

ELK MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit #27
PAUNSAUGUNT
2023

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Garfield and Kane counties—Boundary begins at US-89A and the Utah-Arizona state line; north on US-89A to US-89; north on US-89 to SR-12; east on SR-12 to the Paria River; south along the Paria River to the Utah-Arizona state line. EXCLUDES ALL NATIVE AMERICAN TRUST LANDS WITHIN THIS BOUNDARY. EXCLUDES ALL NATIONAL PARKS.

Land Ownership

Ownership	Yearlong range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	0	0	94519	64	0	0
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	7862	5	40673	73
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	0	0	2779	2	3925	7
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	0	0	41358	28	11058	20
Department of Defense	0	0	0	0	0	0
USFWS Wildlife Refuge	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Parks	0	0	618	1	0	0
Utah State Parks	0	0	0	0	0	0
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	147136	100	55656	100

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

Manage for a population of healthy animals capable of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities, including hunting and viewing. Manage for General Season Any Bull harvest strategy. Balance elk herd impacts on human needs, such as private property rights, agricultural crops, other big game species and local economies.

Maintain the population at a level that is within the long-term capability of the available habitat and that does not negatively impact the mule deer population. Continue with Alton Cooperative Wildlife Management Unit.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Target Winter Herd Size – 140 total elk wintering across the unit. This objective was set largely to provide antlerless harvest opportunities and reduce potential negative impacts to mule deer.

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK POPULATION MANAGEMENT

Population modeling is extremely difficult since the Paunsaugunt winters few elk in comparison to adjacent units and experiences higher numbers during summer months.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Population Size – Aerial counts and annual preseason classification surveys will be used to monitor the population. Opportunistic ground surveys in the winter months appear to also provide some useful trend data due to low overall numbers.

Antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons will be the primary means to achieving the wintering population objectives and reducing potential negative impacts to mule deer. The Skutumpah area should be a focus for any antlerless harvest since this wintering herd is the closest to mule deer winter range. Antlerless harvest may be used if there is evidence of negative impacts to mule deer on additional ranges. Antlerless harvest will occur on the Alton CWMU, across the unit, and on private lands using private lands only permits.

Harvest - Harvest information is acquired through mandatory hunter harvest reporting.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT POPULATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Depredation – Many of the local landowners and livestock owners on the unit worry that an increase in the elk population would increase damages to agricultural crops due to elk depredation.

Potential Competition – Many people in the area are opposed to an increase in elk numbers on the unit. The primary concern is that an increase in the elk population may negatively impact mule deer, which are the top priority in this area as it is managed as a premium deer unit.

Illegal Harvest – Illegal harvest can be a significant source of mortality.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS TO REMOVE POPULATION BARRIERS

Depredation – Take all steps necessary to minimize depredation as prescribed by state law and DWR policy. Maintain the Alton CWMU. Maintain private-lands-only elk permits to focus on depredation elk issues.

Potential Competition – Effectively address situations where elk negatively impact mule deer habitat or populations. Closely monitor for signs of negative competition between the two species. Look for and take advantage of opportunities to convey these efforts to the public. Also, look for and take advantage of opportunities to convey to the public DWR efforts to handle depredation issues.

Illegal Harvest – If illegal harvest becomes an identified and significant source of mortality, attempt to develop specific preventive measures within the context of an “Action Plan” developed in cooperation with the Law Enforcement Section.

UNIT HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Continue to be committed to the statewide goal of supporting habitat projects that increase forage for both big game and livestock.

Work with private, state and federal agencies to maintain and protect critical and existing range from future losses.

Continue projects with USFS, BLM, state and private entities to enhance wildlife habitat.

Provide improved habitat security and escapement opportunities for elk through support and cooperation of approved Dixie National Forest Travel Plan.

Encourage the maintenance and development of water sources throughout the unit. Focus on providing water sources in remote areas or on abandoned / sources such as old water trough's, ponds, and tanks that can benefit both livestock and wildlife.

