

**ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**Elk Herd Unit 2**  
**CACHE**  
**December 2023**

**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.

**Any Bull Elk Unit Boundaries**

**Cache, East Rich** - Rich County - Boundary begins at the Utah-Idaho state line and US-89; south on US-89 to Garden City and SR-30; southeast on SR-30 to Sage Creek junction and SR-16; south on SR-16 to the Utah-Wyoming state line; north on this state line to the Utah-Idaho state line; west on this state line to US-89. USGS 1:100,000 Maps: Logan, Ogden. Boundary questions? Call the Ogden office, 801-476-2740.

**Cache, Wellsville** - Cache and Box Elder Counties - Boundary begins at I-15 and the Idaho state line; south on I-15 to US-91 in Brigham City; east on US-91 to US-89/91; northeast on US-89/91 to US-91; north on US-91 to the Idaho state line; west on the Idaho state line to I-15.

**Limited Entry Bull Elk Unit Boundaries**

**Cache, North** - 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, South** - 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 SR-165; north on SR-165 to US 89/91; north on US 89/91 to US-89; northeast on US-89 to the USFS boundary approximately 3 miles west of Garden City.

**Cache, Meadowville** - Rich County - Boundary begins at US-89 and the USFS boundary west of Garden City; south along this 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.

Use multiple strategies to help manage elk populations and address the complex private/public land interface within the unit. Prioritize the use of Cooperative Wildlife Management Units (CWMU's), depredation plans, and private land only tags in sections of the unit with large amounts of private land and agricultural production. Prioritize habitat restoration and enhancement efforts to increase the amount and quality of habitat on public lands to draw elk away from agricultural areas.

Summer range is abundant and in good to excellent condition. Winter range is in acceptable condition for wintering elk, but is continually being lost by human encroachment.

**UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

**Habitat** - Maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit on summer and 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 (modeled population).

**Bull Elk Harvest Objectives** - As per the Statewide Elk Management Plan, harvest strategies are used to provide diverse hunting opportunities for the public. The subunit specific harvest strategies are as follows:

- **Cache, East Rich** - This is a general season any bull hunting unit.
- **Cache, Wellsville** - This is a general season any bull hunting unit.
- **Cache, North** - This is a limited entry September archery and HAMSS bull elk hunting unit. The objective is to maintain a success rate of 20%-40% OR a 3-year average bull harvest age of 3.5 – 4.5 years for the September archery and HAMSS hunts. Spike elk hunting is allowed to increase hunting opportunity on this unit.
- **Cache, South** - This is a limited entry bull elk hunting unit. The objective is for the average age of harvested bull elk to be 6.0-6.5 years old. Spike elk hunting is allowed to increase hunting opportunity on this unit.
- **Cache, Meadowville** - This is a limited entry bull elk hunting unit. The objective is for the average age of harvested bull elk to be 6.0-6.5 years old. Spike elk hunting is allowed to increase hunting opportunity on this unit.

**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. Although, on extreme winters elk are pushed down to areas that are experiencing accelerated human development. Habitat is being lost rapidly in these areas experiencing growth. Though habitat is probably not limiting at this time, tolerance for wintering elk by landowners is limiting. The objective set forth in this plan takes all factors into consideration and sets the social carrying capacity of the unit at 2,300 wintering elk.

**Range Area and Approximate Ownership**

Ownership	Yearlong Range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	5,701	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
<b>TOTAL</b>	22,374	100	312,544	100	366,283	100

