An Update From The Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group
Working Group Area

2014 Deer Hunt Areas
Items

• What is a working group?
• Who is on the working group?
• What does a working group do?
• What have we learned?
• Short term recommendations and Long term considerations.
What Is A Working Group?
The Standard WGFD Public Process

**WGFD Develops Seasons Proposals**
(some public input)

Public Reacts to Season Proposal

**WGFD Sometimes Makes Changes Based on Public Reaction**

WGFD Left Wondering Why the Public Does Not Understand the Science Behind the Solution

Public Left Wondering Why the Agency Does Not Understand Their Expectations
What is a working group?

"In concert with the premises of the North American Wildlife Conservation model, citizen based working groups are a valuable tool to integrate society’s expectations in management decisions and strategies. The best management strategies for mule deer are those founded in their biology and supported by society."

Daryl Lutz, WGFD
A Change For The Better

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Public Left Wondering Why the Agency Does Not Understand Their Expectations
In With The New

WGFD and Public Work Together To Develop Solutions To A Problem Through A Shared Learning Process

WGFD and Public Review Effectiveness and as Necessary Consider Modifications or Changes

WGFD Approves Solutions or Explains Why Solution Cannot Be Implemented.

Improved WGFD Understanding of Public Expectations

Improved Public Understanding of Differing Public Expectations, Science, and WGFD Limitations
What is a working group?

• One part of a larger public engagement process
• Diverse group of individuals representing breadth of interest towards a given problem.
• A group of citizens capable of meeting more regularly to participate in the shared learning process.
• A group of citizens capable of meeting more regularly to share public interests and values with WGFD.
• Tasked with making recommendations (to WGFD) that will arrest and reverse the decline in Mule Deer in the Sweetwater and South Wind River Herd Units.
Who Is On The Working Group?
# Who is on the working group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Name</th>
<th>Representing</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jared Oakleaf</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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What Does A Working Group Do?
What does a working group do?

Mission Statement:

“To support the conservation and enhancement of the South Wind River and Sweetwater mule deer herds based on scientific research, quality game management and habitat improvements for future generations.”
Group Sideboards

Solutions

To be considered viable, a proposed solution must meet all of the established sideboards.

- PROVEN EFFECTIVE
- SUPPORTS MISSION
- PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE
- TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE
- MONETARILY FEASIBLE
- BEST FOR THE DEER
- LASTING BENEFITS
- SCIENCE BASED
- COST EFFECTIVE
Consensus Based Decision Making

- I like it very much.
- I’m very comfortable with this.
- I can live with it.
- I don't like this, but my reservations are not enough to hold up the process.
- I don’t support the proposal.

If all members of the group present express approval at levels 5, 4, 3, or 2, then the solution passes as a consensus recommendation.

If 2/3rds of the group present agree at a 3 level or better, the solution becomes a recommendation.

If some members continue to disagree (level 1), then consensus has not been reached and objections will be documented for future discussion.
What Has The Working Group Learned?
What has the working group learned?

*Sweetwater and South Wind River mule deer population background* - Stan Harter, WGFD

- 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.
- When all other factors remain stable, mule deer populations grow when recruitment exceeds 66 fawns/100 does.
- Important factors affecting these herds include: habitat degradation and loss, predation, weather, disease, and competition with other animals.
What has the working group learned?

*Hunting Seasons and Mule Deer Populations*

Brad Hovinga, WGFD

– Even where harvest has been greatly limited (such as area 90) mule deer populations are declining in a similar or faster manner than the general hunt units.

– Changes in hunting season structure will not recover deer populations.

– When all other factors remain stable, mule deer populations grow when recruitment exceeds 66 fawns/100 does.
What has the working group learned?

Summary of The April 24th Lander Mule Deer Workshop
Rene Schell, WGFD

Mule Deer Workshop Summary of Main Points for all Groups:

– More family opportunity (youth)
– See quality habitat
– Fewer hunters & ATVs
– Improved quality & quantity of Mule Deer
– Ethics (enforcement presence in field)
What has the working group learned?

Learning what we can do for Wyoming mule deer
Kevin Montieth, UW

– Carrying capacity is not a static number, but instead varies from year to year with climatic conditions and plant growth.
– Mule deer does have very high pregnancy rates.
– Most often impregnated with twins.
– Do not abort fawns, instead choose to mother the fawn based on the doe’s condition during and after the birth.
– The importance of transition zones and stopover areas is equally as important as winter range.
What has the working group learned?

_Habitat Project Summary_

Amy Anderson, WGFD

– Habitat improvement projects were initiated in the Lander Area in the mid 2000’s. Aimed at improving shrub structure and quality for mule deer.

– Originally focused on improving winter range and has since broadened to incorporate transitional ranges such as aspen regeneration project on South Pass.
What has the working group learned?

