

Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group

Meeting 1 – June 17, 2014

Lander, WY

Working Group Attendees: Harold Schultz, Travis Stephenson, Jared Oakleaf, Marla Lemm, Brad Hovinga, Rowdy Anderson, Ken Metzler, Stan Harter, Joe Hutto, Katie Erickson, David Killebrew, Ilana Williams, Ember Oakley

Public Attendees: Mattie Stevenson, Quentin Smith, Bruce Campbell, Jessica Clement, Walter Olson, Jessica Clement, Tom Sweet

Wyoming Game and Fish Personnel: Brad Gibb, Daryl Lutz, Commission President Richard Klouda

Facilitator – Rene Schell

Meeting Guidelines – Rene Schell reviewed the guidelines for all to consider and agree upon. These guidelines will be used at each of the working group's meetings to help ensure time is used effectively and all have the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns.

1. We all have an interest in the South Wind River and/or Green Mountain Mule Deer Herds – please **use respectful behavior**.
2. It's **okay to disagree**.
3. To enhance collaborative learning, we will **seek to understand** before seeking to be understood: ask and provide reasons.
4. We will all participate in making this a successful collaborative learning opportunity – please **don't interrupt others, dominate or withhold** information.
5. We will **be constructive**: discuss less what does not work and more what we think will work.
6. Side conversations are disruptive.
7. If possible, we will **turn off cell phones**. If we can't, we will take the call outside the room.

Introductions - Daryl Lutz provided background of mule deer in Wyoming and the reason the Working Group. He articulated the need for conversation to address the complexity of mule deer management in these five hunt areas and two herd units. Also, he explained the expectation of short and long-term management recommendations.

Ice-breaker - Individuals introduced each other to the working group by answering the questions: Name, job, family, interests, and “what you hope to accomplish as a part of this team.”

Green Mountain and South Wind River mule deer population background - Stan Harter – Presented the background of the mule deer populations in the Green Mountain and So. Wind River herd units. This was the same presentation given at the April 24 meeting. In summary, both deer populations are in decline and presumed to be the result of declining fawn production

and survival. The effects of antler point restrictions have been mixed with regard to buck:doe ratios and also dependent on fawn production and survival. They were successful in decreasing hunter numbers/crowding and overall buck harvest. Hunter harvest statistics are indicative of trends in deer numbers. Important factors affecting these herds include: habitat degradation and loss, predation, weather, disease, and competition with other animals. The key to population stability and eventual recovery is increased fawn production and survival.

Hunting seasons and mule deer populations - Brad Hovinga – Presented the background of and the effects of hunting seasons in these two herd units. This was also presented at the April 24 meeting. In summary, it was made clear hunting seasons are the reason these deer herds have declined. Comparisons between these herds and other herds managed under limited quota license allocation were made to demonstrate even where harvest has been greatly limited mule deer populations are similarly declining. The point was made regarding the need to maintain at minimum 66 fawns/100 does to allow mule deer populations to grow. Again the point was stressed that changes in hunting season structure will not bring deer back and that fawn production and survival is key. However, it was pointed out changes in hunting season structure will address concerns about the quality of the hunting experience.

Both presentations are available on the Department's website at:
<http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wildlife-1002046.aspx>.

Summary of the April 24th meeting - Rene Schell – A summary of the information collected from the April 24 meeting focusing on the question “Considering mule deer hunting opportunity, what defines a good hunting experience for you and others?” was presented and a hand-out was provided. Also, it was stressed the amount of information gathered from this meeting exemplifies the complexity the working group will face as they deliberate recommendations for future hunting seasons. It will be important this information is used to assist the group in considering the important aspect of “Opportunity for All.”

Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group Charter – Daryl Lutz – The working group's charter was provided and reviewed to re-familiarize members the Department's hope for and expectations of the working group. The working groups membership was reviewed and members were reminded their affiliation on the working (i.e., hunter, public at large, landowner, youth, outfitter, business, non-governmental organization, and Game and Fish). It was also pointed out the Department added an additional member to allow for 2 hunters and 1 youth.

Opportunity for All - This video was shown to familiarize everyone with the North American Wildlife Conservation Model. A brief discussion afterward focused on the need for all to participate in the management of Wyoming's wildlife and that is, in part, the reason for the Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group.

Collaborative Learning and Decision Making – Rene Schell – The framework of the Collaborative Process was introduced to the group. Important points and characteristics of the process are:

- Stresses improvement rather than solution.

- Emphasizes situation and progress rather than problem and conflict.
- The learning and benefits of a CL process are owned by all stakeholders. Focuses on concerns and interests not positions.
- Encourages interrelated rather than linear thinking.
- Through shared learning and transparency create equal access to information, allowing solutions to emerge that otherwise could not.

The “five finger” decision making tool was also introduced and is:

- 5 Fingers: Complete Support (I like it very much)
- 4 Fingers: Support (I’m very comfortable with this)
- 3 Fingers: Agreement with Reservations (I can live with it)
- 2 Fingers: Mild Agreement (I don't like this, but my reservations are not enough to hold up the process)
- 1 Finger: Disagreement (I don’t support the proposal)

If all members of the group present express approval at levels 5, 4, 3, or 2, then the proposal is agreed to and constitutes a consensus recommendation. If some members present continue to disagree (level 1) after the group has tried to address their concerns, then consensus has not been reached and objections will be documented for future discussion. If 2/3rds of the group present agree at a 3 level or better, the proposal moves forward.

Proposed Road Map – The proposed road map delineating important tasks and deadlines was reviewed. There was concern voiced the timeline included deadlines in October during hunting seasons and that may be unrealistic. It was stressed the timeline could be adjusted and adapted as the working group progressed. The group, using the decision tool accepted the road map as proposed (5s - 9, 4s - 3, 3s - 1).

Needed Information - Rene will send an email to working group to prioritize these requests for additional information. Members of the working group will be asked to assist/provide some of this information.

- Habitat requirements for ideal fawn production and survival.
- What habitat improvement projects have been done in this state and the results? Perhaps focusing in the Lander Area.
 - Cost and scale.
- Nutritional requirements of mule deer.
 - Primary forage.
- Identify importance of transition habitats (between summer and winter ranges) and where they are.
- What do we know about how mule deer move between important habitats and identify data gaps.
- Historical population levels vs. today. Perhaps back to the 70s or as far as we can.
- What are the changes in cheatgrass and sagebrush stands.
- Genetic requirements. Buck:doe ratios for breeding. What does it take to bring off a fawn successfully.

- Weather trends (i.e., drought) vs. population trends.
- Average age of the Wyoming deer hunter.
- Information from other states how they are doing and results of similar processes.
- Listing of hunting season structure for each of the hunt areas.
- Growth of ATV, demographics of users.

Next Meeting

- Items for next meeting's agenda:
 - **Review charter** – please review the charter and be ready to discuss and accept.
 - **Symbol for the group** – Rene asked if anyone would like to offer their artistic expertise and design or draw a mule deer or representation of a mule deer unique for this group for use on letterhead, etc. Please bring to the next meeting.
 - **Select a Chairperson** – Per the charter the working group will need to select a chairperson to work with the facilitator to develop meeting agendas, identify information and technical resource needs, and to coordinate and collaborate with the working group members throughout the tenure of the group.
 - **Develop a Goal/Mission statement** – Please take some time before the July meeting to articulate in a sentence or two what you think the mission or goal should be for this group
- Meeting date – **July 23rd @ 6:15 p.m. – WGFD Lander Region Office.**