### Habitat Projects Completed and Proposed 2016-2023

Temple Fork Juniper Restoration 3	706 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Weed Abatement FY19	369 acres
Three Canyons Deer Winter Range Habitat Treatment -phase 1	483 acres
Temple Fork Juniper Restoration 4	2,142 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Meadow Fertilizer Project FY19	122 acres
Hardware Plateau Lop and Scatter	2,143 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Meadow Fertilizer Project FY18	128 acres
Hardware Ranch Juniper Lop and Scatter II	872 acres
Bug Lake Lodgepole Thinning Phase II	13 acres
Curtis Ridge Lop and Scatter	400 acres
Hardware Ranch Juniper Lop and Scatter III and Unauthorized route decommission	1,167 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Meadow Fertilizer Project FY20	128 acres
Temple Fork Juniper Restoration	638 acres
Bruce Hall Hardware Ranch	39 acres
Bug Lake Lodgepole Thinning	17 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Meadow Fertilizer Project FY16	133 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Meadow Fertilizer Project FY17	120 acres
Temple Fork Juniper Phase II	675 acres
East Bear Lake Range Improvements - Phase I	1,451 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Meadow Fertilizer Project FY21	120 acres
Three Canyons Deer Winter Range Habitat Treatment -phase 2	248 acres
Red Ryder Precommercial Thinning	1,001 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Meadow Improvement Seeding	104 acres
Rich County Forest Health - CRI	1,550 acres
Red Ryder Prescribed Fire Aspen Restoration & Weed treatments	13,716 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Weed Abatement FY21	340 acres

Three Canyons Deer Winter Range Habitat Treatment -phase 3	53 acres
Hardware WMA Maintenance - FY23	543 acres
Hardware Ranch WMA Weed Abatement FY20	268 acres
Monument Peak Salvage/Sanitation Arc. Survey	245 acres
Mahogany Ridge Bullhog phase 1	1,399 acres
Northern Region Browse and Water Enhancements	60 acres
UWC FS North Zone Watershed Improvements with Partners FY22	4,084 acres
Logan Canyon/Left hand fork Juniper Project - Phase 1	2,899 acres

**Population** - The population has been decreasing but stable at 2,000 wintering elk (spring 2023 helicopter flights with 85% sight ability). In order to maintain the population at objective, antlerless elk will need to be harvested annually through the duration of this plan. These elk will be taken using limited entry, depredation and private lands only antlerless permits. The majority of this harvest will be concentrated in areas where elk 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. Human tolerance of elk in winter does however seem to be limiting in this unit.

**Population** - Past 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 private facility on the Ogden Unit tested positive for 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, it is not advisable to congregate elk on feed rows within the unit. Feeding has been discontinued on the Millville Face WMA and we will continue to work toward reduction of disease risk that may be associational with feeding at Hardware Ranch WMA.

**Other Barriers** - Damage to private landowners will continue to be a problem on this unit. Currently, fencing problem areas, damage payments, and mitigation permits have had varying degrees of success. The prioritized strategy is to prevent damage where possible, compensate for damage when necessary, and discourage animals from coming into situations where they can cause damage using hunting to remove problem animals and favorably influence elk distribution. Culling may an option when all other methods have proven ineffective.

**STRATEGIES FOR REMOVING BARRIERS AND REACHING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

**Habitat** - Continue to work with division habitat personnel to improve both summer range and winter range habitat. Pursue habitat options throughout the unit with special attention to DWR owned properties (Hardware Ranch, Richmond, and Millville Face WMAs). It is also important to continue to monitor permanent range trend studies located throughout the winter range. Continued pursuit of conservation easements in Cache Valley will be vital as well.

**Population** -

- **Population Size** - A model has been developed to estimate winter population size utilizing harvest data, aerial trend counts every 3 years, pre- and postseason classification and mortality estimates as inputs.

- **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 mandatory harvest survey for both bulls and antlerless elk. Maintain the target population size by use of antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons.

- **Depredation** - Fencing, depredation hunts, damage payments, mitigation permits, culling and adjusting hunting season dates will all be used to address depredation barriers.

- **Disease** - Elk will continue to be tested and monitored for brucellosis on this unit especially at Hardware WMA where congregated feeding still takes place. Any elk that are suspected to have any diseases like CWD or others will also be tested within the unit.

**Duration of This Management Plan** - This Unit Management Plan was revised in 2023 following the revision of the Statewide Elk Management Plan. This Unit Management Plan will be revised after the next Statewide Elk Management Plan revision to ensure all current management tools are being used. Revision of this plan may also take place as needed to address future issues or incorporate new management strategies. Unit elk plan goals, objectives, recommendations and strategies are constrained within the sideboards set in the Statewide Elk Plan, which supersedes unit plans. It is possible that changes to the Statewide Elk Plan may affect unit plans. Additionally, changes to Utah State Code and/or Administrative Rule may also affect elk plans.