**History of the South Wind River and Sweetwater Mule Deer Herds** - Stan Harter, WGFD

- Current population levels remain within historic fluctuations dating back to 1971.
- Trends in mule deer population generally follow weather patterns, such as population declines during drought.
- Currently lacking complete migration data, but some movement is known based on field observations and mid 1980s Hall Creek mule deer study.
- Hunter numbers and harvest tend to follow population trends.
- Receiving harvest survey responses is critical to informing the management.
Short Term Recommendations and Long Term Considerations.
# Recommendations and Considerations

## Short Term (2015 Hunting Season) Recommendations
- Adjust Whitetail Season
- Remove Antler Point Restrictions
- Address Youth Seasons

## Long Term (beyond 2015) Considerations
- Habitat
- Research
- Education
- Intensive Management
- Hunting Season Structure
- ATV Issues
- Predator Control
- WGFD Presence
Short Term Recommendations

White-tailed Deer Management:

☑ Start general any white-tailed deer season on October 1 (14 days before mule deer season) and end it the same day as mule deer season on October 22.

☑ Increase length of special draw white-tailed season through November 30.
Short Term Recommendations

- Reduce likelihood of forage and breeding competition between Mule Deer and White-tailed Deer.
- Reduce harvest on Mule Deer by focusing meat hunting opportunities on White-tailed Deer.
- Reduce hunter crowding by allowing hunters to tag-out earlier on White-tailed Deer.
Short Term Recommendations

Mule Deer Management:
• Remove Antler Point Restrictions, maintain existing season length and general license opportunity.
Short Term Recommendations

- Suppresses older age class deer by focusing the harvest on these animals.
- Recent data has not shown improvement in buck ratios due to poor fawn recruitment.
- Illegal harvest of deer below point restriction has been documented and is increasing.
A Population of Bucks

- 5-7 years old = Antler Peak
- >7 years old = Antler Decline
- 3-4 years old = Focus of Harvest During Antler Point Restrictions
- 1-2 years old = Protected During Antler Point Restriction
Legend: Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population

- 1-2 Years
- 3-4 Years
- 5-7 Years
- > 7 Years
After One Year

Legend:
Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population Going Into Hunting Season
- 1-2 Years
- 3-4 Years
- 5-7 Years
- > 7 Years

No APR

- 4% 1-2 Years
- 22% 3-4 Years
- 73% > 7 Years

APR

- 6% 1-2 Years
- 22% 3-4 Years
- 71% > 7 Years
After Two Years

Legend:
Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population Going Into Hunting Season
- 1-2 Years
- 3-4 Years
- 5-7 Years
- > 7 Years

No APR
- 44% 1-2 Years
- 51% > 7 Years
- 5% 3-4 Years
- 0% 5-7 Years

APR
- 67% 1-2 Years
- 29% > 7 Years
- 4% 3-4 Years
- 0% 5-7 Years
After Three Years

Legend:

Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population Going Into Hunting Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-4 Years</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>5-7 Years</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; 7 Years</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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After Four Years

Legend:
Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population Going Into Hunting Season
- 1-2 Years
- 3-4 Years
- 5-7 Years
- > 7 Years

No APR
- 1-2 Years: 26%
- 3-4 Years: 56%
- 5-7 Years: 17%
- > 7 Years: 1%

APR
- 1-2 Years: 25%
- 3-4 Years: 67%
- 5-7 Years: 8%
- > 7 Years: 0%
After Five Years

Legend:
Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population Going Into Hunting Season

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Class</th>
<th>No APR</th>
<th>APR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 Years</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 Years</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 7 Years</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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After Six Years

Legend:
Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population Going Into Hunting Season

- 1-2 Years
- 3-4 Years
- 5-7 Years
- > 7 Years

No APR
- 16% 1-2 Years
- 25% 3-4 Years
- 57% 5-7 Years
- 2% > 7 Years

APR
- 6% 1-2 Years
- 22% 3-4 Years
- 71% 5-7 Years
- 1% > 7 Years
After Seven Years

Legend:
Age Class Of Male Mule Deer In Population Going Into Hunting Season

No APR
- 1-2 Years: 25%
- 3-4 Years: 58%
- > 7 Years: 14%
- No APR: 3%

APR
- 1-2 Years: 73%
- 3-4 Years: 22%
- > 7 Years: 0%
- APR: 5%
Short Term Recommendations

Youth Deer Seasons:

• Continue to allow for youth hunting seasons.
• October 1-22\textsuperscript{nd} areas 92, 94, and 160.
• October 15-25 area 96 and 97.
• Restrict youth harvest in the same manner as the general season, such as buck only vs any mule deer.
Short Term Recommendations

• Reduces the potential for uncontrolled mule deer doe harvest.
• Teaches younger generation the importance of a regulated harvest.
• Teaches younger generation the importance of discipline and patience while hunting.
Recommendations and Considerations

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Clarifications?