

Area 66 Mule Deer Initiative Working Group July 22, 2014 Meeting – Sportsmen’s Warehouse

Members Present: Paul Threlkeld, Miles Bundy, Rhen Etzelmiller, Dusty Porter, Pete Garrett, Jim Wetzel, Randy Morrison and Chris Mikels

Other Publics Present: Steven James, Jeff Gordon and Steve Garrett

WGFD Personnel Present: Justin Binfet, Matt Withroder, Heather O’Brien and Brian Olsen

Not Present: Phil Marton and Brian Scott

The first meeting of the Area 66 Mule Deer Working Group was on July 22, 2014 at Sportsman’s Warehouse. Justin Binfet began the working group meeting with a roundtable introduction, outlined the purpose of the Mule Deer Initiative (MDI), described the process framework and timeline, and then discussed sideboards to the MDI process. Discussion was also had regarding the deliverables including the management plan. A working group charter and meeting agenda were distributed. Dusty Porter was selected as the Chair of the working group.

Heather O’Brien gave a presentation of the history of mule deer management in hunt area 66, outlining historical population trends/estimates, harvest, sex/age ratios and various management challenges and issues. Justin and other Department personnel offered a “field trip” to tour the area, discussing habitat and management activities. Justin then presented information on the recently completed Deer Area 66/70 survey, and provided a handout with a synopsis of results.

The remainder of the meeting focused on developing ideas about how to best foster public participation and comment regarding this initiative. The use of social media and the Department’s website to gather public participation were discussed thoroughly. The group unanimously supported the option of creating a working group Facebook page to initiate public involvement and obtain feedback on a suite of questions. Some concerns were voiced about the working group’s Facebook page degenerating to the point where it becomes argumentative and combative, making it unproductive. The group discussed establishing some ground rules and removing participants from the Facebook page if this became a problem. An idea was suggested about posting a “Question of the Week” on the Facebook page to survey our constituents. We also discussed creating a handout survey to give out in person, post on Facebook, have a booth at Sportsmen’s Warehouse, and attend RMEF and other NGO sportsmen banquets. The group also discussed developing a name for the Facebook page, and ultimately decided on “Area 66 Mule Deer Initiative”. Finally, the group decided to convene another working group meeting in late August specifically to discuss pros and cons with various hunting season structures.

Action Items to be completed by August meeting

- Each member will develop a list of pros and cons for both Limited Quota and General Season license structures.
- Each member will develop their own definition of their idea of a quality hunting experience.

- Each member will develop 2 – 4 survey questions to solicit public feedback for the Facebook page or other Social Media.
- Each member will develop ideas regarding a working group mission statement.
- Each member will obtain a Google gmail account to allow access to shared folders on Google Drive for the posting of meeting minutes, science/pertinent literature, and other electronic documents. WGFD will provide assistance in developing gmail accounts if necessary.
- Binfet will email electronic copies of the herd history presentation, the working group charter, and meeting minutes.

Discussion Items for the August 2014 Working Group meeting

- A roundtable discussion will be had on pros and cons with various hunting season structures.
- The group will develop and finalize a mission statement.
- WGFD personnel will disseminate and discuss the Department's recently completed mule deer talking points.
- The group will discuss the charter in more detail and formal adoption.
- The group will finalize a date for our first public meeting to be held in November or early December.
- The group will finalize plans for developing our Facebook page and will approve a final list of questions to post to solicit public feedback regarding mule deer issues in Area 66.
- The group will develop recommendations for media outreach to advertise the Facebook page and public meetings throughout this initiative.