2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| HERD: PR615-RED DESERT |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 60-61, 64 |  | PREPARED BY: GREG HIATT |
| 2009-2013 Average | $\underline{2014}$ | 2015 Proposed |
| Population: 13,321 | 11,080 | 11,800 |
| Harvest: 748 | 300 | 240 |
| Hunters: 768 | 332 | 280 |
| Hunter Success: 97\% | 90\% | 86\% |
| Active Licenses: 838 | 354 | 280 |
| Active License Success: 89\% | 85\% | 86\% |
| Recreation Days: 2,285 | 1,321 | 740 |
| Days Per Animal: 3.1 | 4.4 | 3.1 |
| Males per 100 Females 62 | 49 |  |
| Juveniles per 100 Females 54 | 53 |  |
| Population Objective ( $\pm 20 \%$ ) : |  | 15000 (12000-18000) |
| Management Strategy: |  | Special |
| Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: |  | -26.1\% |
| Number of years population has been + or - objective in rece | rend: | 3 |
| Model Date: |  | 3/3/2015 |
| Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group): |  |  |
|  | JCR Year | Proposed |
| Females $\geq 1$ year old: | 1.5\% | 0.6\% |
| Males $\geq 1$ year old: | 8.7\% | 6.5\% |
| Juveniles (<1 year old): | 0.2\% | 0.5\% |
| Total: | 3.2\% | 2.0\% |
| Proposed change in post-season population: | +0.8\% | +6.5\% |

Population Size - Postseason


## Harvest



Number of Hunters


Harvest Success
$\square$ PR615 - Hunter Success \% PR615 - Active License Success


## Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested
PR615-Days


Preseason Animals per 100 Females
PR615 - Males

- PR615 - Juveniles



## 2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR615-RED DESERT

|  |  | MALES |  |  |  | FEMALES |  | JUVENILES |  | Tot Cls | Cls <br> Obj | Males to $\mathbf{1 0 0}$ Females |  |  |  | Young to |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Pre Pop | Ylg | Adult | Total | \% | Total | \% | Total | \% |  |  | Ylng | Adult | Total | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Conf } \\ & \text { Int } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Fem } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Conf } \\ & \text { Int } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Adult } \end{aligned}$ |
| 2009 | 13,234 | 268 | 749 | 1,017 | 24\% | 1,987 | 47\% | 1,190 | 28\% | 4,194 | 1,907 | 13 | 38 | 51 | $\pm 3$ | 60 | $\pm 3$ | 40 |
| 2010 | 16,795 | 361 | 951 | 1,312 | 31\% | 1,823 | 43\% | 1,077 | 26\% | 4,212 | 2,595 | 20 | 52 | 72 | $\pm 4$ | 59 | $\pm 3$ | 34 |
| 2011 | 16,523 | 263 | 736 | 999 | 27\% | 1,540 | 42\% | 1,115 | 31\% | 3,654 | 2,650 | 17 | 48 | 65 | $\pm 4$ | 72 | $\pm 4$ | 44 |
| 2012 | 12,798 | 177 | 888 | 1,065 | 32\% | 1,600 | 48\% | 667 | 20\% | 3,332 | 2,103 | 11 | 56 | 67 | $\pm 4$ | 42 | $\pm 3$ | 25 |
| 2013 | 11,361 | 66 | 809 | 875 | 30\% | 1,517 | 52\% | 539 | 18\% | 2,931 | 1,629 | 4 | 53 | 58 | $\pm 3$ | 36 | $\pm 3$ | 23 |
| 2014 | 11,410 | 110 | 519 | 629 | 24\% | 1,285 | 49\% | 686 | 26\% | 2,600 | 1,535 | 9 | 40 | 49 | $\pm 3$ | 53 | $\pm 4$ | 36 |

## 2015 HUNTING SEASONS RED DESERT PRONGHORN HERD (PR615)

| Hunt <br> Area | Dates of Seasons |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Type | Opens | Closes | Quota | Limitations |  |
| 60 | 1 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 31 | 50 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 61 | 1 | Sep. 12 | Oct. 31 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sep. 12 | Oct. 31 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
| 64 | 1 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 31 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 31 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Archery <br> 60,64 <br> 61 |  | Aug. 15 | Sep. 18 |  | Refer to Section 2 of this Chapter |


| Hunt Area | Type | Quota change from 2014 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 60 | 1 | 0 |
|  | 6 | -25 |
| 61 | 1 | -50 |
|  | 6 | 0 |
| 64 | 1 | 0 |
|  | 6 | -25 |
| Total | $\mathbf{1}$ | $-\mathbf{5 0}$ |
|  | $\mathbf{6}$ | $\mathbf{- 5 0}$ |

## Management Evaluation

Current Management Objective: 15,000
Management Strategy: Special
2014 Postseason Population Estimate: ~11,100
2015 Proposed Postseason Population Estimate: ~11,800
The Red Desert pronghorn herd is managed toward a post-hunt population of 15,000 pronghorn, an objective last reviewed in 1994. Population size is estimated using a spreadsheet model developed in 2012 and updated in 2015. The herd is in special management, with harvest quotas designed to maintain pre-hunt buck:doe ratios above 60:100. Objectives for this herd are currently under public review, with no changes proposed.

## Herd Unit Issues

Historically, access in this herd unit has been good. Much of the unit is public land, and hunters have been able to acquire access to most private lands in the checkerboard. The seasonal
distribution map for the herd has not been updated for many years, and it is likely there are crucial winter habitats, particularly in Area 60, that have not yet been delineated.

Habitat issues in this herd unit include continued gas field development, coalbed natural gas development, opening of an in situ uranium mine with other mines proposed and possible development of shale oil. Many miles of sheep-tight fences exist in the herd unit, impeding pronghorn movements and migrations, and increasing losses during severe winters.

## Weather

Drought conditions in 2012 and 2013 continued into the first half of 2014, with significant precipitation not arriving until the last quarter of July. Precipitation during the following three months produced good vegetative growth, but was probably too late to significantly improve fawn survival. Condition of pronghorn going into the winter is expected to have been good. The 2014-15 winter had numerous bitter cold spells, coupled with unusually warm periods, but little significant snowfall until late February. Losses may still be above average because many animals were dispersed off winter ranges prior to the late blizzards.

## Habitat

While no herbaceous habitat transects are established within this herd unit, herbaceous forage production is expected to have improved due to improved precipitation in the latter half of the growing season. Only one shrub transect has been established near this herd unit, on the Chain Lakes WHMA, but was not read in 2014.

Habitat losses to uranium development have increased with opening of the Ur in situ uranium mine in Area 61, but is not in or near crucial pronghorn ranges. Habitat losses to gas development have slowed due to low gas prices and demand for drilling rigs in the Bakken fields.

## Field Data

Fawn production improved to 53:100, near the five-year average for this herd after record lows in 2012 and 2013. Fawn production improved in all three hunt areas. As usual, production was lowest in Area 60 at 45:100. Production was similar between Areas 61 and 64, at 55:100 and 53:100 respectively.

The herd buck:doe ratio failed to meet the special management criterion of 60:100 for the second consecutive year, a result of poor recruitment from the 2012 and 2013 cohorts. None of the three hunt areas met the 60:100 criterion, ranging from 46:100 in Area 60 to 52:100 in Area 64.

## Harvest Data

Hunter success improved slightly, to 85 percent, but was still below the five-year average of 88 percent. Hunter effort increased again, to a record high of 4.4 days per animal. Statistically, the past two years have seen the poorest hunting in this herd since it was delineated in 1976. Hunter success was highest in Area 60 and lowest in Area 64. The average days of effort required to
harvest an animal was a high in Area 61 and a near-record high in Area 64, but near normal levels in Area 60. The effort required to harvest on a Type 1 license in Area 61 was nearly twice that of either Area 60 or Area 64.

## Population

The Time-Specific Juvenile \& Constant Adult Survival (TSJ,CA) spreadsheet model provided the best fit with observed buck:doe ratios for this herd and behaved predictably when 2014 classification and harvest data were added. The model aligns with three out of five line transect estimates, but underestimates the two most recent. Because of these concerns, it is considered a "Fair" model of the herd. Annual adult survival was predicted at 89 percent, a reasonable level. Juvenile survival rates fluctuated within the allowed range but did hover at maximum or minimum values for many years. The CJ,CA and SCJ,SCA models each had slightly lower AIC values, but both models predicted herd sizes well below line transect estimates and generated roughly stable buck:doe estimates that did not track the dips and rises of observed values. Fawn production in 2015 was projected to be near the five-year average and the model was run with median juvenile survival in 2015.

The model predicts the herd has been roughly 20 percent below objective for the past three years. Even with optimistic assumptions on fawn production and survival, the 2015 pre-hunt population should be less than seen in 2012 and herd growth will be minimal. Without major improvement in fawn production and survival, proposed reductions in harvest quotas for 2015 will provide minimal increase in herd size.

## Management Summary

This herd was well below objective size following a record harvest and severe winter losses in 1992. Conservative harvests after that winter combined with improved fawn production and survival beginning in 2007 allowed the herd to reach and be maintained at objective size in 2010 and 2011.

According to the spreadsheet model, the combination of heavy harvests and extremely poor fawn production in 2012 and 2013 significantly reduced herd size, estimated around 11,000.

With the population estimated to be 20 percent below objective and record poor harvest statistics, harvests need to be further reduced to allow the herd to recover. Proposed quotas for Type 6 doe/fawn licenses are eliminated in Area 60 and reduced to a minimal number in Area 64. Recommended quota for Type 1 licenses are also reduced in Area 61, where hunter effort was highest. With the projected harvest of roughly 205 bucks and 35 does and fawns, predicted herd size will increase by about 6 percent to 11,800 pronghorn. The herd is unlikely to reach objective in two or three years unless precipitation improves, raising both fawn production and survival.






