

PVHP Meeting Notes



**Platte Valley Habitat Partnership
December 7, 2012**

9:00 Elizabeth Spaulding, JD, Ruckelshaus Institute, UW: Integrating this collaborative process within NEPA.

11:00 Goal(s) and Objectives for PVHP's first Habitat Plan

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Goal(s) and Objectives for PVHP's first Habitat Plan continued.

3:00 WGFD's Landscape Vision for Platte Valley Mule Deer Habitat.

3:45 Next Steps and Wrap Up

4:00 Adjourn

Next Time:

1:00 Introductions and Recap of Progress

1:30 Start Coordinating the writing of the PVHP Plan.

2:00 Past and current wildlife habitat projects on USFS and BLM.

3:00 Break

3:30 Multi-jurisdictional Mule Deer Habitat Improvements Planning:
WGFD, BLM and USFS.

5:00 Other subjects and Wrap-Up

6:00 Adjourn

Elizabeth Spaulding introduced the collaboration process and how it can work with the NEPA process.

- Collaboration process can streamline the NEPA process by involving stakeholders at the beginning of the process
- Jim States asked how a non-governmental agency can participate and partner with federal agencies
 - Government agencies can request to be a cooperating agency, however FACA doesn't allow a formal partnership to be formed with a non-profit organization. Can avoid FACA by using an open forum process and not just selecting a specific non-profit to work with
- Jim States noted that the public does not know how to get involved in the NEPA process and this lead into the discussion of how does PVHP know what decision process to be involved in and how:
 - FS lists schedule of proposed actions on website
 - District Ranger Melanie views her position as being involved with the community and solicits public information by just being available to the public at community events. Don't always need to go to the FS office to express thoughts or concerns on proposed projects.
 - The most useful/beneficial comments received are those that are well thought out, offer alternatives, and constructive versus those that just state "I don't like this or that"
 - Comments signed by numerous people or petitions are often weighed as just one comment
 - Before the scoping process there is a proposed action. The FS will likely use information presented in groups like PVHP to develop a proposal that is likely more valuable than it would be without the groups input

Discussion transitioned to how PVHP gets habitat projects on the ground

- What the FS already has on the ground in its planning stage is a good place to start for this upcoming year
- Jess asked the FS to come to the next meeting with more detailed info on habitat management for mule deer regarding what has already been done (# of acres, areas treated)
- The NEPA timeline varies depending on the type and size of project but usually it takes a minimum of 6 months to get new projects on the ground
- An umbrella EA for deer management in the PV can be done including both FS and BLM lands and is usually good for 5 years

- Cautioned that a landscape scale EA or larger NEPA may bring in more issues and the process could take longer
- The FS generally looks at the existing conditions and then determines what the desired condition is and then identifies actions to get to the desired conditions
- To address what's been done and what's being proposed, the FS will present more specific data next meeting on what has been done in the FS plans that can be applied to mule deer management and the outcome of past management treatments
- Stan Brooks recommended a survey of cheatgrass valley-wide and what kind of coordinated effort can be done to control it.
 - Wendy noted that the statewide cheatgrass task force has reconvened and have intentions of addressing some of those issues
 - The FS is in the process of completing a forest wide noxious weed plan

The WWF has dedicated 2/3rd time of an employee's time to help out with the PVHP and assist in getting landowners involved

Daryl reminded the group of the difference between PVMDI and PVHP

- PVHP is an outcome of the PVMDI process. Habitat was identified as an issue and the PVHP was a vehicle to best address the habitat component.
- PVMDI is the umbrella initiative, it is not over and issues are still being addressed.
- Group members were encouraged to spread this information to their neighbors as WGFD has heard complaints that they are only focused on habitat now and ignoring other issues such as predator management. WGFD is not ignoring any facet of mule deer management in the Platte Valley.

Jess did a situation assessment of PVHP and introduced a new decision-making tool

- Important to note that the kicking off point of PVHP is mule deer, but overall will be looking to a multi-species effort.
- Introduced the new 5 finger method for decision making
 - **1 Finger:** Complete Support (I like it very much)
 - **2 Fingers:** Support (I'm very comfortable with this)
 - **3 Fingers:** Agreement with Reservations (I can live with it)
 - **4 Fingers:** Mild Agreement (I don't like this, but my reservations are not enough to hold up the process)
 - **5 Fingers:** Disagreement (I won't support the proposal)
 - Jim had reservations with the 5-finger method and thought there should be more levels for disagreement but agreed to try the method.

