

Lewis and Clark can be credited with writing the first detailed account of mule deer habitat requirements. There is evidence that Lewis coined the name, "Mule Deer," when he stated, "We have rarely found the mule deer in any except rough country. They prefer the open grounds and are seldom found in woodlands or river bottom."

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



# Accomplishments to Date

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- Collaborative identification of issues and possible solutions
- Developed and analyzed deer hunter survey
- Working with USFS on seasonal closures in winter and transitional ranges (MFF, BOW, BCA)
- Working with WYDOT to identify highway mortality hotspots (see plan)
- Working with USFS and BLM on identifying habitat projects

# Accomplishments to Date

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- ◉ Working with Albany County Predator Board on 3 year coyote removal project focusing on parturition ranges (in 3<sup>rd</sup> year)
- ◉ Managing Snowy Range elk populations towards management objective
- ◉ Separated deer and elk seasons to reduce crowding
- ◉ Developed draft research prospectus proposal (COOP, MFF)
- ◉ Increased bear and lion quotas

# Accomplishments to Date

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- Closed beaver trapping in important winter/transition range in efforts to improve riparian habitats
- Developed Herd Objective Proposal
- Completed DRAFT Management Recommendations Plan

# Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative Management Recommendations 2015 – v.051315



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

# Draft Plan

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- Requesting Specific comments by page number and topic
  - e.g. “Need to add leopards to predation section on page 26 paragraph 2”.
- Link:  
<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wildlife-1002439.aspx#>
- Cards with link available on back table
- Printed 25 copies of plan
- Public Comments Due? (Discuss)
- Final Draft Meeting

# Draft Plan

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## Send Comments to:

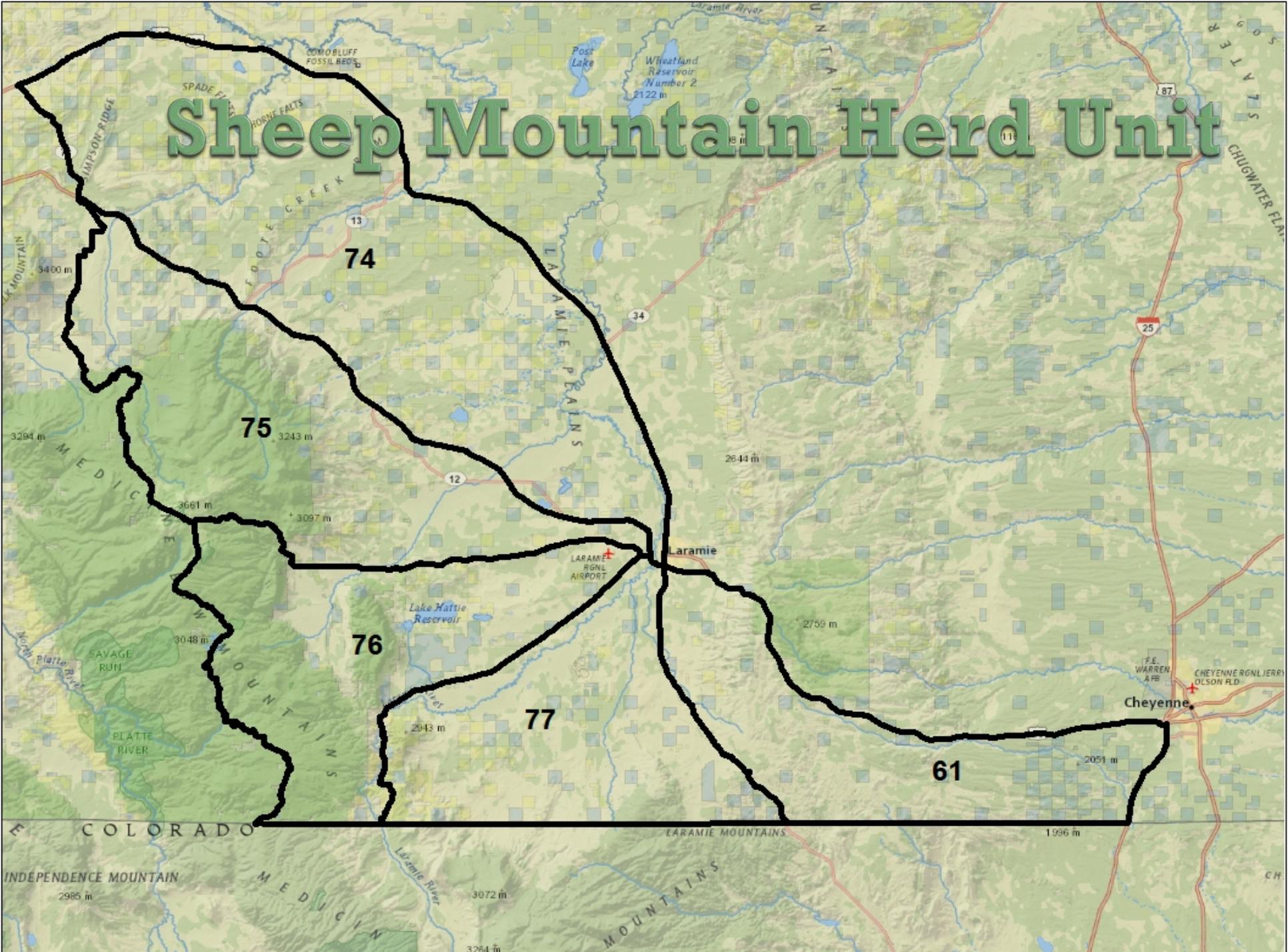
- [lee.knox@wyo.gov](mailto:lee.knox@wyo.gov)
- WGFD Laramie Regional Office
- Laramie, WY 82070
- (307)745-4046



# Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Objective Review



# Sheep Mountain Herd Unit



# Where are we now?

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- Gather public input on Herd Unit (January)
- Develop objective proposal (February)
- WGFD Administration approves proposal (February)
- Propose objective change to public for final public input (March)
- Present final proposal to SMMDI stakeholders tonight
- Presented to Game and Fish Commission in July for approval

# What is an objective?

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- The herd unit objective is a population goal we manage towards. It is based on:
  - **classification data and harvest data (including satisfaction data),**
  - **Hunter field checks**
  - **Species carrying capacity**
  - **Landowner and hunter input**
  - **Regional WGFD wildlife personnel input and Department review**
  - **Department policy and review**
- The objective should be biologically achievable within a five years