2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| HERD: PR630-IRON SPRINGS |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 52, 56, 108 |  | PREPARED BY: GREG HIATT |
| 2009-2013 Average | $\underline{2014}$ | 2015 Proposed |
| Population: 11,322 | 10,398 | 10,434 |
| Harvest: 823 | 466 | 455 |
| Hunters: 852 | 429 | 530 |
| Hunter Success: 97\% | 109\% | 86 \% |
| Active Licenses: 960 | 519 | 530 |
| Active License Success: 86\% | 90\% | 86 \% |
| Recreation Days: 2,858 | 1,424 | 1,520 |
| Days Per Animal: 3.5 | 3.1 | 3.3 |
| Males per 100 Females 44 | 45 |  |
| Juveniles per 100 Females 52 | 61 |  |
| Population Objective ( $\pm 20 \%$ ) : |  | 12000 (9600-14400) |
| Management Strategy: |  | Recreational |
| Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: |  | -13.4\% |
| Number of years population has been + or - objective in rece | rend: | 3 |
| Model Date: |  | 3/3/2015 |
| Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group): |  |  |
|  | JCR Year | Proposed |
| Females $\geq 1$ year old: | 3.1\% | 3.4\% |
| Males $\geq 1$ year old: | 13.9\% | 9.6\% |
| Juveniles (< 1 year old): | 0.7\% | 0.7\% |
| Total: | 4.9\% | 4.2\% |
| Proposed change in post-season population: | -4.5\% | +0.3\% |

Population Size - Postseason


## Harvest



Number of Hunters


Harvest Success
$\square$ PR630 - Hunter Success \% PR630 - Active License Success


## Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested
PR630 - Days


Preseason Animals per 100 Females


## 2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR630-IRON SPRINGS

|  |  | MALES |  |  |  | FEMALES |  | JUVENILES |  | Tot Cls | Cls <br> Obj | Males to $\mathbf{1 0 0}$ Females |  |  |  | Young to |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Pre Pop | Ylg | Adult | Total | \% | Total | \% | Total | \% |  |  | Ylng | Adult | Total | Conf Int | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Fem } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Conf } \\ & \text { Int } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Adult } \end{aligned}$ |
| 2009 | 12,165 | 225 | 525 | 750 | 22\% | 1,764 | 52\% | 861 | 26\% | 3,375 | 1,343 | 13 | 30 | 43 | $\pm 3$ | 49 | $\pm 3$ | 34 |
| 2010 | 13,663 | 159 | 710 | 869 | 23\% | 1,874 | 50\% | 968 | 26\% | 3,711 | 1,477 | 8 | 38 | 46 | $\pm 3$ | 52 | $\pm 3$ | 35 |
| 2011 | 13,082 | 150 | 576 | 726 | 22\% | 1,627 | 49\% | 984 | 29\% | 3,337 | 1,791 | 9 | 35 | 45 | $\pm 3$ | 60 | $\pm 3$ | 42 |
| 2012 | 11,548 | 212 | 604 | 816 | 23\% | 1,801 | 52\% | 863 | 25\% | 3,480 | 1,295 | 12 | 34 | 45 | $\pm 3$ | 48 | $\pm 3$ | 33 |
| 2013 | 10,665 | 131 | 514 | 645 | 22\% | 1,488 | 52\% | 746 | 26\% | 2,879 | 1,336 | 9 | 35 | 43 | $\pm 3$ | 50 | $\pm 3$ | 35 |
| 2014 | 10,910 | 209 | 472 | 681 | 22\% | 1,518 | 49\% | 928 | 30\% | 3,127 | 1,823 | 14 | 31 | 45 | $\pm 3$ | 61 | $\pm 4$ | 42 |

## 2015 HUNTING SEASONS <br> IRON SPRINGS PRONGHORN HERD (PR630)

| Hunt <br> Area | Dates of Seasons |  |  | Quota | Limitations |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Type | Opens | Closes |  |  |
| 52 | 1 | Sep. 16 | Oct. 31 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 2 | Sep. 16 | Nov. 14 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope valid south of North Spring Creek |
|  | 6 | Sep. 16 | Oct. 31 | 75 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
|  | 7 | Sep. 16 | Nov. 14 | 100 | Limited quota; doe or fawn valid south of North Spring Creek |
| 56 | 1 | Sep. 20 | Oct. 14 | 50 | Limited quota; any antelope |
| 108 | 1 | Sep. 20 | Oct. 14 | 75 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sep. 20 | Oct. 14 | 50 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
|  | 7 | Sep. 20 | Nov. 30 | 50 | Limited quota; doe or fawn valid south of the Bridger Pass Road (B. L. M. Road 3301), east of the Continental Divide and north of the Miller Hill Road (Carbon County Road 505W) |
| Archery |  |  |  |  |  |
| 52 |  | Aug. 15 | Sep. 15 |  | Refer to Section 2 of this Chapter |
| 56,108 |  | Aug. 15 | Sep. 19 |  | Refer to Section 2 of this Chapter |


| Hunt Area | Type | Quota change from 2014 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 52 | 1 | 0 |
|  | 2 | 0 |
|  | 6 | 0 |
|  | 7 | 0 |
| 56 | 1 | 0 |
| 108 | 1 | 0 |
|  | 6 | 0 |
|  | 7 | +50 |
| Total | $\mathbf{1 \& 2}$ | $\mathbf{0}$ |
|  | $\mathbf{6 \& 7}$ | $\mathbf{+ 5 0}$ |

## Management Evaluation

Current Management Objective: 12,000
Management Strategy: Recreation
2014 Postseason Population Estimate: ~10,400
2015 Proposed Postseason Population Estimate: ~10,430

The Iron Springs pronghorn herd is managed toward a post-hunt population size of 12,000 pronghorn, an objective last publicly reviewed in 1994. Population size is estimated using a spreadsheet model developed in 2012 and updated in 2015. The herd is in recreational management, with harvest quotas designed to maintain pre-hunt buck:doe ratios below 60:100. Objectives for this herd are currently under public review, with no changes proposed.

## Herd Unit Issues

Construction of the proposed Chokecherry and Sierra Madre wind farms, consisting of roughly 1,000 turbines and the associated road network, could have significant impacts on important habitats in large portions of Areas 56 and 108, as well as the north portion of Area 52. Construction of several large, trans-continental powerlines would cross important winter habitats at the north edge of Area 56.

Access remains an issue in this herd unit, particularly in the checkerboard in association with the proposed Chokecherry and Sierra Madre wind farms. The Walk-In program has opened access to large blocks of private land, primarily in Area 52, which helped address concerns over large numbers of pronghorn residing on irrigated croplands during summer and fall.

The seasonal distribution map was last revised in March 1994 and no changes have been made since that review. Observations during winters since 1994 indicate consideration should be given to delineating crucial winter ranges south of Saratoga, southeast of Chokecherry Knob and near Fort Steele. Fences continue to pose barriers to pronghorn movements throughout much of the herd unit, increasing mortality during tough winters. Sheep-tight fences may also contribute to low fawn survival in pastures with limited water sources during dry summers.

Small acreages of crucial winter range have been lost to subdivision of deeded lands, primarily in the southern portion of the herd, and along Interstate Highway 80 in Area 56. Increased subdivision of these habitats, especially if these tracts are fenced, could seriously degrade the quality and utility of some winter ranges and migration routes. Development, partitioning, and fencing of these lands could have more deleterious effects on pronghorn migrations and habitat than some energy developments. Segregating land ownership among dozens of owners also deters recreational use of those divided lands and inter-mixed public lands.

Losses to EHD were confirmed in the South Ferris herd immediately north of Area 56 in late summer 2013 and the disease probably struck pronghorn in this herd as well. A mule deer fawn died of EHD at the southern tip of Antelope Area 108 so it is likely the disease spanned at least through the northern half of the Iron Springs herd unit.

## Weather

Drought conditions in 2012 and 2013 continued into the first half of 2014, with significant precipitation not arriving until the last quarter of July. Precipitation during the following three months produced good vegetative growth, but was probably too late to significantly improve fawn survival for the drier portions of the herd. Condition of pronghorn going into the winter is expected to have been good. The 2014-15 winter had numerous bitter cold spells, coupled with
unusually warm periods, but little significant snowfall until late February. Losses may still be above average because some animals were dispersed off winter ranges prior to the late blizzards.

## Habitat

This herd unit overlaps most of the western half of the Platte Valley Mule Deer herd, and habitats for pronghorn suffer the same low productivity due to overuse, decadent shrubs and drought. Treatments designed to improve habitat for mule deer through the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership are likely to improve habitats for pronghorn as well. Recent tebuthiuron treatments on top of Miller Hill in Area 108 and prescribed burns in Area 52 should improve summer ranges for pronghorn, at least in the short term.

Oil and gas drilling activity has tapered off in the herd unit, as most drilling rigs are active in more productive fields elsewhere in the country, but a successful shale oil well a few miles east of the herd unit may lead to increased interest here. Proposed strip mining of coal in Kindt Basin in Area 56 could damage winter habitats, but is unlikely to occur in the near future because of more competitive coal reserves elsewhere in the state and conflict with the Chokecherry wind farm. Increased interest in developing coalbed methane resources in southern Wyoming may lead to proposals to develop well fields to extract the methane from these coal seams.

Construction of the 1,000 turbine Chokecherry and Sierra Madre wind farms is predicted to begin next year. Planned revegetation of the massive road network necessary for this project is likely to improve summer forage for pronghorn, but will permanently remove browse in winter ranges and provide avenues for expansion of noxious weeds, as seen in gas fields to the west. Wind turbines have been shown to reduce soil moisture in their wind shadow and the large number of turbines in already arid habitats may remove the benefits gained from revegetation of roads and pads.

## Field Data

Classification sample size increased in 2014 but was still the second smallest sample in 11 years. Area 52 followed this pattern. Classification sample size also increased for Area 56, but the five smallest samples ever collected from that area were in the past five years. Only Area 108 had a sample size that remained relatively stable over the past five years.

With increased precipitation during the latter half of the summer, fawn production improved to 61 fawns:100 does, the highest since 2005. As is typical, fawn production was lowest in Area 56 at 36:100. Production improved in Area 52 to 76:100, the highest recorded for that area since 2001. Fawn production in Area 108 remained stable at 42:100, for the third consecutive year.

The buck:doe ratio improved slightly in 2014 to $45: 100$, mostly from an increased number of yearling bucks in the sample, but has varied little in the past six years. The yearling buck:doe ratio for this herd was the highest in seven years, suggesting fawn survival through the 2013-14 winter was high. Yearling buck:doe ratios were similar for Areas 52 and 108, and above the recent 5 -year averages. But Area 56 had a record low yearling buck:doe ratio, at 5:100, a consequence of the extremely poor 15:100 fawn:doe ratio recorded in that area in 2013. Adult buck:doe ratios declined in all three hunt areas, were highest in Area 52 and lowest in Area 56. If
access continues to be denied after the wind project is constructed, buck:doe ratios will be expected to rise in Area 56 and may exceed the maximum for recreational management. Overall, buck:doe ratios for this herd over the past eight years have been less than would be desired in areas with large blocks of public land.

## Harvest Data

With the reduction in license quotas in 2014, hunter success increased to its highest level in five years, and the average number of days hunted for each pronghorn harvest dropped to its lowest level in five years. Hunter success increased for almost all license types in each of the three areas. Success was lowest for the Type 6 licenses in Area 108, at only 81 percent. Type 2 and Type 7 hunters in the southern portion of Area 52 fared better, with 86 and 87 percent respectively.

Surprisingly, the average number of days of effort required to harvest an animal was lowest in Area 56, where access is most difficult. Necessary effort was highest for hunters with Type 2 licenses in the southern portion of Area 52.

## Population

This herd was more than 10 percent below objective size following severe losses during the 1992-93 winter and remained below objective size for the rest of that decade due to poor fawn production. Fawn production began to improve in 1999, particularly in Area 52, allowing the herd to quickly reach objective size and then exceed it by $\sim 40$ percent by 2002. Most of the population growth was associated with irrigated croplands in the southern portion of Area 52. Harvests were increased, especially with the addition of Type 2 and 7 licenses limited to the southern portion of Area 52. Harvest statistics and landowners' comments about low numbers of pronghorn in their fields indicate that strategy was successful.

Losses in the northern portion of the herd unit were high again during the 2007-08 winter and pronghorn densities in that portion of the herd have not recovered due to repeated poor fawn production in low desert habitats in Areas 56 and 108. Losses were not exceptional in Area 52 during that winter and fawn production remained adequate in that portion of the herd until 2012 and 2013.

