BAGGS MULE DEER HERD WORKING GROUP RAWLINS, WY January 6, 2015
FINAL NOTES 3/2/2015 Approved
The third organizational meeting of the Baggs Mule Deer Herd Working Group (BMDHWG) took place on January 6, 2015. The following people attended:

<u>Working Group Members:</u>
Andy Warren, BLM
Frank Blomquist, BLM
Jim Espy, landowner public representative
Jennifer Lamb, the Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Larry Hicks, Little Snake Conservation District
Chris Herold, Warren Resources, industry representative
Tony Mong, WGFD
Kim Olson, WGFD
Lucy Diggins-Wold, facilitator and chief note taker
<u>Absent Working Group Members:</u>
 Bo Stocks, Chairperson
Patty Waldron
Mike Bauman or Darby Finley, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Joshua Coursey or Joey Faigle from Muley Fanatic Foundation (MFF)
Wendy Haas, USDA Forest Service
Ed Arnett, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

<u>Members of the public:</u>
Game and Fish Commissioner Mark Anselmi
Gene Carrico
Mike Carrico
Erik Collier
Teal Joseph, new West Rawlins Game Warden
Greg Hiatt, Game and Fish wildlife biologist
Jim LaBorde
Jennifer Fleuret, BLM

 Previous meeting and minutes review:
The November meeting minutes were approved.

<u>Action Items and Group Information/deer population data from Tony</u>

➢ Kevin Monteith was not able to present deer nutrition information at the January meeting but will do so at the March 17 meeting in Baggs.
➢ Tony gave the group a presentation on <u>general hunt areas statewide</u> and also <u>2014 classification data for the Baggs mule deer herd</u>. Tony and Kim were able to fly just before the meeting so this population information is "hot off the press".
➢ 4,000 mule deer were classified in @8 hours of flying. There were highly variable fawn rations and only 5 deer were observed in the Sand Hills area. There were 54 fawns per

100 does, with 17 yearling bucks per 100 does this year (2014) compared to 13 yearling bucks per 100 does in 2013. The total buck per 100 doe ratio is 37.

➢ Tony explained the buck classification specification: Class I bucks have an antler spread of <20 inches

➢ Class II bucks have antler spread 20 – 25 inches, and Class III bucks have an antler spread greater than 25 inches.

Group discussion about the first wave of hunter harvest survey comments:

➢ The group reviewed the first wave of mule deer hunter survey comments from hunters commenting on areas 82, 84 and 100. The Game and Fish collects harvest survey results yearly. There will be more mule deer harvest survey comments coming.

➢ Larry Hicks commented that he felt the antler point restriction did what it was designed to do in this instance.

➢ Chris Herold said he believes that hunt are 82 is the source of hunter crowding and other problems. Chris thinks hunt area 82 has two distinct areas (forest and foothills) and there is too much hunter pressure on the foothills.

➢ The group recognized the variability in the comments and also the need to take all the information we have (comments, data, science) to make management decisions.

Group discussion and recommendations about hunter crowding, ATV misuse, buck quality numbers

➢ Chris reiterated that he thinks hunt area 82 is really two distinct areas; off Forest and on Forest

➢ Deer and elk seasons overlap (Chris) trophy hunters were worried about that down lower the elk and deer are mixed.

➢ Chris said that we is alarmed there were only 150 head in the Sand Hills area. You got tightened restrictions in hunt area 84 so there is not much more you can do with hunt area 84.

➢ A lot of hunters apply for the hunt area 84 because it is less crowded. (Greg Hiatt)

➢ Maybe we are about at the sweet spot historic a little more tolerance (Larry) Cow Butte opening day is a circus; please don't funnel a whole lot more hunters in hunt area 82; the trend seems to be to put more hunters in hunt area 82

➢ I think your buck ratios are right on (Gene Carrico) Elk numbers we have trying to get them down and I wonder how that is influencing our deer. Are the cow hunters affecting the deer numbers and where they are at (late elk hunting seasons) Social media causes a buzz when someone reports the elk are in area 21 where they can get at them. Hunting has changed. A lot of things to think about.