Discourage the encroachment of Pinyon and Juniper (PJ) trees into sagebrush and other habitats. Seek opportunities to improve habitat through grazing practices, prescribed burning, and mechanical treatments to improve habitat where PJ encroachment is occurring.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Provide for habitat projects in focus areas including:

- 1) Hatch bench – Winter range (SITLA/USFS)
- 2) East fork Sevier – Calving/Summer range (USFS)
- 3) Skutumpah Terrace and Glendale Bench – Year long range (BLM)

Focus on the three priority improvements:

- 1) Water development and maintenance
- 2) Winter range enhancement
- 3) Summer range enhancement

Work with USFS to continue projects with guzzlers, riparian improvement, and timber harvest in key calving habitat on the East Fork.

Work with the BLM and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument to continue projects on vegetation enhancement, PJ encroachment, guzzlers, ponds and water distribution.

Continue to monitor the permanent range trend studies located throughout the winter range. Work with State range trend monitoring crew to establish new trend studies in areas where elk use or trend is a concern.

Encourage and provide support to other land management agencies, private landowners, and stakeholders when developing habitat projects that will enhance or improve elk habitat throughout the management unit.

Encourage habitat restoration project funding proposals through a diversity of sources including UPCD and Alton Coal.

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Overall, elk habitat on the Paunsaugunt WMU is good with stable range conditions throughout most of their range. Some challenges facing elk habitat include conifer encroachment of aspen stands, degradation of rangelands by increased woody vegetation and water availability.

Many elk habitat restoration projects have been completed in the past 5-10 years. There are also several thousand acres across the unit currently proposed for treatment. See Appendix 2 for a list of projects.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIT HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- Water distribution, development and maintenance
- Degradation of summer and winter rangelands
- Conifer encroachment of aspen stands

STRATEGIES FOR REMOVING BARRIERS AND REACHING UNIT HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Use range trend and habitat improvement data to make appropriate decisions regarding population objectives. Antlerless harvest may be recommended if there is excessive habitat utilization.

Support habitat improvement projects in the Skutumpah Terrace and Glendale Bench areas that could attract elk and other wildlife away from private land at lower elevations. Focus on public lands in Pinyon and Juniper or sagebrush areas.

Continue to focus on improving habitat in upper elevation calving habitat on the East Fork of the Sevier. Projects that provide for aspen and water at higher elevations would be beneficial.

Conduct large-scale habitat projects to help prevent elk and other wildlife from concentrating on isolated patches of improved habitat.

Encourage projects on private land that maintain habitat for elk over the long-term.

Work closely with State Trust Lands (SITLA) to conserve crucial / key winter habitat along the Hatch bench.

Continue projects with USFS, BLM, state and private landowners to enhance overall elk habitat.

To reduce potential negative impacts on the mule deer population, habitat projects will be needed to improve range conditions on both summer and winter ranges.

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.