Prior to the development of a reasonable spreadsheet model in mid-2012, population estimates suggested this herd was roughly at objective size through 2011. According to the spreadsheet model and a line transect survey flown in spring of 2012, the herd fell below objective in 2012. Continued doe/fawn harvest and poor fawn production have kept the herd at that level, roughly 17 percent below objective.

The Time-Specific Juvenile \& Constant Adult Survival (TSJ/CA) spreadsheet model provided the best fit with observed buck:doe ratios for this herd and all three line transect estimates. It behaved predictably when 2014 classification and harvest data were added and is considered a "Fair" model of the herd. Annual adult survival is predicted at 90 percent, a reasonable value. Juvenile survival rates fluctuated within the allowed range and did not hover at maximum or minimum values for most years. The CJ,CA and SCJ,SCA models each had slightly lower AIC
values, but both models predicted herd sizes well below the confidence interval of the most recent line transect estimate and well above a 1993 line transect estimate. Both models generated roughly stable buck:doe estimates that did not track major dips and rises of observed values. Fawn production in 2015 was projected near the 5 -year average. The model was run using a median juvenile survival in 2015.

## Management Evaluation

With the population estimated to be more than 15 percent below objective, harvests should remain conservative to allow the herd to slowly recover. Recommended quotas were the same as in 2014 for all license types in Areas 52 and 56. To address concerns over high numbers of pronghorn in a localized area, 50 doe/fawn licenses were added for a portion of Area 108 using boundaries employed for the same purpose in 2003.

If fawn production and survival are near predicted levels, the expected harvest of roughly 255 bucks and 200 does and fawns from the 2015 license quotas should allow the herd to increase slightly, nearing 10,500 pronghorn.

Opening dates for licenses in Area 52 are the same as in 2013 and 2014 and coincide with seasons in neighboring Areas 50 and 51. As in the previous two years, the Type 2 and 7 licenses in the southern portion of this area are valid for an additional two weeks into November. The season in Area 52 entirely overlaps local deer and elk general license seasons. Opening dates for Areas 56 and 108 are the same as in the previous 16 years and coincide with neighboring Areas 53 and 55 of the Baggs herd. Closing dates for most license types in Areas 56 and 108 are again extended to the end of October. Closing date for the new Type 7 doe/fawn licenses in a limited portion of Area 108 is extended to the end of November. Archery seasons use standardized opening dates and close the day before the regular season opens for each area.






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$\perp$ LT Pop Est ——End-of-Bio Year Model Est (adults) ——Objective - Trend Count $\leqslant$ Total Classified ——Posthunt Pop Est



2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| HERD: PR631-WIND RIVER |  |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 84 | 2009-2013 Average | PREPARED BY: GREG ANDERSON |  |
|  |  | $\underline{2014}$ | 2015 Proposed |
| Hunter Satisfaction Percent | 85\% | 85\% | 85\% |
| Landowner Satisfaction Percent | 0\% | 0\% | 0\% |
| Harvest: | 107 | 111 | 120 |
| Hunters: | 106 | 101 | 110 |
| Hunter Success: | 101\% | 110\% | 109 \% |
| Active Licenses: | 132 | 130 | 140 |
| Active License Success: | 81\% | 85\% | 86 \% |
| Recreation Days: | 571 | 522 | 550 |
| Days Per Animal: | 5.3 | 4.7 | 4.6 |
| Males per 100 Females: | 32 | 20 |  |
| Juveniles per 100 Females | 48 | 24 |  |
| Satisfaction Based Objective |  |  | 60\% |
| Management Strategy: |  |  | Recreational |
| Percent population is above (+) or | (-) objective: |  | N/A\% |
| Number of years population has | een + or - objective in | trend: | 1 |



## Harvest



Number of Hunters


Harvest Success
$\square$ PR631 - Hunter Success \% PR631 - Active License Success


## Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested
$\square$ PR631-Days


Preseason Animals per 100 Females


2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary
for Pronghorn Herd PR631 - WIND RIVER

|  |  | MALES |  |  |  | FEMALES |  | JUVENILES |  | Tot Cls | Cls <br> Obj | Males to 100 Females |  |  |  | Young to |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Pre Pop | Ylg | Adult | Total | \% | Total | \% | Total | \% |  |  | YIng | Adult | Total | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Conf } \\ & \text { Int } \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Fem } \end{aligned}$ | Conf Int | $\begin{gathered} 100 \\ \text { Adult } \end{gathered}$ |
| 2009 | 790 | 0 | 0 | 123 | 24\% | 262 | 51\% | 129 | 25\% | 514 | 523 | 0 | 0 | 47 | $\pm 0$ | 49 | $\pm 0$ | 34 |
| 2010 | 923 | 0 | 0 | 79 | 13\% | 352 | 59\% | 169 | 28\% | 600 | 541 | 0 | 0 | 22 | $\pm 0$ | 48 | $\pm 0$ | 39 |
| 2011 | 0 | 4 | 17 | 21 | 10\% | 124 | 58\% | 67 | 32\% | 212 | 0 | 3 | 14 | 17 | $\pm 0$ | 54 | $\pm 0$ | 46 |
| 2012 | 0 | 7 | 29 | 36 | 20\% | 97 | 55\% | 44 | 25\% | 177 | 0 | 7 | 30 | 37 | $\pm 0$ | 45 | $\pm 0$ | 33 |
| 2013 | 0 | 7 | 14 | 21 | 24\% | 52 | 60\% | 13 | 15\% | 86 | 0 | 13 | 27 | 40 | $\pm 0$ | 25 | $\pm 0$ | 18 |
| 2014 | 0 | 7 | 15 | 22 | 14\% | 110 | 70\% | 26 | 16\% | 158 | 0 | 6 | 14 | 20 | $\pm 0$ | 24 | $\pm 0$ | 20 |

## 2015 HUNTING SEASONS WIND RIVER PRONGHORN (PR 631)

| Hunt <br> Area | Type | Season Dates <br> Opens | Closes | Quota | Limitations |
| :---: | :---: | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 84 | 1 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 22 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope <br>  |
| 6 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 22 | 75 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |  |
| Archery |  | Aug. 15 | Sep. 18 |  | Refer to Section 3 of this Chapter |


| Hunt Area | Type | Quota change from 2014 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 84 | 1 | +25 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  | $\mathbf{+ 2 5}$ |
| Total | $\mathbf{1}$ |  |
|  |  |  |

## Management Evaluation

Current Management Objective: Hunter Satisfaction 60\%
Management Strategy: Recreational
2014 Hunter Satisfaction: 85\%
3 year Average Hunter Satisfaction: 84\%

## Management Issues

The Wind River pronghorn management objective was reviewed and updated in 2014. The previous objective of 400 antelope had been in place since 1994. Due to a number of factors it was never possible to accurately estimate the antelope population in this herd. In response, the Department adopted an objective of maintaining $60 \%$ hunter satisfaction. Unlike other herd units with a satisfaction objective, the objective for this herd does not include a landowner satisfaction component for reasons outlined in the objective proposal. In conjunction with hunter satisfaction, this herd is managed for recreational opportunity.

## Habitat/Weather

This pronghorn population occupies the upper Wind River basin west of the WRR. Much of the habitat throughout the herd unit is marginal or unsuitable. Pronghorn densities are highest on the east end of the herd unit where they occupy deer and elk winter range throughout the summer months. Some pronghorn winter on bare slopes in the mountain foothills, but many migrate east down the Wind River onto the WRR. Available habitat and climatic conditions seem to be the biggest factors limiting this population.

The past year was characterized by mild conditions and good vegetation growth throughout the herd unit. Vegetation transects monitored to determine the amount of forage available on elk winter range revealed herbaceous vegetation production was well above levels observed over the
previous 2 years and was higher than the 20 year average for the area. No shrub data is collected in the herd unit, but the good growing conditions undoubtedly resulted in higher browse production then the previous 3 droughty years. Given the good feed resource in 2014, antelope in the herd unit undoubtedly entered winter in good shape. Fall weather was mild followed by significant snow and cold temperatures in December and January. After January, temperatures moderated and snow cover receded. Given mild to average winter conditions and excellent feed availability, antelope survival in 2014/15 is expected to be good.

## Field/Harvest Data/Population

Classification samples have been collected from the ground and have been low over the past 4 years. Prior to that, classification data was collected aerially and sample sizes were much higher. In 2014 the classification sample was 158 antelope. Low classification samples are likely to remain the rule as long as ground classifications are conducted. Terrain, topography, and access to antelope summer range in the herd unit create difficulties. That said, the classification sample in 2014 yielded a very low fawn/doe ratio at $24 / 100$. The buck/doe ratio was also extremely low at 20/100. Similar ratios were observed in 2013, but the sample size was even lower with only 86 antelope observed. Recent classification ratios should be viewed very skeptically given the low sample sizes.

Despite the low buck/doe ratio observed during classification surveys, Type 1 license success was $93 \%$ in 2014. This was a significant increase over the 2013 success rate of $61 \%$. It was also well above the 5 year average of $83 \%$. The days/animal declined substantially from 7.1 in 2013 to 4.3 in 2014. Both of these statistics indicate hunters had an easier time harvesting an antelope in 2014. In conjunction with the higher success rate, hunter satisfaction increased from $76 \%$ in 2013 to $85 \%$ in 2014. The 2014 satisfaction rate was the same as the 5 year average for the herd unit.

Figure 1. Type 1 license success in the Wind River Antelope Herd


## Management Summary

Given scarce demographic data it is difficult to determine trends in this herd unit. Anecdotally, based on public and personnel observations, it appears this population grew substantially from the middle to end of the past decade. Following a harsh winter in 2010 and extreme drought in 2012 and 2013 it seems the population declined somewhat, then increase again in 2014. Since hunter success and satisfaction both increased in 2014, additional recreational opportunity can be provided in 2015. In response to the increased satisfaction, Type 1 licenses will be increased by 25 in 2015.


