

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 2
Cache
June 2016

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Box Elder, Cache, Rich and Weber counties—Boundary begins at I-15 and the Utah-Idaho state line; south on I-15 to US-91; east on US-91 to US-89/91; north on US-89/91 to SR-101; east on SR-101 to Hardware Ranch and USFS Road 054 (Ant Flat road); south on USFS Road 054 to SR-39; east on SR-39 to SR-16 in Woodruff; southeast on SR-16 to the Utah-Wyoming state line; north along this state line to the Utah-Idaho state line; west along this state line to I-15.

Limited Entry Unit Boundaries

North Cache: Cache and Rich counties—Boundary begins at US-89 and the Utah-Idaho state line; southwest on US-89 and US-89/91 to Brigham City; west on US-91 to I-15; north on I-15 to the Utah-Idaho state line; east along this state line to US-89.

Cache, Rich and Weber counties—Boundary begins at US-89 and the USFS boundary west of Garden City; south on this boundary to SR-39; southwest on SR-39 to USFS Road 054 (Ant Flat road); north on this road to SR-101; west on SR-101 to US-89/91; north on US-89/91 to Logan and US-89; northeast on US-89 to the USFS boundary approximately 3 miles west of Garden City.

Rich County—Boundary begins at US-89 and the USFS boundary west of Garden City; south along this USFS boundary to SR-39; east on SR-39 to SR-16; north on SR-16 to SR-30; northwest on SR-30 to US-89; west on US-89 to the USFS boundary.

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 to excellent condition. Winter range is in acceptable condition for wintering elk.

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. Pay special attention to WMA's and areas where holding elk could alleviate pressure on private landowners experiencing damage by wintering elk.

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

Population

Target winter herd size of 2,300 elk (computer modeled population). Assess the elk feeding program at Hardware Ranch as it relates to disease.

Bull Age Harvest Composition – Average age of bulls harvested from the North Cache will be 4.75 years old, on the South Cache will be 6.75 years old, and on Meadowville 4.75 years old.

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT

Habitat

Elk on this unit generally summer on public land and winter on a mixture of public and private land at lower elevations in Cache Valley and Rich County. Most of the range is in suitable condition to expect growth in elk numbers into the future. Most losses of winter range to development are taking place in areas where elk do not traditionally winter. Though habitat is probably not limiting at this time, tolerance for wintering elk by landowners is limiting. The objective of 2,300 wintering elk in this plan takes all factors into consideration.

RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP*

Ownership	Yearlong range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	5701	25	202,884	65	116,462	32
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	16,627	5	97,367	27
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	13,432	4	18,929	5
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	16,043	72	78,415	25	118,553	32
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	629	3	1,187	<1	14,972	4
TOTAL	22,374	100	312,544	100	366,283	100

Population (Current Status (2016))

The population is stable at 2,300 wintering animals (Modeled Population Pop II Model).

In order to maintain the population at objective, antlerless animals will need to be harvested annually through the duration of this plan. These

animals will be taken using limited entry antlerless permits, and depredation permits. This harvest will be concentrated in areas where animals are causing damage to agricultural interests.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat: At this point habitat does not seem to be limiting on this unit.

Population: Public meetings have garnered public support for the current objective.

Disease: Brucellosis has not been detected in elk on the Cache unit, but neighboring States have positive populations. An elk at a facility on the Ogden Unit tested positive with chronic wasting disease, and some risk of wild ungulate infection exists. In addition other issues like external parasites and more common diseases occur within the population. Due to these risks, a review and assessment of the elk feeding program within this unit will be conducted. Feeding has been phased out on the Millville Face WMA. This assessment will start with a collaring project to monitor elk movement in this unit. Elk will likely be collared during the winter of 2016-17. Habitat projects will be proposed in the area in anticipation for more dispersed elk. Details of feeding elk will be spelled out in the Hardware Ranch management plan that will be completed in August 2017. This plan will be developed using a committee of stakeholders and other public input. We will monitor where elk are going, impacts to habitat, and other ungulates especially mule deer. Disease monitoring will continue, to detect any disease outbreaks within the herd.

Other Barriers: Crop damage to private lands will continue to be a problem on this unit. So far, fencing, damage payments, hazing, culling and mitigation permits 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 from coming into situations where they can cause damage. Culling is an option when all other methods have proven ineffective.

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

Pursue habitat options in the unit with special attention to DWR owned properties (Hardware Ranch, Richmond, and Millville Face WMAs). Seek out opportunities to enhance habitat for elk and mule deer in the greater Hardware Ranch WMA area.

Continued pursuit of conservation easements in Cache Valley.

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

Bull Age Structure - Monitor age class structure of the bull population through the use of Limited Entry hunter tooth submission for aging, 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. Maintain the target population size by use of antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons.

Management Actions to Remove Population Barriers

Fencing, depredation hunts, and other actions will be used to reduce/mitigate crop depredation.