

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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ELK ARE TRANSPLANTED TO INDIAN RESERVATION IN NEW MEXICO

The Jicarilla Apache Reservation in northern New Mexico, world famous for the numbers of trophy-sized mule deer bucks taken there every year, will become even more attractive to big game hunters because of the transplantation in February of 318 elk to the tribal lands.

The Jicarilla's Game and Fish Department arranged the transfer with two agencies of the Interior Department--National Park Service and Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (BSFW). Another Interior agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, helped in making preliminary arrangements.

From Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota came 214 elk, followed by another 104 from BSFW's National Elk Refuge at Jackson, Wyoming.

BSFW worked closely with the Jicarillas in carrying out the complicated large-scale movement of elk. Other assistance came from South Dakota and Wyoming State wildlife agencies.

A helicopter was used to herd the elk at Wind Cave into corrals where they were tested for disease and loaded into trucks for the lengthy trip to New Mexico.

At National Elk Refuge, home for more than 8,000 wintering elk, the animals were baited into traps. The operation was difficult because unusually warm weather meant that the elk could find plenty of food without being tempted to enter baited pens.

When the elk arrived, the Apaches released them into 20,000 fenced acres of prime habitat, a game park that will accommodate about 500 elk under natural conditions. Antlered game apparently find a perfect combination of food and minerals on the reservation to grow big trophies.

The area borders on Stone Lake, one of the top fishing spots in the West. The Apaches plan a luxury resort hotel at Stone Lake to accommodate the tribe's hunting and fishing guests.

Hunting is conducted under permits issued by the tribe. Revenue from sale of hunting and fishing permits is an important source of income and jobs to the Jicarillas. Goods and services needed by visiting sportsmen also contribute to the tribe's economy.

Future plans of the Jicarilla Apaches call for reintroducing bighorn sheep into their mountainous reservation, which lies astride the continental divide.