2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| HERD: PR632-BEAVER RIM |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 65-69, 74, 106 |  | PREPARED BY: STAN HARTER |
| 2009-2013 Average | 2014 | 2015 Proposed |
| Population: 17,780 | 18,999 | 19,029 |
| Harvest: 2,399 | 1,061 | 1,290 |
| Hunters: 2,443 | 1,091 | 1,425 |
| Hunter Success: 98\% | 97\% | 91\% |
| Active Licenses: 2,747 | 1,212 | 1,400 |
| Active License Success: 87\% | 88\% | 92\% |
| Recreation Days: 7,751 | 3,746 | 4,000 |
| Days Per Animal: 3.2 | 3.5 | 3.1 |
| Males per 100 Females 54 | 55 |  |
| Juveniles per 100 Females 58 | 68 |  |
| Population Objective ( $\pm 20 \%$ ) : |  | 25000 (20000-30000) |
| Management Strategy: |  | Special |
| Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: |  | -24.0\% |
| Number of years population has been + or - objective in rece | rend: | 7 |
| Model Date: |  | 2/25/2015 |
| Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group): |  |  |
|  | JCR Year | Proposed |
| Females $\geq 1$ year old: | 2.8\% | 3.2\% |
| Males $\geq 1$ year old: | 18.8\% | 23.4\% |
| Juveniles (<1 year old): | 0.2\% | 0.2\% |
| Total: | 5.3\% | 6.8\% |
| Proposed change in post-season population: | +7.4\% | +0.2\% |

Population Size - Postseason


## Harvest



Number of Hunters


Harvest Success
$\square$ PR632 - Hunter Success \% PR632 - Active License Success


## Active Licenses



PR632 - Active Licenses

## Days Per Animal Harvested

PR632-Days

Preseason Animals per 100 Females
PR632 - Males
$\square$ PR632 - Juveniles


2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary
for Pronghorn Herd PR632-BEAVER RIM

|  |  | MALES |  |  |  | FEMALES |  | JUVENILES |  | Tot Cls | Cls Obj | Males to $\mathbf{1 0 0}$ Females |  |  |  | Young to |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Pre Pop | YIg | Adult | Total | \% | Total | \% | Total | \% |  |  | YIng | Adult | Total | Conf Int | $\begin{gathered} 100 \\ \text { Fem } \end{gathered}$ | Conf Int | $\begin{gathered} 100 \\ \text { Adult } \end{gathered}$ |
| 2009 | 23,584 | 649 | 1,673 | 2,322 | 26\% | 4,109 | 46\% | 2,529 | 28\% | 8,960 | 2,190 | 16 | 41 | 57 | $\pm 2$ | 62 | $\pm 2$ | 39 |
| 2010 | 22,951 | 778 | 1,745 | 2,523 | 26\% | 4,278 | 45\% | 2,800 | 29\% | 9,601 | 2,381 | 18 | 41 | 59 | $\pm 2$ | 65 | $\pm 2$ | 41 |
| 2011 | 20,529 | 521 | 1,413 | 1,934 | 26\% | 3,544 | 47\% | 2,011 | 27\% | 7,489 | 1,893 | 15 | 40 | 55 | $\pm 2$ | 57 | $\pm 2$ | 37 |
| 2012 | 16,470 | 317 | 1,234 | 1,551 | 27\% | 2,867 | 50\% | 1,350 | 23\% | 5,768 | 1,766 | 11 | 43 | 54 | $\pm 2$ | 47 | $\pm 2$ | 31 |
| 2013 | 18,560 | 149 | 1,314 | 1,463 | 23\% | 3,199 | 50\% | 1,725 | 27\% | 6,387 | 1,608 | 5 | 41 | 46 | $\pm 2$ | 54 | $\pm 2$ | 37 |
| 2014 | 20,166 | 419 | 1,240 | 1,659 | 25\% | 3,003 | 45\% | 2,035 | 30\% | 6,697 | 2,408 | 14 | 41 | 55 | $\pm 2$ | 68 | $\pm 3$ | 44 |

## 2015 HUNTING SEASONS

Beaver Rim Pronghorn Herd Unit (PR 632)

| $\begin{aligned} & \hline \hline \text { HUNT } \\ & \text { AREA } \end{aligned}$ | TYPE | Season Dates |  | 2015 | LIMITATIONS |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | OPENS | CLOSES |  |  |
| 65 | 1 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 75 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
|  | 7 | Sept. 1 | Nov. 15 | 75 | Limited quota; doe or fawn valid north of the Little Popo Agie River |
| 66 | 1 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 75 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
| 67 | 1 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 275 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
| 68 | 1 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 250 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
| 69 | 1 | Sept. 15 | Oct. 31 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sept. 15 | Oct. 31 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
| 74 | 1 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 250 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
| 106 | 1 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 50 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sept. 19 | Oct. 22 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |

Archery

| 65-68, <br> 74,106 | Aug. 15 | Sept. 18 | Refer to Section 3 of this Chapter |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 69 | Aug. 15 | Sept. 14 | Refer to Section 3 of this Chapter |


| Hunt Area | Type | Change from 2014 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 66 | $\mathbf{1}$ | +25 |
| 67 | $\mathbf{1}$ | +25 |
| 69 | $\mathbf{1}$ | +25 |
| 74 | $\mathbf{1}$ | +50 |
| 106 | $\mathbf{1}$ | -50 |
| Total PR 632 |  | $\mathbf{+ 1 0 0}$ |

## MANAGEMENT EVALUATION

Current Management Objective: 25,000
Management Strategy: Special (60-70 bucks/100 does)
2014 Post-season Population Estimate: ~19,000
2015 Post-season Population Estimate: ~19,000

## Herd Unit Issues

Habitats are relatively intact with localized energy development and agricultural developments scattered throughout the herd unit, and urban/rural residential development occurring primarily near Lander. This population fluctuated below objective in the 1990s, reached objective in the mid-2000s, and has subsequently declined. The population increased in 2014 to about 19,000 pronghorn post-season, $24 \%$ below objective. The management objective has been reviewed, and a recommendation to maintain the population objective of 25,000 pronghorn is in process. This review included analyses of a potential combination of the Beaver Rim and Rattlesnake Pronghorn Herd Units, but data combinations did not lead to usable model or line-transect (LT) population estimates.

## Weather/Habitat

Drought conditions were extreme to exceptional for most of 2011-13, beginning with minimal snowfall in winter 2011-12 and continuing with almost no precipitation during spring and summer 2012. In April 2013, a series of several late winter/early spring snow storms produced heavy snow through early May throughout the Beaver Rim Pronghorn Herd Unit. These storms were helpful in lessening the effects of drought, yet they only helped change the drought status from Extreme to Severe. Drought returned in summer 2013, with only 0.34 and 0.2 inches of precipitation recorded in Lander and Jeffrey City respectively from June 1 to September 1. This inhibited production in herbaceous and shrub species across the Beaver Rim herd unit, although some improvement over 2012 conditions was noted. Rain and snow returned to the area in September and October 2013, with nearly 300\% of "normal" precipitation recorded in Lander and Jeffrey City with warm temperatures between early storms. Although winter 2013-14 had lower than average snowfall, the increase in soil moisture from the fall 2013 precipitation carried over into spring and was followed by good rainfall throughout most of the herd unit over summer 2014, leading to improvement in vegetation condition. Consequently, this led to improved pre-season fawn/doe ratios and should result in improved pronghorn survival over winter 2014-15. Winter 2014-15 was fairly mild, with above average temperatures and slightly below average snowfall/precipitation. Precipitation from April 1 through early May 2015 has been above average in Lander and Jeffrey City, and ahead of last year's pace. We anticipate habitat conditions will continue to improve as a result. Yet, due to long-term drought, many shrubs remain in poor condition and could contribute to pronghorn nutritional deficiencies and decreased survival.

## Field Data

Fawn/doe ratios declined to a low of $47 \mathrm{~J} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$ in 2012 , but have recovered the past 2 years. The preseason 2014 ratio of $68 \mathrm{~J} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$ was the highest since 2004 , and was $17 \%$ above the previous 5 -year average. Buck/doe ratios recovered to $55 \mathrm{M} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$ in 2014 , with the increase coming from recruitment of yearling bucks to a pre-season ratio of $14 \mathrm{YM} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$. This followed an increase in the fawn/doe ratio in 2013 and favorable conditions through August 2014. Fawn/doe ratios varied by hunt area from 56J/100 to $73 \mathrm{~J} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$, while buck/doe ratios had higher variability between hunt areas, ranging from $37 \mathrm{M} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$ to $83 \mathrm{M} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$. Conservative buck harvest is recommended for the near future to allow for replacement of younger age classes of bucks following low yearling buck/doe ratios in 2012 and 2013.

## Harvest Data

License quotas were substantially reduced in 2013, with 2014 quotas remaining similar. Yet, harvest statistics indicated hunters in some hunt areas still had difficulty finding antelope. Hunter success in 2014 increased to $97 \%$ overall, along with active license success increasing from $82 \%$ to $88 \%$. However, Type 1 (any antelope) hunters in hunt areas 69 and 106 had success rates of $72 \%$ and $76 \%$ respectively. Doe/fawn hunters saw overall good hunting success with a range of $85 \%$ to $100 \%$. As a whole, it took 3.5 days of hunting for each animal harvested. This statistic was identical to that reported in 2013. Concerns about low pronghorn numbers were heard from hunters in a few areas, but less so than in 2013. Adjustments to the 2015 season structure have been made considering these variables, combined with variations in classification data to best fit harvest to individual hunt areas.

## Population

A spreadsheet model was developed for this population in 2012. It has been updated utilizing 2014 preseason classification and harvest data. The spreadsheet model (CJ/CA) works very well for Beaver Rim Pronghorn and tracks quite well with 7 line-transect (LT) estimates over the past 20 years. As such, we consider the model to be GOOD. The end-of-year estimates produced by the model run almost exactly through or very close to the LT estimates in 3 of 7 years, and through the confidence interval for 3 of the other 4 years (projected population is just below the last LT estimate's confidence interval in 2013). The model also produces post-season population estimates which closely follow trends observed by field personnel and the public. The population was at or slightly below objective for 7 years ( $2004-10$ ), but declined sharply in 2011 and 2012, due to poor fawn recruitment as a result of intense drought. However, improved fawn/doe ratios in 2013 and 2014 indicate the population is recovering well and is moving back toward the current objective, with 19,000 pronghorn post-season 2014.

A line-transect survey was conducted in the Beaver Rim Pronghorn Herd Unit at the end of biological year 2013, with flights occurring on June 9-11, 2014 (Appendix 1). The survey required 21.7 hours to complete, including ferry time and travel to and from lines. Line-transect data were analyzed using DISTANCE (v6.2 Release 1). The half-normal/cosine estimator was selected based on minimum Akaike Information Criteria and ocular evaluation of model fit to the data histogram. The histogram for this analysis indicates detection of pronghorn was excellent (Figure 1). The best estimator had a low coefficient of variation (10.64), and the number of groups observed (333) exceeded the recommended minimum number of groups (100). The 2013 end-of-year population estimate derived by the Distance analysis of this line-transect survey was 16,521 pronghorn. This estimate represents a decline of 3,444 pronghorn $-17 \%$ ) compared to the line-transect estimate derived at the end of biological year 2010. The post-season population estimate of 19,000 produced by the spreadsheet model utilizes this LT, but aligns the end-of-year model projection just below the LT estimate's confidence interval.


Figure 1. Histogram for line-transect (LT) Distance analysis completed at the end of bio-year 2013

## Management Summary

For 2015, adjustments in license numbers were made to control localized private land damage situations, while providing hunter opportunity. The number of Type 1 licenses was reduced again in some areas, especially where buck/doe ratios fell or were already low. The overall buck/doe ratio of $55 \mathrm{M} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$ is about $8 \%$ below the minimum of $60 \mathrm{M} / 100 \mathrm{~F}$ needed to keep this population within the Department's Special Management criteria. The number of Type 1 license adjustments made for 2015 are intended to allow for improvement of buck/doe ratios toward that secondary objective. Current license quotas remain consistent with public comments received during hunting seasons and at public meetings.

