

OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Kentucky's elk population should be considered an exploding star for the following reasons:

1. The elk herd is growing rapidly and within 6 to 7 years Kentucky will have an elk population of about 10,000 elk, the largest elk herd east of the Rocky Mountains.
2. Elk are not as wary and tend to stay out in the open more than white-tailed deer or black bears that are the other charismatic mega fauna of the region. This makes elk a primary and extremely valuable component as part of a watchable wildlife business.
3. Elk are particularly valuable as watchable wildlife during the fall rutting season. Mature bulls form harems of cows and defend that harem from other bulls. Fascinating behavior to watch includes sparring, fighting and bugling which is the unique sound a bull makes during the breeding season.
4. The abundance of reclaimed coal lands is being developed into suitable and abundant land for grazing habitat. The reclamation of mine lands with vegetation that creates and restores high quality wildlife habitat has increased not only elk herds but also provided benefits to other wildlife species (deer, quail, turkey, and songbirds).
5. The lack of stressors and limiting factors to the Kentucky Elk herd should continue to produce a healthy elk herd.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Support and ensure the future of economic development based on elk and wildlife recreation by implementing a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan for the region to ensure the long-term sustainability of the wildlife resource. The conservation plan that was completed by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) and its partners in 2005 should be the guiding document for elk and wildlife conservation to support economic development.

TASK 1.1 Increase public land holdings where appropriate around established core habitat areas on the Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF) through federal acquisition from willing sellers. *See Chapter 4 for more information on the basis for Tasks 1.1-1.4.*

TASK 1.2 Where there are currently no extensive public land holdings, develop a program to permanently protect private lands identified through the habitat and access mapping efforts with willing corporate landowners while protecting access to mineral potential.

Action 1.2a: Develop outdoor recreation access agreements with landowners and Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) to increase hunting and other recreation opportunities. Currently, landowners that enroll over 5,000 acres into a voluntary cooperative agreement with KDFWR receive one elk tag per 5,000 acres enrolled.

Action 1.2b: Task 1.2 has proven to be a good incentive for some landowners but leaves out those with smaller parcels of land. Develop a public access program to advance the goal of Task 1.2 and expand it to provide similar incentives for landowners of smaller parcels of land. This will help insure “good will” among the local populace toward the elk conservation efforts, long-term sustainability and provide positive relationships for expanding sport hunting and elk viewing opportunities in the region.

Action 1.2c: Develop funding sources and state tax credits as tools to leverage participation.

Action 1.2d: Work with Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board (KHLCF) and develop other state funding sources for land acquisition.

- TASK 1.3** Establish a conservation buyer program to permanently protect key parcels or facilitate bridge transactions as appropriate.
- TASK 1.4** KDFWR and RMEF should continue interaction with both large and small land owners and leased properties with regard to habitat enhancements, thereby continuing to improve habitat for all wildlife species.
- TASK 1.5** Raise the capital necessary for the RMEF to launch a venture to become a technical service provider to the coal mining industry to ensure that high quality wildlife habitat is restored to mine lands after mining takes place. This effort will benefit from support and cooperation from Kentucky state government, and the federal Office of Surface Mining as well as the U.S. Department of Energy. Political support for this effort from the counties will be greatly beneficial in making this happen.
- TASK 1.6** Both state and federal legislators and agencies need to be kept informed of the importance and advantages to both the wildlife and to the continued growth of the tourism industry through both wildlife viewing and hunting if proper mine reclamation practices continue to be implemented and improved.
- TASK 1.7** A tremendous opportunity for upland game bird hunting exists in this region where coal land has been reclaimed. Statewide quail numbers are down. However, quail numbers are strong in the eastern coalfields around large surface mines. Where habitat restoration and improvements are being made by RMEF and KDFWR, quail numbers should grow even more. *See Chapter 5 for more on this subject.*
- **RMEF, KDFWR and other agencies should continue to partner on this worthwhile initiative.**
- TASK 1.8** Deer have also increased in numbers, actually doubling in numbers in several counties. In the case of Perry County, the deer herd has tripled in population since 1996. *See Chapter 5 for more on this subject.* This is yet another form of consumptive wildlife use the area should capitalize on.