# How an Objective affects management decisions

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- Snowy range elk population objective is 6,000 (4,800-7,200). 2014 post hunt population estimate is 7,900. Seasons are structured to decrease the population with antlerless elk harvest where populations are highest.
- Iron Mountain Pronghorn population objective is 13,000 (10,400 – 15,600). 2014 post hunt population estimate is 11,200. Seasons are structured to maintain the population at objective by issuing enough licenses to keep up with reproduction.
- Laramie Mountains Mule Deer population objective is 25,000 (20,000-30,000). 2014 post hunt population estimate is 17,300. Season is structured to maintain buck ratios, alleviate crop damage and increase the population

# Carrying Capacity

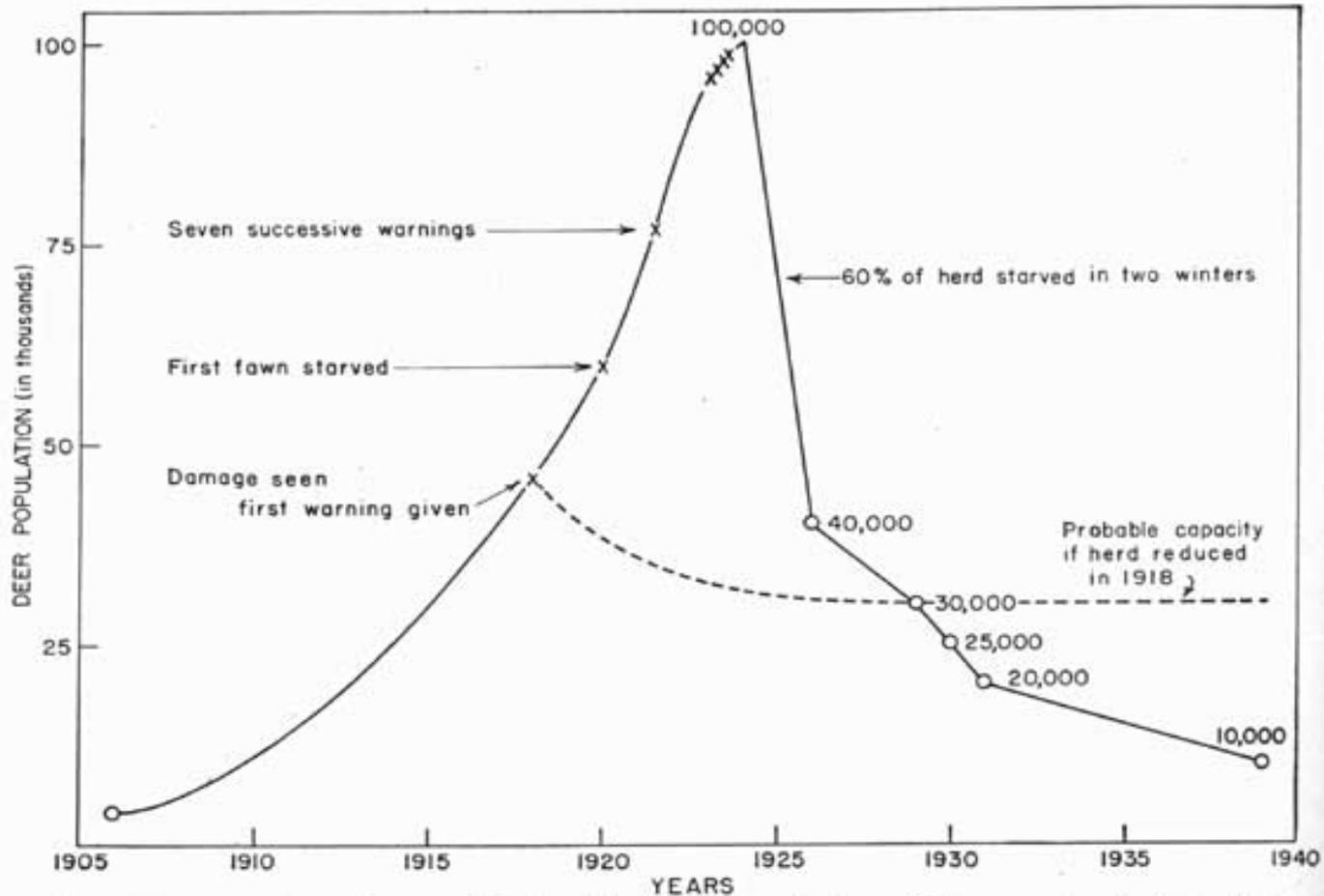
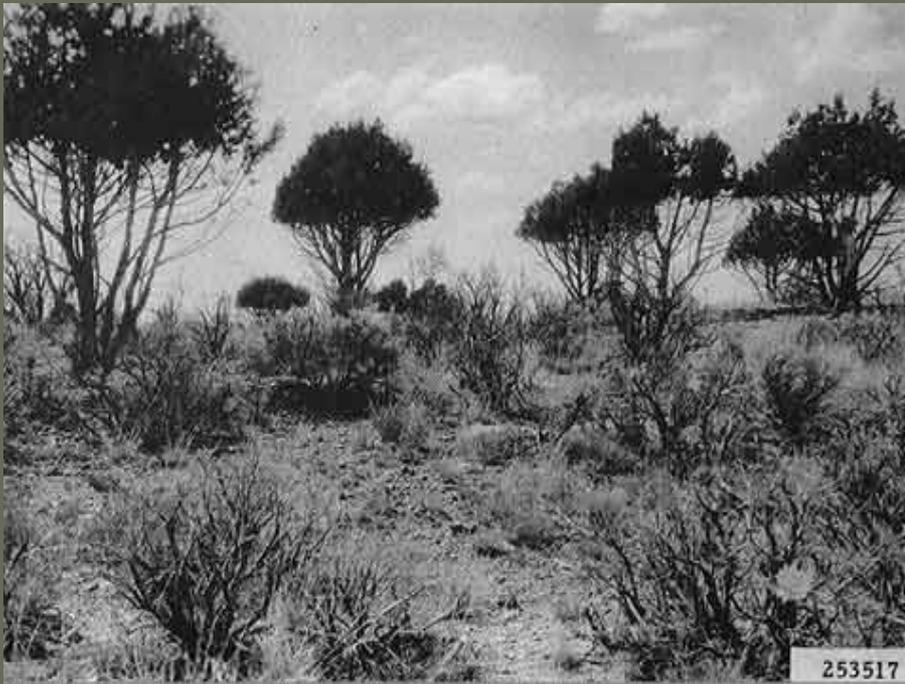


Fig. 252. The effect of removal of predators on populations of deer on the Kaibab plateau in Arizona (727,000 acres). Six hundred pumas were removed in 1907–1917, 74 in 1918–1923, and 142 in 1924–1939. Eleven wolves were removed in 1907–1923 and were exterminated by 1926. Three thousand coyotes were removed in 1907–1923 and 4388 in 1923–1939. (Redrawn from Leopold.)

