

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 30
PINE VALLEY
2023

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Iron and Washington counties - Boundary begins at the Utah-Arizona state line and I-15; north on I-15 to SR-56; west on SR-56 to the Lund highway; northwest on this highway to Lund and the Union Pacific railroad tracks; southwest along these tracks to the Utah-Nevada state line; south on this state line to the Utah-Arizona state line; east on this state line to I-15. EXCLUDES ALL NATIVE AMERICAN TRUST LANDS WITHIN THIS BOUNDARY. Excludes all CWMUs.

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

Maintain a healthy elk population at a biologically and socially sustainable level. Address depredation concerns in agricultural areas in a timely and efficient manner. Continue to manage for a small limited population of elk.

UNIT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Habitat

Manage for healthy habitats capable of holding a small elk population.

Population

Target Winter Herd Size - Manage for a population objective of 50 elk. In the past, public committees including sportsman, landowners, grazers and public land managers were assembled, and DWR has agreed that the habitat on this unit should not be actively managed for increased elk populations.

CURRENT STATUS OF ELK MANAGEMENT

Habitat

Habitat in the northern portion on this unit is currently stable at this time and capable of holding 50 elk.

Large areas in the southern portion of this unit have been affected by wildfires in the past 25 years and several thousand acres of mule deer winter range have been negatively impacted.

Habitat projects

Many projects that have been completed on this unit through the Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) since 2016 that may benefit elk (see Table 1).

Population

The elk population on this unit is currently estimated between 50-75 animals. Small populations have been reported in the Horse Valley/Mt. Meadow and Studhorse/Crestline areas of this unit. Sightings of a few elk in the New Harmony, Pinto and Chloride Canyon area have also been reported. Depredation permits are being issued to agricultural landowners, as well as antlerless control permits and public draw antlerless permits. All hunts have a very low success rate, and it is very difficult to find an elk to harvest.

Table 1. Wildlife habitat projects on the Pine Valley Unit 2016-2023.

Project Title	Fiscal Year	Acres
Enterprise/Hwy 56 Project Maintenance	2016	1,323
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY16	2016	0
Aspen Fire Rehabilitation Seeding	2017	355
Duncan Creek - Final Phase	2017	2,236
Grass Valley Water Project	2018	0
Dixie National Forest FY 2016 Exclosure Repair and Rebuild project	2018	0
Grays Ranch Water Project	2018	0
Pine Valley Fuel Break	2019	959
North Fire Rehabilitation	2019	300
West Valley Fire Rehabilitation	2019	1,792
Pine Valley Fuel Break	2020	800
Kanarra Ridge West Fuels Reduction Seeding	2020	129
Escalante Desert Range Improvement	2020	932
Veyo West Fire ESR	2021	2,559
Southern Region Riparian Restoration FY21	2021	0
Upper Santa Clara Watershed Restoration and Defensible Fire Space project	2022	1,091
Iron Town Private Land Seeding	2022	16
Antelope Fire Rehab	2022	178
Iron Springs Shooting Range/Three Peaks SRMA	2022	488
Antelope Spring Drill Seeding	2023	60
Total acres treated		13,217

POPULATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Monitoring

Population Size - The population will be monitored by doing an aerial helicopter census during the winter months as conditions and funds are available. Helicopter counts would be conducted every third year. If appropriate, population models will be used to fine tune population estimates for the unit. In January of 2022 a short two-hour survey was done in the Studhorse/Crestline area a small herd of 18 cows and calves were sighted within ¼ mile of the Utah/Nevada state line.

Bull Age Structure - Age structure will not be monitored. A general idea of yearlings as compared to mature bulls in the harvest can be obtained through statewide mandatory harvest reporting. The population is small and difficult to locate, therefore no classification or age information is being collected.

Harvest -The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through statewide mandatory harvest reporting. The target population size will be achieved by use of antlerless harvest, using a variety of methods including a limited entry antlerless hunt, antlerless control permits and mitigation permits. A general season any bull hunt is the preferred hunt strategy to make sure that the population is kept at objective and to maximize hunter opportunity.

Depredation problems will be handled aggressively under the rules defined in Utah Code and Rules.

Limiting Factors

Crop Depredation - Depredation may be a limiting factor in localized segments of the unit. The DWR will take all steps necessary to minimize depredation as prescribed by state law and DWR policy.

Habitat - (winter/summer range conditions) Competition between elk and livestock on private rangelands may be a limiting factor. Excessive habitat utilization will be addressed.

Wilderness – At this time, very few elk use the Pine Valley wilderness area. If a herd becomes established in the wilderness area, it will be difficult for hunters to gain access and keep population levels at the objective.

Illegal Harvest - Illegal harvest does not seem to be a significant problem.

Predation - Predators seem to have little impact on the Pine Valley elk herd.

Highway Mortality - Although there is some highway mortality, it is not a limiting factor for the Pine Valley elk herd.

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.