TASK 1.9 Mine reclamation is considered to some to be a destruction of the land and yet most in the eastern coalfields of Kentucky believe it has actually served as an excellent opportunity to “put back the earth in such a way as to make it better for both wildlife and those who live there”. **This appreciation for what is happening to the land needs to be conveyed to both visitors and others outside the area through publications, presentations and on-site tours to reclaimed coal lands.**

While elk and wildlife may be the “hook” that attracts visitors to the region, there is a great opportunity for mine sites to become an “attraction”. Experience with current elk tour operators have found the visitors are as interested in, if not more interested in, the mine reclamation process.

- **Interpretive signs at some of the sites showing “before”, “during” and “after” photos would be an excellent way to deliver the message.**
- **There is strong potential for partnerships between land and coal companies, the communities, RMEF, KDFWR and other agencies.**

TASK 1.10 A tremendous opportunity for upland game bird hunting exists in this region where coal land has been reclaimed. Statewide quail numbers are down. However, habitat improvements for elk is bringing back quail and other grassland birds in strong number in the eastern coalfields. *See Chapter 5 for more on this.*

- **RMEF, KDFWR and other agencies should continue to partner on this worthwhile initiative.**

RECOMMENDATION 2:

On the potential economic impact of elk and other wildlife-related tourism based on experiences from other regions of the United States.

TASK 2.1 **Follow the model utilized in Benezette Pennsylvania where they are establishing multiple Elk Information and Interpretation Centers for elk viewing and interpretation to visitors in partnership with RMEF.** The centers should not only be utilized as an interpretive center for visitors but for outreach and education with employees reaching out to schools and interest groups. Wildlife interpretive centers like the Salato Center in Frankfort or the numerous ones managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation in the state of Missouri lend themselves to education and become tourist attractions in their own right. The two elk centers in Arkansas and the 7,500 square foot, 7 million dollar facility being built in Benezette are excellent examples of educational centers becoming major tourism draws for a region.

- **An ideal location for the primary elk and wildlife viewing center would be on the Beech Fork property located just off Highway 80 in Knott County near the Perry County line. This property is easily accessible and strategically located between the three state resort parks currently offering elk tours and near the site where a private business is offering elk tours on horse back.**

TASK 2.2 Currently KDFWR utilizes Conservation Education Program Leaders (CEPL) to travel and serve as educators and “wildlife evangelists” in the schools of Kentucky. **This type of outreach should be included in Elk Information and Interpretation Centers.**

- Another new initiative in Kentucky begun in 2007 is the Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery Education Center managed by U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Wolf Creek Education Center, located below the Lake Cumberland Dam, is the first center of its kind using a similar formula of outreach and education with the primary wildlife champion being trout.

KDFWR and the RMEF could work to provide greater education on elk in our schools will produce more informed, and in the end, better stewards of the land in which the elk live. Other recently established “charismatic mega fauna” such as black bears should be part of the greater message that all wildlife have an intrinsic value and should be managed/conserved for future generations.

TASK 2.3 Elk have had a significant impact on attracting visitors to the Land Between the Lakes in Western Kentucky/Tennessee and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina. Development of Elk viewing opportunities and appropriate signage will result in increased elk & wildlife viewing visitation. This was verified in the Smoky Mountain, Cataloochee area. *See Chapter 8 for details.* At this time, a visitor could come into the eastern coalfields of Kentucky and never realize that elk were in the area. **There needs to be a concerted awareness campaign started about the elk in eastern Kentucky and the locations where one might see them.**