Group went over draft goals and objectives using the new 5 finger decision making method. The group was then divided into groups to go over the draft criteria to narrow them down to methods by which to gauge success, and measurements. Some subjects that were raised are listed below:

- Several participants would like the goal to address multi-species management but Tom Ryder cautioned that the WGFD Commission's goal is to manage the mule deer and the money that the WGFD has will not be used to fund other wildlife projects. Jessica stressed that although PVHP would like to, and will eventually, be a multiple species effort, it needs to focus on mule deer alone in the first plan, then build on that to add on other species as the group decides.
- Objectives should be measurable
- Group does not know enough yet to be able to quantify objectives on a landscape scale.
- The Vision, Goal and Objectives that were unanimously agreed to and suggestions for Criteria (which will be used to determine monitoring variables) were:

PVHP Vision

The Platte Valley Habitat Partnership considers the quality and quantity of the mule deer population in the Platte Valley important to its landscape and communities to preserve biodiversity, economic, recreational, cultural and aesthetic values.

PVHP Goal

The Platte Valley Habitat Partnership's goal is to improve wildlife habitat with emphasis on sustainable mule deer populations.

Objective and Criteria 1: Biodiversity Value of the Mule Deer Herd

Objective 1: To improve habitat conditions to increase the population size and health of mule deer.

Proposed Criteria :

- ❖ Monitor species diversity of flora.
- ❖ Age Class Diversity of Shrubs
- ❖ Browse Class
- ❖ Shrub and herbaceous productivity.
- ❖ # of acres treated.
- ❖ Shrub recruitment.
- ❖ Pregnancy rates of mule deer (WGFD)
- ❖ Fat reserves of mule deer (WGFD)
- ❖ Population #'s of mule deer (WGFD)
- ❖ Doe-fawn ratios (WGFD)
- ❖ Mortality ratios (WGFD)

Objective and Criteria 2: Economic Value of the Mule Deer Herd

Objective 2: To enhance economic benefits to landowners, communities and dependent interests by improving habitat to increase the population size and health of mule deer.

Proposed Criteria :

- ❖ # of hunters and other mule deer related recreationists (work with WGFD).
- ❖ Outfitter revenues (work with Chamber)
- ❖ Hospitality revenues (work with Chamber)
- ❖ Livestock AUM's (work with Conservation District)
- ❖ # of license applicants (work with WGFD)

Objective and Criteria 3: Recreational Value of the Mule Deer Herd

Objective 3: To enhance recreational benefits by improving habitat to increase the population size and health of mule deer.

Proposed Criteria :

- ❖ Hunter Satisfaction Surveys (WGFD)
- ❖ Revenue
- ❖ Visitor Surveys (USFS)
- ❖ Field personnel contacts (BLM and USFS)
- ❖ Increase in political support
- ❖ Increase in support from more groups and funders (Attendance and \$\$)
- ❖ Types of Chamber of Commerce Requests (Chamber)

Objective and Criteria 4: Cultural and Aesthetic Value of the Mule Deer Herd

Objective 4: To maintain the character of the Platte Valley landscape, culture and aesthetics by improving habitat to increase the population size and health of mule deer.

Proposed Criteria:

- ❖ Modify existing USFS visitor use surveys to address C and A Values.
- ❖ Modify WGFD hunter satisfaction surveys to address C and A Values.
- ❖ Look at BLM public perception surveys.
- ❖ Develop Community Survey for Platte Valley, baseline and changes.
- ❖ Develop landowner survey.
- ❖ Look at WGFD's PVMDI survey

Objective and Criteria 5: Mission Compatibility for State and Federal Agencies

Objective #5: To facilitate state and federal agencies to serve their constituents in a manner compatible with their missions by working to improve habitat for mule deer and other species and purposes.

