



## **NEWS RELEASE: Thursday November 6, 2014**

**Contact:** Brenda Hartkopf, Minnesota Elk Breeders Association, 320-543-2686

### **River Falls Veteran Harvests Bull Elk**

**Minnesota Elk Breeders Association (MnEBA), November 6, 2014** – Erik Olson, a disabled veteran of the United States Marine Corp from River Falls, Wisconsin recently experienced a unique opportunity to harvest a beautiful bull elk as the recipient of the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual MnEBA Charitable Elk Hunt. The hunt took place on September 10, 2014 and was coordinated by MnEBA and generously sponsored by Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch, Lake Superior Chapter of Safari Club International (SCI), Midwest Outdoors Unlimited, Engebretson Elk Farm, Black Velvet Elk Ranch and Splendor Ridge Elk Farm.

Erik Olson served in the United States Marine Corp from 2000-2004, serving overseas in Iraq in 2003. While in Iraq, Erik and several of his fellow servicemen developed brain tumors, while others returned home with brain tumors. Erik was granted an honorable medical discharge and sent back to the states for surgery and treatment. A short time later, Erik was involved in a serious automobile accident which caused further damage to his brain and body.

But Erik didn't let his disabilities get in the way of the dream to someday harvest a bull elk. His determination paid off when he was selected for the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual MnEBA Charitable Elk Hunt. And he needed all the persistence he could muster as the elk bull gave him a chase all day long. The group set out at Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch early in the morning, but didn't see even a glimpse of the bull until 4:30 in the afternoon. But it would take Erik another two hours to get the bull back in his sights and ready to harvest. While Erik's first shot went long and the bull took off, he hit his mark the second time. Erik's mom Hope, who accompanied him on the hunt said, "Erik couldn't have a bigger smile." When Erik was asked how he felt about the experience, he couldn't find big enough words. Erik said, "I'm overjoyed, exuberant!"

As the group paused to take a few pictures, a light rain began, but Erik's spirits couldn't be dampened. Ron Welle of Midwest Outdoors Unlimited helped Erik express his thanks for the opportunity to fulfill his dream. "Thank you to Dennis Engebretson of Engebretson Elk Farm and Brian Wagner of Black Velvet Elk Ranch for donating the bull, Tony Beckel of Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch for the facility and guide services, SCI Lake Superior Chapter for food, lodging, travel and processing of the meat, Brenda and Lance Hartkopf for funding towards the antler mount and Ron Welle and Leroy Wiener of Midwest Outdoors Unlimited for putting the details together to organize and assist with the hunt, videotape it, and also help to fund a portion of the meat processing. Erik's mom Hope said it best when she stated, "Thanks to all of you for making this happen."

Tony took a moment to personally thank Erik for his service. "Thank you for you. Thank you for your service," to which Erik humbly replied, "You're welcome." Ron Welle summed up a successful day when he said, "We have one happy camper here!"

MnEBA offers our heartfelt thanks, support and gratitude to Erik and to all United States military men and women for their service to our country.



**U.S. Marine Corp Veteran Erik Olson**