- a. For having nearly 6,500 elk, more elk than any state east of the Rockies, there is very little evidence of this to one considering coming to the area nor evidence once they actually arrive. This is changing. Knott County has been designated the “Elk Capital of Kentucky” and Clay County has declared themselves the “gateway” and are installing signs recognizing this. Martin County has added a wayside exhibit explaining the habitat of elk at one of their primary viewing areas, and through the guidance of SEKTDA, the entire region now calls themselves “Elk Country”. **The area should continue in this direction.** *See Chapter 11 for more on this subject and Chapter 10 for possibilities in other counties.*
- b. With the help of SEKTDA, the Kentucky Department of Tourism (KDT), Kentucky Tourism Council (KTC), Kentucky Department of Transportation (KDOT), Kentucky Department of Parks, Kentucky Tourism Council (KTC) and other tourism entities, the county and city governments throughout the region need to focus on branding their communities with elk.
 - As construction or repair projects are planned for government buildings and facilities, incorporate elk figures and artwork into the design.

- Work through local chambers of commerce to have businesses begin considering branding themselves with elk images and names.
 - Have elk artwork and images displayed in city and county buildings and local restaurants, hotels, and other businesses.
- c. A proposal needs to be submitted to the Kentucky Department of Transportation and Kentucky Department of Tourism Interagency asking that special awareness and directional signage be placed on major road systems throughout the 16-county region.
- d. A proposal should also be submitted to the Kentucky Transportation and Tourism Interagency Committee asking that “brown signs” reading, “Welcome to Kentucky, home of the largest elk herd east of the Rocky Mountains” be placed at the state line on all interstates entering Kentucky. These would be similar signs to the ones now in place stating Kentucky is the “home of the 2008 Ryder Cup and the 2010 Equestrian games”.

TASK 2.4 **Make access to viewing convenient to visitors.** In Wyoming, opportunities for elk viewing were studied in the Jackson Hole area where elk are fed during the winter in easily observed fields. This occurs when elk migrate to lower altitudes. If feeding is reduced, less elk would come to the area which would have a direct effect on the number of visitors coming to the area. This, in turn, would result in a significant loss to the economy. *See Chapter 8 for more on this study.* City and county governments and chambers of commerce need to reach out to land and mining companies to gain access agreements to their properties for elk and wildlife viewing tourist attractions. NOTE: Feeding wildlife is illegal in Kentucky from March 1st through July 31st. Any plan to make access more convenient will have to rely on habitat improvements (not necessarily “food plots”, although those are certainly an option).

TASK 2.5 **The region needs to develop elk and wildlife interpretive centers similar in concept to the centers in Arkansas.** The Buffalo River National Recreation Area in NW Arkansas has an elk herd of approximately 500 animals that have been in the area since 1981. The upper river region areas have become tourism destinations for wildlife viewing.. Canoeing opportunities often lead to elk sightings which enhances the experience. The Ponca Elk center has become an interpretive destination for elk enthusiasts, tourists, and school groups. Although their visitation numbers are not as large as predicted in the proposed visitor center for Benazette Pennsylvania, they have attracted visitors from every state of the Union and an impressive number from countries around the world. *See Chapter 8 for more on this subject.*

TASK 2.6 In a study conducted in 1994 to estimate the value of elk in Blue Mountain of Oregon & Washington it was determined that the average elk hunter spent \$23 per day averaging \$10 million annually. In 2006, the average elk hunter in Kentucky spent \$308.96 on food, lodging, transportation, guide service and land leasing

during the entire hunt. **It is recommended that an exit survey of 2007 hunters be conducted and the survey instrument adjusted to extrapolate daily expenditures.**

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Types of tourism and economic development that would be feasible and consistent with activity dependent on elk and other wildlife.

TASK 3.1 **Development of an Elk Information and Interpretation Center** (see TASK 2.1)

TASK 3.2 Work with the RMEF to develop new RMEF chapters within the 16-county elk restoration zone. Currently, only Hazard has an active chapter of the RMEF. The primary function of an RMEF chapter is to increase awareness and support for the conservation work of the RMEF. One way this is accomplished is through an annual fundraising banquet and auction to raise money.

