

**Wyoming Game and Fish  
Wyoming Range Mule Deer Management Plan  
Collaborative Learning Process  
Afton Workshop Notes  
August 24, 2010  
6:00 – 9:00 pm**

Meeting Objectives

1. Game and Fish Staff Present Main Themes in Panel Discussions
2. Public Questions and Answer opportunity for Panels
3. Small group break outs to discuss solutions

Group 1 – Daryl Lutz, Facilitator

- \* RAC commission, similar to Utah for mule deer projects
- Reestablish key vegetation species on fall and winter ranges
- Increase cooperation with Federal land managers and grazing permittees
  - Appoint a project marketer
  - Encourage forage reserves
- Increase emphasis on reclamation and rehab
- Move three acre recommendation to policy through planning –recommendation that attendees had heard about: G&F made the recommendation of having oil and gas companies mitigate three acres of mule deer habitat for every one acre disturbed by activities.
  - Emphasis on cooperation with industry
- Do prescribed burns
- Increase emphasis on and don't forget the importance of summer and fall ranges

Population Management

- \*\*\*Mandatory Harvest reporting
- \* Increase funding for tooth age data
  - And general data collection
    - Radio Collars
    - More ground counts
- \*\*Emphasis on “Quality of the Hunt”
  - Hunter density – common opener in Reg G and 135
  - Split seasons and licenses specific to the split
  - Select your weapon
  - Make the season longer
  - Common closure date
  - ATV abuse
  - Don't reduce current access
  - Need ore enforcement
  - Hunter accountability/responsibility
  - More education
  - Support state of trails

- Larger WGF D enforcement of effort/resources
  - Increase check stations – statewide scheduling on enforcement

#### Predators

- \*Bounty on coyotes - \$ from partners energy
- Wolves included
- Emphasis on state predators stamp
- Continued domestic pets/animals
- Increase quotas on lions and bears to benefit mule deer
- Consider emergency feeding

#### Partnerships

- County development
- County mule deer working groups
- Interface with Lincoln/Sublette USFS RAC apply for projects
- Increase involvement in state legislature
- Increase involvement with Federal Representatives
- \*Improve partnerships with oil and gas industry
- \* Improve/create partnership with Union Pacific

#### Group 2 – Jessica Clement, Facilitator

##### 1. Habitat Improvements

- \* Better winter range
- \* Restore less optimum crucial winter range to mimic optimum winter range – for example spike treatments on sagebrush while considering sage grouse needs, burning, mowing and seeding
- Reduce overgrazing, reduce competition where necessary between cattle, sheep and deer.
- Consider cyclical nature of growth and seasons in management decisions
- Summer, fall ranges need habitat improved through fire and better management

##### 2. Habitat Protection

- Aggressive predation management
- Pursue partnership with railroads to protect more deer
- Work with Wyoming Stockgrowers Land Trust on conservation easements
- \*Manage ATV and motorized use
- \* Human presence generally during critical times needs to be minimized. For example antler hnting, coyote hunting, etc.

##### 3. Population Management

- Studies need to be improved, more \$ needs to be invested in sampling process ie flight time
  - Also use hand count on population estimates
- Survey hunters and outfitters
- \* Mandatory reporting vs. sampling
- \*Mandatory checking of harvest

#### 4. Limiting Factors

- \* More Hunting season road closures
- \* More road closures for fawning periods
- \* Weed control before it gets worse

#### 5. Research

- Mandatory checking
- Do research to explore Desert Land and livestock
- What are we losing fawns to, eg high mountain and river valley differences
- Comprehensive study of limiting factors affecting Wyoming Range deer herd

#### 6. Quality of the Hunt

- \* Standardize opening (and closing?) dates for Western Wyoming
- Limited quota hunting licenses for residents
- \* Choose your weapon – archery, muzzleloaders, rifles all separate seasons
- Split up into more hunt areas for Region G
- Longer seasons to spread out hunter pressure
- \*Point restriction

#### 7. Partnerships – All \*

- Partnerships with oil and Gas operations
- BLM habitat restoration
- Wyoming Stockgrowers Conservation Land Trust conservation easements
- Keep USFS and BLM partnerships going with WYGFD
- Partnerships between sportsmen, WYGFD, BLM, USFS and anyone else to do small treatments

#### Group 3 – Mark Gocke, Facilitator

##### Habitat

- Find alternative sources of funding, ie partner with other environmental groups
- Sportsmen need to voice concerns with the legislature, especially with regard to energy development, and including Federal planning processes and reclamation of disturbed areas.
- Current habitat conditions will not support 50,000 deer. Habitat data supports that.

##### Population Management

- Support the lower non-resident quotas
- Time to publicly reevaluate the population objective
- Force hunters to pick their hunt area or region, like non-residents do and /or standard opening dates throughout

##### Partnerships

- Game and Fish needs to carry a bigger stick with the Federal land managers (eg reclamation, grazing and predator control)

- Can Game and Fish inform sportsmen of upcoming public involvement opportunities on federal land or otherwise? Utilize newspapers and Wyoming Wildlife Magazine or a brochure to explain how sportsmen can get involved.

#### Group 4 – Susan Boston, Facilitator

##### Presentation Notes

1. Sustainability—manage mule deer to sustainable numbers
2. Habitat- improve using burns, timber sales, spike
3. Partnerships – outfitters & guides – public issue with drop camps in the backcountry. Perception of more outfitters using drop camps, but used by “do it yourselves”

##### Issues/Solutions

- Can we get to the objective – do we have the habitat to get to and sustain 50,000
  - Maintain 50,000 with an “interim” goal of 35,000
  - With current Winter Range habitat conditions 50,000 not sustainable
  - Black bear impacts on mule deer
  - Habitat improvements – do not shorten seasons (short seasons kill more deer)
  - Population objective should be high
  - Habitat is a key issue – healthy habitat will sustain objective
  - Sustainability is a big issue
- Common Opener Issue
  - All habitat areas should be open on the same day in Western Wyoming
  - September 10, September 20 compromise September 15 date, September 10 -15
  - Regions G, H, K, W all of these areas standard opener
- Habitat Issues
  - Issue: domestic livestock over grazing , deer WP’s (eg Hams Fork, Sage RT)
  - WYGF work with BLM to address management issues and better management of livestock
  - Game and Fish, Forest Service, BLM work to implement prescribed burns, before it all burns
  - Implement small scale timber sales to improve habitat
  - Chemical treatments of spike
  - Planting to enhance habitat (eg winter ranges)
  - CRP (BLM lands) rest all treatments on BLM/FS move livestock to private land (CRP)—Rest BLM grazing; move livestock to private land and rest/rotate, similar to CRP program for Ag.
  - Roads and access issue re: four wheelers and sleds – need more restrictions to minimize sleds
  - Late elk seasons affect mule deer and elk – stress
- Partnerships
  - Issue: sportsmen who do not support outfitting industry –there seems to be more friction between sportsmen and outfitters, question as to why (oppose outfitters & guides)
  - Drop camps by outfitters & guides an issue with sportsmen (Greys River Road lawsuit)
    - Need to improve this relationship by eliminating drop camps
- Issue: Abandonment of “Designated” hunt areas by outfitters & guides in Grey’s River
- Game and Fish and Legislator contacts BLM and local level to become more engaged
- Do it Yourself/Backpackers in back causes conflict - more discussion between outfitters & guides and sportsmen

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Plus

- Facilitator moved meeting along
- Panel Q & A

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- Allow for more time during Q & A
- Provide more information on limiting factors process

Compiled by Elaine Walsh Carney 9/11/10