



## Notes

Third Workshop **Private Lands Focus**  
Platte Valley Habitat Partnership  
Platte Valley Community Center, Saratoga, Wyoming  
August 20, 2012

### Agenda

- 6:00 Introductions
- 6:15 Tom Ryder: Recap of the PVMDI and PVHP Collaborative Process and Purpose of Today's Meeting: Mule Deer Habitat Improvement on Private lands.
- 6:30 Daryl Lutz: Brief Overview of Mule Deer in the Platte Valley and WGFD Strategies.
- 6:45 Discussion 1: Lessons Learned.
- 7:30 Discussion 2: Mule Deer Habitat Improvement and Private Landowners - Steps Forward.
- 8:30 Wrap-up and Action Steps
- 9:00 Adjourn

### Notes from Discussion 1: Lessons Learned from the Past for the Future

#### Whole Group Discussion

- Competition from critters other than livestock – elk are over objective. Creating a lot of competition for habitat. Need to get the number of elk down to objective to help the deer.
- What is the carrying capacity of the habitat? Observed that in the early 1900s there were no deer.
- What treatments are actually working? Some burns are creating monocultures of grasses. Is burning really very effective to improve mule deer habitat? How much will we treat?
- There were no deer through the 1930s. Later there were a lot of deer (50s and 60s) and very few elk.

- What impact is industry having on our crucial ranges? For example, in the Pinedale area there has been a lot of development in important mule deer habitats. This could be very important in the PV.
- The effects of predation needs to be considered, especially on winter ranges.
- Is there any correlation on reduced grazing and the decline in mule deer? Also, the increase in fuels on the Forest “choking” out the new growth?
- The “where” and access to habitats is equally important as is quantity and quality.
- There is a lot more human access to the country than there used to be. Certainly, this is having some sort of impact on mule deer.
- In the 50s and 60s deer numbers were “huge” as were livestock numbers. Turn on dates on the Forest were also much earlier. Perhaps there was also more nutritious forage available in fall. Perhaps earlier “on” dates could be helpful to improve the nutritional quality of the forage available.
- Doe fawn hunts likely eliminated the migratory portion of the mule deer population in the PV.
- Forest Service has shifted focus to less timber harvest and livestock grazing. Perhaps increased focus will improve mule deer habitat (i.e., open the canopy, etc.).
- Riparian and meadows used to be much more productive than they are now. Many have been lost. Clear cuts are also a component. After WWII the war on sage-brush seemed to coincide with high numbers of sage-grouse and mule deer.
- There is a direct correlation with the number of coyotes and mule deer. Also, with regard to sage-grouse there didn’t used to be so many crows.
- Energy development is prominent in the PV. Much of the winter range is currently being threatened.
- Need to treat this problem on a “large” landscape scale. In the past in the PV landowner, GF, USFS, and BLM all did their own thing. It is important we focus on the landscape.
- Used to be less elk, more sheep, turn-on dates.
- Alfalfa/oat meadows and patches used to be more prevalent throughout the PV.
- Ranches provide critical mule deer habitats. Provide water, meadows, open space, a place for wildlife to live.
- When there were more sheep there was also more management on the ground. Herders were out there constantly doing predator control, irrigating, etc. A lot more on the ground activities/management.
- Deer don’t pay the bills. Why is habitat improvement for mule deer going to make my ranch better. It boils down to business. The idea needs to “sold”. What is in it for the rancher.
- IF the rancher doesn’t survive, the habitat doesn’t either.
- Four-wheelers are designed to go off-road. Are deer being pressured by off-roading. How do we address that?
- The role of private landowners and permittees play a critical role in habitat management on both private and public lands.
- It is important we work together to do what is best for mule deer and to best work with what we have.

- Mule deer numbers are down, but on private land the quality of mule deer are higher on private lands. The issue may be access to those quality deer on private lands.
- Grazing distribution is not even across the landscape. Focused primarily on riparian areas.
- Later FS let on dates also affects the quality of forage on private lands.
- The Desert in Western Wyoming – doubled the number of livestock, doubled the number of elk, sage-grouse numbers are high. Grazing patterns will affect where wildlife graze. Need to learn from their experiences to use grazing to improve habitats.
- Landowner incentives to provide more acres for wildlife habitat. License system does not provide an incentive to the landowner to make \$\$ from wildlife.
- The axe, plow, cow and gun can be used to improve conditions for wildlife – Aldo Leopold. We all need to think about ALL alternatives to improve conditions for the landowner and for wildlife.

