Mule Deer in Wyoming

Wyoming’s Mule Deer Populations
Long-term population decline:

- 1990 – 2012 36% decline.
- 2000 – 2012 32% decline.
Fawn productivity

In 30 years we have lost 16/100 fawns or 0.5 fawns/100 does/year. This is ~20% decline.

Below 66/100 fawns in 13 of the last 30 years and 9 years since 2000.
Statewide Fawn Ratios
1982 - 2012

3-year Avg.  Series2  Linear (3-year Avg.)
Statewide Fawn Ratios
1990 - 2012
Harvest Data

- Deer Irruption (Kaibab Effect)
- Deer Crash
- Post-Crash Steady State and Drought Effect
Buck Ratios

Change in Population (per year) Statewide (dark green 2000-2012, other 1990-2012)
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Wyoming’s Mule Deer Hunter Perceptions
Satisfaction remains strong among Wyoming hunters
- 2006: 84% of hunters satisfied with quality of their experience
- 2012: 74% of hunters satisfied with quality of their experience

Enjoyment of hunting, “plenty of mule deer”, and harvest success contribute to satisfaction

“Not enough deer” and crowding contribute to dissatisfaction
Fewer people agree that there were adequate numbers of bucks
- 2006: 64% agreed there was an adequate number
- 2012: 47% agreed there was an adequate number

Definitions of a “large antlered buck”
- 2006: 37% of residents thought 21-25”
- 2012: 37% of residents said 26-30”

Antlerless harvest found to be an acceptable deer management tool in both studies
2006-2012: Where are we now?

- A majority of residents still hunt only one or two hunt areas in a single season
  - 2006: 90% of residents
  - 2012: 70% of residents
- “Close to home”
- Hunter crowding
  - 2006: 35% residents agreed too many other hunters in the area
  - 2012: 50% of residents agreed too many other hunters in the area
2006-2012: Where are we now?

- Quality of the hunting experience continues to be important
- Increased interest in limited quota hunting
  - 2006: general seasons = 55%; limited quota = 28%
  - 2012: general seasons = 48%; limited quota = 35%
- Increased interest in limiting numbers of hunters in the field
  - 2006: 50% of residents support limiting the numbers of hunters in the field
  - 2012: 64% of residents support limiting numbers of hunters in the field
- Strong interest in hunting each year
- Support for current weapon season structure
2006-2012: Where are we now?

- Recognition of the importance of quality and amount of habitat to deer populations
- Majority of hunters continue to say habitat has remained the same or gotten worse
  - 2006: remained the same = 56%; gotten worse = 12%
  - 2012: remained the same = 42%; gotten worse = 34%
  - Among residents in 2012, 40% felt it had gotten worse
Mule Deer Management: What have we done?

- **Deer Management**
  - Implemented “sightability” estimates
  - Utilizing improved population projection techniques

- **Hunting Seasons**
  - Instituted limited quota seasons in the Platte Valley
  - Instituted antler point restrictions
  - Standardized opening and closing dates in western Wyoming
  - Reduced hunting season lengths
  - Moved openers to week days
  - Limited harvest to bucks only
  - Decreased doe/fawn harvest
  - Reduced nonresident region quotas
  - Conducted post hunt season meetings
**Predators**
- Effects of predation remain high on people’s minds
- Worked with ADMB and local PMB’s on coyote control where appropriate
- Increased mountain lion harvest quotas where appropriate

**Habitat**
- Commission - $500,000 Platte Valley Habitat Partnership
- Proposed 40,000 acres for treatment in the Wyoming Range Plan
- Numerous projects implemented statewide
- Refocused attention on summer and fall transition range
Looking Ahead

- Continue to monitor deer populations (fawn productivity) and hunter satisfaction
- Continue to address habitat improvement and effectiveness
- Continue work with the ADMB and PMBs – fawning period
- Continue public involvement to further increase dialogue, trust, and engagement

- Continue to address growing interest in quality of the hunt
- Continue exploring ways to provide an array of hunting opportunities
- Recognize buck quality remains important