

Dear Mr. Strohmeier,

Please add this Testimony to the Hearing on HF1423.

Testimony of Dell Eriksson,

Before the
Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy
Meeting, February 14, 2023
Regarding HF1423 (Kozlowsk)

Please do not support this Legislation.

On the face of it, the Bill appears to be of some benefit to Minnesota's wild environment.

However, it fails on a number of accounts:

1. There are currently about 80 Elk in Minnesota; a small number compared with pre-development times. HF1423 does not increase the number nor health of Elk in Minnesota.
2. The Elk are being removed from an existing Elk herd in Minnesota. This will reduce their numbers.
3. HF1423 will make Elk more vulnerable to dying off.
4. The genetic variability of Minnesota's Elk will continue to decline, again making Minnesota Elk more vulnerable to die off.

5. The current Elk ecosystem will further lack integrity, causing Elk and other life forms to suffer.

6. HF1423 also reduces or eliminates the ability of sportsmen to hunt Elk; and others such as animal lovers and photographers are denied as well.

7. It reduces revenues and income to the State and local tourist areas.

8. Placing Minnesota Elk on Tribal Lands implies all kinds of restrictions on Minnesotan's use of public lands and species.

9. Minnesota sportsmen and wildlife enthusiasts must be freely allowed to use the Elk on Tribal Lands as if it were normal public land.

10. \$4,000,000 is a lot of money; money that is being used for non-public purposes.

11. \$4,000,000 is a lot of money that could greatly improve the existing Elk herd; and could expand its traditional Minnesota territory.

12. \$4,000,000 is a lot of money, money that could be used for important ecosystem preservation, for example, acquire an SNA.

12. There are thriving Elk herds in Montana, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, and elsewhere. Environmental science says that any Elk now in Minnesota must be replaced in the original Minnesota location by out-of-state

Elk. And and those moved must be equally combined in the moved to area with Elk from other states.

Please do not support HF1423.

Re.: Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Meeting, February 14, 2023 Regarding HF1423 (Kozlowski) Elk reintroduction funding provided, and money appropriated.

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/bill.php?b=House&f=HF1423&ssn=0&y=2023>

HF1423

A bill for an act relating to natural resources; appropriating money for elk reintroduction.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. FOND DU LAC BAND ELK REINTRODUCTION; APPROPRIATION.

\$4,000,000 in fiscal year 2024 is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner of natural resources for a grant to the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa to expand Minnesota's wild elk population and range. Consideration must be given to moving elk from existing herds in northwest Minnesota to the area of the Fond du Lac State Forest

and the Fond du Lac Reservation in Carlton and southern St. Louis Counties. The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa's elk reintroduction efforts must undergo thorough planning with the Department of Natural Resources to develop necessary capture and handling protocols, including protocols related to cervid disease management, and to produce postrelease state and Tribal elk comanagement plans. This is a onetime appropriation.



CONSERVATION MINNESOTA

February 14, 2023

Chair Hansen and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee,

We write today to ask for your support for HF 1423 (Kozlowski), providing funding to reintroduce elk to northeast Minnesota. As an organization, our mission is to protect the people and the places that Minnesotans love; and restoring the ecological, cultural, and recreational integrity of our state is central to this goal.

HF 1423 (Kozlowski) appropriates \$4,000,000 from the general fund to the Commissioner of Natural Resources for a grant to the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in order to expand Minnesota's wild elk population and range into northeast Minnesota. This appropriation follows the extensive, multi-year development of an elk reintroduction proposal by the Fond du Lac Band and enables the Band to begin implementing a robust process of interagency and stakeholder planning; public review; CWD surveillance; and eventual capture, relocation, and monitoring of elk. This project represents a long overdue responsibility of our state to restore and conserve a vital species, and it's time for the legislature to commit to its advancement.

The reintroduction of elk into northeast Minnesota reflects the core mission of the Department of Natural Resources and the environmental policy of the State of Minnesota at-large. The restoration, conservation, and management of environmental quality and state natural resources extends directly toward our responsibility for the return of this species. The continued conservation of Minnesota's environment relies on our commitment to reverse the ecologically destructive elimination of key species from our natural spaces. Doing so not only helps to repair our environment, but also helps to reconstruct the human-nature relationship in Minnesota, restoring a culturally significant species for Tribal communities, strengthening recreational opportunities for hunters, and allowing Minnesotans of all ages to witness and appreciate these amazing animals in their native environment.

The reintroduction effort put forth by the Fond du Lac Band is a thorough, practical proposal founded in years of local and comparative research and bolstered by successful precedent from past reintroduction projects in northwest Minnesota and across the Midwest. The process proposed by the Band allows for a reasonable, phased approach toward reintroduction, including considerations for chronic wasting disease, habitat adaptation, and agricultural impact reduction. And the project's implementation timeline delays capture and relocation until the completion of adequate stakeholder and agency planning. We strongly believe that this effort represents an inclusive and responsible pathway toward getting this done – and getting it done right.

As the committee considers this legislation, we want to thank the Legislature and the DNR for their longstanding commitment to elk reintroduction and management. For decades, the State has helped to reestablish this key species in northwest Minnesota; and now, it has a unique opportunity to continue this tradition and to help restore elk within the northeast. We urge you to support HF 1423 (Kozlowski), to help fund the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa's restoration efforts, and to conserve the integrity of Minnesota's environment for current and future generations.

Sincerely,

Nels Paulsen, Policy Director

+1 (608) 469-5299

nels@conservationminnesota.org

David Pelikan, Policy Associate

+1 (262) 685-7265

david@conservationminnesota.org



W.J. McCABE (DULUTH) CHAPTER IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

P. O. Box 3063. • DULUTH, MN 55803

February 13, 2023

To: Representative Rick Hansen - House Environment and Natural Resources Committee Chair

Subject: HF 1423 - A bill for an act relating to natural resources; appropriating money for elk reintroduction

Dear NR Committee Chairman Hansen:

The W. J. McCabe Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America fully supports HF 1423 that would appropriate \$4M to finalize procedures with the DNR that would lead to moving Minnesota elk from herds in northwestern Minnesota to the lands on and near the Fond du Lac Reservation.

Since the initial announcement in late 2015 of the Fond du Lac Band's desire to reintroduce elk to an area(s) near their reservation, the Izaak Walton League (Ikes) have closely followed the detailed planning process. Agreement on topics such as capture and holding methods and studying for CWD at the capture site as well, as the area near the release site, will ensure that this reintroduction is done in a sound, scientific way.

The Ikes continue to be hopeful that the State will see this for what it is, an opportunity to restore a native species once found in this part of Minnesota, an opportunity to build on a growing eco-tourism economy, as well as providing both tribal members and other state hunters an opportunity to see and eventually harvest elk here in northeastern Minnesota.

HF 1423 would provide the necessary funding to begin implementing the introduction plan. By funding this reintroduction of moving elk from northwestern parts of the state to lands near the Fond du Lac Reservation, this project can begin in earnest.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. If you have any questions or need any assistance from the Ikes to move this matter forward, please contact McCabe Chapter Conservation Chair Craig Sterle at csterle777@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Julie O'Leary

W. J. McCabe (Duluth) Chapter President
Izaak Walton League of America

Cc: Kelly Straka - Wildlife Section Manager
David Olfelt, Director Fish and Wildlife Division