APPENDIX 2 Paunsaugunt WMU #27 habitat projects listed in WRI database 2016-2023

Title	Acres	FY Completed
ACD Mitigation Project Upper Kanab Creek	289.35	2018
Cutthroat Trout Migration Barriers, Southern Region FY18	0	2018
Ford Pasture Rabbit Brush Mowing (Alton Coal Mine)	108.84	2019
Water Quality and Fisheries Improvement on the Upper Sevier River near Hatch, UT - Year 6	0	2019
Cutthroat Trout Migration Barriers and Maintenance - Southern Region FY 21	0	2021
South Canyon (Sevier River)	2,373.16	2021
Wire Pass/Pine Hollow Fire ESR	5,400.70	2021
Swapp Canyon Water Meter, Pipeline Float Box, Trough and Fence	0	2018
Left Fork Stewardship Project Phase II	0	2019
Johnson Bench UPD Habitat Enhancement Phase II	262.66	2019
South Canyon (Sunset Cliffs)	3,805.47	2019
Southern Region Riparian Tree and Shrub Planting - FY19	0	2019
UKC Broad Hollow	1,224.69	2020
Upper Kanab Creek Barrier Maintenance - FY19	0	2019
Deer Range Fire Rehabilitation	301.4	2020
SR Mule Deer Winter Range Bitterbrush Enhancement FY20	1,739.44	2022
Maintenance of stream and riparian corridor work on the upper Sevier River near Hatch, UT	0	2021
Skutumpah Terrace Chalk Ridge	715.35	2020
UKC-Spencer Bench	1,800.63	2021
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY 17	0	2017
Mud Springs NEPA wildlife enhancement project	0	2019
Southern Region Riparian Tree and Shrub Planting - FY18	0	2018
UKC - Spaniard Spring/Sink Valley Phase II	2,370.77	2019
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY22	0	2022
UKC Glendale Bench Chaining Follow-up Lop and Scatter	1,134.91	2019
Cockscomb Vegetation Enhancement Project	594.64	2018
Bald Knoll Lop and Scatter (Alton Coal Mine)	336.81	2018
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY23	0	2023
Water Quality and Aquatic Habitat Improvement on the East Fork of the Sevier River - FY19	0	2019
UKC BuckKnoll Bullhog/ Cultural	3,215.43	2019
Fish Migration Barriers Maintenance - SRO, FY19	0	2019
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY 19	0	2019
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY 20	0	2020
UKC Glendale Bench	1,904.07	2018
Bulldog Bench-First Point Handthin	1,961.53	2017
Coal Hollow, Kane County - Phase II	493.21	2016

Dixie National Forest FY 2016 Exclosure Repair and Rebuild project	0	2018
Southern Region Riparian Tree and Shrub Planting FY16	0	2016
UKC - Carly Knoll/Mill Creek	660.57	2016
UKC - Cottonwood Spring- Phase I	1,756.97	2016
Left Fork Stewardship Project	1,256.70	null
FY 21 Southern Region Small Fires	1,058.40	2021
Upper Paria Watershed NEPA	0	2019
UKC Cottonwood Phase II	1,407.27	2017
UKC - Upper Sink Valley	1,362.45	2017
Sunset Cliffs Rabbitbrush Treatment	328.28	2016
UKC - Coal Hollow Phase III	517.35	2017
Kanab Area Project Maintenance	2,802.77	2016
Calf Pasture Wildlife Water Project	0	2016
Water Quality and Fisheries Improvement on the Upper Sevier River near Hatch, UT - Year 5	0	2018
Alton/South Canyon Retreatment - large tree removal	1,210.98	2016
Broad Hollow Rabbitbrush Removal	485.31	2017
Hatch Bench Vegetation Enhancement Phase III	2,036.98	2017
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY16	0	2016
Southern Region Riparian Tree and Shrub Planting - FY17	0	2017
South Canyon (Coal Pit Wash)	2,242.51	2017
Paunsaugunt-Petrified Wash Wildlife Drinkers	0	2022
Paunsaugunt boreal toad habitat improvement project	49.52	2020
Long Valley Estates Water Project-Heaton Livestock	0	2018
East Bench Water System	0	2018
Graff Property Water system	0	2018
Hatch Bench Well and Water Project	0	2018
South Canyon (Panguitch Creek)	2,230.42	2021
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY 18	0	2018
White Sage Well Project	0	2020
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY21	0	2021
Blue Fly Rabbitbrush control wildlife enhancement project	84	2021
Jenny Clay Flex Harrow	1,575.69	2018
Dry Lake Chaining and Seeding	396.56	2019
UKC - Spaniard Spring/Sink Valley	1,071.33	2018
UKC - Burnt Cedar Point, Phase I	1,160.94	2018
Sevy Bench Habitat Improvement Project	4,715.12	2021
Sunset Cliffs Water Project	0	2018
TOTAL	58,843	