

# BAGGS MULE DEER HERD PUBLIC MEETING RECORD

BAGGS, WYOMING JULY 9, 2014

Twenty-seven members of the public attended the BMDH meeting in Baggs. Senator Larry Hicks and Former Carbon County and Former Game and Fish Commissioner Linda Fleming were in attendance. Game and Fish personnel included Steve DeCecco, Mark Zornes, Kim Olson, Brady Frude, Tony Mong and Lucy Diggins-Wold. After a presentation of the process, herd update, and how the working group will be chosen, the group was split into three breakout groups and their responses were recorded. The question posed to the group was: **Based on your observations and experiences what are some issues (I) affecting the BMDH and what are some of your suggestions for solutions (S) for these issues? \*All of the groups' comments were recorded and each group was asked to rank their top three issues. The order of the issues is not in order of importance. Additionally, many issues were lumped together as they are related.**

**I=issues and S=solutions**

## **GROUP 1**

Top Three Issues:

### **1. Access/Hunter crowding**

I= Hunter Crowding (includes ORV impacting deer and habitat distribution)

S=Split the hunting season; change boundary of HA 84 and Ha 82 to allow limited quota area to recover

**2. General overall decline in habitat(s) quality** (decadent sagebrush, decline in mountain shrubs, fire suppression in oil fields, change in grazing practices with sheep now result in poor riparian areas and herbaceous cover.

I= Too many elk and timing of seasons impacts deer

S= Do not let people hunt elk in deer winter ranges

S= reduce number of elk

I= Invasive species: cheatgrass, as well as junipers.

S= eradicate invasive species educate public on what to look for

I= Elk are changing the face of habitats [to the detriment of mule deer] Pronghorn also using traditional deer winter ranges.

S= Place a fence at milepost 35

### **3. Competition (Between all ungulates, i.e. wild horses, elk, etc.)**

Other Issues and Solutions Presented by Group 1

I= Too much private lands and limited access to them

S= More PLPW opportunities-landowners signed up with the access program

S= Look for more late seasons and more antlerless seasons

I= USFS lands are more difficult to access due to bad roads or closed roads and trails and the large numbers of dead timber due to the beetle kill.

S= Pursue structured volunteer projects where volunteers clear trails and roads

I= Hunter ethics are poor-they have declined-and hunter behavior has changed for the worse

S= Encourage people to turn in an unethical/illegal hunter and in return reward the RP with a license.

I= Climate

S= none offered; very complicated

I= License allocation

S= No solution offered

I= Social Issues are driving management decisions; Department is pretty good at managing towards objectives (population) but not so much with managing social issues. [Everyone wants something different and the department has less ability to deal with social issues.]

## **GROUP 2**

### Top Three Issues:

#### **1. Predator Control**

S= more management

#### **2. Habitat(s) poor quality**

S= concentrate habitat improvement projects where you know you have deer concentrations

S= get rid of cheatgrass; be careful if prescribed burns are used for habitat treatments so that cheatgrass does not take over.

I= Lack of data about how cloud seeding impacts/affects habitat quality.

S= Get more data about cloud seeding.

I= Increased energy development negatively impacting habitat quality and values

S= Work with these energy development groups and concentrate your habitat improvement efforts in areas where they are greatly needed; be smart about your efforts

S= Institute winter range mitigation to benefit mule deer

I= Some landowners do not leave grass (food) for the wildlife

S= Talk and work with landowners to see if they can leave grass for wildlife; more work with landowners by the WGFD; express grazing concerns and come up with options.

S=feed deer. \*Tony explained the hazards and pitfalls of trying to feed mule deer.

I= There was a “perfect storm” (high populations, poor winter range conditions, high, early and long lasting snow fall) leading up to the winter of 2007 that killed a lot of mule deer in the herd.

S= Be more proactive with monitoring these events that lead up to a so-called “perfect storm” and be conservative with the number of licenses you issue.

S= Take a look at the herd objective for the BMDH and evaluate whether it is accurate or appropriate.

I= Body condition of these mule deer could be healthier.

S= Utilize volunteer hunters and ask them to collect data, such as body fat and antler growth. Utilize meat processors and use a survey to get more data pertaining to body condition.

I= wild horse populations are out of control

S= work with BLM and reduce the number of wild horses using deer winter ranges

I= irrigation practices have changed from flooding to sprinkling and to a detriment of the deer

S= Work with landowners

**3. I= Hunter (lack of) ethics leading to overharvest** (Some discussion of small, younger bucks taken just to fill the hunter's tag) hunting pressure.

I= Short season results in some hunters taking less ethical shots and more intense hunters looking for any antlered deer to shoot.

S= extend the season so it is not intense in a short amount of time

S= keep point restriction longer

S= make all hunters choose their method of hunting-either firearms or bow

S= Make all hunters choose a Region (like nonresident hunters have to)

#### Other Issues and Solutions Presented by Group 2

I= Low population numbers

S= issue less licenses

S= keep point restriction for longer duration

I= Maintaining a balance between wildlife management and livestock grazing

S= no specific solutions were offered

I= ORV misuse

S= close more roads to ORV use

S= more enforcement

S= encourage peer group influence through education: police themselves [ORV users]

S= more education to not hunt from the ORV's

I= Low populations

S= Limited Quota seasons

I= Overlap between elk and deer seasons; hunter crowding, safety issues

S= Institute a break between the elk and deer seasons; maybe 5 days

### **GROUP 3**

#### Top Three Issues:

**1. I= Lack of winter range habitat improvements**, i.e., fence modifications, etc. to keep deer alive throughout the hard winters

S= institute more winter range closures

S= quality habitat improvement projects

S= more highway underpasses for deer and or more fencing to protect them from getting hit and killed on Highway 70

S= Identify areas where you can do intense predator control

S= Evaluate your herd objective and determine if it is sustainable in hard winters.

### **2. I= Predator control**

S= Increase and more intensive predator control

### **3. I= Hunter pressure**

S= lengthen the hunting season to 14 days

S= Limited Quota season

S= all hunters must choose a Region to hunt; resident hunters along with nonresident hunters

I= impacts from white-tailed deer and elk intermingling with mule deer

S= option for buying a separate white-tailed deer license

I= Accurate population numbers

S= change method to flying by sightability

I= Lack of funding for habitat projects, other projects, flying costs from other groups besides hunters

S= Charge money for shed antler collection

I= Mule deer quality and numbers are poor in Hunt Area 100.

S= Limited quota hunting season

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS SUBMITTED VIA PHONE WITH TONY MONG**

I= Mule Deer herd numbers are way down

S= Shut the season down and let numbers recover