

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 3
Ogden
August 2016

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Box Elder, Cache, Morgan and Weber counties: Boundary begins at US-91 and SR-101 west of Hyrum; east on SR-101 to Hardware Ranch and USFS Road 054 (Ant Flat Road); south on this road to SR-39; southwest on SR-39 to SR-167 (Trappers Loop Road); south on SR-167 to I-84 (Exit 92); west on I-84 to I-15; north on I-15 to US-91; northeast on US-91 to SR-101 west of Hyrum.

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

Manage for a population of healthy animals capable of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities, including hunting and viewing. Consider impacts of the elk herd on other land uses and public interests, including private property rights, agricultural crops and local economies. Maintain the population at a level that is within the long-term capability of the available habitat.

Summer range is abundant and in good condition. Winter ranges are disappearing due to increased development in Ogden Valley. Elk depredation of agricultural crops continues to be a problem during winter months.

UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat

Maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit on winter range to achieve population management objectives.

Work with private and federal agencies to maintain and protect critical and existing winter range from future losses.

Population

Target winter herd size of 2,000 elk (computer modeled population).

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT

Habitat

Elk wintering on this unit are found in southern Cache Valley, and Ogden Valley. Most winter and summer range is privately owned. Winter range is limiting in Ogden Valley where development from the Wasatch front is quickly encroaching in areas elk currently winter. In Cache Valley winter range is less likely to be developed in the short term, but depredation to crops, haystacks, and equipment is a major concern. These factors combined set the social carrying capacity of this Unit at 2,000 wintering animals.

HABITAT PROJECTS COMPLETED AND PROPOSED

Completed Projects – 2009 through 2016		Proposed Projects – 2016 and beyond	
Middle Fork WMA	900	None	
Project total acreage	900		

RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP*

Ownership	Yearlong range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	0	0	15,727	15	18,237	11
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	0	0	0	0
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	8,217	8	0	0
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	8	0	79,181	76	138,217	81
Water	0	0	156	<1	28	<1
USFWS Refuge	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Parks	0	0	0	0	0	0
Utah State Parks	0	0	0	0	0	0
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	0	0	1,263	1	15,110	9
TOTAL	8	100	104,543	100	171,591	100

Population (current status (2016))

The last population flight estimated the population to be 2,200 elk. The current population is estimated to be at 2,300 elk. This is about 300 elk over the objective. We will continue to have hunts to bring the population down to objective and then maintain it there.

Three year plan to achieve population objective: In order to bring this population to objective it may be necessary to limit antlerless harvest to groups of animals that are actually depredate agricultural interests. Non-lethal methods of depredation control like fencing and hazing will be especially important to achieve the objective.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat: As winter range continues to be lost to development, population objectives will have to be adjusted accordingly.

Other Barriers Depredation to crops, haystacks, equipment and infrastructure. Some elk stay on private land where hunting is not allowed.

STRATEGIES FOR REMOVING BARRIERS AND REACHING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat

Monitoring

Continue to monitor permanent range trend studies located throughout the winter range.

Actions to Remove Habitat Barriers

Continue to rehabilitate the Middle Fork Wildlife Management Area (MFWMA) for the primary purpose of wintering elk and deer. This rehabbing may help hold elk on the MFWMA and prevent or reduce crop depredation in the valley.

Continue to pursue conservation easements around MFWMA, and work with land managers to improve habitat for wintering elk and mule deer where necessary.

Population

Monitoring

Population Size - Utilizing harvest data, aerial trend counts, postseason classification and mortality estimates, a computer model has been developed to estimate winter population size. The wintering population on this unit varies because of the influx of animals from the Morgan-South Rich and Cache units. Movement data obtained from telemetry and ear tagging studies indicate that a significant number of elk from those units wintered on the MFWMA.

Bull Age Structure - The Ogden unit is managed under a general season hunt format and as such bull age objectives are not required. General herd health will be assessed through the use of checking stations, uniform harvest surveys, field bag checks, postseason classification and aerial classification.

Harvest - The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through the statewide uniform harvest survey. Achieve the target population size by adjusting antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest and non-harvest methods and season formats.

Management Actions to Remove Population Barriers

Fencing, depredation hunts, other actions to reduce/mitigate crop depredation. Implement hunt strategies to focus on problem areas. Focus on ending hunts early to avoid pushing elk from non problem areas to problem areas.