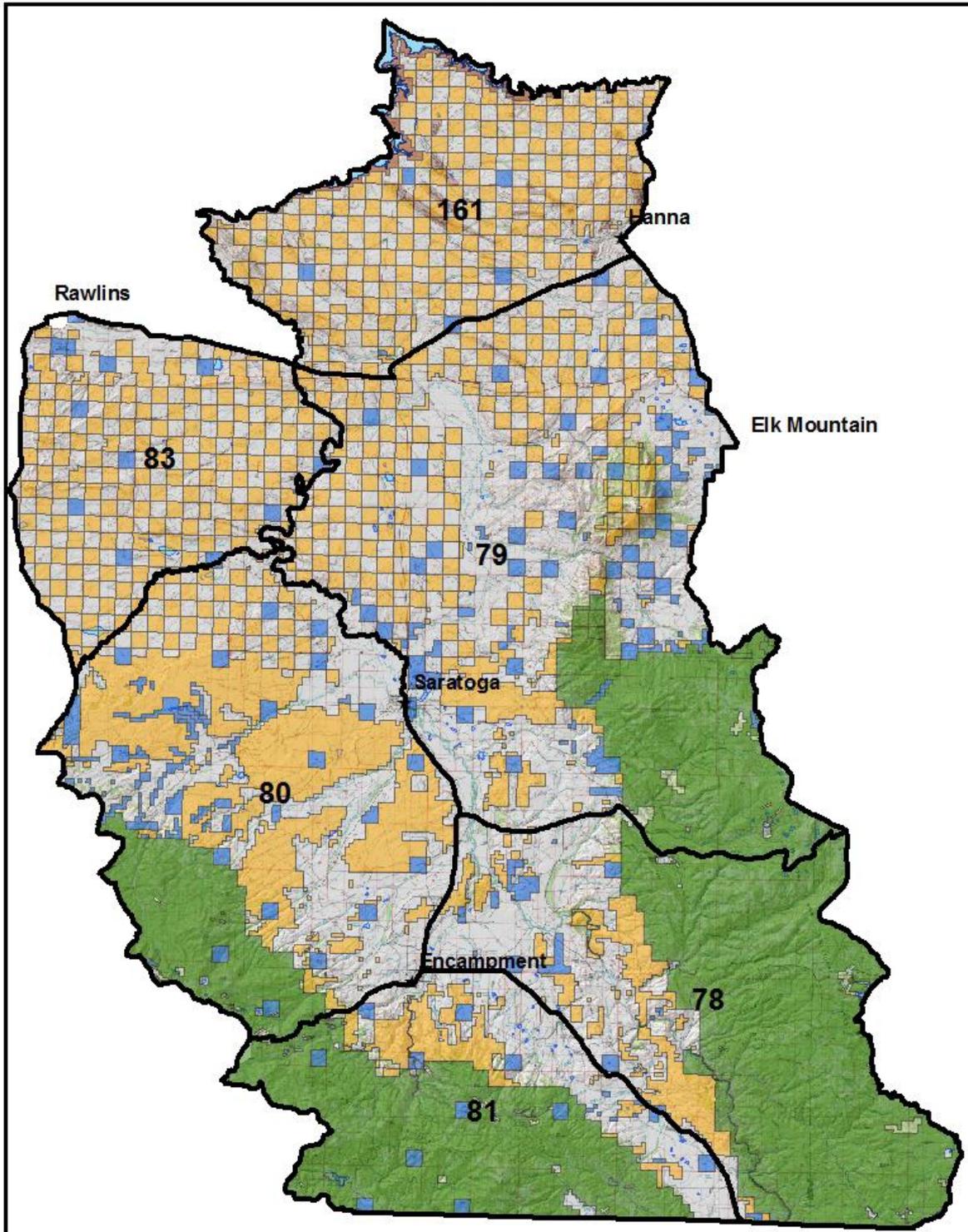
Proposed Criteria:

- ❖ # of projects that cross ownership and jurisdictional boundaries
- ❖ Mix of funding to complete projects.