RMEF chapters also become involved in conservation work and outreach to their communities. RMEF volunteers become ambassadors not only for the RMEF, but for elk and wildlife as well. While the annual fundraising banquet can create some economic activity in the community, a RMEF chapter spawns a force of volunteers that can help spread the word about elk, and help implement other aspects of this plan. We believe that Pikeville, Prestonsburg, Harlan and Middlesboro are the most likely places to start new RMEF chapters. Assistance is needed to find volunteers willing to take on the responsibility to start new RMEF chapters in these communities.

TASK 3.3 Install standardized Kentucky information Brown signs directing visitors to all elk viewing sites and work with KDOT and KDT to reduce the “process time” currently required with the highway department to put these signs in place.

TASK 3.4 The ATV trail system (already established in West Virginia and portions of eastern Kentucky) is happening. Kentucky has one of only five ATV training centers in the U.S. and the only one that has immediate access to a trails system. What is imperative is that an environmental education component be added to the training to educate riders on proper etiquette while in nature.

- **Implement the TREAD LIGHTLY* program as part of the basic ATV training course and work with Honda, Kawasaki and other ATV companies to offer special incentives for ATV riders to take the course. There is a Tread Lightly! 101 Online Course that teaches one the basics on how to minimize one’s impact in the outdoors. See TASK 5.9 for other environmental education programs and initiatives.**

**Tread Lightly! is a nonprofit organization offering a variety of tools to help arm recreationists and the industries that serve them with essential outdoor ethics. Their mission is to proactively protect recreation access and opportunities in the outdoors through education and stewardship initiatives. For more information, visit their website at www.treadlightly.org*

- **Work with the Kentucky Recreational Trails Authority and sKYwards to help create a greater awareness of the ATV trail system while at the same time, educating people on the proper way to ride for both safety and for environmental preservation and protection.**

TASK 3.5 A network of horseback riding trail systems is being established in Knott County and other SEKTDA counties such as Leslie, Perry and Clay with numerous horseback riding clubs being started and growing in membership. Working with Kentucky Horse Council (KHC) and Kentucky Equine Education Project (KEEP), similar environmental education and awareness programs such as those listed in TASK 3.4 and TASK 5.9 should be incorporated into the missions of the saddle clubs and rider groups in the area and classes offered to better understand it. Done correctly, ATV riding business ventures and horseback riding ventures can be compatible with elk and wildlife viewing and recreation business ventures. However, done poorly, serious conflicts can arise.

TASK 3.6 **Develop a network of lodging options for visitors.** This could include bed & breakfast establishments, lodges, campgrounds (primitive to RV's in design), and cabins/motels. These facilities, developed through the private sector, are needed throughout Eastern Kentucky and especially in the elk counties.

- a. Work with Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Small Business Association (SBA) and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide housing incentives.**
- b. Work with SEKTDA, KDT, KTC, Kentucky Department of Parks, chambers and tourist commissions to help market existing establishments and new ones as they are developed.**

RECOMMENDATION 4:

General infrastructure needs for developing tourism based on elk and other wildlife.

TASK 4.1 SEKTDA in partnership with KDOT has established one of the most useful tools found anywhere in the United States in which anyone can call the #511 number and a live operator is available to answer questions and provide detailed information on tourism offering throughout the SEKTDA region.

- **Continue to support and promote use of this service.**

TASK 4.2 **Need to add additional “cell towers” within the 16-county region, not only to use the #511 service noted above but for safety reasons,** Currently locations throughout the region do not have cell reception. This is especially true in wildlife viewing locations which tend to be in more remote areas. Improved wireless telephone communication in SE Kentucky is a must!

TASK 4.3 ConnectKentucky is aggressively working with local government to advance the deployment of high-speed internet service across the Commonwealth through the

Governor's Prescription For Innovation. Technology, whether expanded cell phone service, remote viewing stations, or high speed internet needs to become a priority. **This effort needs to be continued and expedited.**

TASK 4.4 **Continued improvement to waste disposal systems throughout the area.** Alternative sewer options need to be developed which may include constructed sanitary wetlands where feasible.

