

**ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**Elk Herd Unit # 6**  
**CHALK CREEK**  
**December 2023**

**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.

**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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>334,679</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48,007</b>	<b>100</b>

**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 five years, steps need to be taken to improve forage production on existing winter range. Habitat improvement and restoration projects on private lands throughout the unit should be initiated in order to increase forage production for wildlife and livestock. Conservation easements may be a useful tool to protect winter habitat from further loss to urban development when appropriate.

## **UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

**Habitat** - Maintain and improve forage production on all winter range within this unit. Collaborate and work with private landowners to protect winter range from future losses.

**Population** - Target winter herd size of 3,200 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:

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

## **CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT**

**Habitat** - Overall range trend is stable. When evaluating population objectives, the Division accounts for these important factors: 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. All winter range in this unit is on private land. Division staff will work with landowners to improve or restore as many acres as possible over the life of this plan.

**Population** - The population is approximately 4,000 wintering animals (modeled). This unit experiences a significant migration of animals into the unit from adjacent areas during the fall and winter months. The population has trended down over the last two years and is expected to continue to trend toward the objective.

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

**Habitat** - Loss of winter range due to development, poor range conditions during drought years, and 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 hunters when large groups of elk seek refuge on private property.

**Other Barriers** - There is low landowner tolerance of elk due to depredation and private rangeland use throughout this unit and, as a 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 develop strategies to prevent damage where possible, compensate for damage when necessary, and discourage animals with hunting pressure from moving to high conflict areas.

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

**Habitat** - Habitat improvement should focus on redistributing elk away from agricultural areas and improving rangeland productivity.

**Monitoring** - Continue to monitor permanent range trend studies located throughout the winter range.

**Actions to Remove Habitat Barriers** - Initiate habitat improvement and restoration projects on private lands to increase forage on the winter range. When appropriate, support conservation easements that protect winter habitat from loss to urban development.

### **Habitat Projects Completed and Proposed**

<b>Habitat Projects 2014 - Present</b>	
Crandall Canyon PJ Thinning	353 acres
South Fork PJ Treatment	68 acres
Aspen Meadows Fire Rehab	100 acres
Prescribed Fires	901 acres
South Fork PJ Treatment	31 acres
Tervels Fire Rehab	19 acres
Echo 80 Fire Reseeding	10 acres
Bear River Watershed Phase II	707 acres
Bear River Watershed Phase IV	80 acres
Echo Junction Infrastructure	fencing

**Population** - The population estimate currently exceeds the objective but has been trending down.

**Monitoring** - Continue aerial trend counts every three years as well as collection of annual harvest data and classification data when possible

**Population Size** - Utilizing harvest data, aerial trend counts, postseason classification and mortality estimates, a 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 GPS collar 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 mandatory bull and cow elk harvest reporting. Achieve the target population size by use of antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons. Work with CWMU's to increase harvest when needed. Bull harvest strategies will be developed through the RAC and Wildlife Board process.

**Actions to Remove Population Barriers** - Continue focused antlerless elk hunts to place pressure on the 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. Work with CWMU's to harvest elk and alleviate damages to other private landowners.

**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.