*"just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer" (Leopold, 1949).*

1930

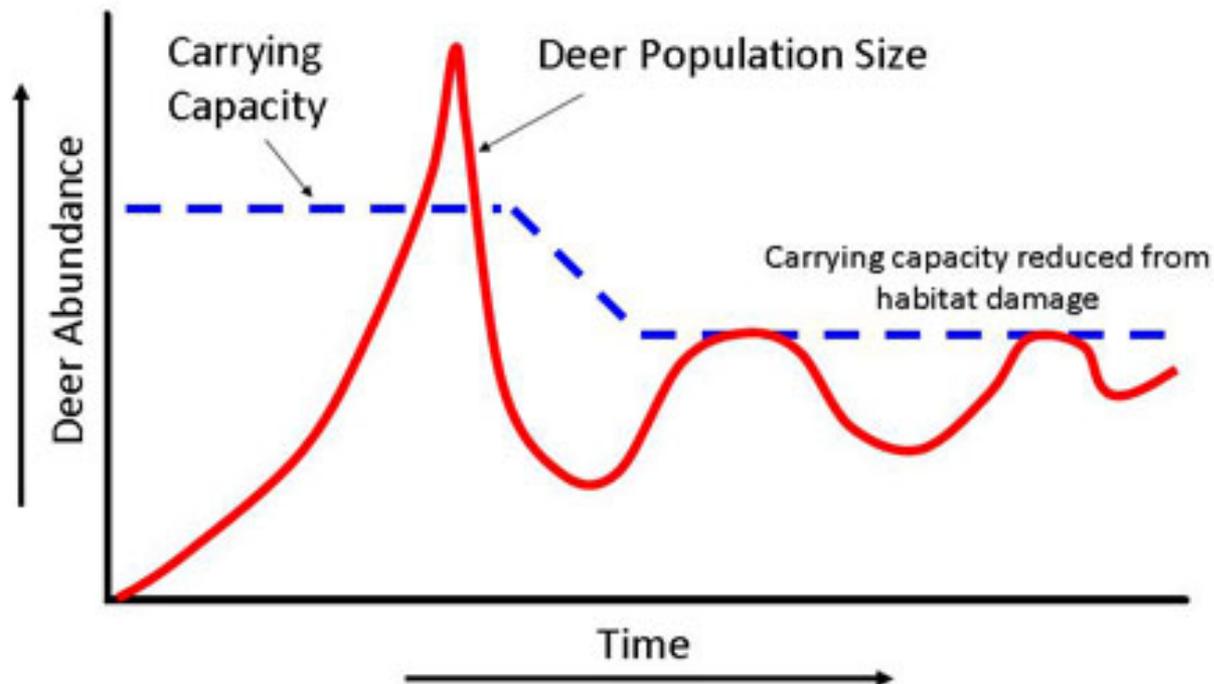


1948



# Carrying Capacity

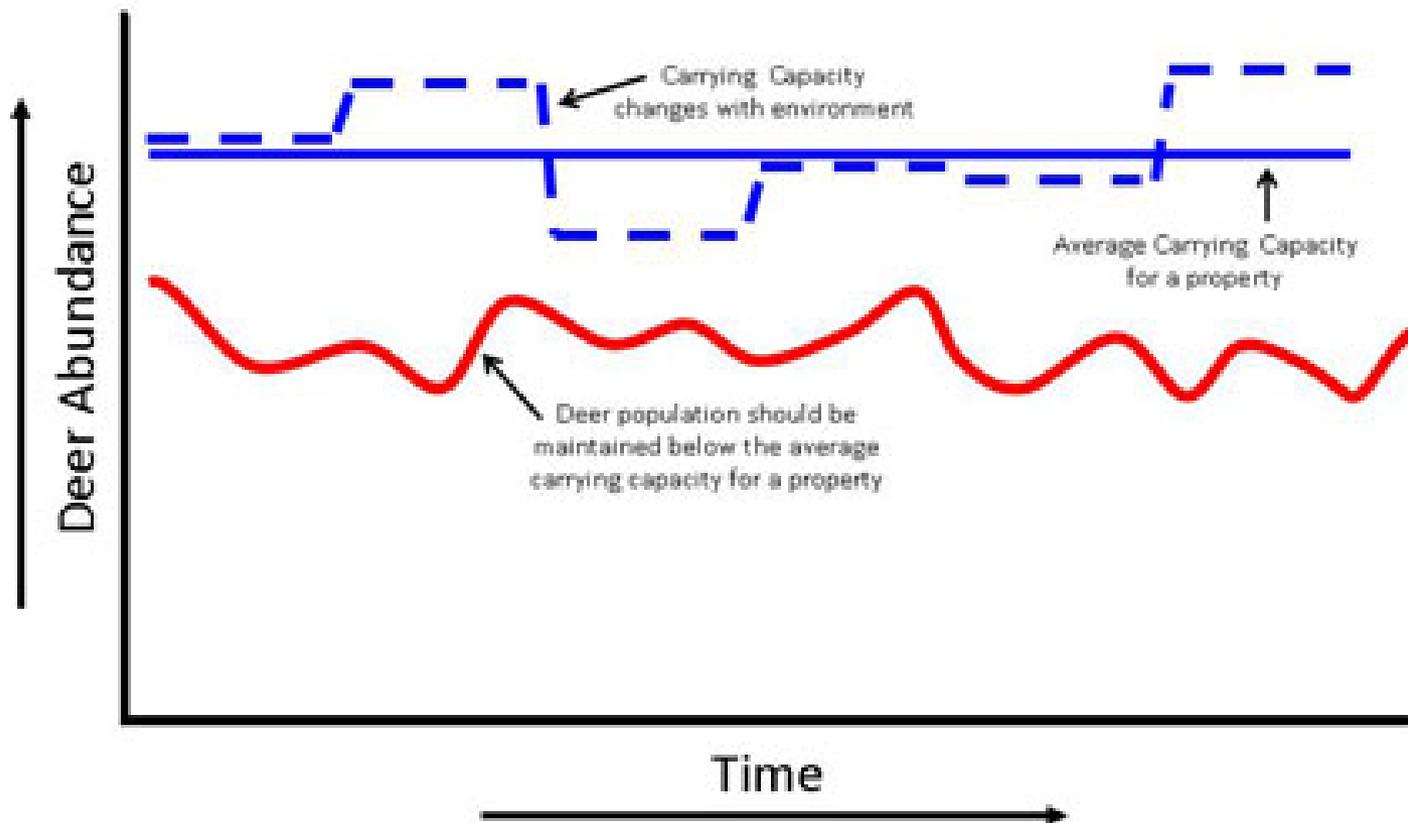
Unrestricted deer population growth may diminish the habitat's carrying capacity



