

**ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**Elk Herd Unit # 5**  
**East Canyon**  
**August 2016**

**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

**Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake and Summit counties** - Boundary begins at Echo Junction and I-80; southwest along I-80 to I-15; north on I-15 to its junction with I-84 near Ogden; east on I-84 to Echo Junction.

**UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS**

To manage the elk population at levels consistent with available habitat, and to cooperate with landowners in the protection, improvement and/or acquisition of critical winter range as opportunity permits. Work to obtain conservation easements on private lands for protection of critical winter and summer areas.

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 to support. Maintain elk population at current population objective to avoid competition with current mule deer populations. Encourage and educate private landowners and Cooperative Wildlife Management Unit operators to continue harvest of antlerless elk in sufficient numbers to maintain the winter elk population at the herd unit management objective.

**UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

**Habitat**

Maintain the 106,072 acres of summer, winter, and year-long range. There is increasing development in most areas of the range for housing and recreational properties and conservation easements should actively be sought out to preserve the dwindling habitat. Work with private landowners on improving and properly grazing winter ranges, as nearly all of the winter range exists on private lands. The East Canyon Unit is adjacent to the Wasatch Front and has become a main area for summer homes and year-round recreation. The Salt Lake and Summit County portions of the unit needs to continually be monitored due to encroaching housing on critical range and human-wildlife conflicts. Provide big game escape cover/security by implementing access management where warranted.

**Population**

Target Winter Herd Size – Decrease elk numbers to achieve a winter population of 1,800 elk (computer modeled population).

Davis and Salt Lake County part - 5A - This part of the unit contains most of the public lands within the unit. The winter ranges are adjacent to the heavily populated "Wasatch Front" and are becoming very limited due to the impact of urban development. Therefore, the post season winter population objective for this portion of the unit is approximately 250 elk.

Morgan & Summit County part - 5B - A majority of the land within this portion of the unit is privately owned and depredation can be a significant

factor in determining the tolerable winter population objective. However, based on the past several years, 1,550 wintering elk is the current objective on this portion of the East Canyon Unit. Private landowners and local interest groups must be involved in management recommendations. Without their support and cooperation, management objectives may not be realized and elk population control may not be possible.

**CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT**

**Habitat** (Current Status (2016))

Range trend studies show the browse trends stable and the herbaceous trend on winter ranges improving. The habitat seems to be improving slightly for elk with the increasing herbaceous trend. Competition on limited shared winter ranges with mule deer and competition with livestock for summer and fall feed seem to be the limiting factors for elk. Also dwindling summer and winter habitat from development and recreational use are factors reducing carrying capacity of elk range.

Approximately 1,500 acres of the Red Rock WMA were burned and re-seeded in the mid 1990's. It was a very successful project improving winter range in that area. There are negotiations underway for conservation easements in the Summit Co. portion of the unit for several large tracts of land, south of the town of Henefer and near the Morgan-Summit County line.

**RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP\***

Ownership	Yearlong range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	0	0	30715	26	0	8
Bureau of Land Management	85	1	0	0	32	<1
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	11388	90	87887	74	24646	99
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	1122	9	77	<1	72	<1
<b>TOTAL</b>	12595	100	118679	100	24750	100

### **Population** (Current Status (2016))

In February of 2016, an aerial trend count was conducted. There is an estimated 2,550 elk with 500 on the Salt Lake-Davis portion of the unit. Overall there has been a decrease in the populations over the past few years. There needs to be a continued harvest on the elk to obtain the objective.

<b>Harvest</b>		
Year	Bull Harvest	Cow Harvest
2006	175	201
2007	217	372
2008	188	291
2009	194	188
2010	245	236
2011	171	297
2012	243	397
2013	213	342
2014	226	348
2015	219	536

### **BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

#### **Habitat**

Winter range is the main limiting factor for habitat on this herd unit. Nearly all of the winter range is in private ownership and mostly out of the control of the UDWR for improvements. Continued housing and summer recreational development eat away at traditional elk ranges in some of the fastest growing rural counties in the state.

#### **Population**

The majority of the elk range in the unit is privately owned and is a barrier to achieve the necessary antlerless harvest to control elk numbers. Some landowners are reluctant to allow hunting and provide areas for elk populations to increase despite efforts to decrease numbers. The UDWR is exploring other antlerless elk harvest strategies to maximize harvest on this unit. There needs to be a continued harvest of 300 or more antlerless elk yearly for the next five years to bring the unit back to the management objective.

#### **Other Barriers**

Crop depredation is a minimal factor in some areas to keep the elk objective at current numbers.

### **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 work with private landowners to enhance ranges with grazing programs and habitat projects. Work on conservation easements for habitat protection to maintain carrying capacity of the unit.

## **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 may vary due to elk movements from the Morgan-South Rich unit and the Wasatch unit to the south.

Bull Age Structure - Monitor age class structure of the bull population through the use aerial classification.

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**

Increase efforts to educate landowners to the need for elk harvest and provide incentives through DWR assisted range improvement projects. Also work through the Walk-in Access program as an incentive to allow more public harvest of antlerless elk. Explore different permit allocation methods to maximize antlerless harvest on private lands where there are low harvest rates.

### **Actions to Remove Other Barriers**

Work on specific areas to reduce elk depredation by issuing mitigation permits to keep elk out of agricultural areas. Work to haze elk from these areas during periods when mitigation permits are not valid.