

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 7
KAMAS
December 2023

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Summit and Wasatch Counties - Boundary begins at I-80 and SR-32 at Wanship; south on SR-32 to Oakley and the Weber Canyon road (CR-2596); east on this road to Holiday Park and the Weber River Trail; east on this Trail to SR-150 near Pass Lake; south and west on SR-150 to North Fork Provo River; south along this River to the Provo River; south along this River to SR-35; west on SR-35 to Francis and SR-32; west on SR- 32 to US-40; north on US-40 to I-80; north on I-80 to SR-32 at Wanship.

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 carrying capacity of the available habitat.

This unit is comprised of mostly private property and, as a result, winter range within the unit is being lost at an alarming rate due to development. During the life of this plan, steps need to be taken to improve existing winter range in order to manage this elk population at the plan objective. Habitat improvement and restoration projects on private lands throughout the unit should be initiated in order to increase forage production for wildlife and livestock. Opportunities for additional conservation easements should be investigated as a means to protect winter range from loss to urban development.

UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat - Maintain and improve forage production on all winter range within this unit. Work with private landowners and United States Forest Service (USFS) to maintain and improve summer range as well as protect winter range from future losses.

Population - Target winter herd size of 850 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:

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

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT

Habitat - Precipitation has generally improved overall range trend in this area during the growing season. 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) over-all 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 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. Most of the winter range in this unit is

Page 1 of 3

on private land. Division staff will work with landowners to improve or restore 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	116,937	93	9,945	33
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	0	0	42	<1
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	81	<1	199	0
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	0	0	7,531	6	18,563	62
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	0	0	0	0	1,183	4
TOTAL	0	0	124,549	100	29,932	100

Habitat Projects Completed and Proposed 2014-2023

Upper Provo Phase II	645 acres
Upper Provo Watershed Restoration	4,389 acres
Kamas WMA Boundary Fence	Fencing
Upper Provo Watershed Restoration	1,090 acres
Upper Provo Watershed Restoration	665 acres
Upper Provo Watershed Restoration	986 acres
Upper Provo Watershed Restoration	3,426 acres

Population - The population is stable at approximately 1,100 wintering animals. This unit experiences a significant migration of animals into the unit from adjacent areas during the fall and winter months. In order to reach the population objective, antlerless harvest needs to increase. This will be done using public draw permits, over the counter permits, and depredation permits. New strategies such as private lands only permits and antlerless archery permits will also be used during this plan to increase the amount of antlerless elk harvest.

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.

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. There are also large blocks of property where hunting is not allowed. These areas are becoming a refuge for wintering elk.

Other Barriers - There is low landowner tolerance of elk due to depredation and rangeland use throughout this unit. Damage to private landowners will continue to be a problem on this unit. Fencing, damage payments, and mitigation permits have been utilized to reduce conflicts with private property owners. These strategies have had varying degrees of success. The strategy should be to prevent damage where possible, compensate for damage when necessary, and discourage animals with hunting pressure from coming into situations where damage may become an issue.

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

- Support conservation easements to protect winter habitat from loss to urban development
- Continue to rehabilitate the Kamas WMA for the primary purpose of wintering wildlife. Habitat improvement and rehabilitation projects may help hold elk on the WMA and prevent or reduce crop depredation in the valley
- Investigate opportunities for habitat improvement projects on private property to increase forage production for wildlife and livestock interests

Population

Monitoring

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 can vary because of the influx of animals from adjacent units.

Harvest - The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through mandatory bull and antlerless elk harvest reporting. We will achieve the target population objective through antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons. 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 that portion of the elk herd that causes crop and rangeland depredation on private land
- Continue Landowner Depredation (mitigation) hunts

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.