TASK 4.5 As noted in TASK 3.6, increased lodging options are needed. With increased lodging, come the necessary infrastructure such as sewer, trash disposal, water, electricity and transportation. PRIDE* has been the driving force in improving conditions and concerns in Eastern Kentucky related to open dumping and solid waste disposal. **This program needs to keep getting funded.**

**Personal Responsibility in a Desired Environment (PRIDE) - A Congressman Hal Rogers' initiative.*

TASK 4.6 **Currently the transportation network is novel to the area with its curvy, snake-like mountain roads and is perceived as a tourism attraction to some visitors such as motorcycle riders and roadsters. This should be marketed as an asset.** Short of major reconstruction to the region, the existing road system should be maintained with an emphasis on widening of extremely narrow county roads and adding pull-offs for visitors to stop and view nature.

TASK 4.7 Swinging bridges in the area providing access from state or county roads across streams are an ongoing concern and major maintenance problem for some counties. For example, Breathitt County has as many as 800 bridges, many of which had been maintained by the county. Many of these bridges are to single-family dwellings and cemetery plots. **But swinging bridges are unique to the area and could become another tourism "asset" as one travels the back roads seeking wildlife viewing opportunities.**

Note: The abundance of small streams requires a "bridge strategy" or low water crossing to be addressed for the future whereby standard improvements and upgrades can be completed in a timely manner but that is not something that will be addressed in this document, only noted.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Communication to the public what the Elk Country of Kentucky has to offer.

TASK 5.1 SEKTDA has created the Elk Country Region which includes the counties of Clay, Leslie, Perry, Breathitt, Knott, and Letcher. **Developing the Elk Country Corridor is an excellent idea which could, in turn, apply for scenic byway designation thus making it qualify for some federal funds for directional signage, interpretive wayside exhibits and marketing materials.**

A suggestion might be to start at the recently declared "Gateway to Elk Country" on Hal Roger's Parkway in Clay County heading towards Knott County "Elk

Capital of Kentucky". Coming from the other direction, the route could start at Jenny Wiley State Park which offers elk tours but few elk actually reside within the county but definitely the route one would take to get to Knott County. The toll booth building at the intersection of Hwy 80 & 66 could be used as a "Gateway Information Center" for those traveling from the west into "Elk Country". *See Chapter 11 for photos of the toll booth and other ideas and suggestions.* Knott County "Elk Capital of Kentucky" has an excellent location for an Elk Education Center (similar to the facility being built in Benezette Pennsylvania) which is strategically located between the two "gateways".

- TASK 5.2** Web page development of areas provide insight into an area, potentially reaching millions of people at a minimal cost. Yet many of the communities have little or no information on their websites in reference to wildlife nor tourism in general. SEKTDA has developed an excellent website at <http://www.tourseky.com/> as well as one of the best companion marketing pieces on the market today called Tourseky.com Southern & Eastern Kentucky Visitor Guide.
- **Communities need to work with SEKTDA and the KDT to make sure the information being provided to visitors is up-to-date and accurate.**
 - **Communities need to improve their own websites and keep them updated.**
 - **Communities should also link their websites to www.tourseky.com, to the state tourism website <http://kentuckytourism.com/> and the Kentucky Tourism Council 's website at <http://tourky.com/>**
- TASK 5.3** There is need for better signage to let visitor know they are in a unique location that offers unique wildlife viewing opportunities not available anywhere else in the United States. *See Chapter 11 for more on this subject.* There also needs to be directional signs guiding visitors to the viewing areas as well as interpretive signs once they get there. Also noted in TASK 2.3c
- TASK 5.4** An entrepreneurial business could benefit from local workshops providing information on loans, liability, taxes and joint marketing opportunities. These could be offered through a joint initiative of SEKTDA, SBA, KDT, KTC and the regional area development districts.
- TASK 5.5** Customer service training for local tourism auxiliary businesses such as gas stations and restaurants is needed in the area. SEKTDA offers an excellent "Company is Coming" program on customer service which need to be deployed in the region.
- TASK 5.6** Working with SEKTDA, KDT and with the state's matching funds program, more advertising needs to take place both within the area and outside the region focused on elk and other wildlife viewing opportunities.

