

Appendix F: 2025 status of Red Hill Elk Management Plan

The fall of 2024 marked the fifth season of elk management of the Red Hill herd on open space properties along US Highway 36, and on BCPOS agricultural leases east of Haystack Mountain.

The season ran from Aug. 19, 2024, to Nov. 2, 2024, with the intent to harvest and influence non-migratory elk before migratory individuals arrive later in the season. Additionally, hunters from this program were used to mitigate elk damage on BCPOS agricultural leases through Jan. 31, 2025.

As in past years, staff continued to work with private landowners in the area experiencing damage caused by this herd, often facilitating game damage assistance from local Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials.

Highway safety in this area continues to be an issue. In 2024, BCPOS staff worked with consultants and other local governmental organizations to develop a comprehensive plan for improving safety in this area using wildlife crossings, fencing, and other measures to address this concern. Elk collar movement data from the Red Hill Elk Management Plan was an integral part in the development of this study.

Red Hill Harvest Overview 2025

- 1) Total participants: 23
- 2) Total harvest: 15 (65.2% success – this does not include harvest on BCPOS agricultural leases after the hunt concluded on Nov. 2, 2024)
- 3) Total post-hunt harvests on BCPOS agricultural leases: 3

In 2024, the program recorded its highest harvest success. However, large numbers of resident elk in the Red Hill area remain. The program has been largely successful in mitigating resource damage to BCPOS properties by moving elk around the area through hunting pressure and harvest success. Unfortunately, many of these resident elk have moved further east in the county and continue to cause issues to other BCPOS tenants and private landowners. Summer elk counts from 2024 put the number of resident elk well above the target of 25 individuals (n=57, n=47). These counts are likely an undercount because many individuals that crossed the Diagonal Highway (US 119) were not detected until later in the season after surveys had been completed.

Resident elk continue to use the federal property at Table Mountain and adjacent City of Boulder parcels south of Nelson Road as a refuge from hunting pressure—causing extensive property damage to neighboring landowners. Additionally, a significant number of elk are moving across US 119 onto irrigated agricultural properties east of the highway and causing substantial damage to corn and other crops in the area. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) estimates that they will pay \$36,000 in damage to crops caused by this herd.

As in past years, the hunt management team continued to coordinate with BCPOS tenants to allow hunters access to their leased properties when elk were present and causing damage to hay and other infrastructure. In 2022, CPW and BCPOS facilitated the installation of a stackyard fence to protect the tenant’s hay. Despite these efforts, six hunters were sent to the property to help mitigate the damage in 2024-2025. BCPOS also worked with CPW to obtain vouchers for this property after the list of available hunters was exhausted in 2024—a necessity caused by the high harvest success this season.

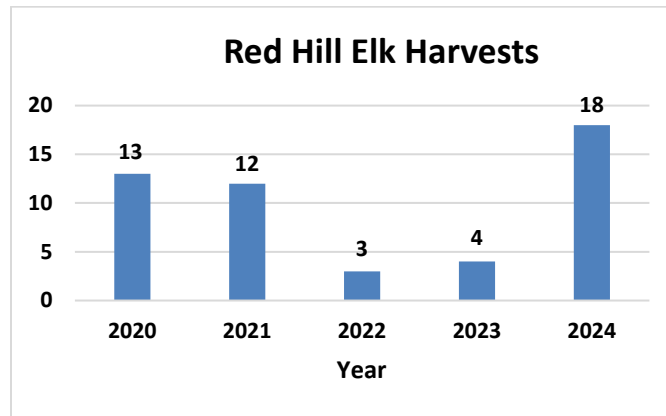


Figure 1: Total number of elk harvested in the Red Hill Hunt Program from 2020-2024

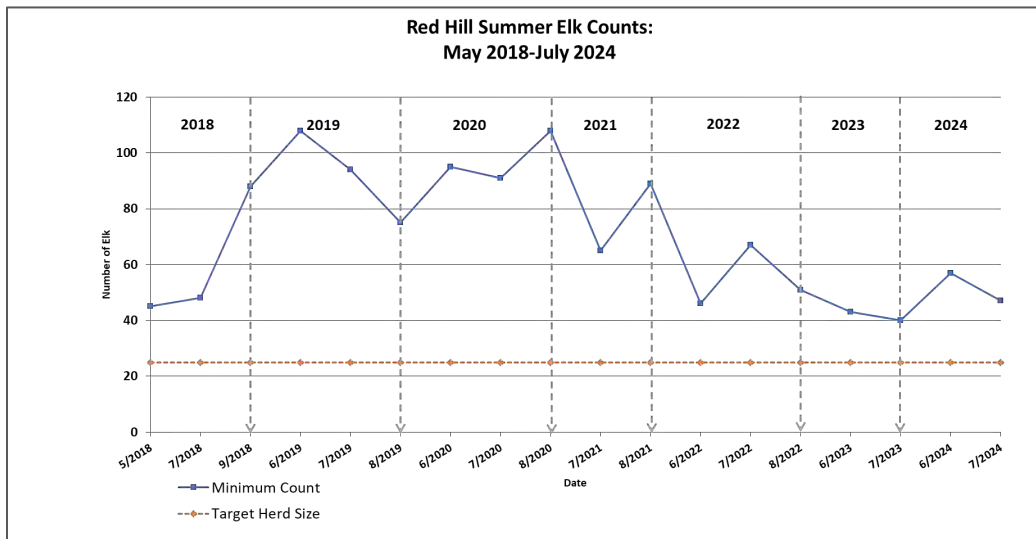


Figure 2: Red Hill Summer elk counts with Colorado Parks & Wildlife from 2018-2024

Appendix G: Proposed Amendments for 2025-2030

Based on the status of the Red Hill elk herd as of 2025, we propose to reauthorize the Red Hill Elk Management Plan. To simplify the process moving forward the following two amendments are suggested:

1. The Red Hill Elk Management Plan will be brought before the Board of County Commissioners for reauthorization every five years.
 - Any changes that dramatically alter the size and scope of the current written plan will be brought before the commissioners for approval. This would include, but is not limited to, the addition of new properties to the hunt area or major increases to the hunt boundaries.
2. BCPOS staff will work directly with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to make operational changes to the current plans, such as altering the number of hunters per week, changes to the duration of the hunting season, and pausing hunting once objectives have been met and restarting hunting if elk numbers increase to levels outside of plan objectives.