

F. Amend 58 Pa. Code § 139.18.

Commentary:

The purpose of Commission's established elk hunt zones is to provide managers with a method of monitoring and modifying harvest pressure across wide geographic areas to match current management goals. In principle, the elk hunt zones are designed to encompass: 1) subpopulations of elk (defined as groups of elk that generally occupy the same geographic area through time); 2) areas of historic and/or present elk-human conflicts; and 3) the greatest percentage of public land available. The Commission's current elk management plan calls for periodic review of the elk hunt zone boundaries. The Commission conducted its last in-depth review and revision of the elk hunt zone boundaries in 2013. Since then, only four minor adjustments have been made to current elk hunt zone boundaries.

In 2025, the Commission used data from GPS-collared elk and landscape characteristics to evaluate elk hunt zones. The Commission is now proposing to amend § 139.18 (relating to elk management area and hunt zones) to update and reorganize the elk management area elk hunt zones with current data. The proposed hunt zones have proven to be a significant improvement over the existing hunt zones. The new elk hunt zones more effectively reflect elk movements and increase the average proportion of public land per zone from 51% to 61%. By design, managers used only named roads and named streams/rivers as boundaries for the proposed hunt zones to eliminate use of ambiguous land features, such as property lines, as boundaries.

CHAPTER 139. SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS

Subchapter A. GENERAL

§ 139.18. Elk management area and hunt zones.

(a) The elk management area is broad geographical range used for management of the Commonwealth's elk population.

(b) Elk hunt zones are those individual and distinct areas within the elk management area in which elk may be hunted according to annual elk allocations.

(b) The division line between two or more hunt zones shall be the center of the highway, road, natural water course or other natural boundary.

(c) The outline map of the elk management area sets forth the elk hunt zones.

(See Elk Hunt Zone Map)