- Radio, television, brochures, maps, signs, newspapers, and magazines should all be utilized to “get the word” out.
- Travel writers should be contacted. The area has something unique to write about including the story of rebirth of wildlife in reclaimed coal mine areas, the reclaimed coal mines themselves, the elk – ten times more than anywhere else east of the Mississippi, The region should capitalize on this.
- Detailed maps of scenic drives, wildlife and elk viewing areas, and nature walks and hikes need to be developed and disseminated to visitors coming into the area at the welcome centers, tourist information sites, chambers, city hall, restaurants, hotels, gas stations and other locations where a tourist might stop.

TASK 5.7 Interestingly and somewhat ironically, there is an opportunity to incorporate coal mine tours and opportunities to visit surface mines into this plan and vision. Staff from Jenny Wiley and Pine Mountain State Resort Parks, and staff from KDFWR and the RMEF that lead elk tours have noticed that people on elk viewing tours seem to enjoy seeing and learning about large surface mines, and the reclamation that takes place after mining is complete. Most visitors from outside southeastern Kentucky have never seen a surface mine. They have only heard and read about them, and are usually very surprised at how nice reclaimed mines can look. There is a tremendous opportunity to partners with the mining industry to incorporate educational materials and mining and mine reclamation into wildlife ventures.

TASK 5.8 Elk Information and Interpretative Centers in Arkansas, LBL area in Western Kentucky and in Benezette Pennsylvania provide information and educate the traveling public not only on elk but on the uniqueness of the region and other sites and offerings within their area. **Information and interpretive centers need to be developed in strategic locations along the elk country corridor providing information on elk and other wildlife, viewing opportunities within the 16-county elk restoration zone as well as other eco-tourism activities in the SEKTDA region** The centers could also serve as a clearinghouse for other tourism offerings within the area and a location to set up lodging arrangements, find out about local events and happenings and find out more about the elk tours, reclaimed coal site tours, nature trails, scenic driving tours, the Daniel Boone Forest while providing similar services as a tourism information center.

- **Information could also be provided on bike trails, horse trails, ATV trails, and hiking trails.**
- **Working with SEKTDA and their marketing team, unique tours could be set up and marketed such as a feud tour. The Hatfield & McCoy feud was the most well known but there were many others such as in “Bloody” Breathitt and the feuds in Clay County.**

- **Other possible tours include salt mine tours, fall foliage driving tours in Autumn and the redbud & dogwood tours in the Spring.**
- **Partner with DBNF and other state and federal agencies to provide information centers and sites throughout the region as noted.**

TASK 5.9 **Incorporate Project WILD and other environmental education programs into the K-12 curriculum for all school districts within the region.** Visit the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) website at <http://eelink.net/pages/Site+Map+New> for a list of the programs and potential grant and funding partners.

**Project WILD is one of the most widely-used conservation and environmental education programs among educators of students in kindergarten through high school. It is based on the premise that young people and educators have a vital interest in learning about our natural world. A national network of State Wildlife Agency Sponsors ensures that Project WILD is available nationwide --training educators in the many facets of the program. Emphasizing wildlife because of its intrinsic value, Project WILD addresses the need for human beings to develop as responsible citizens of our planet. Visit their website www.projectwild.org
Please Note: Project WILD also has a special program offered WILD About Elk that may be an excellent program to implement, not only to K-12 but also to civic groups etc. to create a greater understanding of elk.*

TASK 5.10 **Television programming associated with elk and wildlife viewing should be emphasized in Kentucky television programs like Kentucky Afield. However, the media outreach should not be limited to Kentucky.** Rather, national audience programming for both consumptive users of wildlife (hunting shows) and nonconsumptive users of wildlife (travel and tourism destination shows) should be targeted for programs extolling the virtues of travel in the SEKTDA region.

