BLM STUDY REVIEW of HELLS CANYON COMPLEX STUDIES

Ice Formation on Brownlee Reservoir and Potential Effects
On Big Game Populations

3.2-35

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

The study was to determine potential mortality to mule deer, elk and bighorn sheep due to falling through ice or predation while traversing ice.

2. **CONCLUSION**

"No deer mortalities were observed due to animals falling through the ice. Predation of them while crossing the ice was observed and this predation appeared to be enhanced by the inability of deer to elude predators on the slippery surface."

No analysis was done concerning deer entrapment on the ice. When the reservoir ice freezes thick and the reservoir level then lowered, the ice collapses leaving the ice surface in the shape of a bowl. The deer cannot climb the ice shoreline that is on an incline. Predation would increase in this situation.

"Increased development could increase the potential for animals to cross ice. Such development should ensure land passage for deer."

3. **STUDY ADEQUACY**

During the past 40 years, numerous winters have formed ice on all Hells Canyon Complex reservoirs. Records should have been kept concerning wildlife use and impacts. No reference was made to ice freezing thick and then collapsing as the reservoir is lowered.

4. **BLM CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

CONCLUSIONS

Few observations have documented deer mortality caused by reservoir ice, but no effort was made during severe winters to document any deaths. To observe a life or death event will be rare even if many occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep better records in the future concerning deer use during ice conditions especially during long periods of ice cover. Keep human activities to a minimum or none at all during severe winters to reduce stress and chances of forcing deer onto the ice.