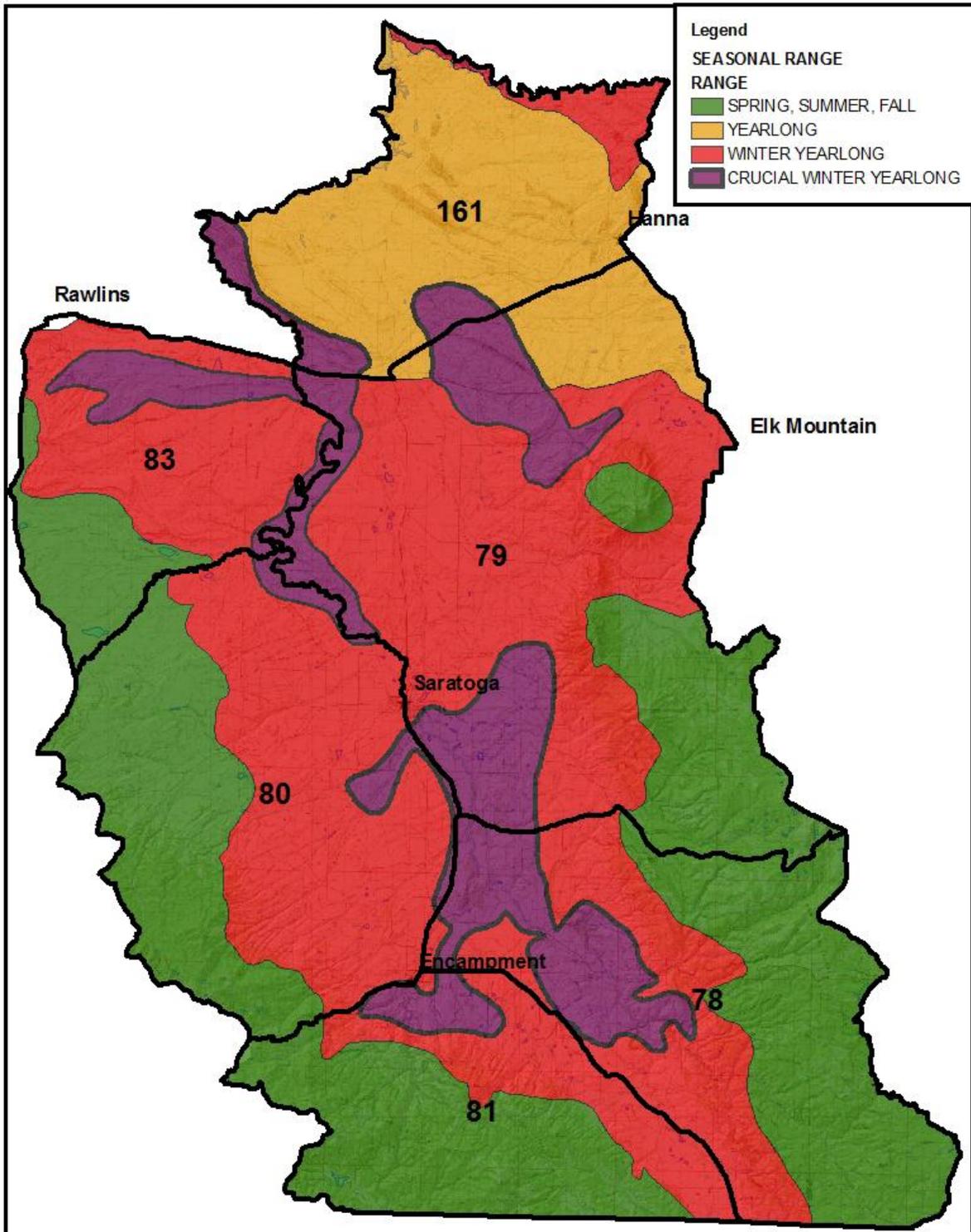
The last section of the day was a presentation provided by Will Schultz (WGFD) to show WGFD's vision of mule deer habitat in the Platte Valley. Will provided mule deer herd unit, the seasonal ranges, specifically winter and summer ranges. Some points that were made:

- The entire valley is mule deer habitat of some type.
- Winter range changes in some locations in response to weather/snow cover.
- Summer map. Mostly USFS above 8,000 feet in elevation.
- If deer do not store adequate fat on the summer range they will move to the winter range in poorer condition.
- Transition map – important for moving to and from winter range. Deer can greatly increase their chances of survival by gaining fat reserves from good transitional range.
- Fawning in transition range is not uncommon.
- Add sage grouse core area map.
- See Maps Below