TASK 5.11 **Working with SEKTDA, five to seven minute videos should be developed and placed in all the welcome centers** featuring the elk and other wildlife viewing opportunities, the uniqueness and beauty of the reclaimed coal mine area, and the many other outdoor recreational opportunities the region has to offer. **Shorter videos could be developed for commercial and public broadcasting.**

TASK 5.12 **Work with SEKTDA to establish a volunteer organization similar to the “Elk Bugle Corps” implemented in the Smokies who are a group of volunteers who dedicate their time to assisting and educating visitors about the elk herd.** *See Chapter 8 for more on this subject.*

RECOMMENDATION 6:

How to incorporate the Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF) into this economic development vision for the SEKTDA region related to elk and other wildlife specifically focusing on the Redbird Ranger District due to its strategic position in the heart of Elk Country.

- TASK 6.1** Because the DBNF operates on a multiple use policy, tourism and recreation are theoretically on an even plane with timber harvest. All tourism efforts related to wildlife viewing and hunting should benefit the region both directly (i.e. hunting on national forest land) and indirectly (i.e. visitation to the elk region often necessitates being within or passing through the Daniel Boone National Forest). Economic development within the SEKTDA region will not necessarily be limited to the Elk counties. Rather, it should affect much of the SEKTDA area as more visitors come to view elk and find other things to do and see while they are in the area.
- TASK 6.2** If the Redbird Ranger District of the DBNF has an opportunity to acquire significant lands that will provide elk habitat and be accessible to the public, the counties should help the Redbird District acquire those funds by asking our Congressional delegation in Washington, DC to help secure the LWCF funding. The counties should also be asking their state general assembly members and the Governor's office to help the Redbird secure federal LWCF dollars by lobbying their congressman.
- TASK 6.3** By partnering with all of DBNF at their ranger stations, literature about elk could be available as well as the many other tourism assets of the region (like whitewater boating, fishing, camping, etc.).
- TASK 6.4** **Developing both Elk Information and Interpretation Centers combined with a Daniel Boone National Forest information center, provides an intriguing opportunity for partnership with everyone benefiting.**
- TASK 6.5** Many of the economic development possibilities previously mentioned will benefit the Redbird Ranger District of the DBNF as the area should not be viewed as separate from the SEKTDA area but rather as tendrils intertwining throughout the region.
- TASK 6.6** **The communities should develop both nature and elk viewing driving tours and nature trails in partnership with DBNF** and in most cases, will need to provide the majority of the funding or find other sources because DBNF does not have the resources nor the staff to construct and maintain trails, picnic areas, viewing sites, pull-offs and auxiliary facilities above and beyond what they are doing now. In fact, their resources are extremely stretched at this time.

The City of Manchester is currently in the process of developing both a wildlife driving loop through the heart of the Redbird Ranger District. *The city is also developing a white tail deer loop in the western quadrant of the county but it does not go through DBNF.*

- The city and the county should partner with Redbird Ranger District of DBNF incorporating the Big Double Creek Picnic Area into the route which offers restroom facilities, picnic areas and hiking/nature trails; the restroom facility

and parking area currently maintained by DBNF strategically located just past Hwy 2000 along the proposed route, possibly develop an elk viewing area on Gilberts Creek Road just off Old Red Bird Creek Road. Adding interpretive signs at this site is represented. *See Chapter 11 for more on this initiative.*

TASK 6.7 The communities should partner with DBNF to use the Redbird Ranger Station as a location to disseminate interpretive information, view a video on the driving tours, the area and the region.

TASK 6.8 The communities in and around the Redbird Ranger District of DBNF should form a core of volunteers to provide assistance in road, trail, and sign maintenance, fund raising for park development, guided tours and more.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Survey of 2007 Elk Hunters
2. More in-depth survey of each community to determine wildlife viewing opportunities and develop a plan for each to implement with specific goals and outcomes.
3. Development of a marketing plan to best market the wildlife viewing areas within the region.
4. A more in-depth case study of Benezette including the proposed elk interpretive center and how their plan might be adapted to fit a site in the elk capital area.
5. A comparative analysis between Pennsylvania's initiative and Kentucky's.