## Notes from Discussion 2: Mule Deer Habitat Improvement and Private Landowners - Steps Forward

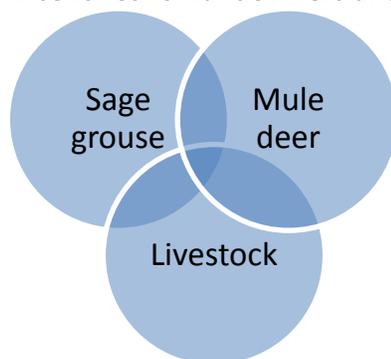
- What do private landowners need to be able to help improve mule deer habitat in the Platte Valley?
- What types of issues need to be addressed in the collaborative process?
- What does the collaborative process need to look like (times of meetings, location, length)?
- What types of tools can be used and what do private landowners need to be able to use them to benefit deer (and later other species)?

### Break-out Group Discussions with diverse stakeholders in each group

#### Group 1

Need to address threat of T&E species.

Need to develop incentives for landowners and minimize risk to be involved.



#### See Diagram above where the three circles overlap:

- create more AUM's
- create increased diversity
- improve habitat for all
- need to "fann" sagebrush
- Provide rest to a ranch or pasture
- Create grassbanks.

Need some ranch specific inventory and plan.

Turn-on dates on USFS to allow increased rest on private lands.

Would like to see a success story. What works?

Need to balance grass production and shrub production.

Need to consider the dollars energy could provide vs. mule deer habitat.

Landowner licenses.

### Group 2

- Technical expertise on resource projects.
- More interactions/cooperation between landowners and agency
- Funding cost-share.
- Economically beneficial to ag operations also.
- Technical information transfer. Both ways – exchange.
- Public lands projects – include permittees in decision-making.
- Opportunity for exchange of info involving all parties.
- Explore opportunities to sell this idea to large percentage of landowners. Flexible and individualistic.
- What's in this for the landowner to commit to this?
- License incentive for private landowners.
- What would incentivize landowners – direct incentives to landowners.
- Leverage Farm Bill Dollars.

### Group 3

- Fewer Elk
- Removal of timber products
- Less ATV access (more people, more roads)
- More cooperation between agencies
- Financial incentives.
- Trust of state and federal agencies by land owners.
- Will goals be met?
- Cheat grass.
- Reward good habitat.

### Group 4

Restrict and regulate ATV's

Rotational Grazing

Food plots: more legumes.

More help paying for legume seeding: farming, waterdevelopment.

Multi-species grazing

Efficient use of water.

Deer friendly fencing

- Make modifications
- Manage cattle grazing

Control white tail deer

Control Elk: competing for forage and space, hay.

Predator control – not agreement

Forage monitoring

Cheatgrass control

### Group 5

- Evening meetings are best.
- Need expertise to look at ground and work with landowners to find out what they need.
- How do you improve/increase bitterbrush?
- Who's gonna pay for? Where is the money coming from for private lands work?
- Will access be tied to habitat work?
- WGFD needs to provide help to ranchers, especially "recreational ranchers" who may be interested in helping to pay for work.
- How will sage grouse play a role in mule deer work?
- Who can landowners contact with agencies to come out and work with them on their places?
- Need inventory of potential water developments to help both livestock and wildlife.
- Provide information and use demonstration projects to help folks understand effects of treatments.
- Would Desert style of management be beneficial on places where livestock grazing is not currently being used?
- Use of food plots for short-term while implementing long-term habitat treatments.
- How do mother-fawn behavioral patterns influence use of areas by deer?
- Need to continue to schedule meetings to maximize chances that landowners can attend.
- Timing of elk seasons may influence their use of mule deer habitats – how could seasons be used to avoid conflicts with deer?
- What are migration routes – how do they use the area and when?
- What effect does I-8- have on migration and winter range use?
- What impact do WT deer have on mule deer habitats?
- Work collaboratively to develop cross-ranch project proposals using conservation district/NRCS, etc.
- 6-9 pm a good time.
- Develop good maps that contain deer ranges, migration routes, etc.

### **Next Meeting PVHP Private Lands**

**November 1, PVCC, 6-9 pm.**

1. Need a success story
2. Interests, Criteria and Options, same as Public Lands.
3. A Colorado ranch example.
4. Options that can work.
5. How does the funding work, who manages it, etc. Keith Schoup.