The 2015 seasons may allow population improvement, if the weather patterns observed since fall 2013 continue and fawn production/survival improves. Doe/fawn licenses remain a part of the 2015 hunting season structure to address localized damage to private land hay crops. While growth in the number of pronghorn in the Lander Foothills may have stabilized, the number of Hunt Area 65 Type 7 licenses will remain at 75 . At the request of at least one landowner who will provide access, the season length for that license will increase, ending on November 15. A total of 1,100 any antelope and 300 doe/fawn licenses will be available for 2015 , and should result in a harvest of nearly 1,300 animals. With average survival in combination with our harvest, we anticipate the population to remain relatively stable at 19,000 pronghorn.




$\Delta$ LT Pop Est ——End-of-Bio Year Model Est (adults) ——Objective ■ Trend Count Total Classified ———Posthunt Pop Est


46 ұuәu6əs łunyəлd Ł0 \%

Appendix 1.

$$
2013 \text { PR632 - BEAVER RIM Pronghorn Line-Transect Summary }
$$

| Survey Dates: | 6/9/2014-6/11/2014 |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Survey Cost: | \$ 5,875.00 |  |  |
| Flight Service: | LAIRD FLYING SERVICE |  |  |
| Aircraft: | HUSKY AVIAT A1C |  |  |
| Observers: | Harter, G. Anderson |  |  |
| Weather Conditions: |  |  |  |
| Temperature (Degrees Fahrenheit): |  | 65 |  |
| Cloud Cover (\%): |  | 0 |  |
| Wind Speed (MPH): |  | 0-20 |  |
| Transect Limits: |  | 10650 to 10846 |  |
| Transect Direction: |  | North/South |  |
| Transect Interval (Minutes of Longitude): |  |  |  |
| Transect Length: (Mi.): |  | 1,032 |  |
| Transect Altitude (AGL): |  | 329 ft . |  |
| Occupied Habitat ( $\mathrm{mi}^{2}$ ): |  | 3,620 |  |
| Density Estimate (Animals/mi ${ }^{\mathbf{2}}$ with Confidence Intervals): |  |  | 4.56 (3.7-5.6) |
| Population Estimate (with Confidence Intervals): |  |  | 16,521 (13,392-20,382) |



2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |  |
| :--- | :--- | :---: | :---: |
| HERD: PR634 - BADWATER |  |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 75 |  | PREPARED BY: GREG |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | ANDERSON |  |  |

Population Size - Postseason


## Harvest



Number of Hunters


Harvest Success
$\square$ PR634 - Hunter Success \% PR634 - Active License Success


## Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested
PR634-Days


Preseason Animals per 100 Females


## 2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR634-BADWATER

|  |  | MALES |  |  |  | FEMALES |  | JUVENILES |  | Tot Cls | Cls Obj | Males to 100 Females |  |  |  | Young to |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Pre Pop | Ylg | Adult | Total | \% | Total | \% | Total | \% |  |  | YIng | Adult | Total | Conf Int | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Fem } \end{aligned}$ | Conf Int | $\begin{gathered} 100 \\ \text { Adult } \end{gathered}$ |
| 2009 | 6,285 | 164 | 360 | 524 | 28\% | 923 | 49\% | 433 | 23\% | 1,880 | 1,279 | 18 | 39 | 57 | $\pm 4$ | 47 | $\pm 4$ | 30 |
| 2010 | 6,195 | 191 | 425 | 616 | 32\% | 860 | 44\% | 464 | 24\% | 1,940 | 1,955 | 22 | 49 | 72 | $\pm 5$ | 54 | $\pm 4$ | 31 |
| 2011 | 4,904 | 113 | 468 | 581 | 31\% | 875 | 47\% | 421 | 22\% | 1,877 | 1,689 | 13 | 53 | 66 | $\pm 5$ | 48 | $\pm 4$ | 29 |
| 2012 | 4,650 | 83 | 296 | 379 | 28\% | 631 | 47\% | 339 | 25\% | 1,349 | 1,522 | 13 | 47 | 60 | $\pm 5$ | 54 | $\pm 5$ | 34 |
| 2013 | 3,617 | 58 | 268 | 326 | 26\% | 646 | 51\% | 285 | 23\% | 1,257 | 1,098 | 9 | 41 | 50 | $\pm 5$ | 44 | $\pm 4$ | 29 |
| 2014 | 3,968 | 87 | 142 | 229 | 28\% | 340 | 42\% | 237 | 29\% | 806 | 1,678 | 26 | 42 | 67 | $\pm 8$ | 70 | $\pm 9$ | 42 |

## 2015 HUNTING SEASONS BADWATER PRONGHORN (PR 634)

| Hunt <br> Area | Type | Season Dates <br> Opens | Closes | Quota | Limitations |
| :---: | :---: | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 75 | 1 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 22 | 350 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 6 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 22 | 175 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
| Archery |  | Aug. 15 | Sep. 18 |  | Refer to Section 3 of this Chapter |


| Hunt Area | Type | Quota change from 2014 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 75 | 1 | +50 |
|  | 6 | +150 |
|  |  |  |
| Total | $\mathbf{1}$ | $\mathbf{+ 5 0}$ |
|  | $\mathbf{6}$ | $\mathbf{+ 1 5 0}$ |

## Management Evaluation

Current Management Objective: 3,000
Management Strategy: Recreational
2014 Postseason Population Estimate: ~3,700
2015 Proposed Postseason Population Estimate: ~3,400

## Management Issues

The Badwater pronghorn herd is managed toward a post-season population size objective of 3,000 . The population is estimated using a spreadsheet model developed in 2012 and updated in 2014. The herd is managed for recreational opportunity. The objective was last reviewed in 2014. During the 2014 review, it was noted the new spreadsheet model appeared to track the same population trend as the previous POP-II model. However, annual population estimates tended to be about 1,000 animals higher in the new spreadsheet model. Initial attempts to increase the objective to 4,000 to compensate for the apparent higher estimates produced by the spreadsheet model were met with resistance from landowners and the BLM. When noted that leaving the objective at 3,000 would in effect mean managing for fewer antelope than in the past, a number of landowners and representatives from the BLM felt that was appropriate given longterm drought and poor habitat conditions in the area.

This pronghorn population inhabits a heavily industrialized area in central Wyoming. Much of the herd unit has or will soon be designated as a special management area emphasizing oil and gas production in both the Casper and Lander BLM RMPs. The Lander BLM is currently analyzing a proposal by EnCana to develop approximately 4,500 oil/gas wells in the central part of the herd unit. Given the commodities production emphasis in the area, it is likely a significant amount of pronghorn habitat will we lost or degraded over the next 20 years.

## Habitat/Weather

This area has been impacted by extreme drought for much of the last decade. Virtually no vegetation grew throughout the herd unit in 2012 and 2013. In 2014 weather conditions resulted in excellent herbaceous production throughout central Wyoming. Although no vegetation transects are monitored annually in this herd unit, observations suggested vegetation growth was better in 2014 than any other year in the past decade. Both deer and antelope in the area appeared to enter winter in excellent body condition. Given average winter temperatures and precipitation, antelope winter survival is expected to be good in 2014.

## Field Data

Personnel observed fewer antelope along classification routes each of the last 4 years. The 2014 sample size of 806 antelope was significantly lower than the 2013 sample of 1,257 . Some of the decline in sample size in 2014 can be attributed to personnel turnover, but the 4 year decrease in observed antelope along designated routes is indicative of a significant, multi-year population decline. Classification samples from the herd unit have historically been close to desired sample levels for calculating confidence intervals around age/sex ratios. The sample in 2014 was $50 \%$ of the desired sample size and yielded a fawn/doe ratio of $70 / 100$. This was the highest ratio over the last 10 years and is undoubtedly attributable to the excellent feed availability during spring/summer 2014. Given average winter conditions, it is expected many of these fawns will survive the year since they entered winter in good body condition. Following 4 years of declining buck/doe ratios, the buck/doe ratio increased dramatically in 2014. The buck/doe ratio increased from 50/100 in 2013 to $67 / 100$ in 2014. The adult buck/doe ratio was similar to 2013 so the marked increase in the overall buck/doe ratio is entirely attributable to an increase in yearling bucks. The yearling buck/doe ratio in 2014 was 26/100 and was the highest on record over the past 10 years. The dramatic increase in the yearling buck/doe ratio for 2014 is particularly remarkable since the fawn/doe ratio in 2013 was fairly low at 44/100. This indicates there was outstanding survival from 2013 to 2014.

## Harvest Data

Despite the high buck/doe ratio in the herd unit, Type 1 license success was only $77 \%$ in 2014. This was the lowest success rate in over 15 years and well below the 5 year average of $88 \%$. The low success rate is somewhat confounding given the high buck/doe ratio in the population. It may be indicative of Type 1 license holders not wanting to harvest a yearling buck which accounted for much of the buck population in 2014. The days/animal statistic for Type 1 license holders was unremarkable in 2014 at 2.7. This was almost identical to the 2013 figure of 2.8 but lower than the 5 year average of 3.2 .

## Population

In 2012, a spreadsheet model was developed for this population. The model behaved predictably with the addition of 2013 and 2014 data. The model appears to track population trends reliably but the actual population estimate appears questionable. The model tracks significantly higher than 5 of 6 line-transect (LT) estimates. Recalibrating juvenile and adult survival rates in various versions of the model does nothing to bring the end-of-year estimate closer to these estimates. LT estimates for this population tend to have very high coefficients of variation attributable to low small samples sizes and variable densities across the herd unit. Due to the high standard
errors associated with the line-transect estimates the population model deviance errors are very small. These numbers are calculated by dividing the difference of the model estimate and the LT estimate by the standard error of the LT estimate. A large standard error in the denominator of this calculation results in a small population deviance value even if the difference between the model estimate and LT estimate is quite large. Since the Solver function of these models is designed to minimize the population deviance, there is little need to account for already small deviances. The bottom line is Solver has little incentive to consider even large differences between model population estimates and LT estimates and therefore, the model essentially ignores the LT estimates.. Concurrently, differences in annual observed versus modeled buck/doe ratios are given undo consideration by Solver. To deal with this problem, population deviances (the difference between model and LT estimates) are multiplied by a factor of 4 in the current model. This forces the model closer to the most recent LT estimate. A correction factor of 4 was chosen because it forces the end-of-year population to model close to the lower end of the confidence interval of a 2010 line transect estimate and at least the upper end of the confidence interval for a 2012 estimate. Without the correction factor, the model population is well above the confidence interval for the 2012 estimate. It should be noted, the overall population trend remains the same with or without the use of a correction factor.

For 2014, the SCJ/SCA version of the model was selected to simulate the population. This was the same version of the model selected in 2013. The SCJ/SCA model had a slightly higher AIC value than the $\mathrm{CJ} / \mathrm{CA}$ model, but the $\mathrm{CJ} / \mathrm{CA}$ version does not compensate for suspected, low survival associated with severe drought in 2012 and 2013. The TSJ/CA had a significantly higher AIC value but produced similar trends to the SCJ/SCA version. Annual juvenile survival in the selected model is constrained to a maximum of 0.8 . Without that constraint, the model consistently estimated juvenile survival higher than adult survival which is not biologically defensible. The SCJ/SCA model has 3 years with modified juvenile survival to account for extreme winter conditions in 2010 and extreme drought conditions in 2012 and 2013. Juvenile survival for these years is constrained to a maximum of 0.4.

