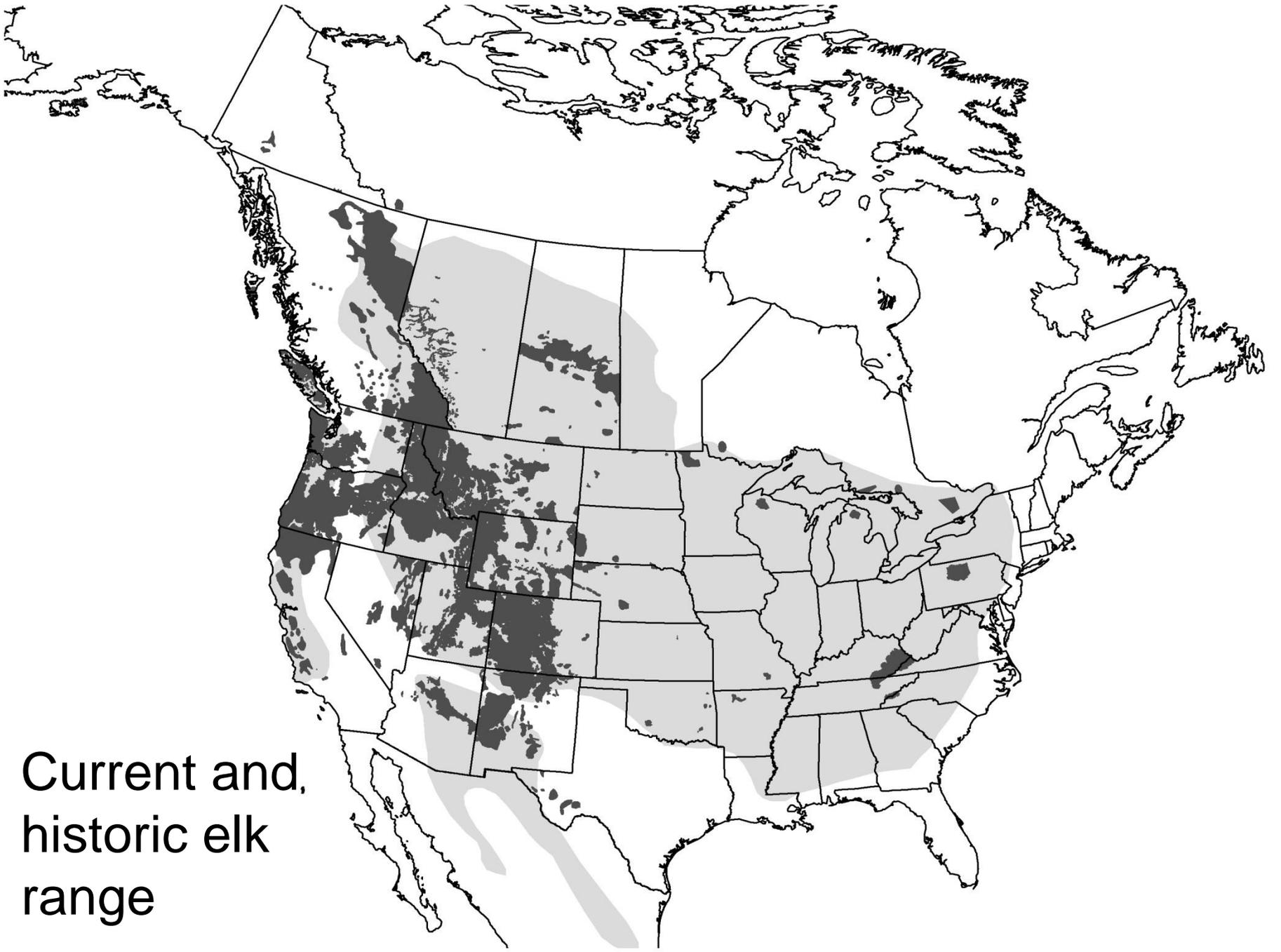


Omaskkoozooog

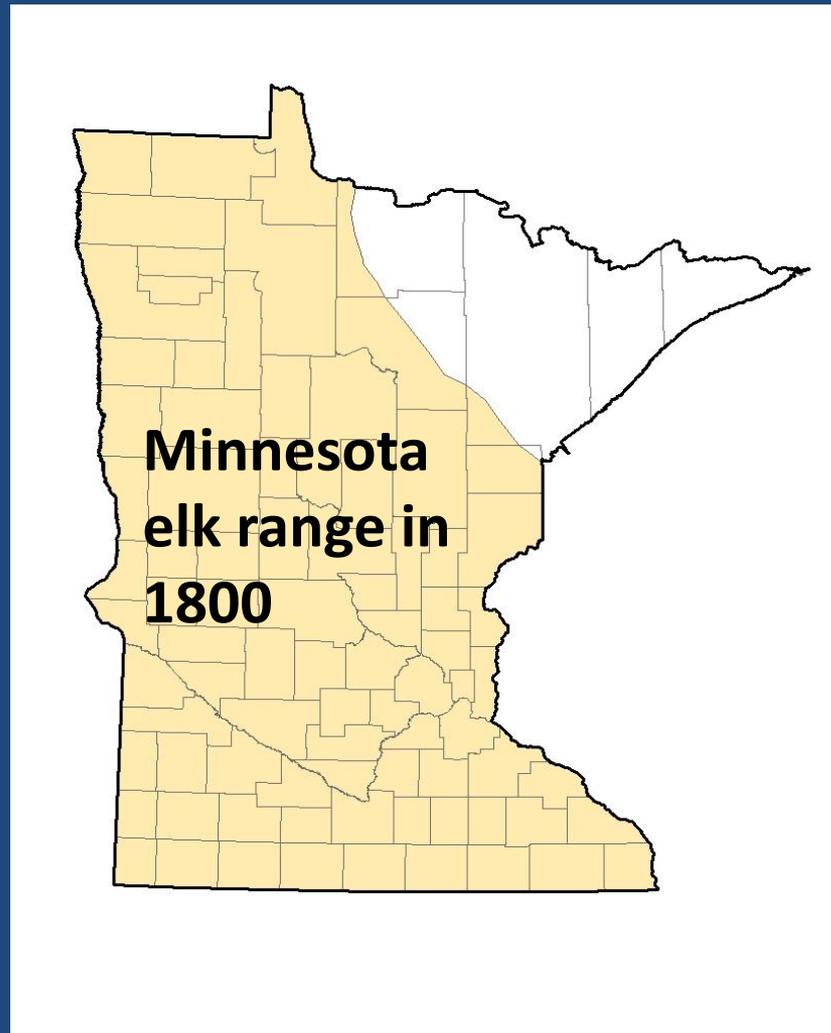


Returning a native. Building
towards the future.





Current and,
historic elk
