

ELK HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Elk Herd Unit # 30
(Pine Valley)
2016

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 population of 50 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 15 years and several thousand acres of mule deer winter range have been negatively impacted.

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.

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. Due to the small size of the heard and priority of other units, no helicopter surveys have been done.

Bull Age Structure - Age structure will not be monitored through specific cementum annuli aging. A general idea of yearlings as compared to mature bulls in the harvest can be obtained through the

statewide uniform harvest survey. The population is so small and therefore difficult to locate, no classification or age information is being collected.

Harvest -The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through the statewide uniform harvest survey. 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 down to the 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 from a population stand point.

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.