to establish a Friends of Winslow Hill group to review designs for the new facility, make recommendations for facility maintenance, suggest traffic control strategies, and guide area closure and other management decisions.

10. The Game Commission should charge a modest admission fee—perhaps $2 per visitor or $8 per vehicle, with season fees of $15 per visitor per year or $25 per vehicle per year.

11. Conduct on-site engineering and testing to determine site-specific information on construction feasibility and prepare detailed construction plans and cost estimates for all aspects of the proposal. Seek public input on final site design.
Fermata recommends the development of a modest, self-supporting interpreted visitor center, with appropriate services to support elk and related wildlife watching and education activities, at the western end of the Elk Range on State Game Land #311 in the Winslow Hill area near the town of Benezette, Pennsylvania. The Winslow Hill portal should be designed, managed, and promoted as the destination for elk viewing in the elk region. Ad hoc elk viewing along Rte 555 and Rte 120 should be limited, especially during the peak seasons, through signage, speed limits, and increased patrols as described above.

**Infrastructure**
We recommend that the Winslow Hill portal site feature an all-weather visitor center building with an adjacent freestanding viewing platform. The visitor center building would operate seasonally from August 15 - November; however, the viewing platform would be open year-round. The visitor center building and the main viewing platform would be connected to other controlled observation points at the viewing site. Additional enhancements would include viewing blinds or platforms that would be linked by a vegetation-screened trail system.

We expect that this arrangement would facilitate rewarding viewing, and at the same time serve to manage access to the Gamelands so that visitors would have a positive experience and possible associated negative impacts to elk would be minimized. Our case study of the Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area in Oregon offers many relevant ideas for the Winslow Hill visitor center development. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife successfully manages viewing to ensure an experience that satisfies the viewer and that does not disturb the elk. The herd of Roosevelt elk is most visible in Jewell Meadows from November through April. However, summer visitors often combine a visit to the coast with elk viewing. This is exactly the type of multiple-interest travel that DCNR, the Game Commission, and the North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission are seeking to promote in Pennsylvania.

The Porcupine Hollow mine lands reclamation is a multi-year project, which will affect about 275 acres in the Winslow Hill area. We recommend that the proposed visitor center be developed in conjunction with these reclamation activities. In particular, road and trail construction, viewing blind placement, and landscaping associated with the reclamation should be designed to support the operation of the actual new visitor center that we recommend constructing just off of Winslow Hill Road on the site where the Game Commission’s information kiosk is now situated.

The scope of our contract did not include conducting on-site engineering testing to determine site-specific information on construction feasibility or detailed construction costs. These actions are recommended next steps that we believe should be conducted in the immediate future so plans for the area can be finalized.

**Vehicular management and parking**
We recommend that the Game Commission restrict all vehicular traffic into the habitat itself in the Winslow Hill area. We propose only park-and-walk viewing sites. For people with disabilities, and for service to the visitor center facilities, a small access road should be established.
The Jewell Meadows area in Oregon receives 90,000 visitor-use days a year and the viewing area at the Jewell Meadows headquarters offers parking for 80 vehicles and a RV lane. Based upon the lower visitation numbers at Winslow Hill, we expect that the Winslow Hill visitor center will need to have paved parking for at least 40 vehicles, with additional overflow parking for peak visitation days similar to that developed for the September 2001 Elk Festival.

**Restrooms**
We recommend that the Winslow Hill visitor center have indoor flush toilets. We believe that restrooms at the Winslow Hill viewing area are essential. The effectiveness of the facility as a viewer management tool depends on these services. The current portable toilets at Winslow Hill are seasonal. Some type of permanent restroom facility is necessary to extend the viewing season. At Jewell Meadows, the flush toilets are in a separate building adjacent to the headquarters but still provide critical amenities to visitors.

**Trails**
We recommend that a network of screened walking trails be constructed as part of the Winslow Hill portal site development. These trails would include interpretive signage and be conducive to other wildlife-watching activities, such as birding.

Trails are valuable management tools that encourage people to leave their vehicles and to experience nature more fully. As such, we believe that it is important to provide this type of foot-access close to the habitat. Winslow Hill is especially well suited to a trail network of this type. The facility is some distance from the state highway, giving visitors an opportunity to be removed from the sights and sounds of other human activity (one of the primary motivations of nature tourists).

Detailed site design work based on a full site survey is necessary for the entire visitor center facility and adjacent property, but is outside the scope of this contract. The following are some basic factors to consider when planning this trail network:

- Utilize exiting native vegetation (or plantings of native species following trail construction) to screen the trails.
- Plan for seasonal wildlife use – maybe some of the trails would be closed during the peak elk rut season but be open for birdwatching during other times of the year.
- Create rewarding trails that include scenic views, terrain and habitat diversity, and loops so that people are kept interested and less apt to create their own trails.
- Align trails on established human edges such as an old roadbed or timber cut rather than bisecting an undisturbed area.
- Keep wildlife travel corridors as intact as possible by limiting the times that a trail crosses a river or a game trail (Oberbillig 2000).

Failure to plan and provide a trail system in the Winslow Hill portal site area will simply result in visitors making their own trails. In the long run, it is more costly and more time consuming to close or rehabilitate poorly sited trails and enforce closures and than to build a trail system. Unmanaged walking through open elk habitat is generally not a very good way to view elk. The elk move off ahead of the walkers and do not remain stationary for prolonged looks, as they generally do at fenced-off viewing locations.
Observation Structures
The greatest benefit of building the proposed primary viewing platform and other viewing structures is that it will allow the Game Commission to concentrate the viewers in the area where they will have the least impact on the resource and the maximum viewing opportunity. A designated spot for visitors will help elk acclimate to humans and be less apt to startle and run off while being observed. Again, platform location selection and design must be done in the context of detailed site planning outside of the scope of this contract.

Accommodations for cold-weather viewing will be necessary. In the case of Jewell Meadows, winter visitors come specifically to see elk. Although the Pennsylvania winter is harsher than at Jewell Meadows, this case study seems to suggest that viewers will visit elk-watching areas even during the off-season.

About Interpretation
We recommend that the Winslow Hill visitor center be staffed seasonally (August 15-November) by a special elk interpreter who would be a permanent Game Commission or DCNR employee. Members of a possible friends group, interpretive association, volunteers, or other agency or non-profit group’s staff could furnish additional interpretive services. When not at work at the Winslow Hill center, the interpretive employee could perform other interpretive duties at the year-round general nature visitor center at Sinnemahoning State Park. This would require that the position be funded and supported jointly by the Game Commission and DCNR. Clearly this could present a management challenge, but could also provide the two agencies with several benefits. We believe the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

We recommend that the visitor center have permanent indoor and outdoor interpretive exhibits, as well as some seasonally themed or rotating exhibits. Some exhibits could only be viewed while the center was open, but others could be designed and located so that they were accessible by visitors year-round. A detailed interpretive plan should be prepared as part of the site design and is outside of the scope of our present contract.

Interpretive signs should be positive and not simply proscriptive. Injunctions such as “Do Not…” and “No…” create hostility and resentment, and invite vandalism. Effective signage should firmly state the prohibition (For example: “Closed to Entry”), and most importantly, explain why (For Example: “People in the fields will disturb or move elk out of view.”). Viewers often feel that their actions are, in a sense, “rights” because they pay taxes and user fees that subsidize wildlife-viewing activities. Consequently, limitations on their actions are often received poorly, or with outright indignation, however justified the prohibitions may be. Virtually all visitors consequently appreciate explanations that give common-sense reasons for prohibitions and injunctions.

We recommend the use of new technology to give people what they want to see and thereby, stop them from trespassing on private lands, blocking driveways, etc. Our overall recommended management strategy for the Winslow Hill portal site is to keep people out of the habitat areas but still allow them to have an intimate experience with elk without destroying the elk habitat or overly habituating the elk to people. Specifically, as part of the interpretive and promotional
strategy for Winslow Hill we recommend the establishment of a web cam site. The camera would snap a photo every 15 seconds and continuously feed the image to large screen television monitors in the Winslow Hill and Sinnemahoning visitor center lobbies, the gateway welcome center on I-80, and to the elk region’s website.

The technology is now available in the $30,000 price range to allow the center to establish a moveable camera that could rotate to focus on a variety of points from where it was mounted. The camera would be solar powered, wireless, and freestanding. The camera is capable of broadcasting its images up to 12 miles to the remote server/host computer. Special software would allow visitor center visitors to actually re-orient the camera, zoom in on an elk, and snap a jpg. The Game Commission could decide whether to leave the webcam set year-round or only use it during those months when the visitor center was staffed.

With these vivid images in the visitor center, the learning experience begins in the center first by engaging people’s interest. Interpreters could talk with visitors about wildlife-viewing ethics before they ever leave the portal and pass into the elk habitat. It also provides access to the resource for people with disabilities.

We also recommend investing in several viewing scopes with digital (CCD) chips that allow interpreters to broadcast images for any period of time to a monitor in the visitor center. As such, visitors can have an intimate experience with the elk without ever going into the habitat. A good example of a successful remote camera operation is at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge where visitors are able to observe over-wintering Bald Eagles from a camera mounted in the eagles’ roost tree. By furnishing the opportunity to see elk in real time, on site, we expect to deter people from driving down the roads and harassing elk. Not only do these technological advancements enhance the visitor’s experience but they also allow the staff at Winslow Hill to show their elk herd to the world!

Another use of technology that we recommend adopting at the Winslow Hill visitor center is sound amplification. Elk bugling is an unforgettable sensory experience. Yet many visitors who are seeing elk are unable to hear this remarkable sound because of so much background noise caused by other viewers on the viewing platform or the distance from the platform to the elk. The solution is to place microphones out where the elk are and pipe the sound back to the center. We have seen a good example of this at the Sapsucker Woods Nature Center managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York. Visitors there can experience the sounds of woodland and wetland birds, without disturbing the birds, and begin to identify birds by the calls that they make.

Dedicated radio broadcasts for the Winslow Hill area would also enhance interpretation, education, and crowd management. The broadcasts could provide updates on congestion, available parking, and alternate viewing sites. The range for this radio transmission would need to be wide enough to include Rte 555 in Benezette. We have seen similar programs work well at Ohio’s Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, in the popular Cape Cod National Seashore, and along the Kancamangus Highway in New Hampshire’s White Mountain National Forest. In our case study review, we also learned that as visitors approach the Jewell Meadows site, a sign displays a radio station number they can tune to for sounds of elk bugling and the latest news about the
refuge that includes elk behavior as well as management activities. Viewers often listen to the message while parked and viewing. This increases visitor awareness of the management aspect of the herd and is educational.

**Experience/viewer management**

Winslow Hill has both the advantage and disadvantage of not being on a main route of travel. The advantage is that viewers can find escape from highway noise and have a wilder feel to their experience. On the other hand, the isolation may encourage people to move off of established trails and have inappropriately close contact with elk.

Two of the elk-viewing areas in other parts of the country that we studied, Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area and Dean Creek, used passive features such as low fences to address this concern and separate viewers from elk. This appears to be one good approach for Winslow Hill. Signage and a strong volunteer presence will also be critical for addressing this concern at Winslow Hill, especially during peak visitation in the fall.

**Community involvement**

In an interview with Tom Toman, Director, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), Fermata learned that RMEF believes that the present interpretive program consisting of a trailer, seasonal interpreters, and current viewing site on Winslow Hill represent an excellent beginning for elk interpretation. RMEF also recognizes that the Pennsylvania investment of personnel and resources into elk viewing is considerably more than the activities of states with similar or larger elk herds. RMEF suggests that an investment in encouraging local, grassroots level support for elk tourism will be a more dependable and effective long-term strategy than a program that depends exclusively on agency or donated funding. Fermata concurs with this assessment.

We recommend that the Game Commission work with Benezette residents, local small business owners, members of non-profit organizations, and others to establish a *Friends of Winslow Hill* group. Such an organization could be an excellent source of volunteer interpreters, visitor center greeters, parking area attendants, lawn mowers, fence painters, gift shop sales people, and the like. The Friends group could also play an important role in reviewing designs for the new facility, making recommendations for facility maintenance and operations, suggesting traffic control strategies, and guiding closure and other management decisions of the Game Commission.

In the case of the Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area, the group Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc. serves as a citizens’ sounding board for planning and management of the site. The nonprofit organization is composed of dedicated local residents who have cared for the protection and stewardship of this elk herd since the 1970s. The organization has proven to be a valuable way of assuring good communication between agencies and local residents. Not only could members of the proposed *Friends of Winslow Hill* group participate in promoting the welfare of the elk, they could also have an on-going forum for voicing and resolving their own concerns about tourism impact on their community and other issues.

There are at least eighteen small businesses in or near Benezette. Many sell products or services that are elk related. All of these companies need to feel a vested interest in the Winslow Hill
visitor center and have an opportunity to benefit from its presence in their community. Fermata recommends dedicating space in the new visitor center for local artisans and crafts people to show their art or products, such as coat racks made from elk horns.

Another way that local service businesses can benefit from the portal visitor center at Winslow Hill is by having the center function as a tourism information center, leading visitors to local lodging properties, gas stations, and restaurants. These service businesses could display their informational brochures at the center. We also recommend creating a touch screen kiosk that would allow visitors to access a region-wide database of local businesses that provide services for visitors. The database would be sorted by businesses within five to ten miles of the portal site and also within fifty to eighty miles. The same searchable database would be shared with the elk region’s website, the other portal site in Sinnemahoning State Park, and the gateway welcome center for the elk region on I-80.

**Long term sustained operational funding**

Fermata evaluated options for managing the Winslow Hill visitor center on a self-supporting basis that covers all operation and maintenance costs. It is understood that the Game Commission would seek special funding for construction.

The Pennsylvania Elk Range offers a diverse mix of recreational and educational opportunities. An equally diversified variety of revenue streams will be needed to support the Winslow Hill facility. Grants, endowments and other donations, licensed branded merchandise sales, direct retail sales, tour and seminar registration fees, and entrance fees are a few examples of possible revenue sources for Winslow Hill. We recommend that the first consideration by the Game Commission be some form of entrance or access fee. How the admission fee is structured will be a major factor in determining pricing for the collateral goods and services that could also be offered at Winslow Hill.

Some modest admission fee may well be the best way to generate funds to support operations of the Winslow Hill portal site. Fermata recognizes that this is a precedent setting action, given that Pennsylvania residents are not accustomed to paying admission fees to access state parks. Residents and non-residents alike, however, do pay license fees for consumptive wildlife use. Still, the concept of fees for non-consumptive use is one that has received little discussion before now.

The decision on how to set entrance fees is related to the overall marketing strategy for the Winslow Hill portal site. Generally, there are two approaches in establishing fee structures. First, an access fee can be significant, with visitors receiving value through additional goods and services provided within the complex at no additional charge. The second approach, and the one that Fermata prefers, is a lower entrance fee, with additional goods and services within the complex priced separately. It is this model that we are using in our recommendation.

We recommend that the Game Commission charge a modest admission fee – perhaps $2 per visitor or $8 per vehicle. The Game Commission could also offer a season pass, which would recognize the fact that many of the site’s visitors are repeat visitors. These season fees could be
$15 per visitor per year or $25 per vehicle per year. Given the number of repeat visitors, it would be reasonable to expect average annual revenue from admission fees of $1.00 per visitor.

Fermata’s survey research in Texas has shown that a typical visitor to the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail would be willing to spend as much as $8.18 for daily admission fees to visit the World Birding Center. An average Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival visitor would be willing to spend $9.87. The National Park Service entrance fees for national parks now range from $8 to $10, with annual passes costing $50.

A two-year Penn State study of the economic impact of Pennsylvania’s elk herd (Strauss et al. 1999) estimated attendance at Winslow Hill during peak visitation at 33,348 visitor days in 1997 and 45,835 visitor days in 1998, with average daily weekend attendance at 1300. These figures, which represent 64 percent of total annual attendance, indicate an increase of 37 percent from one year to the next. Assuming a more modest growth in attendance over the next three to five years, it would still be reasonable to expect 80,000 visitor-days per year at Winslow Hill by the time the visitor center was constructed and operational. This visitation level could yield an annual income from admission fees (at $1.00 per visitor) of $80,000 for the operation and upkeep of the visitor center. Increased visitation as a result of the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor designation and promotion, and the future establishment of a gateway welcome center on I-80 could result in even greater attendance and revenues.

A rough rule-of-thumb for nature center operating costs is that for every $1 million in capital expense (building and interpretive facilities construction), annual staffing and maintenance costs will be approximately $100,000. Therefore the modest $1 million facility (including observation equipment, platforms, trails, etc.) that we envision at Winslow Hill will require $100,000 in annual revenues in order to be a self-sustaining operation. Given the seasonal nature of the facility, we anticipate the annual operating expense to stay well within the $100,000 figure. With access fees providing approximately $80,000 annually, an additional $20,000 will be necessary to approach sustainability.