range



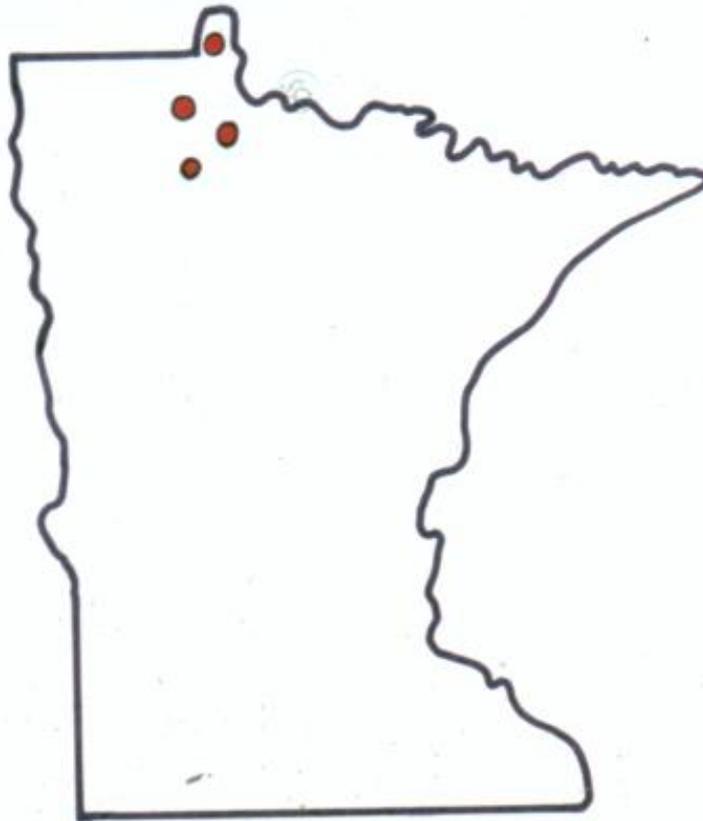
Originally widespread across the prairie and prairie-hardwood forest transition zone
Omashkoozoog translates as 'prairie moose'