Although we refer to carrying capacity as this maximum number the habitat can sustain, in actuality this number is always changing.

Not only does carrying capacity fluctuate from year to year, it fluctuates from season to season. Because deer are herbivores, they depend on plants for food and plant growth is affected by precipitation and temperature. So annual changes in rainfall, for example, can influence carrying capacity by affecting the growth of deer food plants and their quality

# Environmental “Noise” and Carrying Capacity



# DISEASE AND PARASITES

➤ **Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)** was first detected in the Sheep Mountain Herd unit in 2002

➤ 61-2002, 74-2003, 75-2002, 76-2004, 77-2005; all areas were identified through hunter surveillance.



➤ **Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) and Blue Tongue**



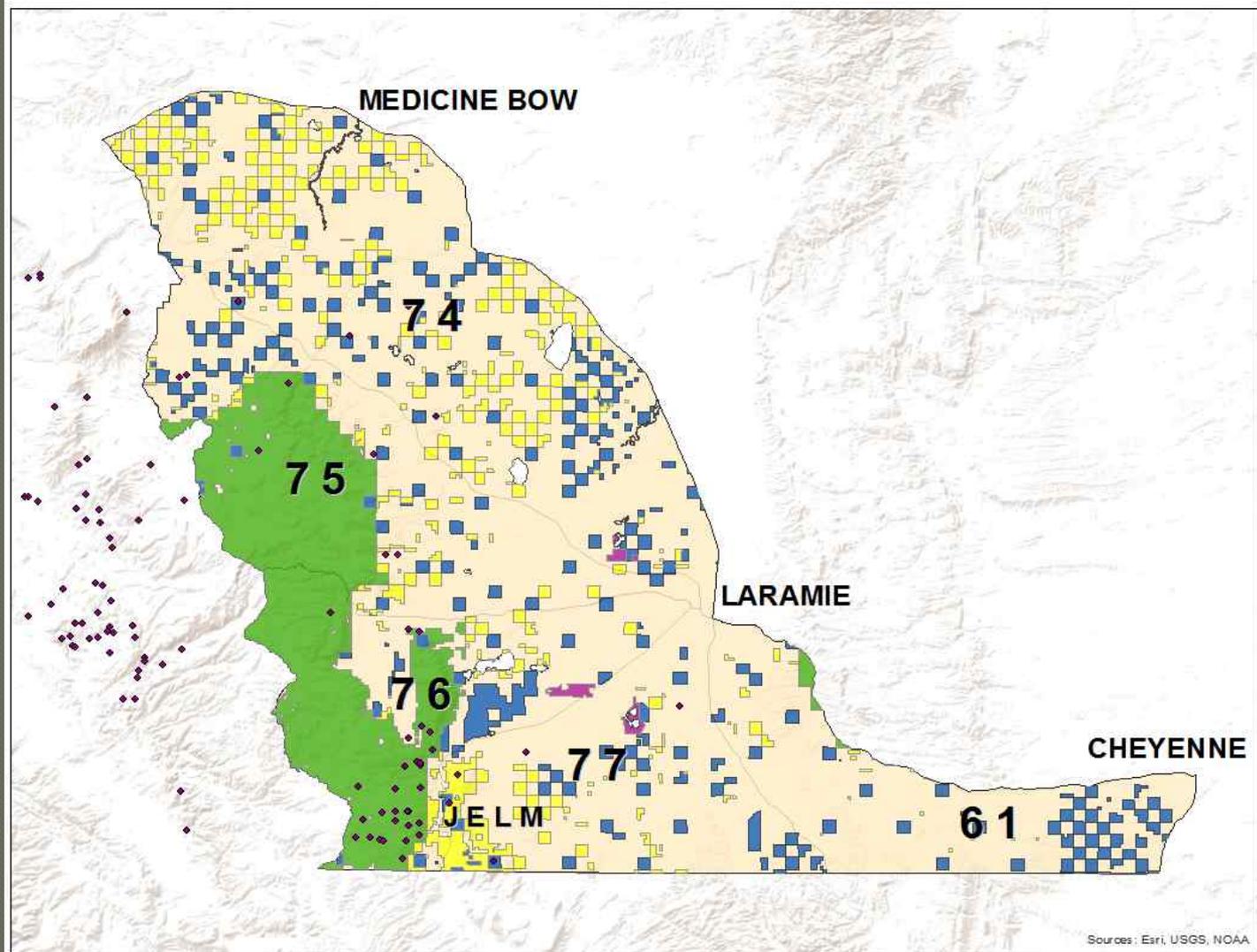
➤ **Fallow Deer Louse**  
(*Bovicola tibialis*)

- 1<sup>st</sup> documented in Wyoming mule deer hunt area 80 in 2009
- This exotic parasite has been linked to mule deer declines in eastern Washington state

