



**PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, September 3, 2025



(Gaylord) In partnership with the City of Gaylord, Downtown Development Authority and Otsego County, the Gaylord Area Convention & Tourism Bureau is proud to announce that elk have formally been declared our county's official wildlife mascot.

As part of their strategic plan, the Gaylord Tourism Bureau began pursuing this endeavor several months ago. Paul Beachnau, Executive Director, stated, "Elk are not only a unique natural resource, they are also a significant factor for Tourism in our area. We felt an official declaration would help promote our entire community and bring the success story of Michigan's elk population to the forefront."

Once native to northern Michigan, elk went extinct in our region in the late 1800s. The current free-roaming herd found throughout the Pigeon River Country State Forest can be traced all the way back to 1918, when seven Rocky Mountain elk were relocated to the Gaylord area from the western United States. Extensive public and private wildlife management has greatly contributed to the success of the current elk population.

Gaylord also offers the convenient opportunity to view elk in captivity at the City Elk Park, located just outside of the downtown district. Recent expansions to the park include modern amenities such as a playground, restrooms, pavilion and a universally accessible viewing platform.

A survey conducted by the Gaylord Tourism Bureau several years ago reported that 60% of visitors to the area participated in elk viewing. “Between the free-roaming herd in the Pigeon River Forest and the fantastic additions made to the City Elk Park, visitors and residents can view elk as an outdoor adventure or with ease,” Beachnau explained.

A resolution to recognize elk as the official wildlife mascot of Otsego County was voted on by the governing Boards of the Gaylord Area Convention & Tourism Bureau, City of Gaylord, Otsego County and Downtown Development Authority. Upon passing, an elk seal was created and will be used to help promote one of our area’s most unique assets. The announcement’s timing is ideal for elk enthusiasts, as this impressive animal is entering the rut and will be at peak activity for the next two months.



**\*\* For media information, please contact Christy Walcott at 989-732-4000 \*\***