

W.L. Finley NWR Elk Survey Protocol – as of March 30, 2017

Background: W.L. Finley NWR staff want to learn more about the overall numbers, herd composition, herd locations, and seasonal movements of the Roosevelt elk herd(s) that use the Refuge throughout all/some of the year.

The Goal of this survey, conducted by the Friends of the Willamette Valley NWR Complex, is to provide additional, more-structured elk herd information than current Refuge staffing capacity allows.

Survey Frequency: Our target is to conduct one (1) survey per week, throughout the year. Additional surveys would be beneficial, if volunteers are available.

Survey Timing: Mornings or Evenings are strongly preferred

- Mornings = complete within 2-3 hours after sunrise
- Evenings = start 2-3 hours before sunset
- other times during the day are acceptable, but it is uncommon to see elk out in the fields during the middle of the day

Number of Observers:

- 2 people are strongly recommended
 - especially if trying to count elk in between Observation Stops
- If only 1 person is available, please limit your survey to the Observation Stops

Information to be collected:

Elk: Total elk #'s observed (by age, gender, and bull antler size, if possible); herd locations
Other: Counts and locations of other wildlife (raptors, mammals, etc.); any other notable sightings

Survey Locations: There are 12 Observation Stops (see Map 1, red squares) along 4 separate roads. All of these should be visited during each survey.

1. Finley Refuge Road (gravel, owned by the Refuge)
 - from the Office/Headquarters to the Prairie Overlook
 - includes 5 Observation Stops
2. Bruce Road ** (gravel, owned & regulated by Benton County)
 - all of Bruce Road within the Refuge's boundary
 - includes 4 Observation Stops
3. McFarland Road ** (gravel, owned & regulated by Benton County)
 - along the entire southern-most Refuge Boundary
 - includes 2 Observation Stops
 - also look for elk on private property south of McFarland Road
4. Bellfountain Road (paved, 55 MPH; owned & regulated by Benton County)
 - a short stretch along the western boundary of the Elk Pasture and Bald Top units
 - includes 1 Observation Stop

** Indicates high-priority areas (these are areas infrequently visited by Refuge staff)

Survey Observation Stops can be visited in any order, as long as all are completed during each survey. We recommend following the order on the data sheet, because Stops 1-6 (McFarland Road and Bruce Road) are the highest priority areas for survey coverage, and should be visited first.

The Observation Stops were chosen because most of the Refuge's open fields can be seen from these sites. Very few elk will be observed away from these viewable fields.

Conducting the Survey:

- Fill out the survey's descriptive information at the top of the data sheet, including the Start Time and Weather conditions
- Start surveying at your first Observation Stop
 - you can visit observation stops in any order
 - if possible, it is best to make the Refuge Office (Stop #12) your final stop, because you can turn your data sheets in there
- Scan all visible fields and forest edges for elk
 - binoculars will be helpful to see elk at distant locations
- If elk are observed, use binoculars (or a spotting scope) to count all of the elk you can see
 - as best as possible, tally the number of elk by:
 - age (adult vs. calf)
 - gender (cow vs. bull)
 - bull antler sizes (# of points on each antler)
 - if antlers are not symmetrical, record the # of points from the largest antler (e.g., a 4x3 bull would be recorded in the '4 x 4' row)
 - enter the elk counts and the field(s) where they were seen on the data sheet in the columns corresponding to each Observation Stop
 - if more than one group is observed, please record separate tallies/counts in the Notes section on the back of the datasheet
 - combine cows and calves (they're sometimes hard to tell apart) on the data sheet, but record the # of calves, too, if you're able to discern them
 - record a "0" in the 'TOTAL # ELK' field for each Observation Stop if no elk were observed there
 - Also record species names and counts of other noteworthy sightings in the rows/columns at the bottom of the data sheet and/or the Notes section on the back of the data sheet
- Drive to the next Observation Stop
 - if a 2nd person is available as an observer, that person can survey the fields adjacent to the road while driving between Observation Stops
 - if elk are observed while driving, **DO NOT** pull off the driving surface of the road or block traffic to count them
 - drive to the nearest **safe**, and legal, pull-out before trying to count & record elk numbers
- Repeat elk counts at each Observation Stop
- When all the observation stops have been surveyed, record the End Time and Weather conditions, and write down any general comments on the back of the data sheets

Precautions:

- **DRIVE SAFELY !!!**
 - vehicle drivers should **not** be trying to count elk while driving
 - be very careful while driving along Bellfountain Road
 - only use field-entrance pullouts to survey Elk Pasture and Bald Top
 - observe the 20 MPH Refuge speed limit
 - do not back up traffic
 - if driving slowly, please pull over and allow any following traffic to pass
 - **ONLY** use established pull-outs, and do not pull vehicles off the driving surface of any roads
- **DO NOT TRESPASS** on private property
 - this includes **not** turning around in private driveways, blocking field gates, etc.
- **DO NOT ENTER** areas of the Refuge that are closed to the public

Data Management:

- Record each survey visit (i.e., each trip) on separate data sheet(s)
- Please make sure that all data sheets are completely legible
- Keep data sheets in a safe, protected location
 - do not take completed data sheets back into the field
- **Completed data sheets should be dropped off in the Friends' information/brochure box, which is located outside the entrance to the Wild Goose Nature Store at the W.L. Finley NWR office (at Observation Stop #12)**

Equipment:

- Vehicle (with clean windows!)
- Binoculars
- Spotting Scope (if available)
- Protocol
- Maps
- Data sheets
- Pencils
- Clipboard
- Camera

THANK YOU for your interest and help with these surveys!!

