

CHAPTER 114**(SCR 49)**

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION supporting the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resource's efforts to gain the cooperation of neighboring states in managing Kentucky's "heritage wildlife," the magnificent elk.

WHEREAS, Kentucky's native elk herd last roamed the hills of Kentucky during the time of the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, in December 1997 the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources began a carefully planned and executed reintroduction of elk to their historic Kentucky range; and

WHEREAS, the department's efforts have resulted in a herd that today numbers 1,400 elk of what may be described as Kentucky's "heritage wildlife" because the reintroduction is filling eastern Kentucky's hills with a wildlife bounty unknown for over 150 years; and

WHEREAS, the department successfully educated Kentucky's local government officials, farmers, hunters, tourism specialists, and wildlife enthusiasts of the challenges arising from the reintroduction and the department's preparations to meet those challenges; and

WHEREAS, the department's educational efforts led to understanding and acceptance of the elk thus making possible the economic benefits now coming to fruition in eastern Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, with the elk herd grown to significant size, now is the time to work with Kentucky's neighboring states toward understanding and acceptance of the reintroduction plan so that the economic benefits flowing from the herd can be spread throughout the region;

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the House of Representatives concurring therein:

Section 1. The efforts of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to inform neighboring states about Kentucky's elk reintroduction program and to gain cooperation in managing the herd is supported and encouraged. The elk reintroduction success has been built upon educating Kentuckians that the released elk are from disease-free wild herds; that site selection for the release minimizes potential crop damage; that disease transfer between the elk herd and the deer population would be carefully monitored; and that development of the herd would lead to greatly enhanced wildlife hunting and viewing opportunities and increased tourism in eastern Kentucky. A similar educational effort in our neighboring states can overcome misconceptions and fears engendered by Kentucky elk colonizing or temporarily migrating to bordering states. With greater knowledge of the department's reintroduction program, surrounding states will realize that they too can benefit from the presence of this magnificent animal and the entire region surrounding eastern Kentucky will be economically strengthened from Kentucky's "heritage wildlife."

Approved March 28, 2002