

BAGGS MULE DEER HERD WORKING GROUP RAWLINS, WY March 17, 2015

Approved: April 17, 2015

The fourth organizational meeting of the Baggs Mule Deer Herd Working Group (BMDHWG) took place on March 17, 2015. The following people attended:

Working Group Members:

Andy Warren, Bureau of Land Management
Frank Blomquist, Bureau of Land Management (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, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Kim Olson, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Bo Stocks, Chairperson
Patty Waldron
Darby Finley, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Katie Cheesebrough, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Ian Tator, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Cindy Mosteller, Mule Deer Foundation (MDF)
Lucy Diggins-Wold, facilitator and chief note taker

Absent Working Group Members:

Joshua Coursey or Joey Faigle from Muley Fanatic Foundation (MFF)
Wendy Haas, USDA Forest Service
Ed Arnett, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Members of the public:

Game and Fish Commissioner Mark Anselmi
Robert Dunn
Dave Allen
Jennifer Fuit
Keith Uraski, GRMR

Previous meeting and minutes review/Corrections to Agenda:

- The January meeting minutes were approved.
- Kevin Monteith was not able to present deer nutrition information at the January or March meeting, but will possibly do so at the April meeting in Rawlins.

Season proposal overview 2015-Tony

Tony gave a brief presentation about the Baggs area mule deer hunting season proposals and reminded the group that the Baggs hunting season open house is March 24 at 6:30 p.m. and

final written comments were due by March 31. Tony also reviewed the fawn ratios, yearling buck ratios and total buck ratio information.

- Dave Allen (public at large) asked Tony why there were doe hunting seasons. Dave also had a concern about the hunting season proposal to harvest 100 does. He also said that we used to have 14-day hunting seasons in the past and now the seasons are shorter.
- Chris Herold wanted to know if the doe hunting seasons were liberal enough.
- Kim Olson reminded the group that there is harvest occurring through the archery seasons and also the youth hunting seasons.
- Commissioner Mark Anselmi asked Tony how many deer were killed last year in hunt areas 82, 84 and 100. Tony replied that 1475 bucks were harvested in the Baggs hunt areas in 2014.
- Larry Hicks asked Tony when the herd unit objective will be reviewed. Tony said the group will talk about the Baggs mule deer herd objective at the April meeting and come up with group recommendations.
- Linda Fleming of the *Snake River Press* asked Tony for a copy of the hunting season proposals for the local newspaper.
- Jennifer (public at large) asked about any diseases that were documented in the Baggs mule deer herd. Tony explained about Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), pink eye and a recent case of ungulate polio.
- Patty Waldron asked if the Snake River Processing Plant had any more information pertaining to sick or diseased mule deer that came into the processing plant during the hunting season.
- Tony and Kim suggested the group do a field tour after the next meeting so we all have a better understanding of what we will be looking at in the “field” and everyone agreed a field tour will be beneficial.

BLM habitat treatments/vegetation data-Andy Warren

Andy Warren with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) gave a presentation to the group about habitat treatments (mechanical, prescribed burns and chemical treatments) completed and or ongoing in the Baggs area and also vegetative data he and the BLM have collected for the past few decades. Andy used maps of treatment sites and also photo data sets to show the pre and post treatment vegetation in many locations near Baggs. Andy also explained the pros and cons of each type of habitat treatment, as well as the grazing management strategies of each area with a permittee.

- Tony asked Andy if he had vegetation polygons/mapping in relation to where mule deer in the Baggs mule deer herd utilize those habitats. Andy said yes but that there were also various types of maps used when a prescribed burn is used to treat the habitat. Andy advised that the new GPS data will not mesh with some of the older vegetative transects.

Habitat treatments- Little Snake River Conservation District-Larry Hicks

Larry Hicks with the Little Snake River Conservation District presented information on habitat treatments in the Baggs area and did a good job of presenting some of the history on the Little Snake River Valley in relation to wildlife populations, aspen regeneration and juniper

encroachment. Larry related that he thinks the winter range for mule deer is in poor condition. Larry explained the three stages of juniper eradication and the costs associated with each stage.

- Jennifer with The Nature Conservancy asked how did Larry and the conservation district set priorities for wildlife and what is their strategy or strategies for addressing their [habitat treatment] those priorities. Larry explained that it is his experiences that it is very easy to get work completed on private lands, somewhat easy on state lands, fairly good on Bureau of Land Management lands and almost impossible on Forest Service lands because of federal laws and policies.
- Jennifer with TNC reiterated that the group should consider wildlife priorities with any habitat plan and also consider where and how the dollars will be spent; some of the projects are going to be short and or long term, consequently slow going.
- Larry said that there is a big difference between the amount of dead trees (masticated and downed juniper trees) you can leave in mule deer habitat and sage grouse habitat. Sage grouse do not like any downed timber. They like open country.
- Darby with Colorado Wildlife and Parks said they are doing serviceberry and oak brush habitat treatments in a 10 year study and they are beginning to gather data now. CO is also using fertilizer on plants within some of their habitat treatment areas.
- Ian Tator said the fertilization treatments have been done in Wyoming with no or short-lived success. The fertilization efforts are costly and elk almost always move into the area and eat the forage. Ian also said as you increase the nitrogen levels in the soil the presence of cheatgrass increases.

Action Items:

ACTION: Tony please work with Andy and Larry to produce habitat treatment/vegetative maps in relation to where the mule deer are utilizing those habitats for the April meeting.

ACTION: Group please shift towards habitat plan development-over the next three months, think of more deer boundaries and NOT just state/political boundaries approaching habitat treatments for the future; take a hard look at the herd objective, carrying capacity and the collaring data in both Wyoming and Colorado.

Use the Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd (PVMDH) Habitat Plan as a reference as a lot of research and hard work went into that plan. *Katie Cheesbrough cautioned the group that while the PVMDH habitat plan is a good reference and contains some similarities, there are differences in the habitat characteristics.

ACTION: Andy please gather browse data to present at the April meeting.

ACTION: Andy and Frank please reserve the Rawlins BLM Office for the April meeting. **CAN WE PLEASE GET IN 15 MINUTES EARLY TO SET UP?**

ACTION: Tony please put together presentation on deer collar use patterns. **Chris** asked for more data on the shrub age structure, nutritional value of specific plants for mule deer and information on the mule deer stop-over sites in the Baggs herd.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 29, 2015, in Rawlins, BLM Office, 5:30 p.m.