Del Norte Triplicate

OPINION

Opinion: Bow Attacks on Elk in Bertsch Tract

August 29, 2025



Did you know that elk are now being hunted with bows on a tiny patch of land in the center of the Bertsch-Oceanview area? A patch completely surrounded by residential neighborhoods, houses, roads, businesses, busy thoroughfares, and children's school bus stops.

I learned this the hard way. One recent Saturday afternoon, I was enjoying my day off watching a little college football when my wife pointed out a man walking through our neighbor's yard carrying a rifle. I ran to the window and saw that it was a game warden. We then saw a large elk in obvious distress, tangled in some foliage.

The warden then shot the elk with his 30-06 rifle right outside our window. After the warden shot the injured animal, I waved him over and asked him why this had happened. He told me the elk had been wounded. I asked if it was a traffic accident; he said no—it was from a bow hunt next door. A bow hunt? I was flabbergasted. How could anyone imagine that bow hunting elk on such a small parcel of land would not lead to this kind of incident?

Then to top it off, we had to listen to the animal being butchered for the next four hours with something that sounded like an electric chainsaw. The game warden had apparently instructed the hunter to move his four-wheeler between us and the butchering so we wouldn't be able to see it happening .

This is not to mention that this elk suffered for almost two and a half hours before the warden even showed up to kill it.

The issue here is that bow hunting in such a small, hemmed-in parcel almost guarantees wounded animals will run into nearby neighborhoods and properties. The hunters are not allowed to leave the hunting area and chase the animals onto private property.

Imagine what we have here: a 1,000-pound animal with a head full of antlers, grievously wounded, running rampant through the neighborhood. Does this sound like a good idea to you?

In California law, the definition of a public nuisance is anything that interferes with the quiet enjoyment of your property; this seems to qualify to me. Even the warden admitted to me

this constituted a public nuisance.

We learned this hunt is part of the SHARE program, a statewide access program administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. While they can authorize a hunt on a specific location, DFWD cannot authorize large, wounded animals running through neighborhoods.

We asked the property owners to stop allowing hunting, but they refused. We asked the Department of Fish and Wildlife to rescind the authorization, and after months of delay, it refused as well.

I want to be clear: I am not making a statement about hunting in general or wildlife management. I am only opposing bow hunting elk in this specific location, for the reasons mentioned.

This poses a real public safety and quality-of-life concern here in Del Norte County. And no one benefits except these wealthy hunters who come in from out of town and pay thousands to kill our elk.

This is also completely unnecessary. This one small herd, approximately 25 individuals, is known as the Elk Creek herd. I have been watching and counting them for about six years now, and they

have not had a population explosion. The elk, as we all know, are gentle, skittish creatures. Yes, they may nibble on our flowers from time to time, but this is hardly a reason to eradicate them.

A few more points: I can walk up to these elk and get within 20 to 25 feet of them. They have never been hunted on this piece of land, and they are quite domesticated. So I would ask—how much sportsmanship is in this type of “hunt”?

The public has virtually no input on the SHARE hunt program. The public is never told where these hunting parcels have been authorized, and only in very loose terms when the hunt is going to occur. The SHARE hunt program is very opaque and largely unaccountable to the public.

I think everyone in the Bertsch-Oceanview area needs to be on the lookout for these types of incidents. The hunting season runs from August 16 through the middle of December. It’s possible that we could be seeing a lot more of these problems. Contact the Board of Supervisors and the Department of Fish and Wildlife And let’s stop hunting elk in the middle of the Bertsch- Oceanview view district!