# PREDATION



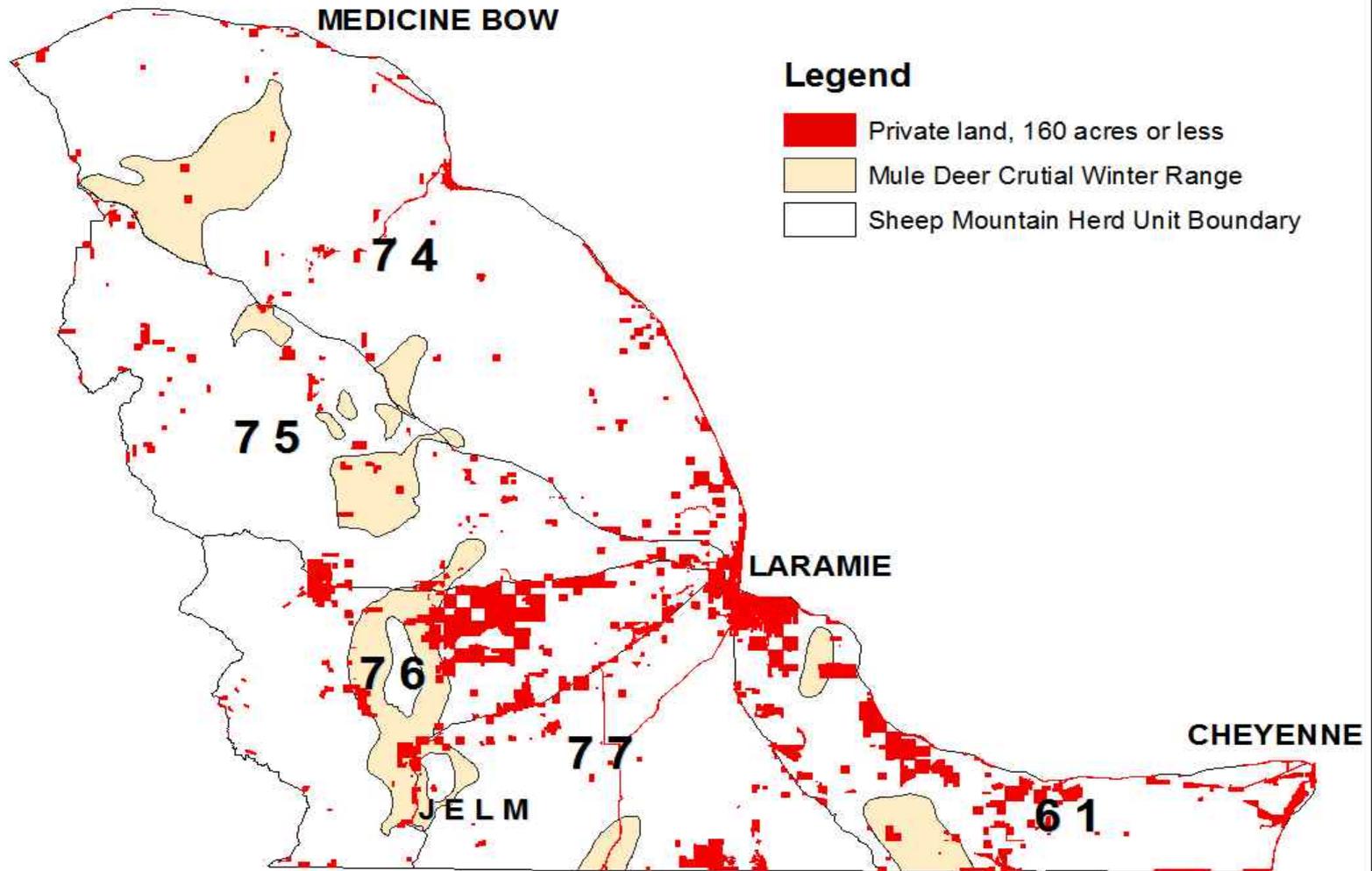
# Mountain Lion Harvest 2009-2014



# DEVELOPMENTS

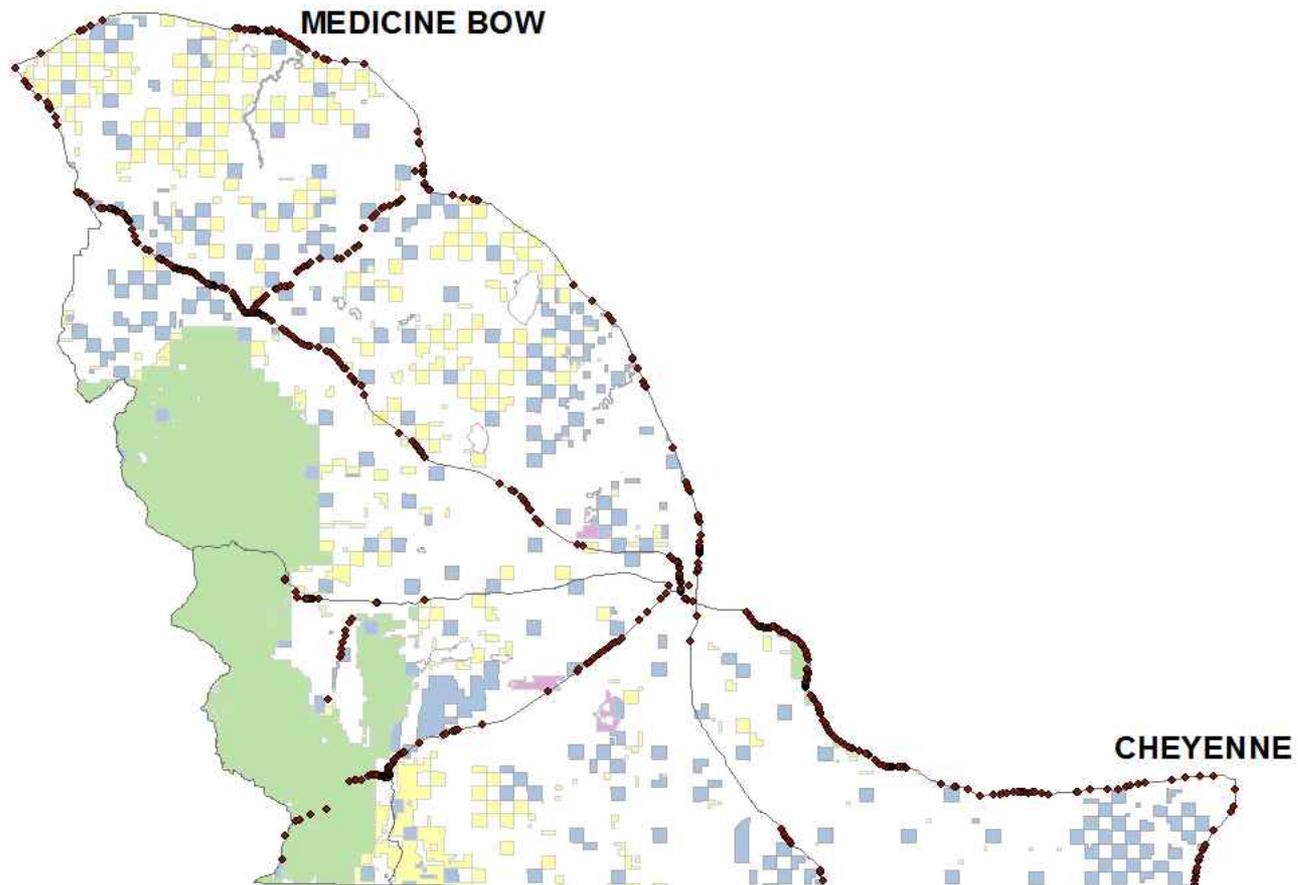


