

THE NEED TO SAVE EPLUS



FOR A FRACTIONAL INCREASE IN THE ODDS OF DRAWING A TROPHY ELK TAG, CERTAIN SPORTSMEN'S GROUPS ARE TRYING TO DISMANTLE THE EPLUS PROGRAM. WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPACT OF DISMANTLING EPLUS? HERE ARE JUST A FEW TESTIMONIES FROM STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROGRAM...

- *"If I didn't have permits to sell I would have to sell my cattle due to three years of drought. We need these permits!"*
- *"My eldest son harvested his first elk this year because of an EPLUS tag. He is determined to continue this sport for as long as he can."*
- *"My wife and I are retired and live on a fixed income. The EPLUS tag allows us to harvest an elk to put meat in our freezer for the year."*
- *"Three years ago I donated my mature bull tag to a veteran. He and his dad were able to hunt together and got a real nice bull the morning of the first day of the season."*



- *"As a rancher, we depend on EPLUS to put food on our table and promote elk herds on our private and surrounding forest land."*
- *"The program allows me to dedicate my land to wildlife habitat. [EPLUS is] the best program to provide habitat for elk."*
- *"On average, elk eat 3% of their body weight per day, so 50 elk, weighing on average 800 lbs, consume 12,000 lb of forage per day or 36,000 lbs of forage per month. 36,000 lbs of forage is enough to sustain 33 head of cattle in the same period of time. In the absence of elk, we could increase the number of cattle on our property. Instead, we lease additional pasture. Elk periodically knock down fences while moving across property lines. Broken fences lead to unaccounted cattle, and ultimately lost income. We are not making a profit from the EPLUS program, it provides part of the budget for operating expenses and is crucial for the family ranching operation."*
- *"I think the EPLUS program has done a good job at helping manage the elk population in unit 4. I do not want my property to be overrun by elk."*
- *"I have a small parcel that qualifies for the EPLUS program. Each year I get a permit. I donate the permit to disabled veterans so they can hunt."*

- *"I think our New Mexico herd is too large. Elk eat the best grass in my pastures every year. It is hard for landowners to get or increase the number of EPLUS tags they get to use. I know that if the EPLUS program goes away, landowners' only solution to the elk problem would be to kill elk. I hope it never comes to that solution."*
- *"The EPLUS program enables me, as a landowner (through the sale of tags) to be compensated for the damages to my property by elk. The hunters that purchase my tags contribute to our local economy."*
- *"We basically raise the elk, feed them and water them. It's nice to get some compensation for the damage that they do."*

- *"I run a small ranch containing 200 acres on the state road 112 south of Tiera Amarilla, a crossing for elk and deer which ruins my fences but I only get one elk permit. It is not enough to keep with all maintenance and all grass lost due to elk and deer."*



- *"Every year from early spring to the late fall elk graze our fields, usually from dusk to dawn. Some years the loss from grazing is significant. In 2019 we suffered a loss of just under 300 bales to our annual hay harvest, cost to us \$3000. When we receive mature bull tag we are able to recover some of the cost by selling our tag to local outfitters or when we get a cow tag we put meat in the freezer."*
- *"My husband is retired and we rely heavily on this food to get us through the year on fixed incomes. We have also helped other families by donating the tag so other families are able to hunt and put food on their tables."*
- *"The EPLUS program is one if the best options for locals to hunt their home districts and the landowners do a great job of keeping the land in great condition for the elk populations. I strongly believe EPLUS is great the way it is."*
- *"The benefit of our EPLUS tags are very important to our family. With the rising cost of meat in today's market the venison we are able to harvest is an extremely valuable resource that gets us through tough times."*
- *"Landowners feed, water, salt, and maintain fences that house the "state's" elk. We are unable to run livestock to capacity with these elk. If they do away with the EPLUS system, what will the state do to compensate for the damages?"*