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CDFW Claims of ‘Conservation’ vs. The Inhumane Death of an Elk

By Dave Grayson November 19, 2026



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Recently, on a pitch-black evening around 6:30 PM, I was sitting inside my home enjoying a college football game when my wife rushed in to tell me there were men walking around in our yard.

It turned out my neighbor had spotted people prowling around his yard with flashlights and had called 911 to report trespassers. Deputies arrived and pulled into my driveway. I walked out into the dark saying, "Hey, what’s going on out here?" One of them replied, "Oh, we're just looking for a wounded elk." But think about that for a second: they weren't questioning trespassing suspects. They were hunting down a wounded big game animal in the middle of a residential area.

Here is what had actually taken place: A hunter on the adjacent Hambro property had botched a shot on a Roosevelt elk using a bow and arrow.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) permits hunting on this minuscule parcel surrounded by homes, businesses, and a casino in the Bertsch-Oceanview subdivision. By my calculation, only 14 acres are actually available for hunting once you factor in the mandatory safety setbacks. Rifles aren't permitted here because it is too close to residences—a clear admission by regulators that the parcel is dangerous. But forcing archery-only on this tiny plot creates a different disaster. Bow-shot elk do not drop in their tracks; they run.

After being hit, the suffering, bleeding animal bolted off the hunting parcel, and the hunters—armed with their bows and arrows—trespassed onto me and my neighbor’s property in the dark to track the elk.

When addressing state wildlife officials about hunting on the Hambro parcel, they have been routinely dismissive, claiming that these types of incidents are rare. However, my direct observation indicates that approximately 50% of the elk hit on the Hambro property result in this type of severe outcome.

This brings us to the tragic climax of that night.

The elk made it to within about 20 yards of Highway 101 before it finally collapsed and died behind the nice hotels across from the harbor district. A wounded 700-pound animal dying yards from a high-speed highway poses an immense public safety hazard. Yet, despite all the chaos, CDFW and the hunters turned their backs—leaving a magnificent animal to rot in a disgraceful, entirely preventable end.

Furthermore, permitting high-risk archery hunts on a postage-stamp parcel squeezed between our homes is a public safety disaster waiting to happen. If a commercial slaughterhouse inflicted this kind of lingering, agonizing death on an animal and left it to rot yards from a major highway, someone would go to prison. Yet when it happens under a state permit, the agencies and hunters walk away scot-free and pretend the danger doesn't exist.

Our community deserves transparency, public safety, and accountability. It is time for CDFW leadership and county officials to close this fringe parcel to hunting before a botched hunt leads to a far worse tragedy.

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