

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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PUBLIC ELK HUNT TO BE HELD ON WILDLIFE REFUGE IN OKLAHOMA

The Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife announced today that it will permit public hunting in December on the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma to reduce the size of the elk herd that is overgrazing its range.

The present elk population of 535 is about 185 more than the refuge habitat will support. Most of this surplus will be trapped and transplanted to other suitable areas. About 60 are expected to be taken by hunting, the only alternative in certain rugged and rocky portions of the refuge where trapping would be impossible.

The proposed public hunt is being arranged by the Bureau and Oklahoma's Department of Wildlife Conservation. The State agency will select specific dates and issue permits.

Last year the State transplanted 287 elk from Wichita Mountains to eastern Oklahoma, with a few sent to Fort Sill.

Some range damage has already occurred. The welfare of the herd will be improved when the range is brought into better balance with the animal population as a result of the public hunt, the Bureau stressed.

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