Historical
distribution in
Ontario



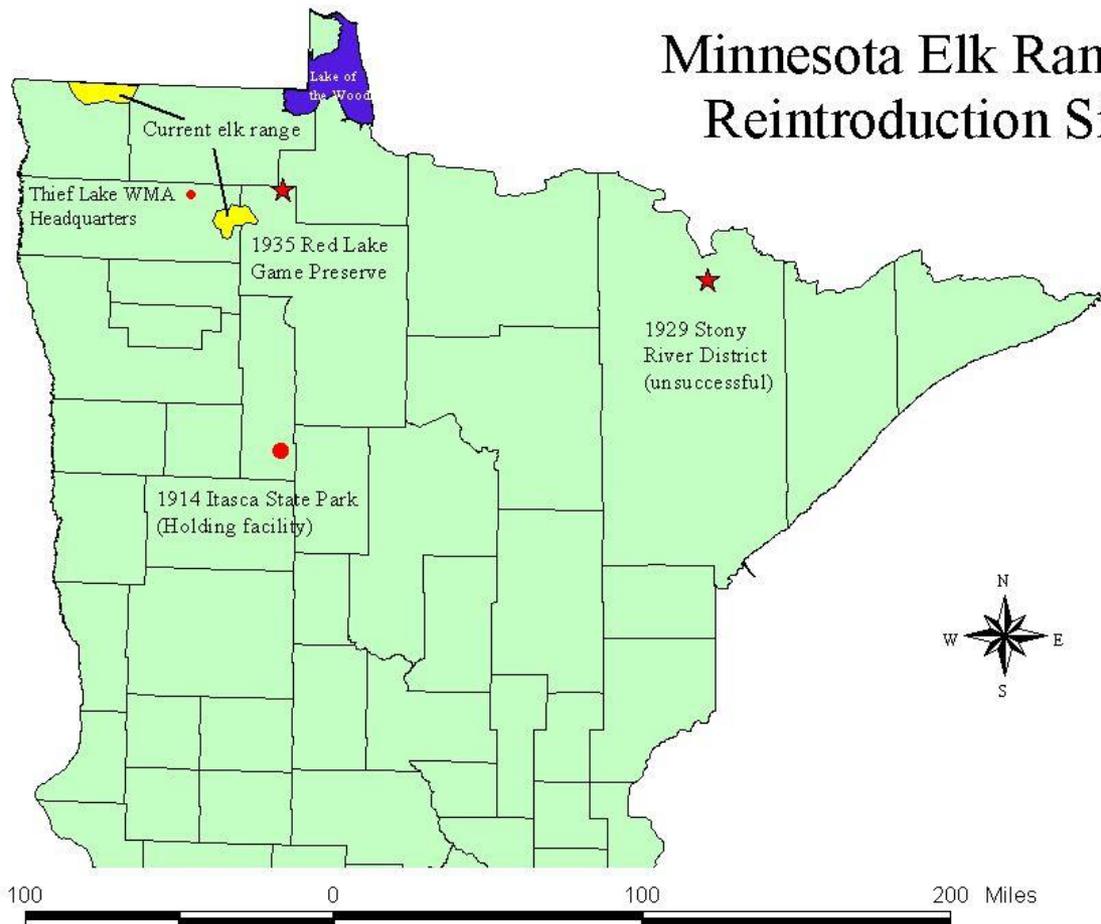


1900-32 ELK RANGE



- 1890 elk sightings in Aitkin and Itasca Counties
- 1900 restricted to small pops northeast of Thief River Falls
- 1932 last verified sighting of native elk in the Northwest Angle