We recommend (and will discuss further in Task 6 - marketing plan) that a combination of other user-related payments be used to make up these additional revenues. These include:
1. Receipts from concession food, outfitting, and guide services provided by third parties at the visitor center.
2. Commission or facility special-use-permit fees from contracted environmental education programs, seminars, and camps.
3. Profit sharing or licensing proceeds from branded product sales.
4. Contributions or commissions from a “friends” group (or interpretive association) managed gift shop that sells field guides, film, binoculars, maps, books, and the like.

In addition to direct user-related charges, there are other options that could ensure that the operation of the center is economically self-supporting in the long term. These include:
1. Partnership operation of the facility with other conservation, economic development, and tourism interests, such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.
2. Lease payments from related non-profit or federal agency field staff that would operate from this facility rather than occupy office space elsewhere.
3. An endowment fund supported by philanthropic donations and grants. Such a fund could be specifically earmarked for facility and programming expansions or major renovations.

The potential financial impact of each of these possible revenue sources is difficult to assess at this time. There are too many unknowns about the design and management of the future new facility to prepare a revenue projection with any degree of confidence. This could be an area for more in-depth study after the detailed plans for the visitor center have been prepared and approved.

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation - Establish a portal site at Sinnemahoning State Park</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Develop Sinnemahoning State Park to serve as a major year-round, all-weather, general nature tourism visitor center with an expanded interpretive center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Construct all-season elk-viewing improvements to control viewing use and limit human interactions with the elk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Build signed nature trails; create interpreted gardening/landscaping for butterflies; establish one or more live cam sites; establish scopes on bald eagle nests.</td>
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<td>4. Nurture an extensive volunteer park host program, and create a Friends of the Park group. Provide educational programming by contractors or staff people year-round on weekends and also mid-week in summers.</td>
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<td>5. Provide visitor services for the three surrounding state forests – Moshannon, Elk, and Sproul – including camping information, maps, trail guides, and any necessary permits. Provide tourism information services to hunters including dining, equipment and ammo outfitters, and rental accommodations information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Develop partnerships with canoe and kayak outfitters and encourage them to base their rental services at the visitor center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Prepare detailed construction plans and cost estimates for all aspects of the visitor center proposal. Seek public input on final site design.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Create a business incubator facility for nature tourism-related entrepreneurial development consistent with the mission of the park. Offer small business skills training in nature tourism-related activities including hospitality, backcountry safety, and others. Create a start-up revolving loan fund for nature tourism development.</td>
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For the eastern part of the range, we propose that DCNR develop Sinnemahoning State Park to serve as a major year-round, all-weather general nature tourism visitor center with an expanded interpretive center. The Sinnemahoning center should function as the central point to introduce visitors to the assets of the region, including the park and the surrounding three state forests, hundreds of miles of trails, and unique natural and wild areas. This is something that Winslow Hill just can’t do. Winslow Hill lacks the central location within the region and the position directly on a state highway. Winslow Hill also lacks the many and varied habitats, including hardwood and riverine forest and related species diversity, including bald eagles and neotropical migratory songbirds.
Nonetheless, elk are now regularly visiting the northern portion of Sinnemahoning and their presence should be capitalized upon in interpretive messages. The Elk Forest Scenic Corridor guide and information and staff at the gateway welcome center on I-80 will also serve to distribute elk-viewing visitors to Sinnemahoning, to other waypoints throughout the region, and in general, away from the crowds at Winslow Hill. We recommend that all-season viewing improvements should be made as quickly as possible to control viewing and human interactions with the elk and prevent some of the problems that have occurred at Winslow Hill. The enhancements recommended at Sinnemahoning are described in Task 5. The scope of the Fermata contract does not include detailed site design planning. We recommend that this effort be undertaken by DCNR as soon as possible.

We envision the type of general nature visitor center found in places such as the Everglades National Wildlife Refuge or Yellowstone National Park. It would be the kind of facility that the AAA and other consumer travel guides point visitors to for an introduction to nature in the elk region. Development of the facility should include a network of signed nature trails, interpreted gardening/landscaping for butterflies, live cams, scopes on bald eagle nests, extensive volunteer park host programs, and the creation and nurturing of a major friends group. Educational programming by contractors or staff people should be encouraged year-round on weekends and mid-week in summers. Similar programs have been successful in the Great Swamp in northern New Jersey.

The trained, full-time interpretive staff at Sinnemahoning will serve as the front-line access point for the uninitiated visitors to the natural world. This center could provide information for the three surrounding state forests – Moshannon, Elk, and Sproul. Visitors could get camping information, maps, trail guides, and any necessary permits here. This would draw in more people who would begin to make the connection with the natural world around them. While this site may be too elementary for the demographic group of avid wildlife viewers who don’t need maps and orientation, they are a much smaller group that can find their way to and through the natural world without much assistance.

The goal of interpretive staff people should be to direct people to the areas that are the least ecologically sensitive and control visitation. Our strategy is for the responsible expansion of public use rather than irresponsible unmanaged growth of public use, which could easily happen in this region without careful and near-time action.

Canoeing and kayaking are also identified in national outdoor recreation research as growing in popularity. The visitor center could develop a partnership with a number of different outfitters to base their rental services here. Hunting remains an important outdoor recreation pursuit in the elk region. There are significant opportunities to cross-market nature tourism to hunters; and also for the Sinnemahoning center to provide tourism information services to hunters including dining, equipment and ammo, and rental accommodations information.

One group of opportunities that the Sinnemahoning State Park visitor center development presents to the Lumber Heritage region, and in fact the entire state of Pennsylvania, is in the area of small business development for nature tourism and related businesses. In our visits to the area,
we have noted what appears to be a lack of interest, or perhaps awareness, on the part of the local business community about the opportunities that nature tourism-related pursuits may hold. Also, there does not seem to be any system for recruiting small nature tourism-related businesses from outside of the area to expand or relocate to the elk region.

We believe that the ultimate long-term success of the elk and general nature tourism development strategy we have laid out for the elk region will depend upon providing assistance to businesses that seek to start-up or move to the region. Fermata is especially excited by this array of opportunities and recommends additional study outside of our present contract. The new facilities that we recommend developing at Sinnemahoning State Park and the expanded role that North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission could play would both be important to helping businesses succeed.

To address this need and take advantage of the unique set of opportunities, we recommend creating a range of private business development services at the center, consistent with the State’s management plan. Possible small business services and programming include:

1. Create a business incubator facility as a pilot project for nature tourism-related entrepreneurial development consistent with the mission of the park and forests. This effort would be a partnership between DCNR and other agencies, with North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission providing the entrepreneurial assistance, business plan development, and revolving loan fund support for the project. The Lumber Heritage Region would be involved in the development of appropriate interpretation for the lumbering heritage of the region. North Central has indicated its interest in assessing and developing the feasibility of such an endeavor.

    North Central can bring a substantial amount of experience and support services to the project. First, they currently own and operate three multi-tenant industrial complexes that house 35 start-up companies. Second, they operate an Entrepreneurial Network Program that provides training and support services to encourage people to start small businesses in the retail, commercial, or services industries. The design and intent of the program would address the needs of a nature tourism incubator. Replicating intake procedures, training modules, and follow-up technical support services could facilitate and expedite the success of a new program.

    Should the incubator become operational, North Central can explore funding sources to assist in the operational cost. The concept of a nature tourism business incubator is unique to Pennsylvania and with the promotion of the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor and the Lumber Heritage Region, the probabilities of success are increased.

    Such a center would be a service not only to businesses but to the public, as well. For a training program, the center might also partner with the US Small Business Development Center program called FastTrac program, which helps new businesses create business plans, develop financing, create marketing materials, and the like. The focus of the program would be strictly on nature tourism businesses, such as outfitters and guides, or maybe campground and lodge owners. People seeking to start or expand these types of small businesses
anywhere in PA could come to this area to receive this training, as well.

2. A partnership with Penn State Extension Service to offer other small-business-skills training in nature tourism-related activities including hospitality, backcountry safety, and others.

3. Create a start-up revolving loan fund for nature tourism development to be administered by North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission or some other economic development entity. We recommend that these organizations look at liberalizing their loan programs so that when small business owners leave the incubator, with their business plans prepared, they can obtain funding for their endeavors.
Gateway Communities

Gateway communities are defined as the towns and cities that border America’s national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and other public lands; and that are the destinations of choice for much of the country’s migrating populace (McMahon 1997).

### Recommendations

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Current infrastructure has insufficient capacity to provide information, services, and accommodations for the possible influx of elk-watching visitors and nature tourists to the counties in the Elk Range.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>There is considerable potential market opportunity for various private services including guides, outfitters and accommodations in the region. Improvements in lodging, dining, and entertainment could make the region an overnight destination of choice.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Gateway communities should work with The National Main Street Center on downtown revitalization planning and implementation.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Create a Lumber Heritage region lodging association to provide innkeeper ownership training, staff hospitality coaching, and other services to members and others in the region.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission should contract with The Conservation Fund to present their course, Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities.</td>
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Ed McMahon writes, “With their scenic beauty and high quality of life, gateway communities have become a magnet for millions of Americans looking to escape the congestion, banality, and faster tempo of life in the suburbs and cities.” What makes gateway communities significant and unique is the public land resource that often serves as the focus of that community’s identity and livelihood.

In this resource assessment and nature tourism strategy, Fermata is considering those village centers and downtowns situated at the ends of the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor spokes or along I-80 as the region’s gateway communities. In our assessment of the region’s gateway communities, we have found less-than-sufficient infrastructure capacity to provide information, services, and accommodations for the possible influx of elk-watching visitors and nature tourists to the counties in the Elk Range.

However, we believe that there is considerable potential market opportunity for various private services including guides, outfitters, and accommodations in the region. This was demonstrated in September 2001 by the number of visitors who traveled to the area specifically to attend the first annual Elk Festival. This type of visitation could go on throughout the fall with the proper promotional strategies.

To approach downtown revitalization we recommend that communities work with a nationwide program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation called The National Main Street Center.
Additional development strategies for these communities should be considered, in conjunction with the Lumber Heritage Region Management Action Plan.

Turning the economic potential from a missed chance into a targeted profit has already become a priority for Ridgway, which is pursuing downtown revitalization projects and actively seeking ways to incorporate a range of quality food and accommodation services into the town’s business mix. Benezette, however, stands to lose out on the region’s tourism if renovation and improvement of services is not begun in the near future. Dubois, St. Marys, Ridgway, and to a lesser extent Emporium and Renovo, are all actively entering the fray to compete for elk tourism dollars. As such, the phenomenon whereby visitors impact Benezette with visitation problems, but leave their dollars in neighboring townships, will only become more pronounced.

Ridgway downtown business owners and property owners have come together to redevelop their old Main Street business district to provide performing arts venues, galleries, shopping, dining, and nearby lodging. The same demographic groups of visitors that seek authentic wildlife-viewing experiences also seek these types of other travel-related experiences. Enhanced viewing opportunities and interpretive efforts, coupled with improvements in lodging, dining, and entertainment could make the region an overnight destination of choice rather than the largely day trip market it now holds.

Other communities in the area could learn from the Ridgway group. Perhaps lodging owners or prospective bed and breakfast developers would want to create a Lumber Heritage region lodging association. Whether formally organized or not, we would encourage these business owners to design and participate in a program for inn keepers and staff exchange, or other training.

We recommend that the North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission contract with The Conservation Fund to put on their three-four day course, *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*, in or near one of the gateway communities. This introductory course helps prepare public land managers and gateway community leaders to develop and promote their own gateway community initiatives. The course explores significant issues facing gateway communities and adjacent public lands and the tools that can be used to address those issues. Participants would come away for this training with an understanding of the benefits of protecting and enhancing the natural, cultural, and visual resources of gateway communities and public lands; and with a plan for developing partnerships between gateway communities and public land managers.
Visitor Management: Allegheny National Forest Case Study

The following case study provides important information for visitor management based on the types of services and support that nature tourists require. This study supports our contention that the uninitiated tourist requires a great deal of nurturing and facilitation. Fermata attempted to obtain additional information but the report was not yet available. We recommend a follow-up effort to access any new or additional information.

A study of communication needs and approaches for visitor management has been completed by Dr. Alan Graefe (Pennsylvania State University) and Dr. James Absher (PSW), with assistance from Dr. John Confer and Dr. Brijesh Thapa (now at University of Florida), focused on Allegheny National Forest’s Hickory Creek Wilderness (HCW) as a case study. Numerous management problems occur in outdoor recreation areas because of ill-prepared, uninformed or misinformed visitors. A variety of direct and indirect communication strategies can optimize visitor satisfaction as well as safeguard and sustain the recreational setting, especially if the information positively influences recreationists’ attitudes and creates acceptable behavioral ethics.

The purpose of this study was to enhance existing understanding of communication, information, and education as resource management techniques. This study provides an analysis of diverse user groups’ knowledge, behavior, and attitudes about Wilderness in general and the HCW in particular. Surveys were conducted with users from five key groups encompassing campground users, day visitors, HCW hikers, adjacent landowners and equestrians. A combination on-site and mail survey methodology was used with mailback response rates from 41 to 61 percent.

The user groups studied varied in their demographic characteristics, use patterns, and information uses and preferences. Visitors were most interested in information on the location of trails and landscape features (i.e. maps), and would prefer to receive such information before their visit. In general, maps and signs were the most frequently consulted information sources, followed by travel guides and tour books, brochures and pamphlets and visitor centers. In general, wilderness users tend to report the greatest information needs and are most likely to seek information before their trip. Adjacent landowners are mainly interested in information about hunting and fishing opportunities, and are least satisfied with existing information services. Day users generally expressed lower information needs and used fewer sources, but were interested in natural and cultural history information. Equestrians rely most heavily on ranger stations and trailhead signs for information and expressed the greatest need for information about rules and regulations. Other results, e.g., “Leave No Trace” knowledge scores, from these and other groups are also detailed in the report.

Study results demonstrate the importance of knowing your customers and your windows of opportunity for information and education programs. These results also suggest the importance of a diverse and strategically implemented communication plan that includes all significant user segments/communities.
**TASK 5. Review and assess existing and proposed transportation enhancements servicing elk-viewing opportunity areas and recommend appropriate improvements.**

“Never stop your vehicle in the road to watch or photograph elk. Be particularly careful on Rt. 555 where through traffic moves at a high rate of speed. When cars block the movement of one or both lanes of traffic on a public road, it creates a dangerous traffic hazard…. Curves in the road, fast moving traffic, and the narrow berm along Rt. 555 make it hazardous to park in this area without blocking someone’s driveway” (Mulvihill 2001).  

Fermata’s extensive review of the area has lead us to conclude that a much more systematic approach to guiding visitors around the area is critical for accessing the many assets. Current signing is inadequate to both guide and educate tourists about the region’s natural resources. The provision of appropriate signing and additional sites for elk viewing and other nature pursuits is essential to the success of the nature tourism program.  

**Scenic Highway Corridor**  
Fermata assisted Pennsylvania’s Lumber Heritage Region, the state’s newest designated State Heritage Region, in seeking $131,500 in enhancement funding to develop and sign a scenic highway corridor based on elk viewing and nature tourism. These funds would compliment $150,000 provided by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for planning the overall signage and way finding system for the heritage region. (See Appendix 2 for detailed budgets.)  

The highway corridor consists of a main hub that would anchor State Route 120, the Bucktail State Park Scenic Drive, to Rte I-80 at two locations. The western connector would begin at the Penfield exit and include portions of State Routes 153, 255, and 555. The eastern connector would begin near the Snowshoe exit of I-80 and follow Rte 144 north to Rte 120. The corridor is approximately 120 miles long and passes through three state forests, and three state gamelands. Additional “spokes” connecting the main corridor would be planned by the Heritage Region to lead visitors to other key destinations in the region.  

Planning for the scenic corridor will continue through the development of the elk watching and nature tourism plan and the signage and interpretive plan for the entire Heritage Region. The proposal will help improve traffic management throughout the region, particularly at Winslow Hill near Benezette, Elk County that presently experiences the greatest impact from visitation during August, September, and October. The signage will help to distribute and extend visitation to the region’s other nature tourism attractions. It is expected to help address the problems of highway congestion, visitor safety, and private property impacts. In addition it is expected to help generate a more stable, well-managed, year-round series of tourism attractions for the Lumber Heritage Region of Pennsylvania.  

The requested funds would support the design, fabrication, and installation of signs for the main corridor and approximately twenty-five waypoints identified in the elk and nature tourism plan. Identifying the scenic corridor/elk highway and improving several elk viewing and other nature tourism waypoints along or near the corridor is intended to better manage existing visitation and
traffic. It would also serve as a focal point to the area for visitors to access other natural attractions, outdoor recreation facilities, and lumber heritage sites.

