

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 7
KAMAS
August 2016

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Summit and Wasatch counties - Boundary begins at I-80 and SR-32 at Wanship; south on SR-32 to Oakley and the Weber Canyon road (CR-2596); east on this road to Holiday Park and the Weber River Trail; east on this trail to SR-150 near Pass Lake; south and west on SR-150 to North Fork Provo River; south along this river to the Provo River; south along this river to SR-35; west on SR-35 to Francis and SR-32; west on SR-32 to US-40; north on US-40 to I-80; north on I-80 to SR-32 at Wanship.

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 carrying capacity of the available habitat.

This unit is comprised of mostly private property and, as a result, winter range within the unit is being lost at an alarming rate due to development. During the life of this plan, steps need to be taken to improve existing winter range in order to manage this elk population at the plan objective. Habitat improvement and rehabilitation projects on private lands throughout the unit should be initiated in order to increase forage production for wildlife and livestock interests. Opportunities for additional conservation easements should be investigated as a means to protect winter range from loss to urban development.

UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat

Maintain and improve forage production on all winter range within this unit for the planning period.

Continue working with private landowners and United States Forest Service (USFS) to protect winter range from future losses.

Population

Target Winter Herd Size – maintain elk numbers at a winter population of 850 elk (computer modeled population).

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT

Habitat

Overall range trend is stable to slightly improving due to the increased precipitation in this area during the growing season.

When looking at population objectives, the Division has taken into account factors which include, depredation issues, winter range that is beyond division control, social and political factors, current range improvements, future range improvements, and over-all range health.

In general, summer elk habitat is extensive within this unit; however, the elk population objective is determined by winter range and impacts of elk on private land agriculture and ranching.

Several factors influencing the population objective include: agricultural depredation, competition for forage with domestic livestock, over utilization of winter browse in areas of heavy concentration of deer and elk during hard winters and landowner tolerance. Most of the winter range in this unit is on private land. Division biologists and land managers will be working with landowners to improve as many acres as possible over the life of this plan.

RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP*

Ownership	Yearlong range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	0	0	116,937	93	9,945	33
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	0	0	42	<1
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	81	<1	199	0
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	0	0	7,531	6	18,563	62
Department of Defense	0	0	0	0	0	0
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	0	0	1,183	4
TOTAL	0	0	124,549	100	29,932	100

Population (current status (2016))

The population is stable at approximately 1,100 wintering animals (modeled Population Pop II Model). This unit experiences significant transfer during the winter months from adjacent units.

Three Year Plan to Reach Objective:

In order to maintain the population at this objective, approximately 175 antlerless animals will need to be harvested annually through the duration of this plan. These animals will be taken using public draw antlerless permits, and depredation permits. This harvest will be concentrated in areas where animals are causing damage to agricultural interests. The majority of the elk range is privately owned and is a barrier to achieve the necessary harvest to control elk numbers. Some landowners are reluctant to allow hunting, which provides areas for elk populations to increase despite efforts to decrease numbers. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources may need to explore other antlerless elk harvest strategies in order to maximize harvest on this unit. Under current permit allocations, it may be difficult to harvest 175 antlerless elk annually for the next five years in order to bring the unit back to the management objective.

TOTAL ELK COUNTED

	YEAR				2011	2013
	1997	2001	2004	2007*		
East Kamas				276	664	749
West Hills Kamas				210	206	194
Total	597	268	399	486	870	943

* 2007 was first year data split out.

2013 ELK CLASSIFICATION

Mature Bulls	Yearling Bulls	Antlerless
44	32	867

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat

Winter range is being lost due to development. Poor range conditions during drought years is a concern.

Population

Antlerless elk harvest is often times difficult due to the amount of private land on the unit. Limited access becomes a problem for many sportsmen when large groups of elk seek refuge on private property.

Other Barriers

There is low landowner tolerance of elk due to depredation and rangeland use throughout this unit. Damage to private landowners will continue to be a problem on this unit. Fencing, damage payments, and mitigation permits have been utilized to reduce conflicts with private property owners. These strategies have had varying degrees of success. The strategy should be to prevent damage where possible, compensate for damage when necessary, and discourage animals with hunting pressure from coming into situations where damage may become an issue.

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 support conservation easements to protect winter habitat from loss to urban development

Continue to rehabilitate the Kamas WMA for the primary purpose of wintering wildlife. Habitat improvement and rehabilitation projects may

help hold elk on the WMA and prevent or reduce crop depredation in the valley.

Investigate opportunities for habitat improvement projects on private property to increase forage production for wildlife and livestock interests.

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

Harvest - The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through the statewide uniform harvest survey. Achieve the target population size by use of antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons. Bull harvest strategies will be developed through the RAC and Wildlife Board process.

Management Actions to Remove Population Barriers

Continue focused antlerless elk hunts to place pressure on that portion of the elk herd that causes crop and rangeland depredation on private land.

Continue Landowner Depredation (mitigation) hunts.