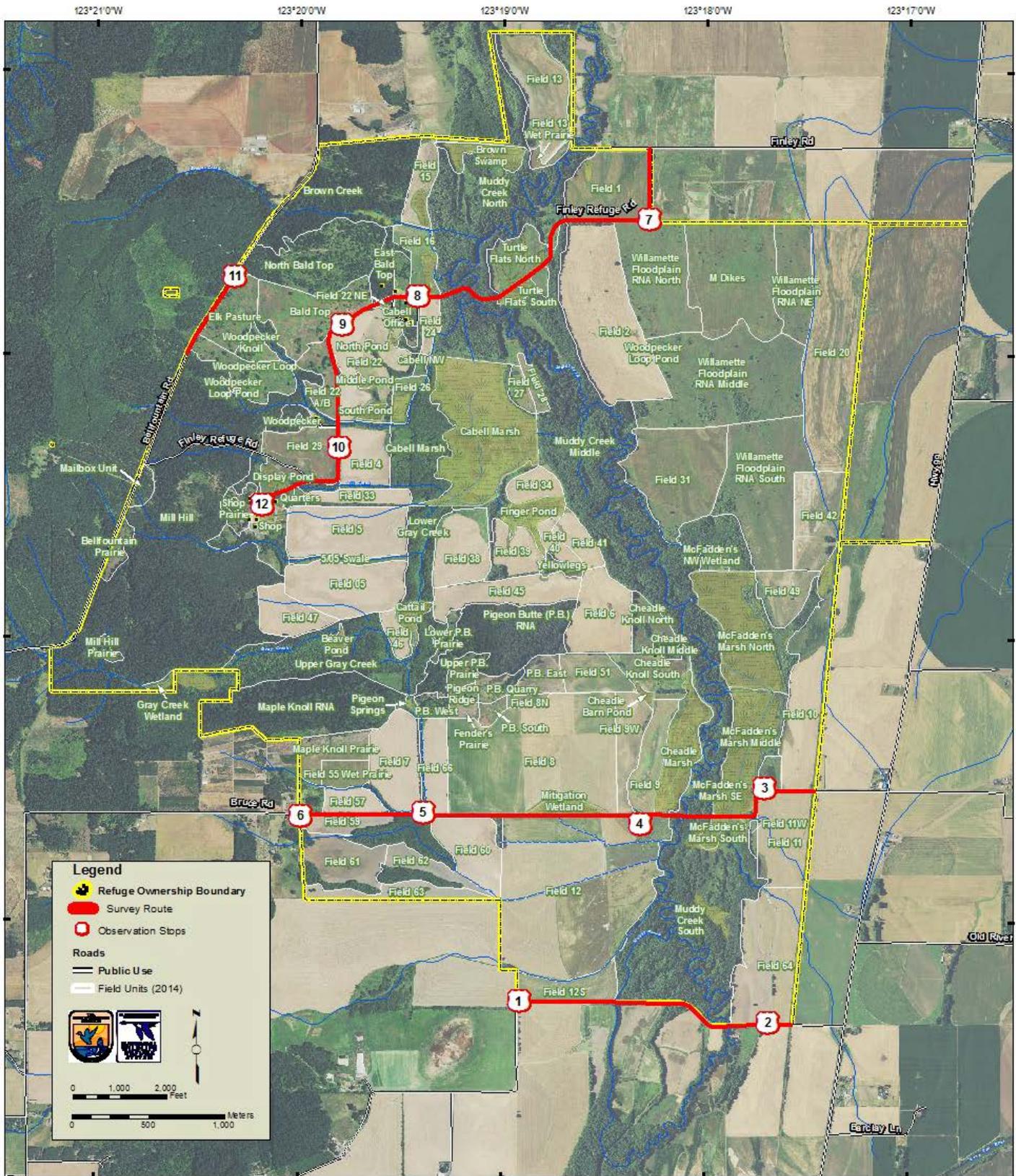
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William L. Finley NWR

Elk Survey Observation Stops (starting 2016)



William L. Finley NWR Elk Survey

Date: _____ (YYYY / MM / DD) Start / End Times: Start _____ : _____ AM/PM End _____ : _____ AM/PM Page: ____ of ____

Observer(s): _____

Weather: **Start** - Sky: clear / pt cloudy / cloudy / fog / precip Wind Dir: N NE E SE S SW W NW Wind Speed: calm / 1-10mph / >10 mph Temperature (°F): _____
End - Sky: clear / pt cloudy / cloudy / fog / precip Wind Dir: N NE E SE S SW W NW Wind Speed: calm / 1-10mph / >10 mph Temperature (°F): _____

Counts of Elk (by gender and age) at each Observation Stop

		Stop 1	Stop 2	Stop 3	Stop 4	Stop 5	Stop 6	Stop 7	Stop 8	Stop 9	Stop 10	Stop 11	Stop 12
Time		__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__	__:__
Field(s) where elk were observed													
Bull Antler Size	> 5 x 5												
	5 x 5												
	4 x 4												
	3 x 3												
	2 x 2												
	Spike												
Cows + Calves													
Calves only (if discernable)													
TOTAL # ELK													

Counts of Other Wildlife, etc. at each Observation Stop

Raptors:													
Mammals:													
Miscellaneous:													

Please write any extra details, notes, comments, etc. on the back of this page

Notes / Comments:

Stop 1	
Stop 2	
Stop 3	
Stop 4	
Stop 5	
Stop 6	
Stop 7	
Stop 8	
Stop 9	
Stop 10	
Stop 11	
Stop 12	
Other Locations	