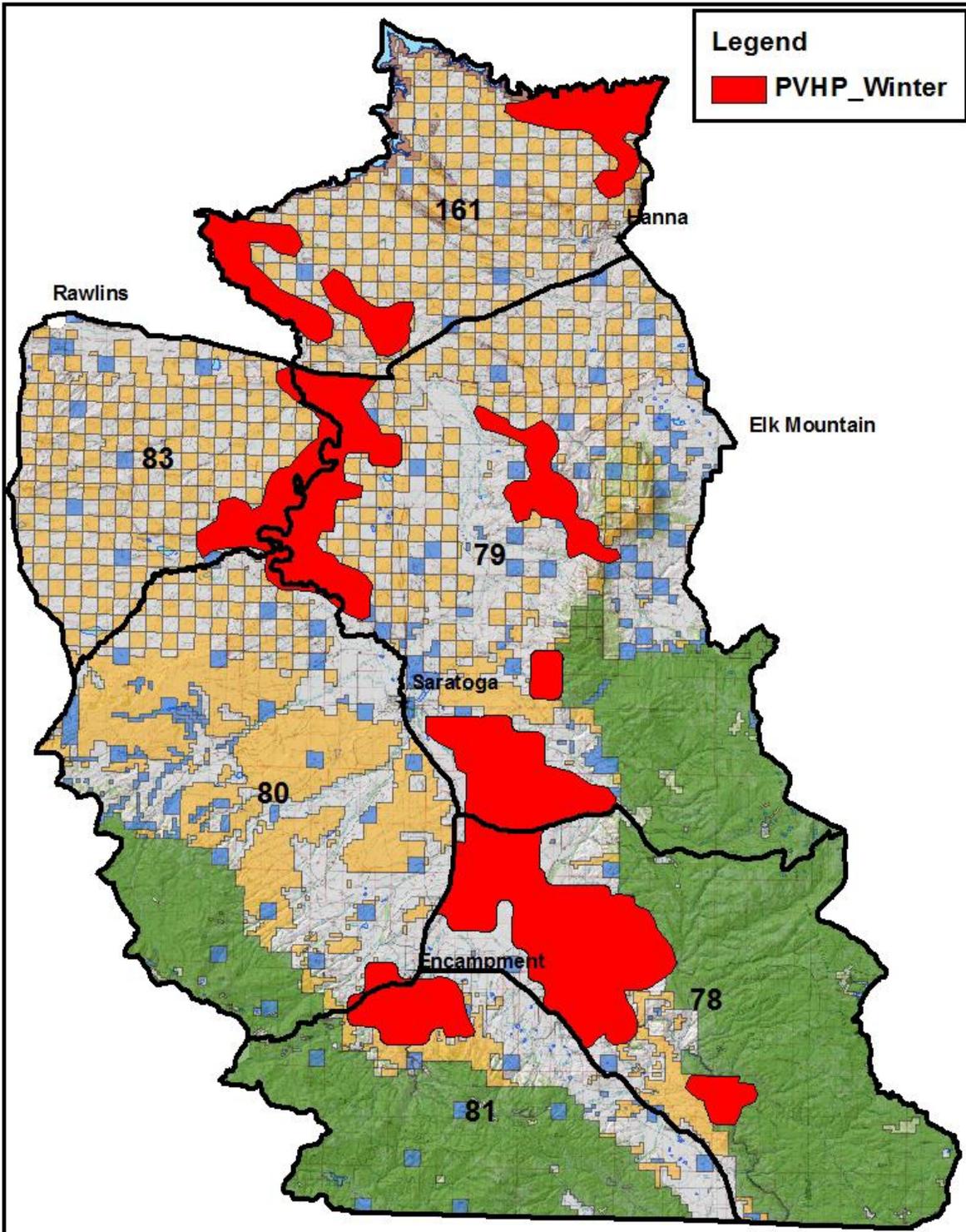
Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit



Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit - RANGES



Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit - WINTER



Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit - SUMMER

