

STATUS OF ELK PROJECT – M.A.P. HABITAT™ PROGRAM™⁵

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The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) has been dedicated to improvement of the status of elk populations and elk habitat protection and enhancement since 1984. An important step in achieving this mission has been the thorough understanding of elk distribution, population trends and habitat distribution and condition. In 1997, the RMEF initiated the Status of Elk Project with the specific goal of gathering the most accurate population status and trend information on elk for the period of 1975-1995, from United States and Canadian elk experts. In addition, in 1997 the RMEF started the collection of occupied elk habitat information. This project is referred to and copyright under the name M.A.P. (Measure and Prioritize) Habitat™ and was sponsored by the Foundation and the USDA Forest Service. Habitat distribution information was mapped in meetings held with state, tribal, Federal, corporate and independent biologists or elk experts. Currently occupied winter range, crucial winter range, summer range, crucial summer range, parturition and movement areas were all mapped using consistent conventions, and was based on expert opinion rather than a rule based model. In addition to mapping occupied habitats, experts assigned “limiting factors” which were used to qualify the effectiveness of each habitat polygon. The RMEF generously makes the M.A.P. Habitat™ available for conservation purposes.