This model version produces a population trend mirroring field personnel impressions. The model indicates the population declined significantly from 2007 through 2013. This is supported by the decreased classification samples collected along standard routes since 2010 as well as declining buck/doe ratios from 2010 through 2013. The population was thought to be at objective in 2013. Given favorable conditions throughout the herd unit and good recruitment in 2014 it is likely the population increased. The model indicates an increase from around 3,300 antelope in 2013 to approximately 3,700 antelope in 2014. The estimated increase can be traced to the model's attempt to track a buck/doe ratio that increased from 50/100 in 2013 to 67/100 in 2014. The 2014 population estimate is $24 \%$ above objective. Given good recruitment in 2014 and excellent survival from 2013 (as indicated by the high yearling buck/doe ratio), the modeled increase is plausible. Reasons for poor Type 1 license success given high buck numbers are not known. Due to the lack of survival estimates, the model is considered a fair simulation.

## Management Summary

Given the modeled population increase over the past year as well as the high buck/doe ratio, hunting opportunity in area 75 can be increased in 2015. Type 1 licenses will be increased by 50 to 350 to allow more recreational opportunity. Type 6 licenses will be increased to 175 to help manage the population toward objective. Given average recruitment, the population is predicted to decline to approximately 3,400 and be within $13 \%$ of objective.

Population Estimates from Top Model

| ¢ |  <br>  |
| :---: | :---: |
|  |  <br>  <br>  <br>  |
|  |  <br>  |
|  |  <br>  |
| $\stackrel{\text { ॠた }}{\stackrel{\rightharpoonup}{\circ}}$ |  <br>  |






2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| HERD: PR635-PROJECT |  |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 97, 117 | 2009-2013 Average | PREPARED BY: GREG ANDERSON |  |
|  |  | 2014 | 2015 Proposed |
| Hunter Satisfaction Percent | 93\% | 86\% | 90\% |
| Landowner Satisfaction Percent | 34\% | 100\% | 60\% |
| Harvest: | 447 | 475 | 475 |
| Hunters: | 387 | 408 | 400 |
| Hunter Success: | 116\% | 116\% | 119\% |
| Active Licenses: | 499 | 518 | 520 |
| Active License Success: | 90\% | 92\% | 91\% |
| Recreation Days: | 1,408 | 1,580 | 1,600 |
| Days Per Animal: | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.4 |
| Males per 100 Females: | 66 | 69 |  |
| Juveniles per 100 Females | 63 | 67 |  |
| Satisfaction Based Objective |  |  | 60\% |
| Management Strategy: |  |  | Recreational |
| Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: |  |  | 33\% |
| Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: |  |  | 2 |



## Harvest



Number of Hunters


Harvest Success

PR635 - Hunter Success \% PR635 - Active License Success


## Active Licenses



## Preseason Animals per 100 Females



## 2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary



PROJECT PRONGHORN (PR 635)

| Hunt <br> Area | Type | Season Dates Opens | Closes | Quota | Limitations |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 97, 117 | 1 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 22 | 300 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 2 | Aug. 15 | Oct. 22 | 50 | Limited quota; any antelope valid in Area 97 south of U.S. Highway 26 and in all of Area 117 |
|  | 6 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 22 | 150 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
|  | 7 | Aug. 15 | Oct. 22 | 75 | Limited quota; doe or fawn valid in Area 97 south of U.S. Highway 26 and in all of Area 117 |
| Archery |  |  |  |  |  |
| 97, 117 |  | Aug. 15 | Sep. 18 |  | Refer to section 3 of this chapter |


| Hunt Area | Type | Quota change from 2014 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 97,117 |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Total |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

## Management Evaluation

Current Management Objective: Hunter/Landowner Satisfaction 60\%
Management Strategy: Recreational
2014 Hunter Satisfaction: 86\%
2014 Landowner Satisfaction: 100\% *
3 year Average Hunter Satisfaction: 89\%
3 year Average Landowner Satisfaction: unknown
*Note: the landowner satisfaction results are based on only 4 survey responses

## Management Issues

In 2013 the Department conducted an objective review for the Project pronghorn herd unit. Previously the herd had a population objective of 400 pronghorn. The population objective was impractical because personnel were unable to collect adequate demographic data due to extensive interchange with the neighboring Wind River Reservation (WRR). Following an internal review, a public meeting and contact with numerous landowners the objective was changed in 2013 to manage for $60 \%$ hunter and $60 \%$ landowner satisfaction. Hunter satisfaction is taken directly from the harvest survey while landowner satisfaction in 2013 was determined by mailing a survey to 98 landowners in the herd unit. From the 98 surveys, the Department received 46 responses. Of those, 21 landowners provided e-mail addresses and indicated they wished to receive the survey in future years. In 2014, 21 surveys were e-mailed to landowners and the Department received 4 responses. One of the respondents requested to no longer receive the survey.

## Habitat/Weather

This herd occupies a heavily agricultural area in central Wyoming as well as lands interspersed with the WRR. Land ownership patterns and extensive border with the WRR make it cost prohibitive to collect adequate demographic data in the herd unit. The highest densities of pronghorn are found along the northern portion of hunt area 97 and commonly move between the herd unit and the WRR. During periods of drought, this herd has typically been impacted less than surrounding populations due to the abundance of feed associated with agricultural operations. In 2014, weather conditions were conducive to good vegetative production throughout the herd unit including upland, native range. As such, antelope were well dispersed throughout the area. Fall observations and field checks indicate antelope in the herd unit entered winter in excellent body condition.

## Field/Harvest Data/Population

The fawn/doe ratio in hunt area 97 was $67 / 100$ in 2014. This was nearly the same as the 5 year average of $65 / 100$ but well above recruitment levels over the past 2 years. The buck/doe ratio changed insignificantly from 70/100 in 2013 to 69/100 in 2014. It should be noted the number of mature bucks did decline from 57/100 in 2013 to 52/100 in 2014. Thus, the stable buck/doe ratio was the result of increased yearling bucks in the population. Type 1 license numbers were increased for several years to provide recreational opportunity and decrease the high buck/doe ratio in the herd unit. It appears the number of licenses in 2014 did decrease the mature buck/doe ratio. It should also be noted there appears to be an uneven distribution of bucks throughout area 97 where most of the harvest occurs. Publicly accessible areas throughout the herd unit tend to have significantly fewer bucks than private land areas. The buck/doe ratio remains high in the surveyed areas of this herd unit and harvest success on Type 1 licenses in 97 was $96 \%$ in 2014. These factors indicate recreational hunting remains good in the herd unit.

The population is considered to be at objective in 2014. Hunter satisfaction (satisfied or very satisfied) remained essentially unchanged between 2013 and 2014 at $88 \%$ and $86 \%$ respectively. This represents a high rate of satisfaction and in combination with a $96 \%$ Type 1 success rate indicates hunt quality was good. This was the second year the landowner satisfaction survey was conducted so long term comparisons are not possible. That said, it appears landowners are somewhat ambivalent about the survey. As mentioned above, only 4 landowners responded to a
simple electronic survey in 2014. Obviously the paucity of responses doesn't inspire confidence in the results. Of the 4 respondents, all 4 felt antelope numbers were at a desirable level.

## Management Summary

Given the high level of hunter satisfaction and no indication of landowner dissatisfaction, 2015 management will remain unchanged from 2014. With average survival for the year, the population is expected to remain unchanged in 2015.

## Appendix A

Electronic message sent to landowners requesting survey input.
February 18, 2015

Dear Landowner,

Last year the Wyoming Game \& Fish Department began using a survey to assess landowner satisfaction with deer numbers in hunt areas 157 and 170 and antelope in hunt areas 97 and 117. Responses to these surveys help us determine harvest management (hunting seasons) for the upcoming year. The survey in the link below contains the same questions asked last year. We would appreciate any input you have by March 10. If surveys indicate a majority of respondents are satisfied with deer and antelope numbers, it is likely upcoming hunting seasons will be very similar to last year's. If the majority of respondents feel there are too many or too few deer or antelope, we will likely recommend issuing more or fewer licenses respectively.

This survey will only be conducted electronically by clicking the link below. We try to survey all of the landowners in these areas who express an interest. If you hear of anyone who did not get this survey please have them contact one of the Department personnel listed below so we can get their e-mail address and ensure they receive the survey in future years. If you have any questions, again, feel free to contact one of the Department personnel listed below.
https://docs.google.com/a/wyo.gov/forms/d/1eFaCcqXQVsF_FDpa-
nWGKIUs2EQmtgyn5 xOsVBnKfY/edit?usp=sharing

The Department sincerely values your input, and we thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Greg Anderson, North Lander Wildlife Biologist. 307-332-2688
Jessica Beecham, North Riverton Game Warden. 307-856-4982
Brad Gibb, South Riverton Game Warden. 307-856-9005

$$
\begin{aligned}
& \text { Project Antelope Seasonal Range } \\
& \text { Hunt Areas 97, } 117 \\
& \text { Revised } 2012 \\
& \times \times \text { cRUWYL } \\
& \square \text { OUT } \\
& \square \text { SSF } \\
& \square \text { SWR } \\
& \square \text { WVL }
\end{aligned}
$$

2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn HERD: PR636 - NORTH FERRIS |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 63 |  | PREPARED BY: GREG HIATT |
| 2009-2013 Average | 2014 | 2015 Proposed |
| Population: 5,520 | 5,028 | 4,758 |
| Harvest: 647 | 230 | 265 |
| Hunters: 686 | 279 | 325 |
| Hunter Success: 94\% | 82\% | 82 \% |
| Active Licenses: 740 | 279 | 325 |
| Active License Success: 87\% | 82\% | 82 \% |
| Recreation Days: 2,060 | 762 | 900 |
| Days Per Animal: 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.4 |
| Males per 100 Females 66 | 61 |  |
| Juveniles per 100 Females 49 | 57 |  |
| Population Objective ( $\pm 20 \%$ ) : |  | 5000 (4000-6000) |
| Management Strategy: |  | Recreational |
| Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: |  | 1\% |
| Number of years population has been + or - objective in rece | rend: | 1 |
| Model Date: |  | 3/3/2015 |
| Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group): |  |  |
|  | JCR Year | Proposed |
| Females $\geq 1$ year old: | 0\% | 1.8\% |
| Males $\geq 1$ year old: | 16.0\% | 18.2\% |
| Juveniles (<1 year old): | 0\% | 0.4\% |
| Total: | 4.4\% | 5.2\% |
| Proposed change in post-season population: | +3.9\% | -5.4\% |

Population Size - Postseason



Number of Hunters


Harvest Success
$\square$ PR636 - Hunter Success \% PR636 - Active License Success


## Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested
$\square$ PR636 - Days


