Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative
Hunt Areas 61, 74, 75, 76, 77
Meeting Goals

- Provide Information on Mule Deer, Specifically the Sheep Mountain Herd
- Identify and Prioritize Factors that can Improve Mule Deer Hunting and Populations within this herd
- This is **NOT** a Season Setting Meeting
  - Season’s can and should be discussed, but this meeting will not Usurp the existing Season Setting Process
Why Are We Here?

- This is part of a Statewide Mule Deer Mgt Effort
- Decreasing Mule Deer Populations
- Low Fawn Ratios
- Decreasing Hunter Satisfaction
- Low Hunter Success
- Conversations with Concerned Sportsman and Landowners
Mule Deer in Wyoming

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

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

Mule Deer Decline NOT exclusive to WY
GOT FAWNS?
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
Buck Ratios

Change in Population (per year) Statewide

- Bucks
- Fawns
- Does
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
Mule Deer Management: What have we done?

**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 and black bear 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**
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
Questions?
How can we manage for a healthy mule deer herd and provide a quality mule deer hunting experience?
2006-2012: Where are we now?

- 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
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
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