Objectives
1. To bring existing visitation under control and to serve as brand or focus point to the area by providing natural viewing experiences in appropriately managed settings.
2. To bring uninitiated and casual viewers to a well-managed but uncluttered experience.

These objectives address the two highest priority concerns that emerged through public participation and agency involvement in the strategic planning initiative for the elk region:

- Highway congestion, visitor safety, and private property impacts. The proposal will improve traffic management, and to some degree traffic counts, at Winslow Hill in Benezette and other places along the Highway by educating visitors, providing clearly marked waypoints/parking areas, and redistributing elk viewers along the entire route instead of clumping them all at one site. In future phases of the project, additional waypoints will be enhanced, the viewing sites at Winslow Hill and related access roads will be improved, and an interpreted portal welcome center will be established on I-80.

- Promoting and interpreting other nature tourism opportunities in addition to elk, or where elk are not present. While elk are the portal species, the charismatic mega-fauna, the brand or identifier of the region, there is clearly more to the elk region and to the Elk Highway hub/spoke approach than simply viewing elk. As a portal species, elk serve as the conceptual entry point, especially for casual, uninitiated visitors to the elk region and all of its natural resources.

Build Model Sites
This project is the beginning of a multi-phase process to develop the elk range of Pennsylvania as a world-class wildlife and nature tourism destination. Additional components will address access to Winslow Hill, appropriate interpretive and visitor facilities, and a marketing plan for the region’s outstanding nature tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities.

The goal of this work is to create elk viewing and other nature experience destinations from among the potential waypoints that will not only meet the phase one objectives but will also serve as demonstration sites for future developments in the region. Part of the planning budget for the sites addresses the need to be evaluating the success of this approach in achieving objectives; and make adjustments as needed to work toward objectives. This work will help to guide developments in future years at other sites.

The model sites recommended for improvements by Fermata were selected from sites nominated by DCNR and Game Commission personnel based on the following criteria:

1. elk are consistently seen at the site or one or more other nature tourism experiences exists presently;
2. site is on or adjacent to the Elk Highway;
3. off-highway, surfaced parking either exists or could be created;
4. if it is an elk-viewing site, the Game Commission manages the habitat at the site for elk viewing;
5. viewing at the site is or could be made accessible by only foot traffic and appropriate ADA modifications;
6. site has one or more locations at which shelters or blinds can be developed to provide viewing and photography opportunities in a non-intrusive, confined setting to avoid impacting the resource;
7. site has, or could have, interpretive and informational/directional signage
8. site is situated so that it can be easily monitored by agency personnel over time as part of the model evaluation process.

Fermata has suggested major enhancements for the model sites (detailed in Task 1 and Appendix 2) that are critical to the site itself and the overall elk-viewing strategy. The elk viewing in the region is random and haphazard, with the functional destination for most visitors being the elk themselves. In order to diminish conflicts between local residents and elk tourists, we must shift the visitation pattern to one where travelers focus on specific physical destinations where elk may be viewed.

While Winslow Hill will serve as the elk portal, we have recommended improvements for additional sites in the region to help manage visitors, maintain a separation between visitors and wildlife, and facilitate an enjoyable experience. These additional sites will help to spread the visitation throughout the region, and diminish the impacts on any specific location. This will be critical for the next several years as Winslow Hill is compromised by a reclamation project that will no doubt displace elk and elk viewers alike. The success of the strategy depends upon all regional interests being willing to join the effort.

The seven sites chosen to serve as model elk-viewing sites along the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor and recommendations are summarized below and are shown on Map 2. The first two sites (Hick’s Run and Fish Dam Run Overlook) are immediately off the Elk Highway and considered priorities. The remaining five sites are listed in order of priority and should be completed as funding permits.

**Hick’s Run:** The minimal enhancements we suggest for Hick’s Run are for a surfaced parking area, an access trail, and a viewing blind.

Surfaced parking should be on the north side of State 555, allowing visitors to access Hick’s Run without crossing the highway. An abandoned roadbed can be used both for parking and for an entrance trail and PennDOT has intimated that this parking area would meet with their approval.

The access trail should run east/west along the old roadbed. At the eastern end of the roadbed the trail would turn north and continue in a series of switchbacks to a road that accesses the elk-viewing opening. The trail would then turn to the west and continue back to the elk-viewing blind that we recommend constructing at the opening. This will avoid entrance in or around the cemetery and buffer contact between elk and viewers.
The viewing platform (blind) should be constructed adjacent to the elk opening. In order to maintain a near-wild environment at the site, a viewing blind is critical to keep elk and elk viewers separated. The blind would also offer shelter from the elements and serve as a destination for visitors and wildlife photographers who travel to the region to photograph the elk. This will aid in managing the traffic flow in and out of the property.

**Fish Dam Run Overlook:** This site provides one of the most spectacular vistas of pristine forests, steep mountain valleys and unspoiled watersheds in the state. It also is used by ham radio clubs and is an exceptional “dark sky” location for star-gazing. The high location was once used as a fill area for a state road excavation. Plans at this site include re-contouring one of two fill areas, and providing a well-designed entry/exit, stone-surfaced parking for 12 cars, a walkway to an observation area, railing, benches, landscaping with native plants and interpretive signing.

**Sinnemahoning (872 spoke):** Our minimum recommendations for this site are for road, parking and pedestrian trail improvements, a viewing platform, and interpretive signage. The access road needs to be widened and paved. There should be paved parking for ten cars between the highway and the old roadbed and the pedestrian trail along the old roadbed should connect to the paved road in the park. An observation platform should be built at the north end of the food plot and connect to the parking area. In addition, interpretive signage about the management of the site and the elk should be installed.

**Beaver Run Shallow Water Impoundment:** Minimum recommendations are for improved pedestrian trail, shelter, and interpretive signage. The pedestrian trail from the existing parking area to the blind needs improvement. Interpretive signage about the management of the site and the elk should be installed as well as a shelter.

**Two Rock Run:** This site provides a panoramic view of the forest stretching east some 60+ miles and an immediate view of a forest recovering from one of the largest forest fires (over 10,000 acres) in the Commonwealth in the last century. This area also has transitional forest and shrub growth unique to the north central plateau that attracts several rare bird species as well as diverse wildlife populations. This site was once used as a “log-landing” for salvage operations after the fire. Planned improvements include a well-designed entry/exit, stone-surfaced parking for 12 cars, a relatively short (approx. 1000 feet) signed trail, interpretive signage and landscaping.

**Kettle Creek:** Minimum improvements recommended are for parking, pedestrian trail, and interpretive signage. Paved parking should accommodate ten cars in an area along the highway near the equestrian trailhead with an improved pedestrian trail from the parking area to the edge of the meadow. Interpretive signage about the site’s management and the elk should be installed.

**Hoover Farm in Quehannah Wild Area:** A large habitat improvement has been constructed at this location on the footprint of an old airfield. Elk are seen here relatively frequently. The location is known to the local community and already attracts viewers. There is currently no parking area, no signage, and no other improvements to facilitate viewing or maintain a
separation of viewers from the elk. In order to maintain low impact activities in this area, enhancements should be restricted to an observation blind and associated interpretive signage.

Map 2. Model Elk and Nature Viewing Sites
MARKETING ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**TASK 6. Develop a marketing plan for elk watching and related nature tourism.**
This task includes development of a multi-year cooperative marketing effort that brings together local tourist promotion agencies (TPAs), nature tourism outfitters, accommodations, local and national corporate sponsors and the state partners to responsibly promote year-round visitation to the region for elk watching and related nature-based recreation.

“Some residents have told me that the elk are not the problem. They love the elk; that is why they own camps or houses in elk country. Tourists are the problem, they say, because they create safety hazards and are sometimes an annoyance to local residents.”

“Being an elk watcher and frequent visitor to the elk range myself, I think that most visitors don’t intend to break the rules or be an annoyance, but frequently they are not aware of the code of conduct. Many of them do what they see others doing, because they aren’t sure of the rules or the limits. Of course, there are a few who don’t use good judgment, set a bad example, and give the rest of the tourists a bad name! But I honestly believe that the majority of visitors are decent people who want to do the right thing. They just need more information ahead of time. Common sense helps, but so does information. Educating tourists about appropriate behavior on the elk range may be one strategy to help to improve the situation. And, of course, being a good example speaks volumes!” (Mulvihill, 2001)

The above excerpt also speaks volumes in relation to the Fermata marketing strategy that we propose for the Elk Range, which is one weighted toward tourism development rather than tourism promotion. Tourism development differs from tourism promotion in that tourism promotion is predominantly a sales and marketing approach. Contrarily, tourism development responds to the issues raised by Mulvihill and other area residents: to create the venues tourists want to visit in an environment that is mutually respectful of the elk and the local population. Merely increasing visitation to the Elk Range, the goal of tourism promotion, will do no more than exacerbate the problems that currently exist and negatively impact the region.

Product development in the region lags behind product promotion. Local communities have been specific and vociferous in expressing concerns that tourism promotion not outstrip their capacity to respond. Therefore, the objective of a marketing strategy must be tempered by the community’s limits of acceptable change. Objectives may be set that on the surface would address the gap in tourism services but would also extend beyond the boundaries of acceptable change. For example, increasing visitation in the Benezette area during the fall elk-viewing season would create an even greater burden on the already overburdened residents. Therefore, it is safe to say that traffic in Benezette during peak periods already exceeds the limits of acceptable change and the steps recommended (i.e. traffic control, signage, creation of alternate sites) must address the matter of capacity before additional promotion should be considered.

The resource inventory and industry objectives quantify the gaps that need to be addressed. The communities themselves, however, must define the limits of acceptable change and the appropriate measures of success. Marketing efforts in the elk region must be tied to the ability of the local communities to adapt to increased visitation and demand on local goods and services. Therefore, the cooperative marketing effort is not so much tied to time in terms of developing a
multi-year plan as it is to action. Our strategy will call for managing current visitation while developing additional tourism products over the next three to five years. However, the success of the program will not be determined by time but rather by measurable accomplishments. In the Pennsylvania Elk Range, time is an artificial constraint that must be replaced by action.

The Elk Range is poised to take advantage of this portal species (elk) and the expanse of wilderness with bountiful natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities that will ultimately benefit the residents of the region and preserve and enhance the resources themselves. However, significant obstacles exist. With careful planning, funding mechanisms, and solid partnerships, the area can create a thriving and profitable tourism industry that is both harmonious and symbiotic.

The marketing strategy that we propose will target specific recreational groups, specialized market segments within these groups, and advantageous seasons until state agencies and the private sector have time to ratchet up capacity (programs and products). The concept here is to narrow down to a smaller and smaller group of visitors whose travel expectations are met by current product offerings.

**Definitions**

Geographical / Zone of Influence: Narrow down the market and the marketing region to sizes that can be managed. Only deal with the Elk Range and surrounding communities. Only deal with potential visitors within a six-hour drive.

Recreation: Limit to those that are high growth and low impact such as backpacking, wildlife watching, hiking, and primitive camping.

Specialization: Market to the most specialized / most avid early adopters, who require the least amount of facilitation and nurturing.

Season: Before increasing visitation in the fall (elk viewing) spread out use to shoulder seasons, especially spring (mountain laurel).

Specifically, during the immediate term, efforts should be made to expand tourism during the shoulder (spring) season for the most specialized (avid) market segment. We recommend that current marketing levels continue with a shift in emphasis to attracting overnight visitors.
Existing visitation must be controlled before introducing additional visitors to the area. Maintaining the current visitation growth rate during the fall season over the next three to five years will provide the time for further development of portals, gateways, and the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor.

As program and product capacity, including enhancements, is built then, we recommend slowly working to increase visitation – starting with the bottom of the target market funnel. The first increase in marketing would be to expand from spring to the other seasons, and then reach out to less specialized recreationists, followed by people engaged in more diverse forms of recreation, and finally promote a larger area such as the entire Lumber Heritage Region. Our recommendation for incremental marketing steps will move from the most specialized (smallest segment) to the least specialized (largest segment) target market as product development is accomplished. This “ratchet up” approach responds to the concerns of the local communities and offers a framework for bringing new products and services online in a manageable way.

The proposed cooperative marketing campaign in the short term will be:
- targeted to key markets
- driven by product development rather than promotion, and
- tied primarily to the local communities’ ability to adapt to change but not necessarily measured by time.

The structure of this marketing campaign will:
- focus on specific market segments and seasons, and
- take advantage of existing capacities while the private sector has time to ratchet up capacity.
Fermata’s marketing recommendations have been organized into a broad incremental framework and are tied to implementation of the program and product development strategy (outlined in Tasks 3, 4, and 5).

### Incremental development and marketing framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program and product development activities (outlined in Tasks 3, 4, and 5)</th>
<th><strong>Beginning now and . . .</strong></th>
<th><strong>once some product development is in place</strong></th>
<th><strong>Then . . . only after product development is complete</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traffic control including education and enforcement program</strong></td>
<td>Elk Forest Scenic Corridor designation</td>
<td>Web-based target marketing (promotional)</td>
<td>Sinnemahoning State Park Portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information and interpretive signage including that funded in a TEA-21 grant to North Central</strong></td>
<td>Waypoint enhancement (see sample drawing)</td>
<td>Expanded interpretive programming (Sinnemahoning State Park, other state parks, state forests, and game lands)</td>
<td>Winslow Hill Portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guidelines for ethical viewing</strong></td>
<td>Web-based viewing guide (informational)</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>I-80 Gateway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Game Commission and DCNR habitat improvements on public lands</strong></td>
<td>Collateral informational materials</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>Expanded Lumber Heritage Region tourism marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Penn DOT traffic study</strong></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paving Rte 555 and other highway upgrades to improve access to region</strong></td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Related marketing activities (outlined in Task 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation 6</th>
<th>Recommendation 1</th>
<th>Recommendation 3</th>
<th>Recommendation 8</th>
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<td>Recommendation 2</td>
<td>Recommendation 4</td>
<td>Recommendation 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 3</td>
<td>Recommendation 6</td>
<td>Recommendation 7</td>
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<td>Recommendation 4</td>
<td>Recommendation 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for implementing the incremental development and marketing framework (strategy: programs and products first, followed by promotion)

| Recommendation 1: Transform existing day-trip visitation into overnight visitation during the elk-bugling (fall) season. |
| Recommendation 2: Target new avid nature tourists who are interested in specialized, low-impact outdoor recreation. Focus on the shoulder (spring) season over the next three to five years (or until program and product development is complete). |
| Recommendation 3: Develop a web-based marketing campaign including informational viewing guide and promotional materials. |
| Recommendation 4: Establish a marketing partnership with Pennsylvania wood products manufacturers. |
| Recommendation 5: Develop, adopt, and support a unique, cohesive brand identity that unifies and connects the elk attractions with the array of other offerings and opportunities in the region. |
| Recommendation 6: Introduce funding and business development strategies. |
| Recommendation 7: Create training programs and support materials for portal managers, resource managers, site staff, and volunteers. |
| Recommendation 8: Expand elk viewing (fall) as portals (Sinnemahoning and Winslow Hill) and enhanced waypoints come on-line. |
| Recommendation 9: Expand year-round tourism marketing to less specialized market segments once all product development is complete. |

**Recommendation 1: Convert existing day trip visitation to overnight visitation during the fall season.**

Elk are the portal species for the region. They are a major attraction for non-specialized tourists from within the immediate region as well as within a 5-6 hour drive distance. Current informal communication such as word-of-mouth regarding the presence of elk is luring people to the region. As such, no new formal promotional efforts are needed during the fall season. Most visitors who come specifically to see the elk, go home once this goal is accomplished. The development of portals and enhanced waypoints is intended to enlarge the opportunities for visitors’ experiences and expand their horizons from “elk only” to nature in general. “Elk only” is a day trip; nature in general demands an overnight stay.

As the product and program development is implemented, it will engender a shift from elk-oriented visitation to destination-oriented visitation. It is our recommendation that no additional
marketing beyond current efforts be done to attract additional elk-viewing visitors during the fall season as this will only overtax the communities that serve as home for the elk population. Rather, we recommend that efforts be made to convert current day trip visitors to overnight visitors by augmenting their experiences with additional nature-based opportunities.

Our research of services and accommodations in the area shows ample ability to accommodate overnight visitation at current levels across the entire viewing season. The number of rooms and restaurant seats available in the seven-county area are shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hotel rooms</th>
<th>B&amp;B rooms</th>
<th>Cabin/lodge rooms</th>
<th>Avg. annual occupancy</th>
<th>Restaurant seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinton County</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarion County</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson County</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>See note below</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk County</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2310</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearfield County</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron County</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest County</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2168</strong></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
<td><strong>267</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6615</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See note below

Source: Clinton County Economic Partnership and Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau

In Clarion, Jefferson, Elk, Clearfield, Cameron, and Forest Counties, occupancy levels are averaging out at 50 percent for hotels, 70 percent for B&Bs, and 80 percent for cabins and lodges.

