

Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative
Annual update meeting – April 28, 2016

Laramie Wildlife Biologist Lee Knox presented a summary of the Sheep Mountain mule deer population:

- The objective for this herd is 10,000 animals. The population is currently about 5,700 animals
- Fawn ratio is good at 65:100 (fawns to does)
- Buck ratio is doing great in this herd at 39:100 bucks to does
- Harvest is up some from last year, from 290 to 370

2016 hunting season – Hunters should be aware of these changes

- General deer season will run Oct. 1-7, 3 points or more for mule deer; any white-tailed deer
- Archers may only take the sex and species of deer specified in Section 2. Not “any” deer like before

Mule deer projects

- A GPS collar study has been funded and will provide monthly updates on deer movement
- Ryan Amundson presented information on a cheat grass treatment project in the Squirrel Creek Fire burn area. Colorado State University is mapping the cheat grass density in the burn area and this will allow us to focus treatment on the worst areas. Treatment is planned for 3,100 acres. Project partners have raised \$100,000 for this project and there is \$43,000 of in-kind money. The Plateau herbicide will cost \$6.60 per acre. The treatment will begin about the last week of August 2016.
- Ryan Amundson updated the group on a mule deer fecal study in the Sheep Mountain area. Results show mule deer diet in the study area is approximately 55% to 70% Wyoming Big Sagebrush. True Mountain Mahogany is only 0-1.4%, Antelope bitterbrush 1.4-7.5% and birch accounted for 8-16% of the diet. In the unburned areas, 100% of the diet is shrubs and in the burned areas grasses make up 13% and forbs make up 16%. More research is needed to introduce different variables into the study.
- A PRISM study will look at precipitation levels in the entire Snowy Range area
- Rapid Habitat Assessments will be used throughout the study area this summer as a faster way to look at the entire Snowy Range. Biologists can cover a lot of country with these assessments.
- Some food plot work will be conducted this summer
- There are also opportunities for planting shrub seedlings this summer throughout the fire site. Interested landowners should contact G&F
- The BLM will have some fence removal projects this summer

Habitat tour

Game and Fish would like to offer a habitat tour this summer of some of the projects. The meeting participants said they would like to tour some of the sites prior to any work getting underway so they can see “before and after.”

U.S. Forest Service road closures

District Ranger Frank Romero signed a U.S. Forest Service decision memo earlier this week to improve crucial big game habitat along the southeast boundary of the Snowy Range. The decision will extend existing seasonal road closures on the Medicine Bow National Forest, as well as allow installation of new gates to assist with compliance, and place new sections of area roads under seasonal closures. The closure will be from Oct. 1 – June 15. There will also be some permanent closures of unauthorized roads. This project was developed in collaboration with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and specifically for the Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative.