

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 6
CHALK CREEK
August 2016

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Summit and Duchesne counties - Boundary begins at I-84 and I-80 near Echo; northeast on I-80 to the Utah-Wyoming state line; southeast along this state line to SR-150; south on SR-150 to Pass Lake and the Weber River trail; west on this trail to Holiday Park and CR 2596 (Weber Canyon road); west on this road to SR-32; northwest on SR-32 to I-80 at Wanship; north on I-80 to I-84 near Echo.

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

Manage for a population of healthy animals capable of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities, which include 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.

This unit is comprised of mostly private property, and as a result winter range is being lost at an alarming rate due to development. In the next 5 years steps need to be taken to improve forage production on existing winter range. 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. Conservation easements should be initiated as to means to protect winter habitat from further 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 Utah Foundation for Quality Resource Management (QRM) to protect winter range from future losses.

Population

Target Winter Herd Size – decrease elk numbers to achieve a winter population of 3,200 elk (computer modeled population) in the planning period.

CCURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT

Habitat

Overall range trend is stable to slightly improving with the increased precipitation in this area.

When looking at population objectives, the Division has taken into account factors which include 1) depredation issues 2) winter range that is beyond division control 3) social and political factors 4) current range improvements 5) future range improvements and 6) overall 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 of this unit 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. In 2012 juniper thinning and reseeded projects were utilized to increase forage production on winter range.

COMPLETED HABITAT PROJECTS

Crandall Canyon PJ Thinning	150-200 acres	2012
South Fork PJ Treatment	150-200 acres	2013

All winter range in this unit is on private land. Division land managers and biologists will work with landowners to improve or rehabilitate 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	33,987	9	0	0
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	80	<1	224	<1
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	245	<1	222	<1
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	0	0	300,278	90	45,471	95
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	124	<1
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	0	0	89	<1	1,966	4
TOTAL	0	0	334,679	100	48,007	100

Population (current status (2016))

The population is approximately 4,100 wintering animals (modeled Population using Pop II Model). This unit experiences significant transfer during the winter months from adjacent units.

TOTAL ELK COUNTED BY YEAR

Year	1990	1992	1996	1999	2001	2004	2007	2011	2013
South of Chalk Creek Road	463	937	743	821	787	640	560	559	1713
North of Chalk Creek Road	1097	1114	1552	1408	1064	966	1354	2613	1686
Total	1560	2056	2295	2229	1851	1606	1914	3172	3399

CLASSIFICATION

Year	Mature Bulls	Yearling Bulls	Cows	Calves	UNC Antlerless	Calves/100cows	Bulls/100Antlerless
2004	216	111	418	257	---	61	48
2007	228	175	125	61	---	49	28
2011	336	235	---	---	2601	59*	22
2013	490	261	---	---	2648	59*	28
2014	96	37	297	152		51	43
2015	69	21	216	120		56	42

* 2011 Pre-season elk classification data

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat

- Loss of winter range due to development.
- Poor range conditions during drought years.
- Reduced quality of winter range due to juniper dominance.

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 and, as result, damage to private land will continue to be a problem. Fencing, damage payments, and mitigation permits have had varying degrees of success in alleviating depredation issues. The division will be working on strategies to prevent damage where possible, compensate for damage when necessary, and discourage animals with hunting pressure from coming into situations where they can cause damage.

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

Initiate habitat improvement and rehabilitation projects on private lands in order to increase forage on the winter range. Continue to support conservation easements to protect winter habitat from loss to urban development.

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 unit. Movement data obtained from telemetry and ear tagging studies indicate that elk from the North Slope unit winter on this unit as well.

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) permits and private lands only hunt strategies.