Based on a two-year Penn State study of the economic impact of Pennsylvania’s elk herd (Strauss et al. 1999), elk tourism averaged 62,000 visitor days per year. Other results of this study are described in Task 3. Tourists engaged in elk-viewing activities were predominantly Pennsylvania residents, with 10 percent from Elk and Cameron Counties and 82 percent from other primarily adjacent Pennsylvania counties. Non-resident elk watchers accounted for only eight percent (4,960) of the total, generally coming from southwest New York, northeast Ohio, northern Maryland, and New Jersey.

So there would be enough rooms for all of the out-of-state visitors in an entire season (assuming two visitors per room) in just one night. Realistically, we assumed that initially about 56 percent of all visitors would stay overnight (34,720). Assuming that this travel is spread over ten weekends, each with 1-2 nights stay, about 2,315 people stay overnight at any one time, requiring 1157 rooms (or 45% occupancy rate). Current capacity is such that on a busy weekend, 5090 people could stay overnight in the region, leading to a ten-week total maximum possible overnight visitor count of 50,900 people.
Recommendation 2: Target market to avid nature tourists who are interested in specialized, low-impact outdoor recreation during the shoulder (spring) season

During the product development period, the market segment that can be attracted to the area is the avid nature tourist, particularly during the spring season. This group requires little facilitation and can appreciate the experience with minimal infrastructure and improvement. The "as is" natural setting and public lands in the elk region satisfy these peoples’ demands to be outdoors and to enjoy the sights, smells, and sounds of nature. **We recommend that the initial focus of the marketing initiative be aimed at the avid nature tourist who can access and appreciate the opportunities that are currently available.**

The level of marketing messages required to attract different market segments is inversely proportionate to the avidity level (or degree of specialization) of the groups (see also Recommendation 9). That is to say that the uninitiated general tourist has little or no awareness of the natural world nor the skills and equipment to access or appreciate it. The avid nature tourist, on the other hand, needs no additional information or training.

Although the avid nature tourist represents the smallest market segment (see figure 1) it is the largest group of spring travelers whose primary motivation for travel is recreation. This specialization cone is based upon data from Fermata’s proprietary research (n=2700). The arrows indicate market expansion over time and following product development.

**Figure 6: Specialization cone**

Our observations show a clear distinction between the "uninitiated" and the "casual" nature tourist. The uninitiated do not refer to themselves as nature tourists. They may feed birds in their yard. They may take the boat out to see the Whooping Cranes, or walk the bridge at Fort Kearney to see the Sandhill Cranes. Specialization among those who do view themselves as nature tourists, however, is equally distinct. Once across the hypothetical threshold (self-identified as a nature tourist), the initiated segment into discrete strata as well. We use the labels “uninitiated,” “casual,” "active," and "avid" to distinguish levels of specialization among tourists. Working with Ditton and Stoll, we have developed definitions for these groups.
### Tourist specialization definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uninitiated</strong></td>
<td>The &quot;uninitiated&quot; are people for whom watching wildlife is an interest rather than a recreation. These are people for whom the title &quot;birder&quot; has no meaning or significance. Yet somehow (and the various vectors are a story in themselves) these people find their way to nature through birds or other wildlife. The uninitiated score in the NSRE surveys, but otherwise remain transparent. The uninitiated represent an amorphous mass of recreationists who have yet to find an identity. These are general, or maybe experiential, tourists that do not respond to the title &quot;nature tourist.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Casual</strong></td>
<td>A person whose wildlife viewing is incidental to other travel and outdoor interests; who may not belong to a formal birding organization; who may read an article on birds and other wildlife in a local newspaper but does not subscribe to birding or conservation magazines; who keeps no life list; and for whom wildlife viewing is an enjoyable yet inconsistent outdoor activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active</strong></td>
<td>A person who travels infrequently away from home specifically to view nature; who may or may not belong to a local birding club; who subscribes to general interest magazines (such as <em>Wild Bird</em> or <em>Birdwatcher’s Digest</em>); who participates in, but does not lead, local field trips and seminars; who keeps a general list of birds and other wildlife seen; and for whom wildlife observation is an important but not an exclusive outdoor activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avid</strong></td>
<td>A person who is willing to travel on short notice to see a rare bird or other uncharismatic species; who subscribes to a number of birding magazines (such as <em>Birding</em>) that specialize in the identification of birds and other wildlife and the places where they may be seen; who leads field trips or seminars for local birding and other nature clubs; who keeps a detailed life list as well as a daily journal; who purchases ever-increasing amounts of equipment to aid in attracting, recording, and seeing wildlife; and for whom wildlife viewing is a primary outdoor activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fermata’s proprietary research conducted at four nature-related festivals across the country show that avid and active nature tourists can play a major role in filling the shoulder season (winter and spring). During these seasons, these people out-number general tourists and casual nature tourists.

**Figure 7: Market Segmentation by Season**
Recommendation 3: Develop web-based marketing campaign (both information in the near-term and promotion in the longer term, following product development)

In order to attract avid recreationists, we recommend a web-based marketing campaign that is content-driven and appealing to a discriminating market segment, that is the avid nature tourist. The website must provide detailed, exciting descriptions and focus on what makes the region unique and worthy of visitation. People who have a choice, as virtually all travelers do, must see something truly distinctive and enticing. Special pricing and packaging can be targeted to this specific group easily and affordably. For tracking purposes, we recommend that the website also include survey and polling capacity.

Information
Web-based marketing is a cost-effect means of disseminating information about elk, elk viewing, and other nature-based activities. As reported recently by the Travel Industry Association (TIA) and the Forrester Gartner Group and Jupiter Communications, over seventy percent of frequent travelers had access to the Internet in 2000, up from a mere twenty-three percent only four years before. The U.S. on-line population is expected to double to 210 million by 2004. The number of online travel planners has risen to 65 million for the year 2001, up nine percent from the previous year and a staggering 180 percent since 1997. Of those who used the Internet for research, 31 million are U.S. online travel bookers, up from just five million in 1997.

The major activities of the 65 million online travel planners included:

- Obtaining maps and directions (74%)
- Checking airfares and schedules (69%)
- Locating places to stay (67%)
- Researching things to do (53%)
- Locating dining and entertainment venues (45%)

In addition, the initial research and development related to effective resource and site interpretation can first take place within a virtual environment. The functions of many of the bricks-and-mortar enhancements may first be perfected through the Internet. Virtual trails, interpretive text and graphics and real-time information initially can be assembled on the web site and as these functions are honed they can be embodied in more permanent and tangible media. Therefore, we recommend that the bulk of initial marketing efforts and investment be devoted to web site development.

In our opinion, most alternative media can be sacrificed until a comprehensive, web site development strategy is implemented. This stage of web site development involves the creation of a database of resource destinations and their attributes, and the organizations, agencies, and goods and services providers serving these destinations. The investment in content development for the web site will be returned in spades, in that much of the same material will be appropriate for print media (pamphlets, rack pieces, guides).

Promotion
The Internet is the tourism medium of choice, particularly for communicating with niche markets. Since these potential visitors are only a click away from a competing destination, it is
critical that the story of elk viewing and other nature-based activities be of the highest possible quality. Surveys consistently reaffirm that website traffic is greatly enhanced by updated content, and by thorough treatment of the target topic. Fortunately, the Internet is the most flexible of the media, allowing for the development of responsive interpretation and real-time communication. However, most regional/community websites are designed with minimal depth of information, minimal interactivity, and no benchmarks for regular rewrites and updates. The effectiveness of an Internet presence will largely depend on the degree to which the community sees its website as a critical tool for expansion and development of tourism, rather than as an electronic brochure.

More importantly, the Internet offers impulsive travelers the convenience (even necessity) of purchasing on-line. For the purposes of the Elk Region, the medium matches the message and the market. Convenience is the overwhelming motivator for web users, and a thorough web infrastructure will allow them to spend their money on travel to the Elk Range region.

A web-based effort could include:

- Real-time, responsive information about the elk herd and viewing opportunities
- Real-time, responsive information about nature-based recreational opportunities
- Sample itineraries that include accommodations, restaurants, and other outdoor recreational opportunities in the area
- Interactive bulletin boards
- Checklists (PDF)
- Guides (PDF)
- Links to goods and services providers with click-through purchasing
- Weather information
- Travel conditions
- Links to Pennsylvania tourism and DCNR web sites
- Estimated travel budgets for various itineraries

The use of the Internet allows a potential traveler to query a website specific to his or her own particular interests. Specific recreational opportunities at specific locations during specific seasons may be interlinked. If web-based marketing offers the set of resources and recreational opportunities that the traveler requests, then it may likely be selected as the destination over competing venues.
Recommendation 4: Establish a marketing partnership with Pennsylvania wood products manufacturers

Initially, we considered recommending that the Elk Region form a strategic marketing partnership with one of the nation’s leading personal Global Positioning System (GPS) manufacturers. However this is a typical activity and one that we expect many other regions are pursuing. Instead, we believe the region will be better served by establishing a unique relationship with the area’s wood manufacturing industry, and in particular the “green certified” manufacturers.

When designing a nature tourism marketing plan, the value of cultural attractions and products should be considered. According to Lederman (2001) in the International Ecotourism Society Newsletter, “Developers of new ecotourism sites should seriously consider integrating a permanent cultural venue within a site. As part of the site, it helps create a year-round draw for foreign and domestic tourists…. In addition to enjoying great scenic beauty and outdoor activities, ecotourists like to learn about local indigenous peoples and their cultures. Authentic crafts, and craft-making demonstrations combined with credible cultural performances heighten the tourist experience and increase sensitivity and tolerance for foreign cultures and lifestyles.”

According to DCNR Secretary John Oliver, “Pennsylvania’s forests are admired worldwide for their diverse mix of high-quality hardwoods enriched with thousands of plant and animal species, scenic rivers and streams, and seemingly endless opportunities for recreation and solitude.” Pennsylvania has more then 2.5 million acres of forests considered “well managed” under the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and 2.1 million of these acres are in the state forest system. This accounts for one-half of all certified forests in the United States. This is a unique selling proposition for the region and also one with a logical connection between well-managed forests and high-quality wildlife experiences.

Seventeen Pennsylvania manufacturers are certified as “chain-of-custody” manufacturers by SmartWood, an FSC accredited certification program. Products crafted from SmartWood certified wood now include furniture, toys, musical instruments, flooring, and picture and window frames. Certification helps Pennsylvania compete in the niche consumer market for certified wood products, a market that includes environmentally conscious timber consumers. Developing the elk region as a marketing vehicle for Pennsylvania green wood products will serve both the producer and consumer. The connection exists. The benefits of such a partnership are mutual.

We recommend a beginning dialogue with the Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group, Inc. (AHUG). AHUG’s primary goal is to expand and diversify the forest products industry while maintaining sustainability. Their focus is on the effective use of Allegheny Plateau hardwoods in the value-added secondary market sector. This is an industry driven organization with representation from a 14-county region in northwestern and north central Pennsylvania. The organization acts a single-point resource for this region and has an extensive database and referral network already in place.
An additional resource is the Pennsylvania Hardwoods Development Council created by an act of the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1988 to promote the Commonwealth's forest products industry. The 25 member Council represents the Governor's cabinet, the Senate, the House of Representatives, agricultural college, pertinent government agencies, industry, regional hardwood utilization groups and industrial organizations. The Council supports and assists the forest products industry in developing domestic markets for value-added products, promotes and expands the manufacturing of value-added forest products, and promotes public knowledge and understand about the role of the forest industry and its products in society.

There is also a natural link to the Lumber Heritage Region that specifically embraces outdoor recreational activities and historical/cultural interpretation of logging in the north central area. This cultural/historical theme can be used for enrichment, as an accent, to the elk viewing and natural resource-based themes. To tie culture and history to the overarching nature themes is a logical approach that will prove to be very effective.

The same generation that launched the environmental movement in North America in the 1970s still considers themselves environmentalists. Research shows that over 23 percent of American consumers make their purchases based on environmental decisions. Green marketing and to varying degrees, actual environmental reforms, are occurring at all levels of the travel industry throughout the world in response to changing values of consumers.

According to a 1996 survey of 753 frequent vacation travelers conducted by the research organization, American LIVES, 53 percent of all ecotourism vacation travelers are part of a demographic category called Cultural Creatives (Ray and Anderson 2000). Cultural Creatives’ lifestyles are experiential, authentic, and holistic. They are "aggressive consumers of the arts and culture" (Ray and Anderson 2000). Cultural Creatives are consumers of experiences such as weekend workshops, spiritual gatherings, vacation-as-spiritual-tour, vacation-as-self-discovery, and other experiential vacations. Cultural Creatives "define the leading edge of vacation travel that is exotic, adventuresome, educational, experiential, authentic, altruistic, or spiritual."

Similar to the 50 million Cultural Creatives worldwide are the Bobos, or bourgeois bohemians. This is the term used by David Brooks to describe a new affluent group in society. The bourgeois work for corporations and love order; the bohemians are creative types who love freedom. But these two groups have merged and it’s difficult to determine in a café who is the banker and who is the artist. Bobos as travelers seek to be differentiated from passive tourists, sightseers, and bus-tour participants. They don't just want to see sights, they want to "try on other lives" (Brooks 2000). Brooks identifies a distinct set of travel preferences and motivations for Bobos. They want to get away from their affluent worlds and seek "spiritually superior worlds" and more authentic native/local culture, foods, and crafts. Bobos want to go to uncrowded, undiscovered places where "simple people live in abundance."

An important component in the travel and tourism mix is memorabilia. Authentic crafts and art conjure pleasant memories of past adventures. In addition, these items expand the economic impact in the community, particularly when these goods are produced locally. Sites that feature local crafts and cultural experiences help preserve the artistic heritages and native traditions as well as create income for local families. The benefits enjoyed by the region and the residents
help encourage a more protective attitude toward the natural environment. “Handcrafts can be integrated into a site through permanent retail outlets, temporary displays, and festivals. They should be offered in a balanced mix of expensive museum-quality genuine artifacts, affordable utilitarian products that are authentic and traditional, and fun inexpensive impulse buys. The authenticity and high quality of the products, and how that information is conveyed in the retail setting, are the keys to consumer enthusiasm and strong sales” (Lederman 2001).

A variation of this approach is to thematically link locally produced arts and crafts to the natural resources being showcased in the region. For example, the traditional carving of waterfowl decoys in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia is intrinsically (and thematically) linked to the annual massing of geese and ducks in Chesapeake Bay. The same is true for shorebird decoys around Delaware Bay and the Gulf of Maine. The Elk Region should assess the extent and variety of art and crafts in the region, and determine which of these traditional activities are related to the natural resources.
Recommendation 5: Develop, adopt, and support a unique, cohesive brand identity that unifies and connects the elk with the array of other offerings and opportunities in the region.

The Pennsylvania Elk Range represents an expanse of remote, forested public lands within a six-hour drive of many major metropolitan areas having a population of 46 million people. The overriding theme for the area should create the essence of this rich forest juxtaposed in contrast to some of the most urbanized regions of the United States and Canada (i.e. New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Toronto). The elk are the “calling card” to this region and this signature species personifies the contrast. The brand identity for the region needs to take advantage of the elk as an icon. We recommend that the route that connects the various sites within the region be named the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor or a similar identifier. Focus group research in key markets may be warranted before this title is adopted permanently in signage and printed materials.

It is imperative to develop a regional format for the appearance of visitor information, interpretive signage, and marketing collateral. This includes the development of a logo that conveys the heart of the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor. This logo will be used on letterhead and business cards bearing the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor thematic identifier. The next step will be getting buy-in from the managers of the portals and waypoints, as well as other organizations, for the adoption of this brand and imagery in the individual sites’ promotions, signage, and elsewhere.

We recommend the development of a style manual to ensure consistency in the use of the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor identifier. The manual can be distributed to all site managers and administrative personnel to guarantee that marketing and interpretive messages are cohesive and work hand-in-hand. This may be a good first step for a grant-funded project to prepare the manual for implementation at one of the portal sites as a pilot program or demonstration. The grant would need to include an information-sharing component for the selected site.

The scenic highway corridor within the Elk Range will serve to unify the collection of portals and waypoints. Visitors will travel the “hub and spoke” route to enjoy the elk-viewing opportunities and other nature tourism destinations. The corridor route must be clearly branded with the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor identifier and provide ample directional signage for travelers.