- Doesn't take much snow drifts to limit elk hunters. The reduced number of deer in the Sand Hills has been trending down for multiple years now. (Kim) We see a lot of deer and elk on Battle and Horse Mountains. There are deer in the Sand Hills in September.
- Both elk and deer populations were rising at the same time. I don't there is definite data to support the notion that elk are influencing the deer populations. (Larry)
- Can you get collar data from those deer on the Sand Hills? Tony says yes.
- (Frank) Atlantic Rim EIS second go around of trapping 40 wild horse and Doty Mountain/Sand Hills area continue to track them to see how migration is influenced by energy development.
- Darby from CO reported CO is seeing way-more deer this winter during their flights. Darby and Tony are building an Interstate mule deer population model. Tracking animals as far north as the radio tower here; modeled together make sure the 37 bucks per 100 is actually what we have in the fall and try to figure out some of these movements.
- 29 is the top for recreation and 30-40 for trophy bucks per 100 does (we are at 37 bucks per 100 does)
- The herd objective is being reviewed this year
- What happens if we come up with a split number and these numbers don't address the buck quality? We need to set some goals. (Larry) Keep numbers up somewhere around 30 and set goals using your data. If we just use the hard buck number we are just going to go down that road of killing a lot of deer.
- How does suggesting longer seasons and more opportunities appear to people if this working group was formed to address the decline in Baggs mule deer? Just thinking big picture. (Jennifer) Do we have the freedom to evaluate the herd objective when we start getting into the habitat specifics? *Tony responded that yes, the group will be able to review herd objective numbers.*
- Tony advised the group that we may see increased stresses and demands on the habitat in the next few years with an increase in human activity associated with the wind energy development coming
- What is distribution of buck harvest? Greg says it is the first three days, but if there is an opener in the middle of the week there is a difference.
- Kevin's nutrition information dictates the Baggs mule deer are not in as good of shape as the Wyoming Range mule deer, but better than the Rock Springs/Superior deer; the deer condition is somewhere in the middle.
- What has been the history of this deer herd objective?
- We have the roller coaster cycle (long term) because of the "bad years" and the habitat is telling us what we can support when we get those bad winters. Pull the peaks down and push the troughs up. (Larry) We grow deer during the drought years so the real controller is those real bad winters. Pay attention to the nutritional data for winter ranges and what is the carrying capacity.
- Your doe harvest does not have to be type 6's it can also be a type 4. Type 4 is full price! (Greg)
- Take a look at the WWNRT and the funding they are providing for the neonatal research. Don't want to be data rich and information poor. (Larry)

- ➢ **Recommendation: using our buck ratios split those out and have a goal of not less than 20 per 100 with class I II combined and not less than 10 per 100 with the class III (long-term goal)**
- ➢ **Recommendation: Maintain a general license unit and split that by geographic boundaries (i.e. forest, off forest) (long-term goal)**
- ➢ **Recommendation: Split hunt area 82 into two separate units (long-term goal)**
- ➢ **Recommend a 10 day general season**
- ➢ **Recommend continued youth hunting season**
- ➢ **Recommend possible doe licenses in southern portion of hunt area 82. Tony will follow up with potential area and population model.**

NEXT STEPS

- ➢ Population Management: Recommendations by end of February as season setting process is in March; herd objective review starts in March-June Group needs to come up with recommendation in March and April and Tony will send those up the chain; management plan needs to be completed this summer and needs to be in place this summer and packet information completed by November.
- ➢ Habitat: March will be a review of projects that have been completed BLM, WGFD, LSRCD, finish the habitat management plan this summer
- ➢ What are the research needs that are out there that we might anticipate that the group should take a look at. (actual ages of deer harvested (teeth data and is very expensive at $10 a tooth, habitat transects in Poison Basin, dietary selection data needed and fecal analysis) It is difficult to do fecal analysis effectively

ACTON: Tony will run the populations data

ACTION: Tony will put together the objective history of the herd

ACTION: Tony will work up recommendation data

ACTION: Tony call and reserve the Baggs (Valley) Community Center for March 17.

ACTION: Kim is going to look at the doe season data

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 17, 2015, in Baggs, **Valley Community Center, 5:30 p.m.**