

Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Workshop  
Laramie, Dec. 16, 2014

Personnel present: Lee Knox, Corey Class, Robin Kepple, Bill Brinegar, Ryan Amundson, Rick King, Jordan Winter, Brooke Weaver

1. Corey Class did brief staff introductions and a short overview of why we are here.
2. Corey gave a recap of the previous meetings. Please see Power Point presentation on this web page.

Human disturbance:

U.S. Forest Service, District Ranger Frank Romero

The Forest Service has been meeting with conservation groups such as Muley Fanatics and to work on projects for mule deer.

Frank said the Forest Service has heard a lot of concerns about a travel management in Sheep Mountain area. He said the public is asking for changes. The Forest Service is currently implementing some gates to control travel in certain areas in the north part of the property. They are doing similar work on Pole Mountain too.

Frank is looking for assistance and volunteers to implement these projects faster. One of the things they have to do is to put up signs to let the public know why an area is being closed. He said people don't like it when access to public lands is closed, but if they see a sign explaining why then they are more accepting of it. The Forest Service needs volunteers to help install the signs. Frank has a map of areas they are working on and invited everyone to review it after the meeting.

**Question from audience:** Has Forest Service considered closures on critical winter ranges? Frank said it is something they would consider, but right now want to focus on gates and signs.

3. Ryan Amundson talked about mule deer nutrition and habitat enhancements. Please refer to the Power Point presentation on this web page.

Some of the highlights from this presentation:

- A summary of the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership projects, along with other mule deer projects he is working across the state.
- Fence projects and mule deer safety. Top wire height: 42 or less; Between top and second wire: at least 12 inches; Bottom line at least 16 inches off ground. Ask for smooth wire if antelope live in the area
- Conservation Easements – there are opportunities for landowners. More info can be found on the Power Point presentation.

- Volunteer opportunities – Ryan shared some photos of recent projects that were made possible by volunteers. These include replanting shrubs, guzzler installation and seed collection.
  - Agreements for landowners for habitat projects - Recreational access is not required, but is looked upon favorably.
  - Invasive species aerial application.
  - Prescribed fires potential in some areas. Forest Service is looking into doing some prescribed fires.
4. Lee Knox gave a presentation on herd objectives for the Sheep Mountain mule deer herd. Please see Power Point presentation on this web page for more information.
- Herd objective reviews are required every 5 years
  - Population objective for this herd is 15,000 animals, but current population estimates are just over 13,000. The current objective of 15,000 animals may not be realistic for this herd.

**Question from audience:** about the number and quality of bucks: is it just Sheep Mountain?

**Herd objective questionnaire:**

Before the break, Corey handed out a brief survey asking hunters if they thought the current herd objective of 15,000 was acceptable. A quick review of the responses showed split opinions.

5. Corey Class gave a brief explanation of the Draft Management Recommendation Outline. The plan will include these basic components:
- Acknowledgements (list of participants)
  - Introduction
  - Issues, Objectives, Strategies
  - Population Management (data collection, hunting seasons and research.)
  - Habitat Management (habitat quantity and quality, focus areas, key habitat types)
  - Predation Management
  - Disturbance (Human presence and activities, motorized activity, etc.)
  - Access Management
  - Youth Hunter Education, Involvement and Recruitment
  - Literature Cited
  - Appendices (survey, collaborative session results, minutes, etc.)
6. Bill Brinegar asked participants about any information needs they may have and requested suggestions for potential workshops. A couple suggestions:
- Conservation easements for landowners

- OHV disturbance and mule deer. Hunters are really split on ATV use. Wants to get everyone in the same room and work on the problem.

**Question from the audience:** Is there any data on how Platte Valley MDI is working?

**Comment from the audience:** I like the signs about the limited quota seasons. When people are up there hunting is when they want to talk about mule deer. Maybe have a suggestion box up there so people could give you the information during the time they are up there hunting when it is fresh in their minds.

7. Mule Deer Hunter Survey - Corey Class went over the results of the survey. These can be found on the Game and Fish website.

8. Final questions & comments from audience:

**Question:** How likely is it the antler seasons will be implemented east of the Continental Divide?

**Question:** How long would it take to implement limited quota hunting seasons?

**Question:** How big of a factor do you think predators are?

**Question:** Sometimes I see a mountain lion when I am hunting but I don't have a license for a lion for that year. Could you make a lion license good for three years?

**Question:** What is the lion quota for the Sheep Mountain area?

**Question:** Why are you allowing bow hunters to kill does every year? If you lose does you lose fawns. Why are we allowing them to do that?

**Question:** As part of your habitat work and monitoring work, are you looking at where deer and elk use winter ranges? Are you going to look at each species uses these habitats? Are the elk affecting the mule deer?

**Question:** There are a lot of deer killed on Highway 11 between 130 and Albany, and on Highway 230 near Woods Landing. Can we get the speed limit reduced to 55 mph at night in those areas?

*Corey: I am vexed as to why I did not record the responses to these questions at the time of the meeting. Let me know if you want responses included and I will have to work with you on it.*