# Development

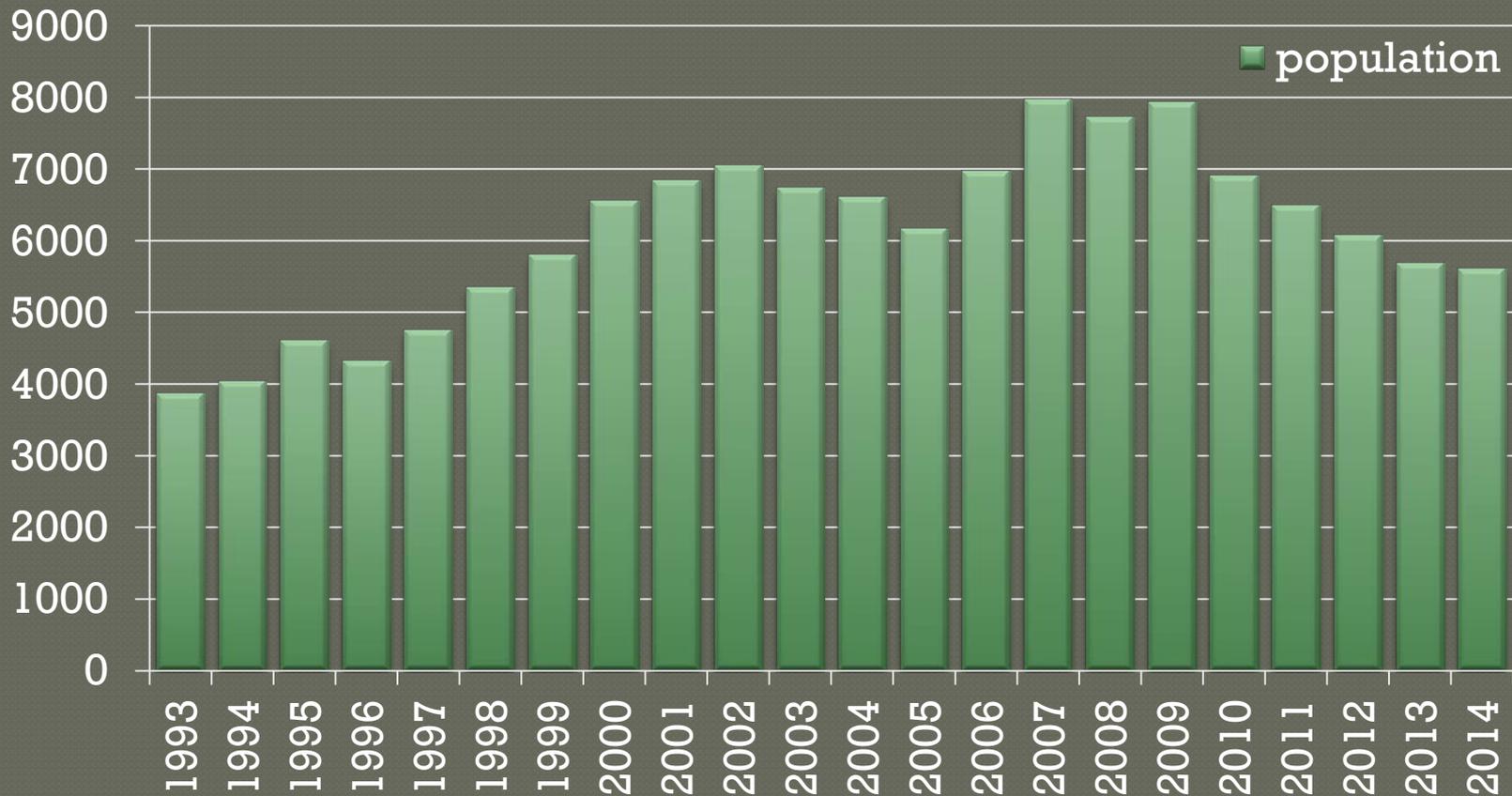




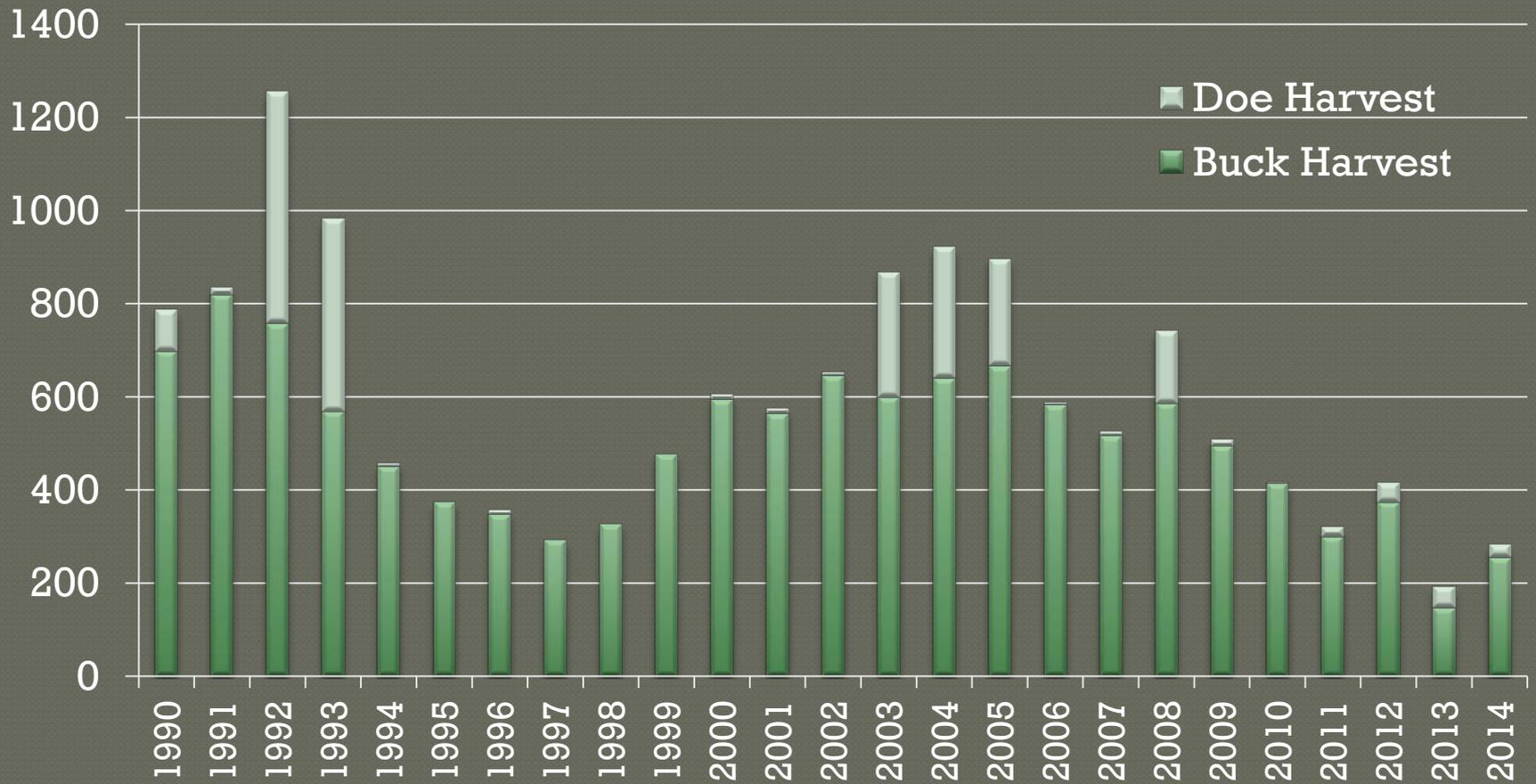
# Highway mortalities



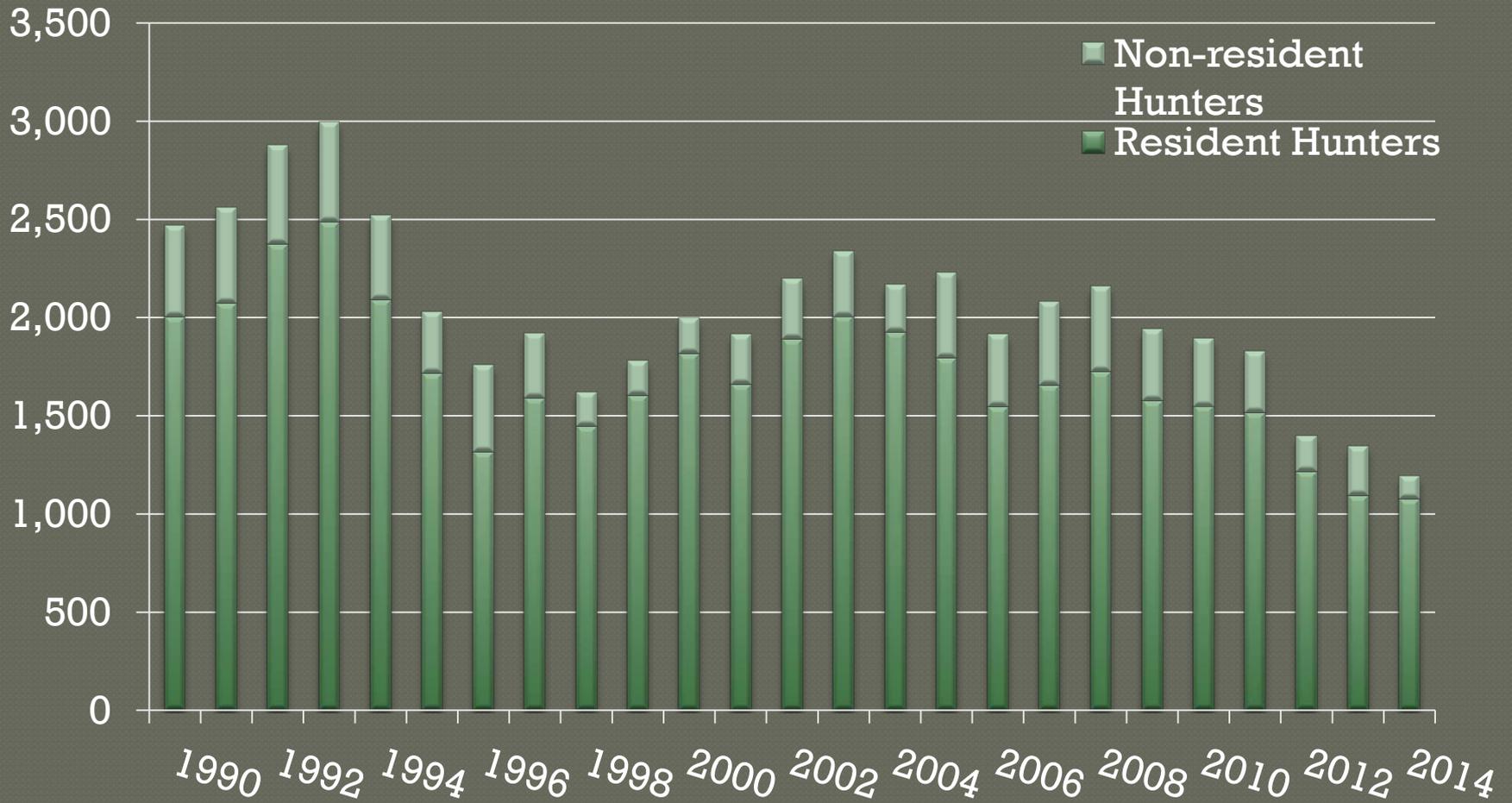
**The current population objective for Sheep Mountain Mule Deer is 15,000. We estimate the current population to be ~ 5,600.**



