

**ELK MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ZION UNIT #29  
2016**

**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Iron, Kane and Washington counties; Boundary begins at the Utah-Arizona state line and I-15; north on I-15 to SR-14; east on SR-14 to US-89; south on US-89 to US-89A; south on US-89A to the Utah-Arizona state line; west on this state line to I-15. This hunt is comprised of all or largely private property. Excludes Zion National Park. EXCLUDES ALL NATIVE AMERICAN TRUST LANDS WITHIN THIS BOUNDARY. Excludes all CWMUs.

**LAND OWNERSHIP**

**RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP**

Ownership	Yearlong range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	0	0	12,512	7	0	0
Bureau of Land Management	21,861	35	13,014	8	14,550	47
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	7,318	12	2,184	1	2,389	8
Native American Trust Lands	0	0	0	0	2,088	7
Private	33,446	53	133,459	79	5,978	20
Water Resources	0	0	43	>1	0	0
USFWS Refuge	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Parks	184	<1	8,765	5	5,611	18
Utah State Parks	0	0	0	0	0	0
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	0	0	0	0	0	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62,809</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>169,979</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30,616</b>	<b>100</b>

**UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS**

Manage for a population of elk capable of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities including hunting and viewing. Maintain healthy elk populations at biologically and socially sustainable levels. Continue with the any bull harvest strategy.

**POPULATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

Target Winter Herd Size: Continue to manage for a total of 300 elk wintering across the unit.

Bull Age Structure: Continue to manage the unit as a general season any-bull unit. No age of harvest data will be collected on this unit.

Recruitment: Aerial surveys and annual preseason classification surveys (July – August) will be used to monitor the population. Population modeling will also be used to generate annual postseason (winter) population estimates.

Harvest: Bulls are harvested under a general season any-bull hunt strategy. Antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons will be the primary means to achieving the wintering population objective.

Current Status: An aerial survey was conducted in January 2011. The wintering population at that time was estimated to be 275 elk. The unit has not been surveyed by helicopter since 2011 due to poor snow conditions. It is scheduled for survey in January 2017. The current population has been modeled to be approximately 350 wintering elk.

Barriers to Achieving Unit Population Objectives: Due to the high amount of private land and varying tolerances towards elk, depredation will continue to be an issue on high elevation private range lands.

Strategies for Removing Barriers to Population Objectives:

- Depredation - Take all steps necessary to minimize depredation using management strategies within state law and DWR policies to increase tolerance of elk on private and public lands.
- Support statewide landowner incentive programs within the Statewide Elk Management Plan.
- Use new antlerless harvest tools identified in the Statewide Elk Management Plan as needed (private lands permits, etc).
- Explore implementation of current private lands programs (LOA, CWMU) through research, public opinion surveys, etc.

## **HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

Current Status: Overall, range conditions on the Zion WMU are good with stable to increasing range conditions on most of the unit (UDWR Range Trend / USFS and BLM Vegetation Monitoring). Approximately 7,100 acres of elk habitat have been treated through WRI since 2006 (Appendix 1). Some challenges facing elk habitat include:

- Conifer encroachment of aspen stands
- Recovering forests from epidemic of spruce bark beetle
- Stabilization following the Shingle Fire

Unit Habitat Objectives:

- Continue to be committed to the statewide goal of supporting habitat projects that increase forage for both big game and livestock.
- Maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit to achieve population management objectives.
- Work with private, state and federal agencies to maintain and protect crucial ranges. Continue projects with USFS, BLM, state and private entities to enhance habitat across the unit.
- Provide improved habitat security and escapement opportunities for elk through support and cooperation of approved Dixie National Forest Travel Plan.
- The 2011 Zion Elk Committee has suggested that the DWR be a participating partner in the Cedar Mountain Initiative and work with landowners on large-scale aspen regeneration projects.
- Work with land management agencies to improve calving habitat and minimize disturbance in these areas. Seek opportunities to improve aspen communities, and some sagebrush ranges where calving and foraging are occurring.

Barriers to Achieving Unit Habitat Objectives:

Restoration efforts on summer ranges to improve forest health and address watershed productivity are needed. Private landowners, livestock permittees, federal and state land management agencies and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources are encouraged to continue to work together to conduct landscape scale treatments. In an effort to regenerate aspen communities, land managers are encouraged to use fire, mechanical or chemical treatments on landscape level projects.

Strategies for Removing Barriers to Habitat Objectives:

- Encourage improved communication among stakeholders through Utah Partners for Conservation and Development as well as annual interagency coordination meetings.
- Use range trend and habitat improvement data to make appropriate habitat-related decisions.

**Appendix 1.** Recent habitat projects in elk habitat on the Zion WMU #29.

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Title	Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Acres
Laurence Reese Discretionary Seeding	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	2006	83
RW North Fork Discretionary Seed	Private Landowner	2009	16
Duck Creek Aspen Regeneration	U.S. Forest Service	2009	188
Muddy Creek	Bureau of Land Management	2010	1,581
Lambert Discretionary Seed	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	2010	9
Crystal K Ranch Discretionary Seed	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	2011	12
Shingle Fire Browse and Forb Seeding	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	2013	2,962
Shingle Fire Reforestation	U.S. Forest Service	2016	714
Dixie National Forest FY 2016 Exclosure Repair and Rebuild project	U.S. Forest Service	2016	14
Kanab Area Project Maintenance	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	2016	1,581