Production and Survival of Elk Calves in Response to Habitat Improvement in Northwest Montana[TWS]

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The purpose of this study was to determine elk pregnancy rates and calf survival from habitat enhancement. Habitat mitigation was completed in the area on elk winter range in the spring of 1996. I followed approximately 25 collared cow elk and their calves per year over a 2-year period to gather baseline data on pregnancy rates and calf survival. Pregnancy was determined through fecal analysis, and calf survival through observations and capture. Forty-year harvest trends show a possible decline in elk population in the Southfork of the Flathead River around Firefighter Mountain. We speculate that there are lower pregnancy rates in the Southfork as compared to other Rocky Mountain ecosystems. This may be because of alternate year breeding, summer or winter habitat quality, weather conditions. Over the two years of my study, we did see a difference in calf production and survival, however, weather conditions may have been a factor.