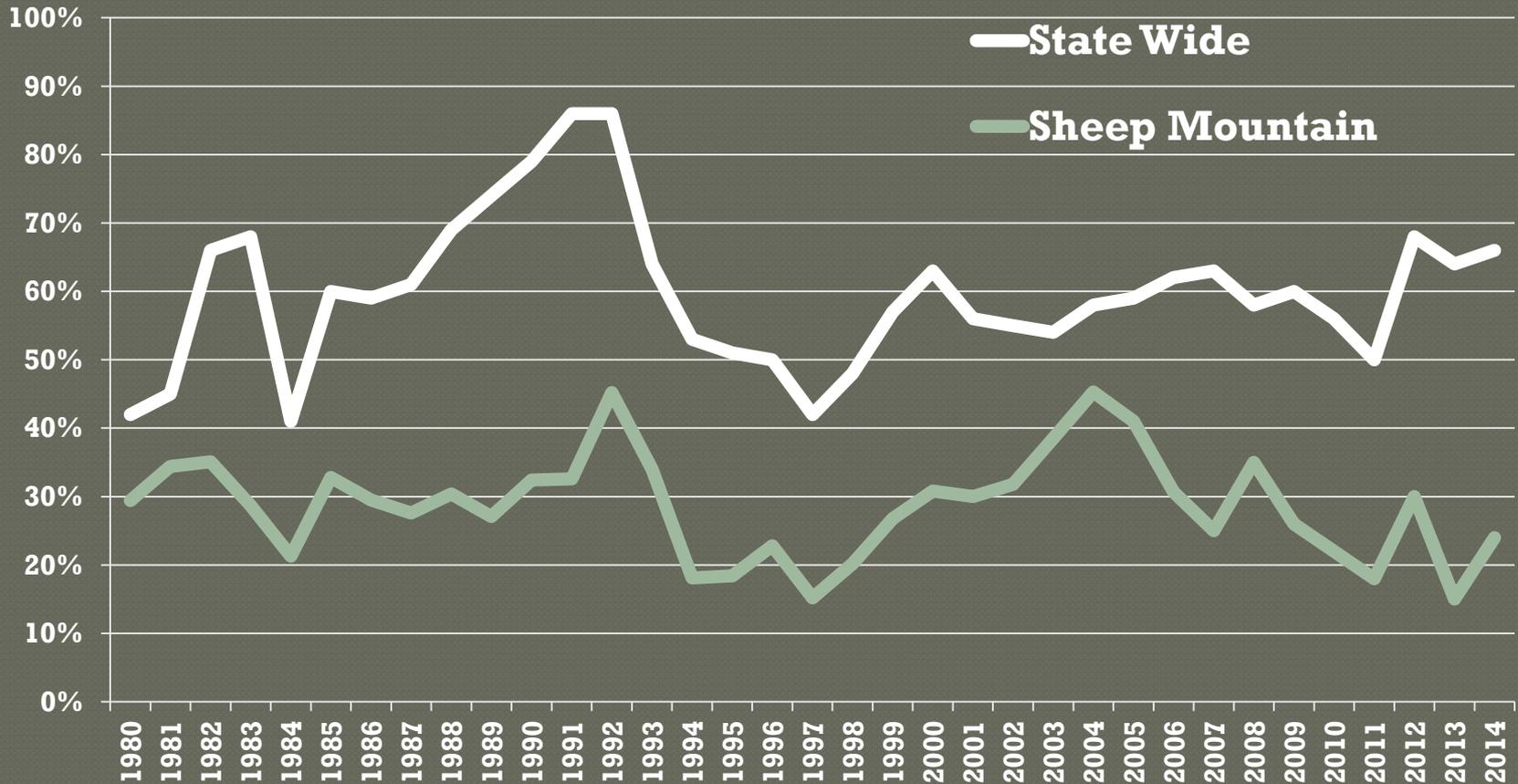
# Harvest



# Hunter numbers



# Hunter Success



# Proposed Objective

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- Reduce the Management Population Objective from 15,000 to 10,000 mule deer postseason.
- Maintain Recreational Management of 20 to 29 bucks per 100 does.
- Closely monitor hunter success, effort, and satisfaction.

Any Questions?



# Hunting Season Discussion

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- Hunter survey indicated a preference for limited quota hunting (61%)
  - LQ hunts on hold until:
    - Platte Valley LQ evaluation completed (2016)
    - Statewide discussion on hunter movement and displacement (40% of Laramie region in LQ already)
- Archery antlerless harvest
  - Discussed at statewide season setting meeting

# Hunting Season Discussion

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- Separated deer and elk seasons to reduce deer hunter crowding and harvest, and to simplify elk regulations
- Antler Shed Regulation
  - TRW will evaluate/discuss this during interim east of CD

# Group Decisions

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## ◉ Decision Rules

- Consensus
- Consent
- Simple Majority
- Super Majority (90%, 75%, 2/3, 60%)

## ◉ Tools/Methods

- Thumbs up/down palm neutral
- Raise hand
- 5 fingers

# Annual Habitat Project Mtg

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- Stakeholders present habitat projects to SMMDI group for endorsement.
- Projects must address desired outcomes identified within the plan to be endorsed
- WGFD Funding Status
- Suggest adopting/customizing PVHP habitat project application
- Suggest meeting timing last 2 weeks of July to accommodate grant application cycles

# Annual Report Format

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## ○ Suggested Information

- Classification data (included in graph)
- Harvest report data (included in graph)
  - Hunter effort
  - Hunter success
  - Harvest
  - Hunter satisfaction

## ○ Habitat project updates

## ○ Predator management efforts and harvest

## ○ Other Related News

## ○ Timing (all data is available by end of February)

# Annual Meeting

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- Suggest to review information from the annual report in person
- Suggested time frame early March

# Proposed Summer Field Trip

MEDICINE BOW

74

Medicine Bow River winter range

WC importance of aspen and riparian areas for fawning

Cooper Cr. winter range

75

Conservation easments

LARAMIE

Stop 5 Squirrel cr. fire and seasonal road closures

Stop 4 Overview of important mule deer winter forage

76

Overview of Jelm winter range

CHEYENNE

77

JELM

Stop 2 Aspen Treatment

61

Stop 1 Guzzler



“I’m sorry, ma’am, but his license does check out and, after all, your husband *was* in season. Remember, just because he knocks doesn’t mean you have to let him in.”

# Questions?