Minnesota Elk Range & Reintroduction Sites

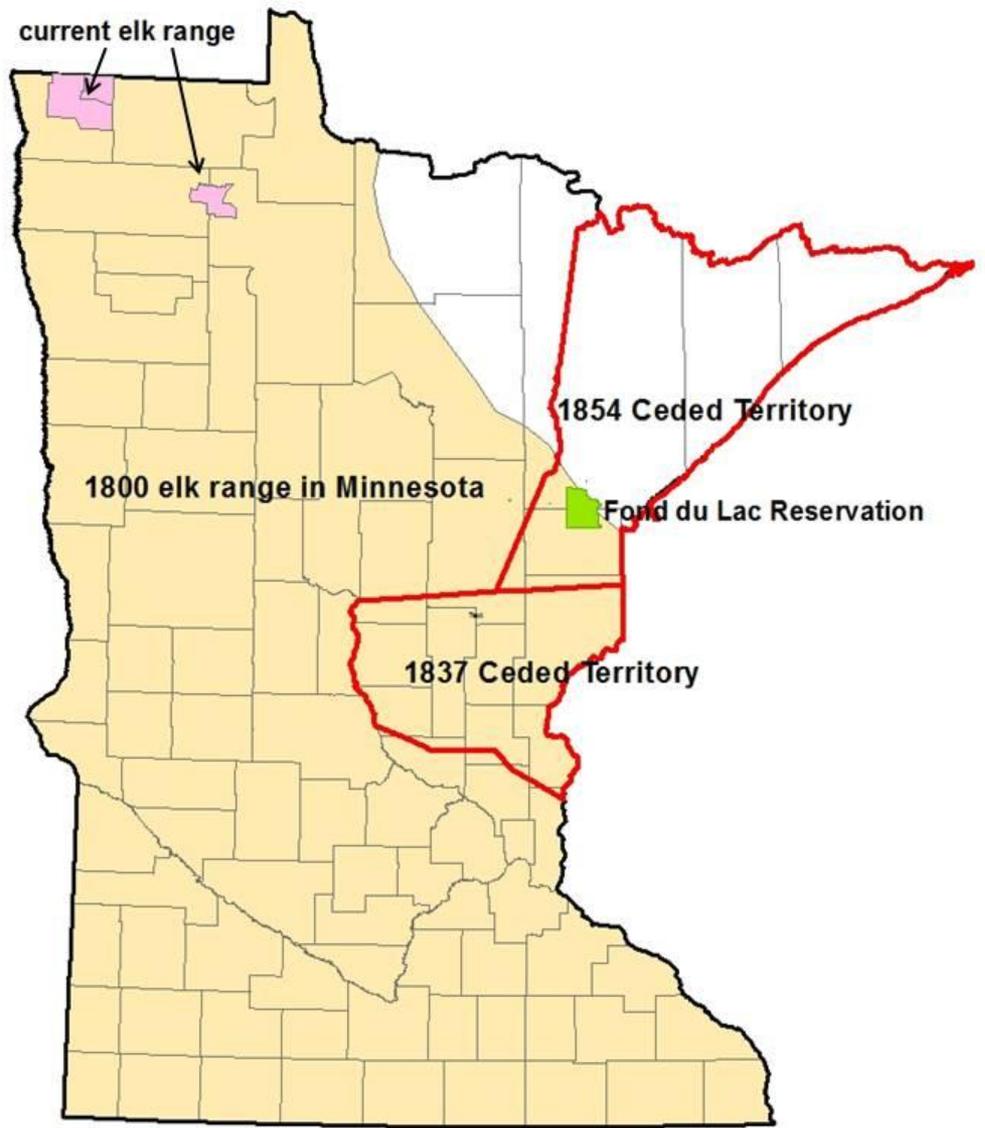


- 1914-5 elk brought to Itasca State Park
- 1929 transplant to Stony River Ranger District
- 1935 transplant to Red Lake Game Preserve
- 1980s elk move in from Manitoba
- 2015 population estimate of 131 elk

Northwest Minnesota elk management

- Landscape with lots of agriculture
- Elk like agriculture
- Standing crop, stored forage and fence damage
- Low landowner tolerance
- Habitat mngmt to entice elk away from problem areas
- Managing for limited elk populations
- Current elk plan under revision





Why restore elk populations?

