

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 3
OGDEN
December 2023

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Box Elder, Cache, Morgan and Weber Counties - Boundary begins at US-91 and SR-101 west of Hyrum; east on SR-101 to Hardware Ranch and USFS Road 054 (Ant Flat Road); south on this road to SR-39; southwest on SR-39 to SR-167 (Trappers Loop Road); south on SR-167 to I-84 (Exit 92); west on I-84 to I-15; north on I-15 to US-91; northeast on US-91 to SR-101 west of Hyrum.

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 strategic strategies to help manage the elk population and address the complex private/public land interface throughout the unit. Prioritize the use of Cooperative Wildlife Management Units (CWMU's) and depredation plans on 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.

UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat - Summer and winter ranges should be maintained and improved to sustain healthy herds of elk across the unit. Summer habitat improvements should be prioritized on the Middle Fork and Cinnamon Creek WMA's to help distribute elk on public property and away from private. Winter ranges should also be improved to maintain healthy elk herds and limit the amount of time elk spend depredating agricultural fields, feed rows and haystacks. This will be accomplished by working with private and federal agencies to maintain and protect critical and existing winter range from future losses.

Population - Target winter herd size of 2,000 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 harvest strategies are as follows:

- **Ogden** - This is a general season any bull hunting unit.

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT

Habitat - Elk wintering on this unit are found in southern Cache Valley and Ogden Valley. Most winter and summer range is privately owned. Winter range is limited in Ogden Valley where development from the Wasatch front is quickly encroaching in areas where elk currently winter. In Cache Valley, winter range is less likely to be developed in the short term, but depredation to crops, haystacks, and equipment is a major concern, especially on hard winters when elk are pushed to the valley floor. These factors combined set the social carrying capacity of this Unit at 2,000 wintering animals. Summer range is abundant and in relatively good condition. It has suffered some from years of extended drought and encroaching invasive species.

Range Area and Approximate Ownership

Ownership	Yearlong Range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	0	0	15,727	15	18,237	11
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	0	0	0	0
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	284	8	0	0
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	8	0	79,181	76	138,217	81
Water	0	0	156	<1	28	<1
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	9,197	1	15,110	9
TOTAL	8	100	104,543	100	171,591	100

Habitat Projects Completed and Proposed 2016-2023

Bobcat Ridge Aspen Improvement	137 acres
Northern Region WMA Browse and Water Enhancements	234 acres
Cinnamon Creek WMA Improvements FY23	1 acre
Water Hollow Fire Reseeding	163 acres
Cold Water	NA
Lopez Basin Rx	49 acres
Middle Fork WMA acquisition	2,052 acres
Green Canyon Aspen Improvement Phase II	11 acres
Northern Region WMA Annual Browse Enhancement	5 acres
Cinnamon Creek Acquisition	8,113 acres
UWC FS North Zone Watershed Improvements with Partners FY22	4,084 acres

Population - The last population survey flight (spring 2023) estimated the population to be 1,950 elk.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat - In general, this unit has suffered from habitat degradation due to drought, invasive species invasion, and human development. Habitat improvement projects aimed at removing invasive species, re-establishing productive rangelands, and preserving critical summer and winter habitat would be beneficial for elk.

Population - Past public meetings have garnered public support for the current objective.

Other Barriers - Depredation and damage to crops, haystacks, equipment and infrastructure continue to be a barrier for this unit. Elk on this unit often stay on private land where hunting is not allowed. Similar to other private property, many of the elk in this unit stay on CWMU's where hunting is very limited in the fall. This makes it difficult to maintain the objective with fall hunting.

STRATEGIES FOR REMOVING BARRIERS AND REACHING UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat - Continue to rehabilitate the Middle Fork Wildlife Management Area (MFWMA) for the primary purpose of wintering elk and deer. This will be done by reversing habitat degradation, removing invasive species and planting valuable winter forage for elk. This rehabilitation may help hold elk on the MFWMA and prevent or reduce crop depredation in the valley. Also work to make the newly acquired Cinnamon Creek WMA (CCWMA) a viable location for summering elk to move elk from private to public land.

Population - The wintering population on this unit varies because of the influx of animals from the Morgan-South Rich and Cache Units. Movement data obtained from GPS collars and ear tagging studies indicate that a significant number of elk from those units winter on the Ogden unit. In order to bring this population back to objective and to maintain it, it may be necessary to implement the following strategies:

- Limit antlerless harvest to groups of animals that are actually depredating agricultural interests
- Implement hunt strategies to focus on problem areas
- Adjust hunting seasons to avoid pushing elk from non-problem areas to problem areas
- Monitor harvest through mandatory bull and antlerless elk harvest surveys
- Achieve the target population size by adjusting antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest and non-harvest methods and migration timing adjusted season dates
- Non-lethal methods of depredation control like fencing and hazing will be especially important

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.