*We recommend preparation of a detailed interpretive plan that would serve to solidify not only the corridor resources but also to solidify the story of the region as a whole. The interpretive plan would identify existing sites and stories along the Elk Range Scenic Corridor and include:*  
  • Theme and storyline – identify natural community-based themes to present a site and its surrounding area as a unique entity within an inter-related region  
  • Specific stories and sites to include in the Elk Range story  
  • Where and how visitor information and interpretation is to be delivered -- locally and regionally.
The development of this interpretive plan can use a “product-oriented” approach that engages the local community in stewarding and promoting the region’s resources. This approach:

- generates public interest in the project — something that sparks imagination and creativity
- creates something that allows local interpretation of the resources
- provides a framework that invites contributions from many stakeholders
- develops ownership and identifies roles for the management of the region’s resources
- provides a structure that facilitates communication and unification of the region.

We further recommend the designation of a marketing and public relations committee to facilitate the development of a brand identity. This committee could be responsible to:

- oversee development and implementation of Marketing Plan by identifying potential markets, their needs, and how to meet their needs
- provide recommendations for products/programs and how to promote programs
- identify additional research needs
- develop recommendations for organization’s response to specific issues
- stay informed on legislative/development matters affecting the Elk Range
- identify tracking mechanism to assess effectiveness of marketing.
Recommendation 6: Funding and business development strategies

Designate a Finance Committee to be responsible for the following:

• **Inventory** bike-touring companies, guides for birding or wildlife viewing, and outfitters including canoe and kayak liveries in the region.

• Pursue **additional grant opportunities** to fund individual site enhancements and interpretation as well as whole-region programs and services including long-term administrative support.

β Create a **certification program** for guides and outfitters similar to a master gardener program. The expectation is that to achieve certification, these individuals will have participated in some sort of training and demonstrated a degree of competency in not only message portrayal but also in ethical behavior for visitors understanding. Only those people or companies who receive this certification would be eligible for a listing or link from the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor website list of certified providers.

β Create **corporate sponsorship opportunities** for major non-traditional partnerships.

β Create **line of merchandise** with Elk Forest Scenic Corridor logo. Sell at portal and other sites' gift shops and in an on-line store on the website. Sell other high quality products in all venues. Ideally, crafts and specialty food items offered would be locally produced.

β Explore creating a **membership only section of the website** and other benefits for participants in an ecotraveler program for which a minimal fee would be required. Participants would receive special quarterly publication and discounted rates during travels, similar to a Passport program popular in other parts of the country.

• Create a **reading list** of elk viewing and natural resource-related books and offer either for sale on the website or in a pass through to Amazon.com.

In addition to the above business development strategies, we recommend that DCNR pursue the establishment of a nature tourism incubator at Sinnemahoning State Park business in partnership with North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission. North Central has already indicated its interest in this project and can bring a substantial amount of experience and support services from programs they currently operate. The North Central Entrepreneurial Network encourages people to start small businesses and attain self-employment in industries that are typically retail, commercial, and service oriented. This program presents a perfect match for the nature tourism incubator and North Central could facilitate and expedite the success of the project by replicating existing procedures, training modules, and follow-up technical support services.
Recommendation 7: Create training programs and support materials for portal managers, resource managers, site staff, and volunteers

Training managers, staff, volunteers, and other personnel who interact with tourists is part of the product development process. We recommend a comprehensive training program targeted to specific market sectors.

**For portal and/or site managers:**
- Logo slicks
- Style manual for common signage
- Reporting mechanism for communicating species, wildflower blooms, event, etc
- General interpretation for the entire series of portals and sites that should be communicated via signs, scripts, etc.
- Research tools/assessment surveys (simple) that can be distributed to visitors at each portal, but analysis done through at common site.
- Grant writing assistance to portals and other sites to help them access not only the new competitive grants but other sources of funding. This helps to ensure that sites within the Elk Range are coordinating efforts rather than competing with each other.
- Volunteer training video (Most of the interpretation done is through volunteer staff. A video would share the entire message - how each portal fits into bigger picture, etc.)
- Interaction with other resource managers to see how they can cooperatively benefit and how all are a part of the overall message.
- Integrated “industry only” site for managers to access information on the web site regarding programs, funding options, education, etc.

**For travel counselors and Welcome Center staff:**
- Host Welcome Center and Pennsylvania Travel Information Center personnel on familiarization trips.
- Meet with travel counselors each year to provide information about the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor.
- Purchase Elk Forest Scenic Corridor giveaways for distribution to these travel counselors in order to keep the Elk Range prominent.

**For the local business audience:**
- Speak at chambers, business functions, tourist council meetings to educate and inform businesses about Elk Forest Scenic Corridor.
• Develop training program aimed at educating hotels, restaurants, and attractions about reaching this market. Identify Best Practices.

• Provide additional information on “industry only” web site.

Although visitor demand for access to natural resources and interpretive programming is at an all-time high and expected to grow, state budgets to support the operation and management of these facilities are declining. In many cases, seasons for operation have been shortened and staffing has been cut back or eliminated. We recommend working through legislative channels to help restore or increase funding for essential services.

• Create a legislative kit with a one-page fact sheet about the project and a fact sheet about economic impact of natural areas.

• Schedule office visits

• Schedule legislative tours in 2004.
Recommendation 8: Expand elk viewing as portals and waypoints come on-line

During the ratcheting up process of portals and waypoints, new opportunities will come online. Sinnemahoning State Park may expand its elk viewing and other nature tourism projects. At such time, a marketing campaign could be developed that was directed at the casual experiential tourist, but still not the uninitiated (who require more places, more interpretation, visitors centers on the Interstate, etc.).

This campaign would be focused on raising awareness about the new things to experience in the Elk Region and lead people to the new and improved park, nature programming in general, and elk-viewing opportunities in particular. The marketing effort could be a story in the Sunday Travel section of the Philadelphia Inquirer, a small space piece in the What’s New portion of the Destinations section in Outside magazine, or an ad in the PA travel guide specific to the park and nature exploration there. The message could be as simple as "Watch one of Pennsylvania’s old gems sparkle anew."

We previously predicted the total number of visitors could grow to 129,000 in the next 10 years and that overnight visitors could increase to 72 percent of all of these (92,880). This also is based on the assumption that the visiting season would be extended beyond the current ten weeks to sixteen weeks (July, Aug., Sept., and Oct.). Therefore the lodging requirements (for a 1-2 night stay, two people in a room) for these visitors would amount to 1935 rooms per night (or a 76% occupancy rate).

Given that the average occupancy in Clinton Co. presently is about 65 percent during elk-viewing season, all but 20 percent of the occupants in that county’s rooms could be presumed to be elk viewers. Assuming this same figure across the entire region that means about 509 rooms are filled with non-elk visitors. This figure will probably remain unchanged over the next ten years and as such, there would still be capacity to accommodate these guests plus the increase in elk-related overnight travelers (2444 rooms). However, this is an effective occupancy rate of 96 percent - a level at which some visitors simply will not be able to find lodging within the region.
Recommendation 9: Market year-round tourism to less specialized market segments once product development is complete.

Only once the basic tourism development strategy has been implemented (that is, Sinnemahoning and Winslow Hill portals, enhanced waypoints, and a signed and mapped Elk Scenic Corridor) should the marketing effort begin to target both an expanded fall season and the less specialized recreationist. The uninitiated and casual recreationists demand facilitation, interpretation, and nurturing, and the region will not be able to provide these services until the gateway/portal/waypoint structure is in place. The nature tourism industry incubator at Sinnemahoning will begin to train operators, guides, B&B owners, etc. Low interest loans may begin to fund additional service providers. Only then will the region be equipped to handle the non-specialized visitors that an expanded marketing plan will target.

The non-specialized visitors who make up the mass tourism market in this phase of regional tourism development will be additional elk viewers in the fall, along with outdoor recreationists interested in wildlife photography, wildlife watching, or fall foliage viewing. Spring and summer will also become a more robust tourist season. Research of the geographic area within a six-hour drive of Benezette produced some astounding results. There are at least 46 million Americans, or 16 percent of the nation’s 281,421,906 people, who reside within a day’s drive of the Elk Region (see Appendix). Using the NSRE figures from 1999 that 71.2 million people (or 25% of all Americans) viewed birds, we can theorize that the same proportion of people within a six-hour drive would share this interest.

That amounts to a potential market size of 11,688,883 people. The 1997 annual visitor level specific to nature tourism in the Allegheny National Forest Tourism region is estimated at 640,000 (nature sightseeing, wildlife watching, and camping).

The products and services must provide a sound foundation upon which an appropriate integrated marketing communications campaign can be built in order to reach those eleven million people who are unaware of the region's offerings or who have yet to make a decision to try a visit to the area. In 1997, 15.9 million visitors traveled to Pennsylvania to take part in some form of outdoor recreation. This shows that the potential primary market size of 11.7 million people is certainly realistic. The challenge is ratcheting up the offerings and then crafting the promotional messages to attract these visitors.

Although a large portion of the 11+ million people will be uninitiated travelers, the marketing initiative can be targeted to the casual and active market segments. Uninitiated tourists will invariably encounter the advertising and messages developed for these other segments and benefit from the information, as well.

We offer the following marketing suggestions to incorporate into a targeted marketing campaign, none of which should occur until the product development phase is complete and the area is prepared to accommodate an influx of uninitiated tourists who will need facilitation, nurturing, and support. Based on the population figures, there is little doubt that a comprehensive marketing campaign will potentially attract visitors by the millions.
Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

- Develop a fulfillment/interpretation piece that is a comprehensive brochure for the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor that lists facilities, hours of operation, and product offerings. It would be offered at the visitor’s center, portals, waypoints, and other tourism bureaus. It should use a minimum of paper that is 100% recycled and unbleached with environmentally sound inks (such as soy-based).

- Design print advertising that sells the “soul” of the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor. Focus on aspects everyone can appreciate and enjoy. Select publications that are well matched to target markets.

- Coordinate publication of an events schedule listing workshops, festivals, concerts, etc. that tell the elk story.

- Initiate a customer satisfaction marketing study at portals. Request additional information about sites visited.

- Host familiarization tours for outdoor writers, feature writers, travel writers, and others.

- Develop a press kit.

- Develop a press release schedule.

- Create a public awareness campaign for citizens and residents.

- Pursue promotional opportunities with outdoor recreation retail shops.

- Develop an audio-cassette/CD driving tour.

- Ensure that the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor is represented at all Pennsylvania Welcome Centers.

- Develop specific packages, brochures, and fact sheets related to elk theme.

- Offer workshops for the public on topics such as resource protection to promote stewardship ethic.

- Explore development of on-line reservation system that would not only be a visitor service but the commissions from which would also serve as a source of administration funding in the future.

- Use e-commerce as much as possible, including electronic postcards and e-mail messages.

- Participate in subject-specific chat rooms and listservs that are used by past visitors to help raise awareness and dispel myths. Chatters often comment on the high quality of their experience. This is a good way of communicating with future visitors in that they are more apt to find a fellow camper or angler more credible than any advertisement or website.
As far as creating a set of environmental education messages in the integrated marketing communications campaign for the region, we need to look at the development of value or meaning for nature through wildlife appreciation. In many ways this is the challenge for the uninitiated. Each individual develops a unique value set for wildlife observation. Yet the uninitiated are that group who have found wildlife and nature (distinguishing them from the disengaged) but have yet to develop a well-founded set of values. This is the stage between recognition (wildlife exists) and meaning (wildlife has value).

We recommend that in the long-term the most appropriate place to invest efforts is with the uninitiated. The uninitiated are malleable and open to influence. We recommend continued exploration of the manner and methods for connecting with this group as they pass through on their way to more specialized pursuits.

As for the casual, active, and avid, the ability to connect the recreation and the resource is rooted in this formative stage. We are not convinced that the conservation ethic cannot be instilled in later stages of specialization; we just believe that it becomes increasingly difficult. If a region has limited resources, the question comes down to “where do we best spend them?”

**Public relations and advertising**

While the Internet is recommended as the primary venue for attracting the avid nature tourist to the area, a well-planned public relations campaign can generate substantial free print coverage. A well-connected professional nature writer who can guarantee springtime magazine spots should be sought. We believe that well-placed articles in *Audubon, Birding*, or other popular magazines of this nature will also reach this target market. Although elk are the portal species and the major calling card, the article must focus on the diversity of activities available and highlight the Pennsylvania Alleghenies as “nature in the raw.”

Web marketing should always be combined with advertising in selected print media. We recommend combining the introduction of new web products with ads in the same publications as are the focus of the public relations efforts.
MARKETING BUDGET

The following marketing budget is in three phases:
1. minimal marketing to be done for the avid nature tourist
2. marketing to be done to raise awareness for the active and/or casual market segment who still need less interpretive and signage support
3. the full marketing campaign to be implemented when product development is complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elk Forest Scenic Corridor Marketing Suggestions</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work that can be done now, without any additional on the ground product development</strong></td>
<td>Design logo for use in signage, web, and printed materials</td>
<td>$1,200.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design simple guide to the region for visitors to encourage dispersed use</td>
<td>Includes writing and layout and photo purchase and printing costs</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>$0.25</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and host website including map and guide</td>
<td>Basic informational site, small database and limited interactivity and promotion</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain professional writers to prepare one themed feature story and 4 press releases</td>
<td>Includes distribution (to publications used by avid tourists)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$3,100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in marketing and visitor interaction for site managers and guides</td>
<td>Assume 10 people participate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
<td>$2,500.00</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elk Festival - Included in PA Great Outdoors budget. We recommend continuing at current level of intensity and promotion until additional on the ground work is completed. $21,300.00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work that can be done after some additional on the ground product development has taken place including alternative (to Winslow Hill) site development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design folded map and guide for visitors to highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain professional writers to prepare four themed feature stories and 12 press release and assemble into media kits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write and design two camera ready print ads for use in regional media and travel guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insertions for ads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Training as in phase I above plus interpretive training, entrepreneurial training and lodging operations training | Assume 50 people participate | 50 | $250.00 | $5,000.00 | $17,500.00

| Work that can be done after all additional on the ground product development has taken place including signage, a welcome center, etc. (note: costs for the interpretive enhancements such as signs, exhibits, and webcam/Elk cam are included in the project budget for Task 4 Visitor Services) |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Upgrade website | Includes all features above plus real time sightings, printable pages at visitor center kiosks, etc. |  |  | $25,000.00 |
| Write, design, and distribute four-color 12-page newspaper insert | Uses info from brochure and web and includes three outdoors writers pieces | 250,000 | $0.75 | $6,000.00 | $193,500.00 |
| Write and design four camera ready print ads for use in regional media and travel guides | Includes image purchase | 4 | $1,500.00 | $4,000.00 | $10,000.00 |
| Insertions for ads |  |  |  |  | $160,000.00 |
| Write and produce a series of six different TV spot ads | Includes filming and project mgmt (shown as an expense) | 6 | $2,000.00 | $3,000.00 | $15,000.00 |
| Airtime for TV ads. Each ad runs 20 times in each of ten markets | includes project mgmt | 1200 | $300.00 | $1,500.00 | $361,500.00 |
| Training as in phase I above plus interpretive training, entrepreneurial training and lodging operations training | Assume 150 people participate | 150 | $250.00 | $10,000.00 | $47,500.00 |

Elk Festival - Included in PA Great Outdoors budget. We recommend growing this event in scope and promotional effort.

Trade show participation - in PA Great Outdoors budget. |  |  |  |  | $812,500.00 |
REFERENCES


Eubanks, T.L. 2000. *Using a world class birding facility for economic conservation and development in Texas’ Lower Rio Grande Valley*.


Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania
APPENDIX 1. WAYPOINT COORDINATES FOR HUB AND SPOKE ROUTES

Primary Route

From west to east, the Elk Forest Scenic Corridor begins at Dubois (exit 101) (I-80 @ PA 255)
41° 07.691’
78° 42.689’
WAYPOINT 001

From Dubois (and the intersections of I-80 and PA 219/PA255), continue E on I-80 to PA 153
(Exit 111) (9.8) [The alternative is to take PA 255 N to PA 53 (Waypoint 007) in Penfield]
41° 06.344’
78° 32.056’
WAYPOINT 002

Go N on PA 153 to Moshannon State Forest Headquarters (1.0)
41° 07.242’
78°32.056’
WAYPOINT 003

Continue N on PA 153 to 4-Mile Road (0.1) and S.B. Elliott State Park
41° 07.392’
Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

78° 32.056’
**WAYPOINT 004**

Return to PA 153 @ 4-Mile Road, continue N on PA 153 to Mud Run Road (4.3)
41° 10.991’
78° 32.959’
**WAYPOINT 005**

Go right (E) on Mud Run Road to Parker Dam State Park (2.3)
41° 11.627
78° 30.696’
**WAYPOINT 006**

Return to PA 153, continue N to PA 255 in Penfield (2.4) [At this intersection, join with Dubois loop travelers on PA 255 or PA 219]
41° 12.515’
78° 34.471’
**WAYPOINT 007**

Go N on PA 255 to PA 555 in Weedville (6.4)
41° 16.247’
78° 29.740’
**WAYPOINT 008**

Veer right (E) on PA 555 to Medix Run (7.0) [At Medix Run, either continue E to Benezette and Driftwood, or go south to the Quehanna Wild Area]
41° 17.321
78° 23.769
**WAYPOINT 009**

Continue E on PA 555 to Benezette (3.0)
41° 18.891’
78° 23.054’
**WAYPOINT 018**

Go right (N) on Winslow Hill Road to the Winslow Hill Elk-Viewing sites. The first is Winslow Hill – Gilbert Tract (2.1)
41° 20.465’
78° 22.131’
**WAYPOINT 044**

Proceed on Winslow Hill Rd. to the larger viewing site, Winslow Hill – Dent’s Run (1.3)
41° 20.752’
78° 20.800’
**WAYPOINT 045**
Continue to loop E (and then S) on Winslow Hill Road back to PA 555 (2.2)
WAYPOINT 017

Continue E on PA 555 to Hicks Run (4.3)
41° 21.657
78° 14.924
WAYPOINT 052

Continue E on PA 555 to Driftwood (7.7) and PA 120
41° 20.370’
78° 08.058’
WAYPOINT 016

Go E on PA 120 to SR 2001 (3.6)
WAYPOINT 013

Continue E on PA 120 to PA 872 (0.1)
41° 19.192’
78° 04.874’
WAYPOINT 014

Continue E on PA 120 to the Sproul SF Codics Run Headquarters (14.4)

Continue E on PA 120 to SR 4001 (3.3)
41° 18.046’
77° 50.422’
WAYPOINT 019

From the intersection of PA 120 and SR 4001 continue E on PA 120 to PA 144 (4.8)
WAYPOINT 025

Continue E on PA 120 to its intersection in Renovo with PA 144 (1.6)
41° 19.635’
77° 44.766’
WAYPOINT 026

From the intersection of PA 120 and PA 144 in Renovo go S on PA 144 to Swamp Branch Road and Barney’s Ridge (10.2); Chuck Keiper Trail
WAYPOINT 034

Continue S on PA 144 to Fish Dam Run Scenic Overlook (0.3)
41° 14.001’
77° 47.218’
WAYPOINT 027

Continue S on PA 144 to Penrose Road (1.6)
WAYPOINT 033
Continue S on PA 144 to Big Rocks Scenic Area (1.2)
WAYPOINT 028
Continue S on PA 144 to Two Rock Run Burn (1.5)
WAYPOINT 032

Two Rock Run Interpretive Trail
WAYPOINT 058
Continue S on PA 144 to SGL 100 (11.1)
41° 06.135’
77° 59.233’
WAYPOINT 029
Continue S on PA 144 to PA 879 (4.2)
WAYPOINT 041
Continue S on PA 144 to PA 53 (1.0)
41° 01.934’
78° 00.319’
WAYPOINT 030
Continue S on PA 53 to I-80 (11.0)
40° 59.366’
78° 10.113’
WAYPOINT 031

Or, from PA 144 and PA 53, continue S on PA 144 to Snow Shoe (2.9)
41° 01.609
77° 57.081
WAYPOINT 050
Continue E on PA 144 to I-80 (0.8)
41° 01.610’
77° 56.136’
WAYPOINT 051

End of Primary Route
Quehanna Wild Area Loop
From Medix Run, go S on Quehanna Highway to Moshannon State Forest Quehanna Headquarters (7.5)
41° 15.743’
78° 18.244’
WAYPOINT 010

Continue S on Quehanna Highway to Losey Trail and the Marion Brooks Natural Area (1.4)
41°15.916’
78° 16.689’
WAYPOINT 046

Continue S on Quehanna Highway to Beaver Run Road (0.9) and the Beaver Run Shallow Water Impoundment (0.2 to end of gravel road). Enter by foot only.
41°15.659’
78° 15.488’
WAYPOINT 047

Continue S on Quehanna Highway to Lincoln Road (1.8)
41° 15.253’
78° 13.846’
WAYPOINT 048

Go left (E) on Lincoln Road (gravel) to its end at Old Wykoff Road (1.7) and the Wykoff Natural Area Elk-Viewing site (also known as the Hoover site)
41° 15.535’
78°11.952’
WAYPOINT 043

From the intersection of Lincoln Road and Old Wykoff Run Road, go right (S) to Wykoff Run Road and Sinnemahoning, or left (N) through the mountains (spectacular view, although narrow unpaved road) to PA 555 in Driftwood

Return to Quehanna Highway, and continue S to Wykoff Run Road (SR 2001) (2.6)
41° 13.766’
78° 11.489’
WAYPOINT 012

From this intersection, you may go N on SR 2001 to PA 120 and Sinnemahoning (9.9)
41° 19.198’
78° 05.002’
WAYPOINT 013
Between 012 and 013, this is a spectacular scenic view (designate as Wykoff Run Scenic Drive); also good area for bear, many waterfalls, fall color
Continue S on Quehanna Highway to PA 879 (9.8)
41° 07.776’
78° 07.955’
WAYPOINT 042

Veer E on PA 879 to PA 53 and the Elk Highway (1.1)
41° 02.877’
78° 00.207’
WAYPOINT 041

Return to Medix Run

Emporium
From the intersection of PA 555 and PA 120 in Driftwood, go N on PA 120 to the PennDOT Parking Area (4.5)
41° 22.948’
78° 09.561’
WAYPOINT 053

Continue N on PA 120 to Mason Hill Road (3.5)
Continue N on PA 120 to Emporium Country Club Golf Coarse (2.0)
Continue N on PA 120 to Wayside Memorial Park (4.4)
41° 28.845’
78° 11.887’
WAYPOINT 054

Continue N on PA 120 to Emporium and PA 155 (2.3)
41° 30.521’
78° 13.205
WAYPOINT 055

Continue N on PA 155 to Sizerville SP
41° 35.428
78° 11.522
WAYPOINT 056

Return to Driftwood
Sinnemahoning
Go N on PA 872 to Sinnemahoning SP Headquarters (8.3)
41° 25.226’
78° 01.792’
WAYPOINT 015

Sinnemahoning SP Elk-Viewing Area
WAYPOINT 057

Return to the intersection of PA 120 and PA 872,

Kettle Creek
Go N on SR 4001 to the Alvin R. Bush Dam (11.1)
41° 21.576’
77° 55.677’
WAYPOINT 020
The dam site is our preferred second major elk-viewing location, offering parking, a scenic overview, and distance between the viewer and the proposed elk habitat area.

Continue N on SR 4001 to Kettle Creek SP (1.5)
41° 22.608’
77° 55.797’
WAYPOINT 021

Continue N on SR 4001 to Beaver Dam Day Use Area (1.1) (area improved for elk)
41° 23.505’
77° 55.781’
WAYPOINT 022

Continue N on SR 4001 to Trout Run Road (3.0)
41° 25.928’
77° 55.230’
WAYPOINT 023

Continue N on SR 4001 to PA 144 in Hammersley (1.6) (Access to Hammersley Wild Area)
41° 26.170’
77° 53.795’
WAYPOINT 024
From Hammersley, go S on PA 144 to Tamarack (3.0) and Steward Hill Road - Tamarack Swamp Natural Area
41° 25.460’
77° 50.883’
WAYPOINT 038

Continue S on PA 144 to PA 120 (8.8)
End of loop

Hyner Run View
From the intersection of PA 144 and PA 120 in Renovo, go E on PA 120 to Hyner Run Road (6.2)
41° 19.959’
77° 38.631’
WAYPOINT 035

Go left (E) on Hyner Run Road to the entrance to the Hyner View SP (1.8)
The scenic view is located at the end of the road (4.0)
41° 19.590’
77° 37.403’
WAYPOINT 036

Return to Hyner Run Road, continue E to Hyner Run SP (0.1)
41° 21.303’
77° 37.609’
WAYPOINT 609

Return to Renovo and PA 144
End of loop
### APPENDIX 2. POSSIBLE BUDGETS FOR PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTING ELK HIGHWAY ENHANCEMENTS AND MODEL SITES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elk Highway</td>
<td>Route designation</td>
<td>Identify in narrative and on GIS map location of Highway. Work with Penn DOT and others on highway designation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$60.00</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>$2,100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk Highway</td>
<td>Waypoint identification</td>
<td>Identify in narrative and on GIS map location of Highway</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$60.00</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>$1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk Highway</td>
<td>Create map and guide for visitors to highway</td>
<td>Project preparation including photographer, designer, and printer liaison</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>$225.00</td>
<td>$865.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk Highway</td>
<td>Design logo</td>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$580.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk Highway</td>
<td>Oversee design for general signage and interstate signs, Coordinate installation</td>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$60.00</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
<td>$2,700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk Highway</td>
<td>Design interpretive kiosks. Oversee fabrication. Coordinate installation</td>
<td>Project management and design</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$90.00</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>$2,360.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Priority model sites located immediately off of Elk Highway**

| Hick’s Run | Trail on old right of way to access blinds | Engineering and construction management | 24 | $90.00 | $300.00 | $2,460.00 |
| Hick’s Run | Paved parking area at bottom of hill | Engineering and construction management | 16 | $90.00 | $200.00 | $1,640.00 |
| Hick’s Run | Site development | Project management | 24 | $90.00 | $100.00 | $2,260.00 |
| Hick’s Run | Design and oversee construction viewing blinds | | 2 | $1,000.00 | | $2,000.00 |
| Hick’s Run | Interpretive signage - design two 2’x3’ panels | | 16 | $40.00 | $100.00 | $740.00 |

**Fish Dam Run Overlook (PA 144) - all enhancements will be ADA compliant**

| Fish Dam Run | Access road improvements - paving | Engineering and construction management | 24 | $90.00 | $300.00 | $2,460.00 |
| Fish Dam Run | Paved parking area at edge of loop | Engineering and construction management | 16 | $90.00 | $200.00 | $1,640.00 |
| Fish Dam Run | Site development | Project management | 24 | $90.00 | $100.00 | $2,260.00 |
| Fish Dam Run | Design and oversee construction viewing platform | | 1 | $1,250.00 | | $1,250.00 |
| Fish Dam Run | Interpretive signage - design three 2’x3’ panels | | 24 | $40.00 | $100.00 | $1,060.00 |
| Fish Dam Run | Landscaping and seating | Design and project mgmt | 16 | $80.00 | $200.00 | $1,480.00 |

**Total** |  |  |  | **$10,405.00** |  |  |

**Total** |  |  |  | **$9,100.00** |  |  |

**Total** |  |  |  | **$10,150.00** |  |  |
### Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

| Other model sites to complete as funding permits - listed in priority order | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sinnemahoning** (route 872 - spoke) | Access road improvements - widening and paving | Engineering and construction management | 16 | $90.00 | $250.00 | $1,690.00 |
| Paved parking area between highway and old railbed | Engineering and construction management | 16 | $90.00 | $200.00 | $1,640.00 |
| Site development | Project management | 24 | $90.00 | $100.00 | $2,260.00 |
| Design and oversee construction viewing blinds | | 2 | $1,000.00 | | $2,000.00 |
| Interpretive signage - design two 2'x3’ panels | | 16 | $40.00 | $100.00 | $740.00 |
| **Beaver Dam Reservoir, Quehanna Highway (spoke)** | Site development | Project management | 24 | $90.00 | $100.00 | $2,260.00 |
| Design and oversee construction viewing blinds | | 2 | $1,000.00 | | $2,000.00 |
| Interpretive signage - design two 2’x3’ panels | | 16 | $40.00 | $100.00 | $740.00 |
| **Two Rock Run facing E (PA 144) - Replaces Burns Run Area Overlook facing W (on highway)** | Access road improvements - paving | Engineering and construction management | 16 | $90.00 | $250.00 | $1,690.00 |
| Paved parking area at edge of loop | Engineering and construction management | 16 | $90.00 | $200.00 | $1,640.00 |
| Site development and trail design; trail interpretation | Project management and construction supervision | 32 | $90.00 | $350.00 | $3,230.00 |
| Interpretive signage - design two 2’x3’ panels | | 16 | $40.00 | $100.00 | $740.00 |
| **Kettle Creek (PA 4001) (spoke) - need to add elk to site** | Paved parking area along highway near equestrian trailhead | Engineering and construction management | 16 | $90.00 | $200.00 | $1,640.00 |
| Site development and trail design; trail interpretation | Project management and construction supervision | 16 | $90.00 | $200.00 | $1,640.00 |
| Interpretive signage - design two 2’x3’ panels | | 16 | $40.00 | $100.00 | $740.00 |

**Total: $54,305.00**
## Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction - Elk Highway</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elk Highway - 120 miles with 25 waypoints</strong></td>
<td><strong>Site</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Units</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unit Cost</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Design logo</td>
<td>for use in signage, web, and printed materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Design folded map and guide for visitors to highway</td>
<td>Includes writing and layout and photo purchase and printing costs</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Design and host website including map and guide</td>
<td>Basic promotional site, no database or interactivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fabricate general signage and install on post</td>
<td>Average of three basic signs per waypoint plus 40 others along route. Installation by PA DOT or others</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fabricate directional sign to use with general sign on same post</td>
<td>One for every general sign. Uses same post as general sign</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fabricate informational sign to use with general sign on same post</td>
<td>One for every general sign. Uses same post as general sign</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>$90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fabricate and install interstate signs</td>
<td>At least two exists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Build and install interpretive kiosk to introduce visitors to project on PA 144 and 153</td>
<td>Installation by PA DOT or others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Elk Highway improvements total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hick's Run</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paved parking area at bottom of hill</td>
<td>parking for 12-15 cars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fence cemetery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fence cemetery parking area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construct pedestrian trail</td>
<td>Along old right of way to blinds</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build viewing blinds</td>
<td>At east and west ends of food plot (for morning and afternoon optimal viewing)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretive signage - fabricate two 2'x3' panels and install</td>
<td>About the site's management and about elk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$2,100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Dam Run Wild Area Overlook (PA 144)</td>
<td>Access road improvements - paving</td>
<td>One way drive through</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>$18.94</td>
<td></td>
<td>$25,568.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paved parking area at edge of loop</td>
<td>parking for 12-15 cars at an angle as part of the loop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fence parking area</td>
<td>to limit access to natural area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve pedestrian trail</td>
<td>configure Chuck Keiper trailhead to fit as appropriate with parking/access road</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build viewing deck</td>
<td>overlooking wild area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$12,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$12,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretive signage - fabricate three 2'x3' panels and install</td>
<td>About the site's management, about the wild area's natural features/habitats, about the trail system</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
<td>$3,150.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landscaping (acres)</td>
<td>native plantings including perennials and shrubs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seating (benches)</td>
<td>at overlook and viewing deck</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$400.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other model sites to complete as funding permits - listed in priority order</td>
<td>Access road improvements - widening and paving</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$18.94</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,681.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinnemahoning (route 872 - spoke)</td>
<td>Paved parking area between highway and old railbed</td>
<td>parking for 10 cars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve pedestrian trail</td>
<td>along old railbed to connect with paved road in Park</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,280.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build observation platform connected to parking area</td>
<td>At north end of food plot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretive signage - fabricate two 2'x3' panels and install</td>
<td>About the site's management and about elk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$2,100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver Dam Reservoir, Quehanna Highway (spoke)</td>
<td>Improve pedestrian trail</td>
<td>from existing parking to blind at food plot</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Expenses:** $20,600.00

**Total Expenses:** $25,568.18

**Total Expenses:** $52,618.18

**Total Expenses:** $22,061.82

**Total Expenses:** $22,061.82
## Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model sites enhancements subtotal</th>
<th>Cost Breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Build viewing shelter</strong></td>
<td>1 $5,000.00 $5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretive signage - fabricate two 2'x3' panels and install</strong></td>
<td>About the site's management and about elk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$8,600.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two Rock Run facing E (PA 144) - Replaces Burns Run Wild Area Overlook facing W (on highway)</strong></td>
<td>Access road improvements - paving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paved parking area at edge of loop</td>
<td>parking for 10 cars at an angle as part of the loop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fence parking area</td>
<td>to limit access to the burn area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop interpreted loop nature trail</td>
<td>trail construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trail signage/interpretation</td>
<td>small identification signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretive signage - fabricate two 2'x3' panels and install</strong></td>
<td>About the site's management/fire, about the wild area's natural features/habitats including species and succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$21,381.82</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kettle Creek (PA 4001) (spoke) - need to add elk to site</strong></td>
<td>Paved parking area along highway near equestrian trailhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve pedestrian trail</td>
<td>from parking to edge of meadow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretive signage near parking area - fabricate two 2'x3' panels and install</strong></td>
<td>About the site's management and about elk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$11,100.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model sites enhancements subtotal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania
APPENDIX 3. CASE STUDIES

These case studies are furnished to detail how managers in other parts of the country have dealt with elk-viewing management.

- Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon
- Forest Learning Center, Weyerhaeuser, Mt. St. Helens, Washington
- Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon
- Mackinaw State Forest, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan
- Oak Creek Wildlife Area, Washington Department of Wildlife, Washington
Preliminary Plan for Promoting Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism in North Central Pennsylvania

Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area
Kathy Wall, Resource Area Wildlife Biologist (541) 756-0100
Ownership: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Size: 1,095 acres

Location: Oregon, 3 miles inland from coastal town of Reedsport
Elk population: 60-120 Roosevelt Elk
Principal viewing seasons: Year-round
Year established: 1987
Area objectives: Provide safe wildlife-viewing opportunities, environmental education, nature appreciation, protection for elk and other wildlife, and bring revenue into the local economy.

Overview
All decisions made at Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area are based on obtaining optimum wildlife viewing. More than 200,00 people pull off the highway annually to watch Roosevelt Elk here. The two agencies in charge of the area developed a management plan in 1993 that laid out a 50-year vision for the viewing site. That plan was amended in 1998 to include management for lands that were acquired in 1994.

The viewing area adjoins Highway 38, a well-traveled route to the coast. The area fronts the highway to the north and private timberlands to the south. Elk remain on the property and managers do not have problems with depredations on private farmlands.

Wetlands interspersed with old farm meadows and woods offer excellent wildlife viewing. Elk are definitely the portal species that attracts viewers. Once visitors stop to watch elk, they may linger to observe birds in the wetlands. Managers enhance habitats both for elk and for wetland wild inhabitants.

Summer is the primary viewing season for coastal visitors. However, the elk remain throughout the year. Mornings and evenings are the most reliable viewing times. Nearby communities market the elk viewing in conjunction with other activities such as whale watching and bird watching at the Umpqua Discovery Center.

Unlike the feeding program at Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area in northern coastal Oregon, managers do not provide supplemental food. Instead, the BLM mows, tills, re-seeds, and fertilizes meadows to assure that nutrition and palatability levels remain high. The managers also enhance the wetlands to expand areas of standing water for the benefit of wading birds, waterfowl, and other wildlife.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for Dean Creek lies in loss of forage in the prime viewing areas, where the BLM has invested heavily in viewing and education facilities. Changes in the water table have encouraged the spread of reed canary grass and common tussock, which are not palatable to elk. The BLM and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife are studying ways to mitigate the water table changes. Development of an area exclusively for elk viewing requires a long-term commitment to maintaining the habitat that draws elk to that site.
Private Land Exchanges
As far back as the 1970s, a group called Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc. promoted the idea of a protected elk-viewing area. Eventually, the idea came to fruition through three different land exchanges. The BLM bought the 923-acre Washburn ranch in 1987, the 116-acre Alderwood Ranch with ranch house and farm buildings in 1991, and the 56-acre Spruce Reach Island in 1994. The acquisitions have added significant habitat and more opportunities for public outreach.

Key Objectives of Management Plan
The following is excerpted from the Dean Creek EVA 1998 Amendment:

- Highway Safety: Eliminate conflicts between wildlife viewing and vehicle traffic on Highway 38.
- Construct an access frontage road to the ranch house. (This amendment deletes this action.)
- Provide vegetative visual screening along Highway 38 where necessary. Place appropriate warning signs and repair right-of-way fences.
- Habitat Management: Protect and enhance the different habitats at the elk-viewing area to provide diverse wildlife-viewing opportunities.
- Manage meadows for high quality elk forage in areas that provide safe wildlife viewing.
- Maintain and enhance wetlands, riparian areas, and upland habitat. This includes using water-control structures, providing nest boxes, reintroducing native riparian vegetation, retaining hardwood trees and snags for diversity and nesting, cutting upland openings for enhanced elk forage, and clearing ditches of vegetation.
- Restrict human activity to public use areas.
- Elk Herd Size: Manage for 60-120 elk by removing excess elk through trapping and transplanting.
- Meadow Management: Provide high quality forage through meadow conditioning, hay removal, fertilization, meadow renovation, reseeding, and prescribed burning.
- Public Facilities: Provide public visitor facilities for safe wildlife viewing and environmental education.
- Install viewing decks, interpretive panels, and viewing scopes. Create a brochure and guided walks.
- Use the east-end ranch house as a visitor center. (This amendment deletes this action.)
- Use the east-end ranch house as an environmental center and develop an environmental education curriculum.
- Administration: Implement monitoring, research programs, and adequate staffing.

Public Involvement
Dean Creek Wildlife, Inc. provides a citizens’ sounding board for planning and management of the elk-viewing area. The nonprofit group is composed of dedicated local residents who have cared for the protection and stewardship of this elk herd since the 1970s. Only six individuals are active today, but the organization remains a valuable way of assuring good communication between agencies and local residents. Benezette residents should form a similar organization to promote the welfare of the elk in conjunction with protecting their own concerns about tourism impact on the town.
A full-time manager, Larry Johnston, oversees the habitat management, facilities, and recreation. The BLM also employs a full-time maintenance person. The Coos Bay District of the BLM and the South Coast District Office of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife provide expertise and assistance as needed.

During the summer, a volunteer remains at the main viewing area for a few hours per day, two to three times a week. The viewing areas and facilities are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Dean Creek is exploring ways to involve retirees as volunteers to provide more personal on-site interpretation.

The average visitor spends about ten minutes looking at elk before returning to the highway and other destinations. Biologist Kathy Wall refers to the majority of use as “elk fast food viewing.” However, some visitors spend a half-hour or more and read the signs. In addition, there are dedicated local residents who come to the site every day to see what the elk are doing. We suggest surveying use patterns at Winslow Hill, both to see the differences in local versus visitor use, and to get a sense of time spent viewing. This will allow managers to make sure the viewing experience meets the needs of both casual visitors and locals who know the herd well.

**Separation of Viewers and Elk**

Visitors are limited to the designated viewing areas. “No Trespassing” signs make it clear that the elk have free rein on the property, but not people. Viewers can watch elk from pullouts along the highway, or from two paved pullouts on a frontage road constructed for elk viewing, where the main facilities are located. The elk are so habituated to the presence of viewers in dedicated areas that they sometimes approach within 50 feet.

A low, woven-wire fence separates viewers from the elk. An honor system works well among viewers. If anyone attempts to climb over a fence, the elk spook immediately and the viewers become visibly upset. The area is so open and the viewing area so popular in summer that it is impossible for someone to sneak in without being highly visible, according to Kathy Wall.

Winslow Hill and nearby viewing areas have the advantage and disadvantage of not being on a main route of travel. While viewers can find escape from highway noise and a wilder feel to their experience, the isolation may encourage more violations of closed areas. Both Jewell Meadows and Dean Creek use low fences to separate viewers from elk, which appears to be an excellent suggestion for Winslow Hill. While signing and a strong volunteer presence may not be critical at Dean Creek, it would be at Winslow Hill during peak visitation in the fall.

**Facilities**

The main viewing area, called the O.H. Hinsdale Interpretive Center, features viewing scopes and a large, covered, open-air structure with 14 interpretive signs on the following subjects: welcome to Dean Creek; elk in spring; elk in summer; elk in fall; elk in winter; Native Americans interaction with elk; farming for elk; interactive questions about elk (lift flaps for answers); other wildlife to view; and where the elk might be if not here now.

The O.H. Hinsdale Interpretive Center has parking for ten motor homes and fourteen cars. Sidewalks and benches invite visitors to walk beyond the kiosk. Flush toilets add another reason
for travelers on the highway to stop by. While the restrooms are necessary to accommodate the high number of viewers, the heavy use results in constant maintenance problems.

Other facilities include a second viewing site at the west end of the road with two decks that overlook wetlands as well as elk habitat. Interpretive signs feature waterfowl and other wildlife. This parking area accommodates twelve cars.

The combination of connected elk and wetland viewing areas is an effective way to broaden visitor appeal and to help them appreciate wildlife diversity, rather than focus on one spectacular species, and suggests that the Pennsylvania approach will ultimately be successful.

**Nature Tourism and marketing**

Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area is part of a network of Oregon viewing sites marked with a binocular logo on roadsides and included in a guidebook. (At least 41 states now have viewing guidebooks). The binocular logo gives visitors added incentive to stop and explore an area. The book also serves as a way for visitors to plan loop tours and wildlife-viewing trips that combine several stops.

There are two brochures for the site—one is a glossy, full-color format, and the other is a simpler, three-color tri-fold. Local chambers of commerce stock the brochures and send them out to potential visitors. Both brochures feature elk, while also highlighting the other wildlife and habitats to explore. The lead paragraph of the tri-fold offers a good example of how Pennsylvania can encourage visitors to explore further:

> “Experience the wildlife of Dean Creek! While some animals are secretive, requiring both patience and knowledge to see, Dean Creek’s elk are usually within a camera’s reach. They are drawn to the lush meadow grasses and are accustomed to passing cars and sightseers. But elk are only part of the picture here. Dean Creek’s mosaic of mountains, meadows, and marshes is home to many animals. Come to see the elk and challenge yourself to discover some of the other residents. Sniff the wind, listen to the sounds around you, and taste the air. Wildlife is everywhere.”

The Reedsport Chamber of Commerce actively promotes elk-viewing visits to the coast. Reedsport and Winchester Bay combine wildlife viewing marketing as part of the Oregon Coast Travel Guide (see the website [http://www.presys.com/dt/coast/coast6.html](http://www.presys.com/dt/coast/coast6.html):

> “Reedsport & Winchester Bay—These neighboring towns along the Umpqua River offer the rare opportunity to watch elk and gray whales in the same afternoon. While in Reedsport, visit the Umpqua Discovery Center on the riverfront. Then travel east of town on Highway 38 to the Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area. Then head southwest to Winchester Bay, where the Spy Hoppers whale-watching platform is perched on a bluff, across from the Umpqua Lighthouse.”

The brilliant autumn foliage of Central Pennsylvania is a logical component to market in conjunction with the elk, much as the whales are marketed in Oregon. See the marketing section of the Pennsylvania Elk Watching and Nature Tourism Project for other comparable ideas.
Finally, Dean Creek is promoted on several Internet sites, some of which would potentially be available for Pennsylvania’s elk-viewing areas. For example, L.L. Bean has an outdoors-online section that allows users to search for parks. Dean Creek appears on this site with a description, several color photos, a map, and a list of related outdoor activities. To look at the L.L. Bean site for ideas, go to [www.llbean.com/parksearch](http://www.llbean.com/parksearch).

**Key Points**

- Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area serves as an excellent example of planning for wildlife viewing as the primary attraction for visitors. A management plan in 1993 laid out a 50-year vision for viewing, enhancement, and education.
- With a well-developed viewing area, the challenge remains to ensure that the habitat will support the elk. Unexpected circumstances can threaten the viability of the site.
- A short frontage road with two pullouts takes visitors off the main highway and provides a safe place for viewing and interpretation.
- Viewing facilities are designed both for elk and for wetland wildlife observation. The elk lure people in to appreciate a broader spectrum of animals and birds.
- Dean Creek Elk-Viewing Area appears on several Internet sites, including L.L. Bean’s outdoors-online section. This offers similar possibilities for Winslow Hill as a marketing and promotion vehicle.
**Forest Learning Center, Mt. St. Helens, Washington**
Dick Ford, Manager, 360-414-3439

Size: 68,000 acres  
Ownership: Weyerhaeuser  
Location: Mt. St. Helens  
Elk population: Variable numbers of Rocky Mountain Elk  
Principal viewing season: Summer

**Overview**
An elevated elk-viewing area overlooks the Mt. St. Helens blast zone. Viewers stand on a cliff and can view elk far below with the aid of spotting scopes. The viewing area is part of an elaborate visitor center that takes visitors on a journey tracing the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, and Weyerhaeuser’s salvage, recovery and reforestation program. The center also has a volcano theme playground for kids and a replica forest complete with a full elk mount.

According to the center’s manager, both the mounted elk and an outdoor bronze elk statue are popular and helpful to tourists—80-90 percent have never seen an elk. The site attracts visitors from all 50 states and numerous foreign countries. Although most visit to see and learn about the volcano, viewing elk for the first time adds significantly to the experience, even when the animals are relatively distant.

Three porcelain enamel signs interpret elk and their natural history at the viewing overlook. A brochure called “Elk on the Mountain” tells the story of how the elk survived and returned after the eruption. Volunteers help visitors spot elk and answer questions. An impressive 75 volunteers, mostly retirees, staff the center for six days weekly.

In addition, Weyerhaeuser distributes Elk Watch curriculum for school children. This material is adapted from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation materials. The center also runs a 9-minute version of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation’s longer film, “Elk of the Northern Herd.” The film is short and extremely popular, even though the elk featured are in Yellowstone.

**Key Points**
- Interpretive material should also target uninitiated tourists—those who have never before seen an elk, and who may not be sure what an elk actually is.
- Viewing sites that give a more distant view of elk can be effective, especially if mounted spotting scopes and volunteers are on hand to help spot the animals and interpret their behavior. This has significance for the potential adoption of Kettle Creek as an additional viewing site, because it maintains significant distance between viewers and elk.
- A successful volunteer program is integral to a positive wildlife-viewing experience.
- A mounted elk or statue gives viewers new to elk a sense of the animal’s size and proportions. It also serves as a photo opportunity for tourists.
Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon
Bryan Swearingen, Manager (503) 755-2264
Ownership: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Size: 1200 acres with approximately 2000 acres under contract with private and public landowners for a refuge buffer.

Location: Oregon coast range, inland from Astoria
Elk population: 200 Roosevelt Elk
Principal viewing seasons: Year-round
Year established: 1969
Area objectives: “Provide food for wintering Roosevelt elk, habitat for elk and other native wildlife, and a place for the public to view and study wildlife in natural surroundings.”

Overview
Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area offers many relevant ideas for Winslow Hill. Visitor use is high—90,000 visitor use-days a year—and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife successfully manages viewing to assure an experience that satisfies the viewer and that does not disturb the elk. The herd of Roosevelt elk is most visible from November through April. However, summer visitors often combine a visit to the coast with elk viewing; this is the exact type of multiple-interest travel that DCNR, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and North Central are seeking to promote in Pennsylvania. Winter visitors come specifically to see elk or participate in a supplemental feeding program. Although the Pennsylvania winter is harsher than at Jewell Meadows, this seems to suggest that viewers will visit elk-watching areas even during the off-season. Hunters are also part of the elk-watching mix. Many will visit the viewing area to look at the herd as part of a hunting trip to nearby properties. This suggests a further compatibility between hunting and elk viewing, and indicates that hunters can effectively become revenue sources for hunting and for elk watching.

Public Involvement
Jewell Meadows has only two permanent staff, and relies on volunteer hosts and strategically planned viewing areas that encourage an ethical experience. The Pennsylvania Game Commission currently handles most of the work related to elk management and interpretation, and Jewell Meadows suggests that a wider range of public involvement could serve to lower operational costs and to increase public support for elk tourism.

In Benezette and Renovo, where there has been resistance by some residents to expanded elk tourism, local involvement in the actual viewer management activities can greatly build support for the Game Commission’s work and for DCNR.

Separation of Viewers and Elk
All four elk-viewing areas at Jewell Meadows feature physical barriers intended to separate viewers from the elk, but not to prevent elk from moving freely. Three areas have low wooden fences. One viewing area, along the principal highway, has a planted hedgerow of roses.
At the fenced areas, small signs (10” x 10”) every five or six fence posts read:

**Closed to Entry**
People in the fields will disturb or move the elk out of view.
Your cooperation is expected.

The fences are open-ended and signs are placed where people are most inclined to walk around or climb over the fences. As long as visitors stay in the designated viewing areas, elk will move to within 30 feet. This provides an extremely intimate and prolonged viewing experience. The elk are habituated to human presence, but as soon as a viewer crosses a barrier, the animals move off immediately. The hedgerow faces the main highway, where viewing is limited to an extended shoulder. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife buys its own gravel and maintains the pullout lane. At this site, a large sign reads, “Jewel Meadows Wildlife Refuge,” with smaller signs that say, “Closed to Entry” placed every 300 feet.

One of the key issues with regard to signage is that the signs should not simply be proscriptive. Injunctions such as “Do Not…” and “No…” create hostility and resentment, and invite vandalism. Effective signage should firmly state the prohibition (ex. “Closed to Entry”) and most important, explain why (ex. “People in the fields will disturb or move the elk out of view”). Viewers often feel that their actions are in a sense “rights” because they pay taxes and user fees that subsidize wildlife viewing activities. Consequently, limitations on their actions are often received poorly, or with outright indignation, however justified the prohibitions may be. Virtually all visitors consequently appreciate explanations that give common-sense reasons for prohibitions and injunctions.

This has particular application to Winslow Hill, where signage is minimal and viewer interaction with elk is particularly problematic.