- Elk were native to eastern Minnesota
- Diversify and restore traditional wildlife heritage
- Diversify ecosystems
- Elk will survive climate change



Eastern elk restorations

Pennsylvania - 1913
Minnesota – 1914
Michigan – 1918
Arkansas – 1981
Wisconsin – 1995
Kentucky – 1997
Ontario – 1998
Tennessee – 2000
N. Carolina/GSMNP – 2001
Missouri – 2011
Virginia – 2012
West Virginia - ?



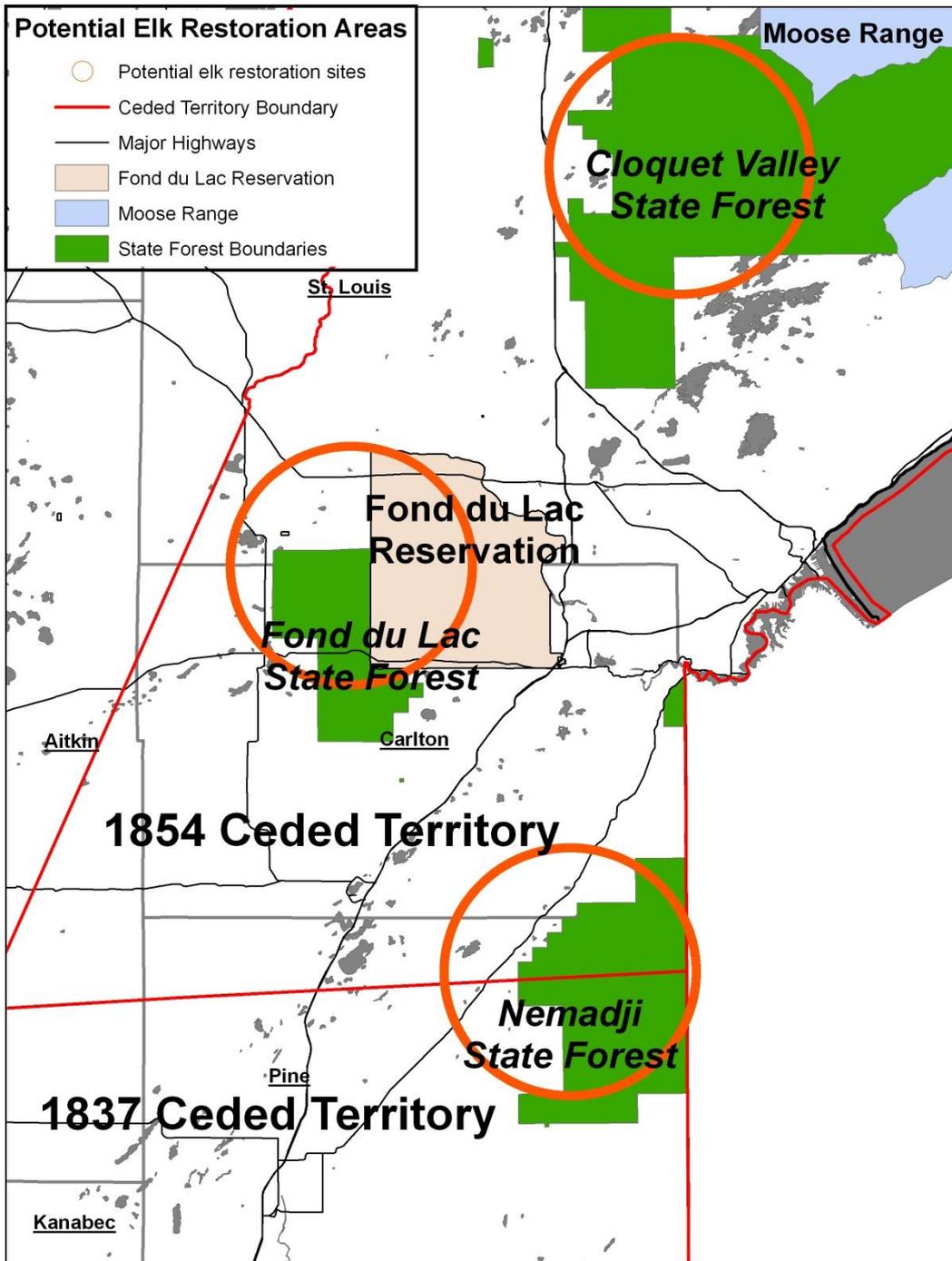
Suitable Elk Habitat is.....