Preseason Animals per 100 Females


## 2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR636-NORTH FERRIS

|  |  | MALES |  |  |  | FEMALES |  | JUVENILES |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Tot } \\ & \text { Cls } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Cls } \\ & \text { Obj } \end{aligned}$ | Males to $\mathbf{1 0 0}$ Females |  |  |  | Young to |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Pre Pop | Ylg | Adult | Total | \% | Total | \% | Total | \% |  |  | YIng | Adult | Total | $\begin{gathered} \text { Conf } \\ \text { Int } \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Fem } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { Conf } \\ \text { Int } \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} 100 \\ \text { Adult } \end{gathered}$ |
| 2009 | 6,935 | 240 | 573 | 813 | 31\% | 1,192 | 45\% | 627 | 24\% | 2,632 | 2,040 | 20 | 48 | 68 | $\pm 4$ | 53 | $\pm 3$ | 31 |
| 2010 | 7,762 | 99 | 274 | 373 | 32\% | 519 | 45\% | 257 | 22\% | 1,149 | 2,145 | 19 | 53 | 72 | $\pm 7$ | 50 | $\pm 6$ | 29 |
| 2011 | 6,623 | 72 | 288 | 360 | 31\% | 516 | 45\% | 275 | 24\% | 1,151 | 1,914 | 14 | 56 | 70 | $\pm 7$ | 53 | $\pm 6$ | 31 |
| 2012 | 4,914 | 55 | 253 | 308 | 29\% | 534 | 51\% | 208 | 20\% | 1,050 | 1,330 | 10 | 47 | 58 | $\pm 6$ | 39 | $\pm 5$ | 25 |
| 2013 | 4,920 | 57 | 216 | 273 | 29\% | 459 | 49\% | 205 | 22\% | 937 | 1,460 | 12 | 47 | 59 | $\pm 7$ | 45 | $\pm 6$ | 28 |
| 2014 | 5,281 | 72 | 143 | 215 | 28\% | 350 | 46\% | 201 | 26\% | 766 | 0 | 21 | 41 | 61 | $\pm 8$ | 57 | $\pm 8$ | 36 |


| Hunt | Dates of Seasons |  |  | Quota | Limitations |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Area | Type | Opens | Closes |  |  |
| 63 | 1 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 31 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope |
|  | 2 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 31 | 200 | Limited quota; any antelope valid east of the Buzzard Road (Natrona County Road 410 - Carbon County Road 497) |
|  | 6 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 31 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn |
|  | 7 | Sep. 19 | Oct. 31 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn valid east of the Buzzard Road (Natrona County Road 410 - Carbon County Road 497) |

Archery
63
Aug. 15
Sep. 18
Refer to Section 2 of this Chapter

| Hunt Area | Type | Quota change from 2012 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 63 | 1 | 0 |
|  | 2 | 0 |
|  | 6 | +25 |
|  | 7 | +25 |
| Total | $\mathbf{1 \& 2}$ | $\mathbf{0}$ |
|  | $\mathbf{6 \& 7}$ | $\mathbf{+ 5 0}$ |

## Management Evaluation

Current Management Objective: 5,000
Management Strategy: Recreation
2014 Postseason Population Estimate: ~5,030
2015 Proposed Postseason Population Estimate: ~4,760
The North Ferris pronghorn herd is managed toward a post-hunt population of 5,000, an objective last reviewed in 2014. Population size is estimated using a spreadsheet model developed in 2012 and updated in 2014. The herd is in recreational management, with harvest quotas designed to maintain pre-hunt buck: doe ratios below 60:100.

## Herd Unit Issues

Historically, access has not been an issue in this herd unit which is mostly public lands, but access to some large blocks of private land has become more difficult in recent years and may affect management ability to attain adequate harvests in the future. Potential for economic wind
power exists within the herd unit, but appears unlikely when other resource issues such as T\&E species and sage-grouse Core Area are considered. Many miles of sheep-tight fences still stand in the herd unit, impeding pronghorn movements.

## Weather

Drought conditions in 2012 and 2013 continued into the first half of 2014, with significant precipitation not arriving until the last quarter of July. Precipitation during the following three months produced good vegetative growth, but was probably too late to significantly improve fawn survival. Condition of pronghorn going into the winter is expected to have been good. The 2014-15 winter had numerous bitter cold spells, coupled with unusually warm periods, but little significant snowfall until late February. Losses may still be above average because many animals were dispersed off winter ranges prior to the late winter blizzards.

## Habitat

While no herbaceous habitat transects are established within this herd unit, herbaceous forage production is expected to have improved due to the increased precipitation in the latter half of the summer. Two shrub transects have been established within this herd unit, primarily to monitor mule deer winter forage. One of these, on the Morgan Creek WHMA, was burned in the 2012 fires and the second was not read in 2014. New owners of the Pathfinder Ranch, which encompasses the north-central portion of this herd, have expressed interest in looking for opportunities for improving habitat conditions for wildlife, possibly as mitigation for wind power projects in other parts of the state. Shrub treatment on winter ranges, adjustments of grazing use, and modification of sheep-tight fences would benefit pronghorn in this herd unit.

## Field Data

Classification sample size declined again for the fifth year, was the smallest sample since 1977, and was 40 percent less than the 5 -year average. These data are collected from the ground along routes that have had only minor changes over the past two decades. Higher densities of pronghorn were again found in the eastern half of the area near Pathfinder Reservoir and along irrigated hayfields on the Buzzard and Sand Creek Ranches. Fawn production improved to 57:100, the highest in six years, but was still below the long term average for this herd.

Following exceptionally high recruitment of yearlings in 2005, buck:doe ratios exceeded the 60:100 maximum criterion for recreational management in this herd. Buck harvests were increased, often double or triple historic levels, and surplus bucks were successfully harvested with the buck:doe ratio returning to an acceptable 58:100 in 2012. The ratio recorded in 2013 was little changed, at 59:100. Much of the decline was attributable to the supply of adult bucks, with that ratio dropping to its lowest level in nine years in 2014. As expected, hunter complaints about poor quality of bucks increased as the adult buck:doe ratio declined. Yearling recruitment was high again in 2014, producing a slight increase in the buck:doe ratio to 61:100, despite the reduced supply of adult bucks.

## Harvest Data

Success for hunters with Type 1 licenses improved slightly, to 84 percent. Hunters with Type 2 licenses, which restricted them to the eastern portion where pronghorn densities are typically higher, also had improved success but were still low at 81 percent. The average effort required to harvest a pronghorn was unchanged for the Type 1 hunters, and improved slightly for those with Type 2 licenses.

## Population

This herd was below objective size for most of the decade following the 1992-93 winter, a consequence of low fawn production and poor recruitment. High fawn production followed by an unusually mild winter in 2004 provided the first significant growth in herd size.

Population estimates suggested this herd was well above objective size by 2006 and harvests were increased accordingly. The current spreadsheet model predicts the increased harvests successfully reduced the herd to objective size by 2011, and below objective in 2012. This current model, however, aligns near the maximum limit of the confidence interval on the most recent line transect survey and may be over-estimating herd size. Hunter comments, classification data and harvest statistics all suggest there has been a greater decline in herd size than predicted by the model.

The Time-Specific Juvenile \& Constant Adult Survival (TSJ,CA) spreadsheet model provided the best fit with observed buck:doe ratios for this herd, particularly for the most recent seven years. The model behaved well when 2014 classification and harvest data were added and falls within the confidence intervals of all 3 line transect estimates. Annual adult survival was predicted at 82 percent, a level slightly lower than in models for some nearby pronghorn herds. Juvenile survival rates fluctuated within the allowed range but frequently settled at maximum or minimum allowed values, exceeding adult survival rates in some years. This is difficult to accept biologically, and as a result the model is only considered to be a "Fair" representation of the herd. The CJ,CA and SCJ,SCA models each had lower AIC values, but both models predicted herd sizes greatly exceeding past trend counts, without following count trends, and generated roughly stable buck:doe estimates that did not follow dips and rises in observed values. Estimated buck:doe ratios of these two models approximated observed values in only five or six of the past 20 years.

Due to the improved condition of animals going into this winter and improved browse conditions following the late summer moisture, fawn production in 2015 was projected to be near the 5 -year average. The model was run using a median juvenile survival in 2015.

Losses to EHD were documented in pronghorn herds south and west of North Ferris in 2013, and reports of carcasses in Area 63 suggests the disease was present here as well. Effects of significant losses in late summer and early fall 2014 may not yet affect estimates in the model and it may be over-estimating herd size.

## Management Summary

With slight improvement in fawn production and the herd estimated to be near objective size, doe harvest needs to be implemented to prevent any significant increase in herd size. As with the "any antelope" licenses, the recommendation is to restore both the Type 6 and Type 7 doe/fawn licenses which were eliminated in 2014, directing at least half the additional harvest to the eastern portion of the herd unit where pronghorn densities are typically higher and where most private lands are found. The model predicts even this slight increase in harvest will decrease herd size below 5,000 in 2015, unless fawn production exceeds average.

The expected harvest of roughly 220 bucks and 45 does and fawns from the 2015 license quotas should provide a slight decrease ( $\sim 5$ percent) in herd size, projected to be $\sim 4,800$ at post-hunt 2015. With the herd so close to objective, if either winter survival or fawn production exceeds expectations in 2015, harvests will probably need to be further increased in future years.

Opening date is shifted one day to remain on the third Saturday of September, synchronizing with Area 68 to the north and other areas in the Lander Region. Closing date is the same as in the previous three years and extends to the closing of the local deer season. Archery season uses a standardized opening date and closes the day before the opening of the regular season.






2014 - JCR Evaluation Form

| SPECIES: Pronghorn HERD: PR637-SOUTH FERRIS |  | PERIOD: 6/1/2014-5/31/2015 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  |
| HUNT AREAS: 62 |  | PREPARED BY: GREG HIATT |
| 2009-2013 Average | 2014 | 2015 Proposed |
| Population: 7,043 | 5,062 | 5,052 |
| Harvest: 214 | 101 | 120 |
| Hunters: 245 | 118 | 150 |
| Hunter Success: 87\% | 86\% | 80 \% |
| Active Licenses: 258 | 128 | 150 |
| Active License Success: 83\% | 79\% | 80 \% |
| Recreation Days: 727 | 510 | 450 |
| Days Per Animal: 3.4 | 5.0 | 3.8 |
| Males per 100 Females 60 | 64 |  |
| Juveniles per 100 Females 43 | 47 |  |
| Population Objective ( $\pm 20 \%$ ) : |  | 6500 (5200-7800) |
| Management Strategy: |  | Recreational |
| Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: |  | -22.1\% |
| Number of years population has been + or - objective in rece | rend: | 3 |
| Model Date: |  | 3/3/2015 |
| Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group): |  |  |
|  | JCR Year | Proposed |
| Females $\geq 1$ year old: | 0.8\% | 0.7\% |
| Males $\geq 1$ year old: | 6.6\% | 7.6\% |
| Juveniles (<1 year old): | 0\% | 0\% |
| Total: | 2.1\% | 2.3\% |
| Proposed change in post-season population: | -7.2\% | +0.2\% |