**Facilities**
As visitors approach Jewell Meadows, a sign displays a radio station number they can tune in for sounds of elk bugling and the latest news about the refuge, news that includes elk behavior as well as management activities. Viewers often listen to the message while parked and viewing. This increases visitor awareness of the management aspect of the herd, and is educational. Parking design gives viewers a good vantagepoint so that they can view the herd from inside the vehicle even in rainy conditions, which are frequent. Some type of accommodation for cold-weather viewing will be necessary if Winslow Hill plans to expand its elk season into the colder months; an enhanced parking area could well serve this purpose.

The largest viewing area, at the headquarters, offers parking for eighty vehicles and an RV lane. A central interpretive kiosk, brochures, and flush toilets that are separate from the headquarters facilities provide critical amenities to visitors. Bathrooms at a central viewing area are essential, and the effectiveness of these facilities as a viewer management tool also has particular application to Winslow Hill and Benezette. Since current toilets at Winslow Hill are seasonal, some type of permanent facility is necessary to extend the viewing season. The viewing area also has one game-proof fence to keep the animals out of the headquarters’ yard.
Walk-in viewing access is possible at one area, but the consensus is that walking constitutes a poor way to view elk. The elk move off ahead of hikers and do not remain stationary for prolonged looks as they do at fenced-off viewing locations. However, for viewers who are content with fleeting glimpses of elk, removed from the sights and sounds of other human activity, some type of foot-access should be considered for Winslow Hill as an alternative to the traditional venues, particularly if the trail were interpretive and conducive to other wildlife-watching activities such as birding.

**Winter Viewing**

During the winter, a supplemental feeding program draws viewers to Jewell Meadows specifically to watch 75-200 elk congregated in meadows. From December to February, the staff offer free, daily, one-hour tours to feed the elk—one group per day, one feeding per day, limit 16 people. Participants are required to speak quietly and to stay in the trailer. The program has become so popular that groups reserve tour spots long in advance. School groups receive a special priority for the tours.

Similar guided tours, without supplemental feeding components, might be considered for Winslow Hill, and potential seasons such as winter should be considered as ways to expand into shoulder season visitation. The fact that Pennsylvania’s winter landscape is a dynamic and spectacular one adds to the potential appeal of this type of activity.

**Hunting**

Elk are not hunted at the Jewell Meadows site, although hunting is allowed outside the boundaries. The elk know the borderline well, and note the difference between a person in camouflage or in street clothes. Camouflage clothing causes the elk to vanish. Once hunting begins with the Pennsylvania herd, it is reasonable to expect high concentrations of elk at the viewing area, since the animals are intelligent and well able to discriminate between safe and unsafe venues. The need to develop guidelines for dealing with elk/human interactions will be heightened by elk behavior during hunting season. During hunting season, the staff and outside enforcement spend considerable time and resources monitoring the boundaries for trespass. Prior to regular boundary patrols, poachers shot a significant number of bulls. Monitoring and clear signage have, however, almost completely eradicated the problem.

Again, hunting falls outside the scope of the nature tourism initiative and is the purview of the Game Commission. However, publicity attendant with the fall hunt will probably attract some degree of poaching, and this in turn could affect viewing opportunities. The Jewell Meadows experience may provide some useful guidelines to commission staff as they coordinate the twin activities of elk watching and hunting. It is also instructive to note that nothing in the Jewell Meadows experience indicates that hunting and elk watching are incompatible when properly managed. To the contrary, hunters have become part of the regular elk-viewing tourist mix.

Roosevelt and Rocky Mountain Elk share similar behavioral traits; management tools at Jewell Meadows should have some application in Pennsylvania. The greatest difference between the two herds lies in the Roosevelt Elk’s tendency to stay in one area year-round, with the exception of younger bulls that strike out on their own in the fall.
Wildlife Crop Damage
This material is provided as a reference for the economic cost of a large elk herd—over 50,000 animals—in terms of crop damage mitigation. Oregon has about 4,000 wildlife damage reports per year, and about 55 percent are from big game. A 1990 survey showed that Oregon spent more than any other western state on crop damage control measures—$1,000,000. The next highest state was Utah, at $600,000. Oregon expenditures were not, however, for compensation. The state has never embraced a compensation scheme for the following reasons:

1. It does not alleviate the problem—landowners are likely to make claims the following year as well.
2. Attorneys must frequently be called in to arbitrate the amount of compensation, raising the cost to the agency and souring relations between landowners and agency personnel.
3. Other wildlife programs must be cut to fund compensation programs.
4. Landowners often refuse to deal with crop damage by granting hunters land access to hunt, and thereby reduce the population of problem animals. Since higher population densities are, to a degree, being funded by compensation dollars which in turn are funded via hunting license fees, agencies are criticized by both of their main constituencies.
5. Hunters become dissatisfied with wildlife agencies because the agencies try to limit compensation by decreasing the population of game animals, even though hunting revenue largely funds agency activities.

Key Points
• Positive elk-viewing experiences depend on elk approaching people in designated areas rather than encouraging people to initiate close contact with the animals.
• Dedicated radio broadcasts for the Winslow Hill area would enhance interpretation, education, and crowd management, particularly if the broadcasts provided updates on congestion, available parking, and other viewing sites.
• Signage can enhance visitor compliance with viewing regulations by careful placement, being of moderate size, and explaining the reasons for the proscribed activity.
• Volunteer involvement throughout the viewing seasons enhances public awareness, enhances visitor compliance with viewing rules, and builds strong local support for elk viewing.
• Trails are ineffective for obtaining prolonged looks at elk, but have some usefulness as an alternative to the mass tourism experience of traditional venues during peak season.
Overview

The Mackinaw State Forest herd is an excellent example of management techniques that integrate hunting with elk watching. More importantly, the success was predicated upon a management plan that addressed the habitat needs for the elk, and the need to integrate elk management with recreational opportunities. Distinct from the nature tourism-based aspects of the plan in Pennsylvania, the recreational opportunities in Michigan’s plan focus primarily on hunting. Nonetheless, elk viewing has become a popular and important part of the tourism mix here, as evidenced by the annual elk festival in late September, and as evidenced by the “elk” brand that local communities have adopted as their primary tourism label.

Elk viewing has become increasingly popular here, especially in September, when numerous visitors park at a designated viewing area to see elk, particularly bulls in the rut. For the first time this fall, visitors will be able to stop in the local Michigan DNR office in Gaylord to pick up a viewing map with information, including general ethics. Otherwise, no interpretation or facilities exist beyond parking areas. To meet the mandate of the forest for low intensity management, managers emphasize self-discovery and dispersed use.

The state plants food crops at the viewing areas to improve both habitat and viewing experiences. Brian Mastenbrook, elk habitat biologist, observes that the elk will leave a viewing area, in spite of food plots, if a viewer or photographer moves in close. He has also watched visitors exert peer pressure to prevent people from approaching the animals.

In addition to driving and parking at elk-viewing sites, horseback riders have taken a keen interest in elk viewing. The horseback user groups are developing their own use plan to provide ethical elk-viewing guidelines for riders. The plan is in response to problems from riders trailing elk and forcing them to move from preferred areas. This approach might be useful in Pennsylvania as a way to promote an off-road elk-viewing experience. The process, too, offers a model for a viewing plan generated by the users, rather than by an agency. Michigan DNR welcomes the effort and works with the group closely.

Key Points

- Food plots at viewing areas only work for enhancement as long as elk watchers don’t pursue the animals.
- Peer pressure can be a successful way to self-enforce viewing ethics.
- Horseback riding offers another elk-viewing experience—a new plan will address responsible viewing for riders.
Oak Creek Wildlife Area, Washington Department of Wildlife, Washington  
Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Coordinator, 360-902-2364  
Michael Malley, Watchable Wildlife Program Manager, 360-902-2377  
John McGowan, Oak Creek Manager, 509-653-2390  

Size: 84,000 acres  
Ownership: Washington Department of Wildlife  
Location: Eastern Washington, 30 miles from Yakima  
Elk population: 2,000-3,000 Rocky Mountain Elk  
Principal viewing seasons: Winter and Spring  

Overview  

Like the famous herd in Jackson, Wyoming, the elk at Oak Creek congregate at feeding stations that replace lost winter range and that keep the elk from straying onto neighboring ranches and orchards.  

Feeding assures reliable winter and spring viewing of large herds with sufficient opportunity to observe elk behavior. By season’s end, however, the site takes on the appearance of a feedlot, greatly diminishing the natural integrity of the viewer’s experience. A 10-foot, 100-mile fence that keeps the elk off private land and roadways, and separates them from viewers further detracts from the aesthetics of the viewing experience. To observe the elk in a natural setting, viewers can scan the dramatic basalt cliffs beyond the feeding area for animals on the move.  

As many as 200,000 people per year stop at Oak Creek to view the elk. Many visitors combine elk viewing with a winter ski trip. In addition, the Washington Department of Wildlife is proposing to add a live video elk cam to provide a web-enabled viewing experience. The wildlife cam program is very popular, according to Chuck Gibilisco. The site receives 6,000 hits per day on the bald eagle cam during nesting season. View [www.wa.gov/wdfw](http://www.wa.gov/wdfw) to see how the cam operates. The website also features activities for kids, related links, and learning experiences.  

The actual Oak Creek site accommodates 70-100 vehicles. The one-way entry and exit has caused some minor traffic accidents. The Washington Department of Wildlife has applied for Dept. of Transportation funds to improve the lot and design a flow-through entry and exit area.  

Once parked, viewers can enter a 1,400 square-foot interpretive center to view elk comfortably through large glass windows, or they can climb up bleachers outside for unobstructed views of the herd. The flush toilets are the only restrooms within a 60-mile area, and a key element of the successful visitation program. According to Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Coordinator, the best blind design incorporates a bay window (the center and two sides at 45-degree angles) with no roof. A variety of slots are located at different heights. Chuck has jpeg photos of bird blinds and is planning to put them on line on Washington’s website by this fall.  

A volunteer program helps to make the interpretive activities successful. Part of a statewide Senior Environmental Corps, Oak Creek volunteers make sure that an expert is on site daily from late December through early spring. The volunteers are all retired natural resource specialists,
and they handle all elements of organization and supervision. Uniforms help draw attention to their role as interpreters and add a degree of authority to the interpretive program.

Interpretive signs for the center are being designed with the help of a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation grant. The signs will draw on visitor interest in elk and then lead them into other species to watch for and appreciate. Golden Eagle, Lewis’s Woodpecker, and Bighorn Sheep are other charismatic animals that occur in the area. The signs are being designed along a journal-type format used by watchable wildlife signs in Colorado state parks. One of the signs focuses on wildlife-viewing ethics, but is not specific to elk.

The orientation sign offers an innovative approach to wildlife viewing that borrows from consumer report tables. Key wildlife species are listed by season. Next to each species circles are filled in completely or partially to denote the visitor’s likelihood of seeing a given species during a 15-minute visit.

In recent years, large numbers of visitors have flooded the backcountry areas in March and April, looking for shed antlers. The Department of Fish and Wildlife recently closed these areas off until May, when the elk migrate to higher elevations. This type of visitor activity is highly disruptive to the elk, and forces them to move away from preferred feeding areas. Pennsylvania’s viewing season/ethics should deal with this potential problem.

In addition to the elk-viewing opportunity, visitors may also view beaver at a wetland. The Washington DNR’s best site has built a walkout area into the marsh that is screened by cattails and phragmites to create a natural blind. Binoculars are needed to observe the beaver coming and going from the lodge, but they are quite visible and getting used to human viewers in the area. There is also interpretive information for viewers stressing the need to be quiet for best viewing.

**Key Points**

- An elk cam at Winslow Hill could be a good viewing tool, particularly during peak seasons.
- An elk website that provides more extensive, real-time, interactive features would increase the effectiveness of education, outreach, and marketing efforts.
- Daily staffing during peak seasons is highly beneficial.
- Large parking areas should have a flow-in, flow-out design. Look into potential matching funds through PennDOT.
- An indoor viewing center is critical to winter viewing, particularly in Pennsylvania. The center should blend in with the site, and should offer interpretive possibilities in addition to elk.
- Elk feeding detracts from the aesthetics of the viewing experience, and although it can be enjoyable for viewers, would intensify current habituation problems at Winslow Hill.
- Flush toilets will be a critical addition to the Pennsylvania viewing areas.
- Uniformed volunteer interpretive specialists add authority to volunteer programs and can help create an atmosphere that encourages viewers to follow elk-viewing ethics and guidelines.
- Guidelines should address disruptive antler hunting behavior.
- Oak Creek enjoys significant popularity in winter, a good indicator that Pennsylvania’s expansion of viewing into the off-season could also be successful.
APPENDIX 4. SINNEMAHONING STATE PARK NATURE TOURISM PORTAL OPPORTUNITIES

**ACTIVITY:** Elk Watching  
**SEASON:** September thru November  
**TIME OF DAY:** Early Morning/ Late Afternoon and Evening  
**LOCATION:** Improved habitat areas in park/ surrounding state forest  
**SERVICE:** Guided Walks/Special photo opportunities/van or auto tours of elk range

**ACTIVITY:** Eagle Watching  
**SEASON:** Year-round. Special opportunities in Early Spring  
**TIME OF DAY:** All day  
**LOCATION:** Lake shore across from main boat launch.  
**SERVICE:**

**ACTIVITY:** Bird Watching  
**SEASON:** Year-round. Special opportunities (waterfowl, warblers) in spring.  
**TIME OF DAY:** All day  
**LOCATION:** Wildlife trail/park/surrounding state forest/lake and creek  
**SERVICE:** Guided walks/ special photo opportunities/equipment/kayak or canoe rental(future possibility, currently, there are no rentals).

**ACTIVITY:** Wildlife Watching  
**SEASON:** Year-round. Special opportunities in spring.  
**TIME OF DAY:** All day, but morning and evening best.  
**LOCATION:** Wildlife trail/park/surrounding state forest/lake and creek  
**SERVICE:** Guided walks/ special photo opportunities/equipment/kayak or canoe rental

**ACTIVITY:** Wetland Walk  
**SEASON:** Year-round  
**TIME OF DAY:** All day  
**LOCATION:** Proposed wetland trails or boardwalks along main wildlife trail.  
**SERVICE:** Guided walk/ special photo opportunities

**ACTIVITY:** Butterfly and Damsel Fly Hikes  
**SEASON:** Late Spring, Summer and Early Fall  
**TIME OF DAY:** All Day  
**LOCATION:**  
**SERVICE:** Guided walks/ special photo opportunities

**ACTIVITY:** Wildflower Walks  
**SEASON:** Spring is best. Some opportunities in summer and fall  
**TIME OF DAY:** All Day  
**LOCATION:** Wildlife trail/park/surrounding state forest/lake and creek
SERVICE: Guided walks/ special photo opportunities

ACTIVITY: Fishing including Fly Fishing
SEASON: Year-round. Special opportunities in Spring on the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning Creek
TIME OF DAY: All day.
LOCATION:
SERVICE:

ACTIVITY: Wildlife and Nature Photography
SEASON: Year-round
TIME OF DAY: All Day
LOCATION: park/ lake and creek/ surrounding state forest
SERVICE: Photography seminars/guided tours/equipment

ACTIVITY: Hunting
SEASON: Spring Gobbler/Fall/small game/deer/bear
TIME OF DAY:
LOCATION: Huntable areas in park/ surrounding state forest
SERVICE:

ACTIVITY: Camping
SEASON: Spring/summer/ fall
TIME OF DAY:
LOCATION: Sinnemahoning State Park Campground
SERVICE:

ACTIVITY: Backpack Camping
SEASON: Spring, summer, fall.
TIME OF DAY: N/A
LOCATION: Surrounding state forest
SERVICE: Information/permits/guided hikes (future possibility)

ACTIVITY: Hiking
SEASON: Spring/summer/fall.
TIME OF DAY:
LOCATION:
SERVICE:

ACTIVITY: Horseback Riding
SEASON: Spring, summer, fall.
TIME OF DAY: All day.
LOCATION: Surrounding state forest.
SERVICE: Information/guided rides/ horse concession (?)
ACTIVITY: Mountain Biking
SEASON: Spring, summer, fall.
TIME OF DAY:
LOCATION: State Park Roads and surrounding state forest roads and permitted trails.
SERVICE: Information/guided rides/bike concession (future possibility?)

ACTIVITY: Canoeing/Kayaking/tubing
SEASON: Spring/summer/fall
TIME OF DAY:
LOCATION: Boat launch/or access point below dam
SERVICE:
## APPENDIX 5. MAJOR POPULATION AREAS

Population in major metropolitan areas in a 6 hour drive from Benezette, PA (see attached map)

*source: 2000 US Census*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>572,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>490,268</td>
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<td>St. Catharines</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>129,170</td>
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<td>Toronto</td>
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<td>2,481,494</td>
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<td>Bridgeport</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>minus Cincinatti</td>
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**Total Population: 46,331,094**