- Determined by local govt., public and landowner acceptance
- Within the 1837 or 1854 Ceded Territories
- Large blocks of public land
- Dominated by forest with minimal agriculture
- Abundant young forest habitat
- Outside primary moose range



Potential Elk Restoration Areas

-  Potential elk restoration sites
-  Ceded Territory Boundary
-  Major Highways
-  Fond du Lac Reservation
-  Moose Range
-  State Forest Boundaries



Interactions with white-tailed deer

- Not much eastern elk / whitetail research
- No reports of conflicts from NW MN or other eastern states
- Elk are susceptible to brainworm but not as much as moose? and are doing well in eastern states with lots of whitetails



Benefits of elk restoration

- Elk were native to eastern Minnesota
- Diversify and restore traditional wildlife heritage
- Diversify ecosystems
- Elk will survive climate change
- Benefits to other early succession species
- Potential for outside funding for forest mmgnt
- Lessard-Sams
- RMEF
- Elk tourism
- Elk hunting



Challenges for elk restoration

- Gaining public support
- DNR backing
- Addressing potential agricultural damage and other concerns
- Raising funds
- Finding a disease free elk herd and a willing donor
- Changes to land use and management
- Changes to political and agency leadership
- Predation
- Disease
- Having patience



First step...do feasibility studies

- Do we have suitable habitat – where, how much of it, age and cover type, how will it be managed?
- Public opinion – does the public support elk restoration? What are the concerns?
- Partner with University of Minnesota and RMEF
- Seeking funding from ENRTF (\$325,000)
- 3-4 year process to complete



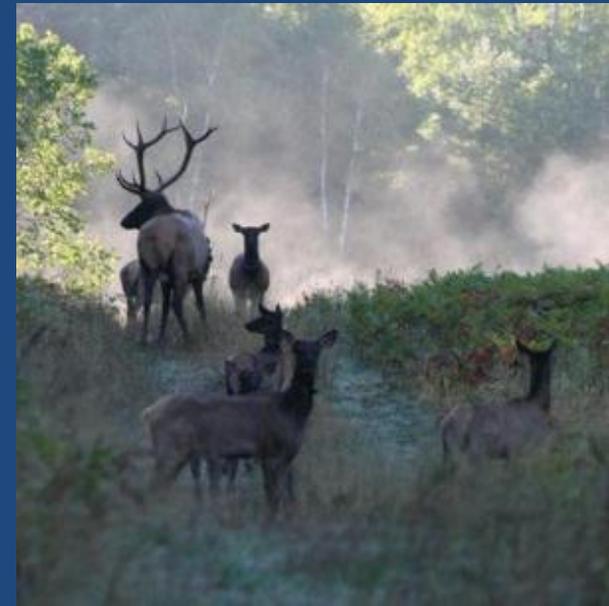
Feasibility studies *do not* mean elk are coming!

- These are necessary first steps to determine if taking the next steps make sense
- If enough suitable habitat exists and if the public supports the idea, the next steps include planning how to manage elk once here, raising funds and finding a source herd(s).



Supporting feasibility studies

- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Carlton, Pine and St. Louis Counties
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Duluth Chapter, Isaak Walton League
- Minnesota Chapter, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
- Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
- Carlton County Chapter, MDHA
- Minnesota Conservation Federation
- United Northern Sportsmen





Questions?