Population Size - Postseason


Harvest


Number of Hunters


Harvest Success
$\square$ PR637 - Hunter Success \% PR637-Active License Success


## Active Licenses



Preseason Animals per 100 Females
PR637-Males

- PR637 - Juveniles



## 2009-2014 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR637-SOUTH FERRIS

|  |  | MALES |  |  |  | FEMALES |  | JUVENILES |  | Tot Cls | Cls <br> Obj | Males to 100 Females |  |  |  | Young to |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Pre Pop | Ylg | Adult | Total | \% | Total | \% | Total | \% |  |  | YIng | Adult | Total | $\begin{gathered} \text { Conf } \\ \text { Int } \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Fem } \end{aligned}$ | Conf | $\begin{aligned} & 100 \\ & \text { Adult } \end{aligned}$ |
| 2009 | 5,657 | 127 | 495 | 622 | 28\% | 1,049 | 47\% | 543 | 25\% | 2,214 | 1,553 | 12 | 47 | 59 | $\pm 0$ | 52 | $\pm 0$ | 32 |
| 2010 | 10,681 | 209 | 578 | 787 | 31\% | 1,234 | 49\% | 481 | 19\% | 2,502 | 1,652 | 17 | 47 | 64 | $\pm 4$ | 39 | $\pm 3$ | 24 |
| 2011 | 10,574 | 144 | 477 | 621 | 31\% | 943 | 47\% | 451 | 22\% | 2,015 | 1,776 | 15 | 51 | 66 | $\pm 5$ | 48 | $\pm 4$ | 29 |
| 2012 | 4,868 | 47 | 452 | 499 | 31\% | 827 | 51\% | 293 | 18\% | 1,619 | 1,502 | 6 | 55 | 60 | $\pm 5$ | 35 | $\pm 3$ | 22 |
| 2013 | 4,615 | 53 | 312 | 365 | 25\% | 766 | 53\% | 319 | 22\% | 1,450 | 1,145 | 7 | 41 | 48 | $\pm 4$ | 42 | $\pm 4$ | 28 |
| 2014 | 5,173 | 82 | 354 | 436 | 30\% | 686 | 47\% | 324 | 22\% | 1,446 | 1,638 | 12 | 52 | 64 | $\pm 5$ | 47 | $\pm 4$ | 29 |


| Hunt <br> Area | Type | Dates of Seasons <br> Opens | Closes | Quota | Limitations |
| :---: | :---: | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 62 | 1 | Sep. 12 | Oct. 31 | 40 | Limited quota; any antelope <br> Oct. 31 |
|  | 2 | Sep. 12 | 100 | Limited quota; any antelope valid <br> east of the Continental Divide and <br> north of Wise Dugout Draw) |  |
| 7 | Aug. 15 | Oct. 31 | 25 | Limited quota; doe or fawn valid <br> on private lands in the Muddy <br> Creek drainage |  |
| Archery <br> 62 |  | Aug. 15 | Sep. 11 |  | Refer to Section 2 of this Chapter |


| Hunt Area | Type | Quota change from 2014 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 62 | 1 | 0 |
|  | 2 | +25 |
|  | 7 | 0 |
| Total | $\mathbf{1 \& 2}$ | $\mathbf{+ 2 5}$ |
|  | $\mathbf{7}$ | $\mathbf{0}$ |

## Management Evaluation

Current Management Objective: 6,500
Management Strategy: Recreation
2014 Postseason Population Estimate: 5,060
2015 Proposed Postseason Population Estimate: 5,050
The South Ferris pronghorn herd is managed toward a post-hunt population size of 6,500 pronghorn, an objective last publicly reviewed in 2014. Population size is estimated using a spreadsheet model developed in 2015. The herd is in recreational management, with harvest quotas designed to maintain pre-hunt buck: doe ratios below 60:100.

## Herd Unit Issues

Hunter access to much of the eastern half of the herd has been severely limited by private landowners since the mid-1990s and has resulted in buck:doe ratios and pronghorn densities greatly skewed between the western and eastern portions.

Prior to 2012, population size was estimated using a Pop-II model with reasonable confidence. Attempts to develop a spreadsheet model for the herd in 2012 and 2013 were unsuccessful, presumably because buck:doe ratios vary widely between the lightly hunted eastern half and
publicly accessible lands in the western half of the herd unit. However, addition of the 2014 classification and harvest data allowed for a reasonable model of herd size and trend.

Fawn crops have only ranged from 28 to $55: 100$ over the past 14 years, averaging $\sim 40: 100$. In addition to limited access to much of the herd, poor production and recruitment has reduced harvest levels the herd can support.

The large Peterson Ranch in the south-central portion of the herd has changed hands twice in recent years, and it is not known how the newest owners will handle hunter access. They have already decided to not renew the large Walk-In area along US287.

Losses to EHD were documented in this herd in 2013. By the number of reported and observed carcasses, losses appeared to be greatest along the west shore of Seminoe Reservoir, but spanned down to Rawlins and up towards Lamont. No similar mortalities were found in 2014, but the presence of the disease should remain a concern whenever drought conditions arise.

## Weather

Drought conditions in 2012 and 2013 continued into the first half of 2014, with significant precipitation not arriving until the last quarter of July. Precipitation during the following three months produced good vegetative growth, but was probably too late to significantly improve fawn survival. Condition of pronghorn going into the winter is expected to have been good. The 2014-15 winter had numerous bitter cold spells, coupled with unusually warm periods, but little significant snowfall until late February. Losses may still be above average because many animals were dispersed off winter ranges prior to the late blizzards.

## Habitat

While no herbaceous habitat transects are established within this herd unit, herbaceous forage production is expected to have improved from the increased late summer moisture. Only one shrub transect has been established near this herd unit, on the Morgan Creek WHMA. This transect used to monitor bitterbrush growth and utilization in the Seminoe Mountains was burned in the 2012 fires.

Owners of the Pathfinder Ranch, which encompasses the north-central portion of this herd, have expressed interest in looking for opportunities for improving habitat conditions for wildlife, possibly as mitigation for wind power projects in other parts of the state. Treatment of browse on winter ranges, adjustments of grazing use, and modification of sheep-tight fences would benefit pronghorn in this herd unit.

## Field Data

Classification sample size in 2014 was essentially the same as in 2013, the smallest sample since 1979. Fawn production improved slightly, to $47: 100$, slightly above the 5 -year average. Fawn production was significantly lower in the eastern portion of the herd at $36: 100$, compared to 55:100 in the west.

The buck:doe ratio jumped from 48:100 in 2013 to $64: 100$ in 2014. All of the increase in this ratio was in the eastern portion of the herd unit, where access is strictly limited. The eastern ratio rose from 55:100 in 2013 to 100:100 in 2014. Most of the increase was in the adult buck:doe ratio, which rose from $48: 100$ in 2013 to $80: 100$ in 2014, but the yearling buck ratio also increased, from 7:100 to 19:100. Buck:doe ratios in the western portion of the herd did not change, at 7:100 for yearling bucks and 33:100 for adult bucks in both 2013 and 2014. Buck:doe ratios have exceeded the 60:100 maximum criterion for recreational management in four of the past seven years, but always due to high ratios in the east half of the herd which is largely unavailable to most hunters. Buck:doe ratios in the western portion only averaged 42:100 over the previous five years, generating complaints of poor buck numbers and quality by hunters. Buck:doe ratios in the eastern portion, however, averaged 75:100 over those five years. The Type 2 licenses introduced in 2012 to address the disparity between buck densities between the two portions of the area have only been moderately successful.

## Harvest Data

The difference in supply of bucks between the two halves of the herd unit is also apparent in the harvest statistics. While both Type 1 and Type 2 hunters had poor success in 2014, at 83 percent, those limited to the eastern portion of the herd unit only expended an average of 3.3 days to harvest an animal. The Type 1 hunters, able to hunt the entire area but usually only found in the western portion, expended a record 8.9 days for each pronghorn harvested.

Type 7 doe/fawn licenses were introduced in this area in 2013 to address complaints about high concentrations of pronghorn on irrigated fields along Muddy Creek. Nineteen does were harvested the first year, but only 10 were removed in 2014. Pronghorn use of the irrigated fields appears to have lessened, but it is not known if that is due to harvest, hunter activity or more forage opportunities on native ranges due to increased precipitation in 2014.

## Population

Efforts to develop a reasonable spreadsheet model for this herd in 2012 and 2013 failed, a failure attributed to the highly skewed buck:doe ratios between the eastern and western portions of the herd unit. Last year's population estimates were obtained using two separate spreadsheet models, one each for the east and west portions of the herd unit. While effective, these separate models could not be anchored to defensible line transect estimates. This year, however, the addition of the 2014 classification and harvest data allowed for a reasonable model, despite the highly skewed buck:doe ratios.

A line transect survey in spring of 2013 estimated only 4,600 pronghorn in this herd, and found a noticeable disparity in pronghorn densities between the east and west portions. The population estimate was less than half that of a similar survey three years earlier, and standard spreadsheet models were apparently unable to accommodate that steep of a decline in herd size. This year's model, however, incorporated one year of variable adult survival in the Time-Specific Juvenile \& Constant Adult Survival (TSJ,CA) model, for the severe 2011-12 winter.

While costing a degree of freedom, the resultant model has a reasonable AICc value, aligns closely with all three line transect estimates, has a reasonable track compared to historic trend
counts, and aligns well with most observed buck:doe ratios. Adult mortality for the majority of years in the model is estimated at a reasonable 88 percent, while adult survival in 2011 drops to 40 percent. This also appears reasonable, given the losses noted that year and the severe decline in line transect estimates. However, juvenile survival rates exceeded adult survival rates in some years of the model. This is difficult to accept biologically, and as a result the model is only considered to be a "Fair" representation of the herd.

The CJ,CA model had a similar AICc value, but did not track observed buck:doe ratios, aligned with only the two older line transect estimates, and predicted unrealistic counting success for early trend counts and equally unrealistic poor counting success for later trend counts. The SCJ,SCA model had the lowest AICc value, but only aligned with two of three line transect estimates, fit poorly with historic trend counts, observed buck:doe ratios and required four years of variable survival rates instead of one.

The new TSJ,CA model predicts the herd was about 22 percent below objective in 2014. Fawn production in 2015 was projected to be near the 5 -year average. Assuming a mid-range fawn survival of 60 percent, the model predicts the herd will essentially be stable in 2015.

## Management Summary

With the population well below objective, harvests need to remain low to allow the herd to recover and no changes are recommended for the Type 1 license quota. The exceptionally high buck: doe ratio in the eastern portion of the herd indicates there is a surplus of bucks that can be harvested in that portion. The recommended quota for Type 2 licenses is increased by 33 percent. While no doe harvest is needed for the herd as a whole, the Type 7 doe/fawn licenses on private lands along Muddy Creek are retained to address high numbers of pronghorn on irrigated croplands in the northwestern corner of the herd. Most of these lands are enrolled in the Department's Walk-In program, so access to these private lands should not be a concern.

The expected harvest of roughly 105 bucks and 15 does and fawns from the proposed license quotas should maintain herd size near the 2014 level of approximately 5,000 pronghorn.

Opening date falls on the traditional day of the week and will synchronize with neighboring Area 61. The closing date is the same as in the previous three years and extends to the closing of the local deer season. A standardized opening date is used for the archery season, which closes the day before the opening of the regular season.






