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Acknowledgements

The data contained in these reports were collected by the combined efforts of Pinedale and Jackson Region Wildlife Division personnel, including District Wildlife Biologists, District Game Wardens, the Habitat Biologist, the Wildlife Management Coordinator, Region Supervisor and other Department personnel and volunteers working at check stations. The authors express their sincere appreciation to all those who assisted with data collection.

2019 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bighorn Sheep

PERIOD: 6/1/2019 - 5/31/2020

HERD: BS121 - DARBY MOUNTAIN

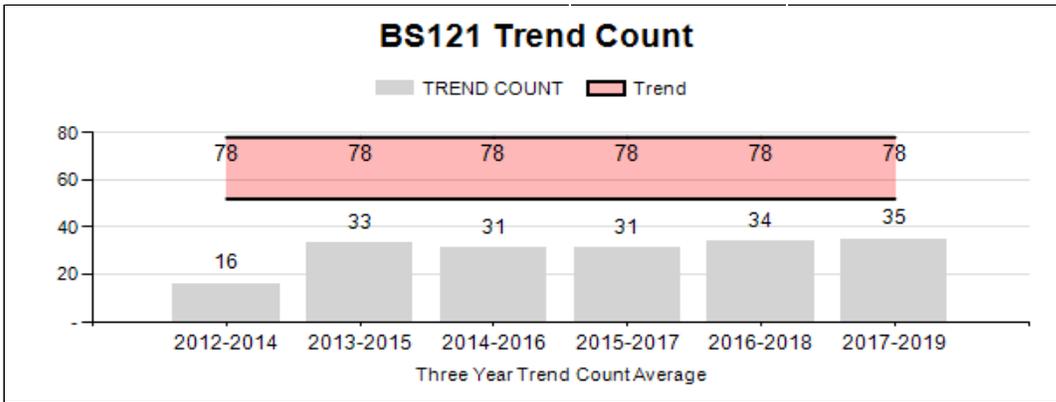
HUNT AREAS: 24

PREPARED BY: GARY FRALICK

	<u>2014 - 2018 Average</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	52	43	50
Harvest:	1	1	1
Hunters:	1	1	1
Hunter Success:	100%	100%	100%
Active Licenses:	1	1	1
Active License Success	100%	100%	100%
Recreation Days:	2	1	3
Days Per Animal:	2	1	3
Males per 100 Females:	220	71	
Juveniles per 100 Females	70	8	
Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$)			65 (52 - 78)
Management Strategy:			Special
Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:			-33.8%
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:			2

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	NA%	NA%
Total:	NA%	NA%
Proposed change in post-season population:	NA%	NA%



**2020 HUNTING SEASON
DARBY MOUNTAIN HERD UNIT - BHS121**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
24	1	Aug.15	Aug.31	Sept. 1	Oct.31	1	Any ram

2019 Hunter Satisfaction:

2020 Management Summary

1.) Hunting Season Evaluation: The 2020 bighorn sheep hunting season will be open for hunting for the 5th consecutive year. A total of one (1) limited quota license will be issued for any ram to a resident hunter. This hunting season will likely result in the harvest of one adult ram 2+-years old. The posthunt 2020 population trend count is projected at approximately 45-60 sheep.

2.) Management Objective Review: The population objective was evaluated for the first time since 1991. Since that time the Darby Mountain herd objective was 150 sheep. The population objective was changed to a trend based objective in 2016. The 3-year trend based objective of 65 sheep was approved by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission in 2016.

3.) Herd Unit Evaluation: Preseason on-ground surveys were conducted in July and August 2019. A total of 43 sheep were observed. The results of those surveys were as follows: 16 adult rams, 1 yearling ram, 24 ewes and 2 lambs were observed. A total of 35 sheep were observed on Fish Creek Mountain and Darby Mountain and in the headwaters of Middle Piney Creek, and 8 sheep were observed along the crest of the Wyoming Range from Box Canyon northward to South Cottonwood Creek. No mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*) were observed along the crest of the Wyoming Range during pre-season 2019 surveys.

In 2019 the fourth ram was harvested since the hunting season re-opened in 2016 after being closed since 2013. Since 2016 all hunter-harvested rams have been at least 8.5 years of age or older.

The number of rams observed during summer surveys typically exceeds, or is equivalent to, 20 rams. The number of rams observed during summer surveys from 2017 – 2019 was a sufficient number of to warrant the issuance of one (1) license for any ram in the 2020 hunting season.

2019 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk
 HERD: EL104 - HOBACK
 HUNT AREAS: 86-87

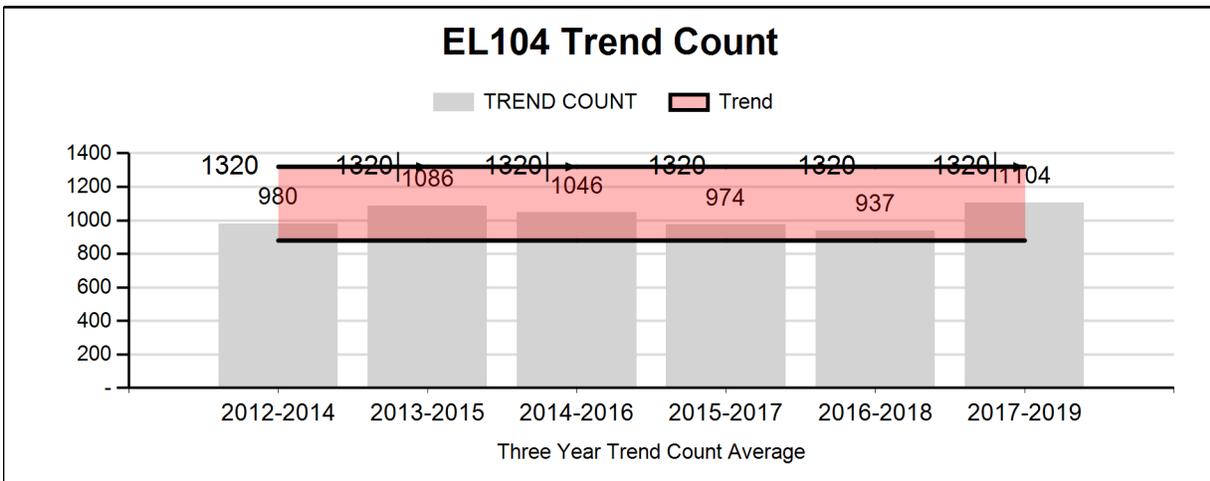
PERIOD: 6/1/2019 - 5/31/2020
 PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2014 - 2018 Average</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	1,005	1,428	1,250
Harvest:	201	205	275
Hunters:	727	638	700
Hunter Success:	28%	32%	39%
Active Licenses:	734	653	700
Active License Success	27%	31%	39%
Recreation Days:	4,776	3,928	4,200
Days Per Animal:	23.8	19.2	15.3
Males per 100 Females:	17	18	
Juveniles per 100 Females	30	28	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$) 1,100 (880 - 1320)
 Management Strategy: Recreational
 Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: 30%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 1

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	0%	0%



**2020 HUNTING SEASONS
Hoback Elk (EL104)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
86	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 25	Sep. 26	Oct. 31		Any elk
86	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 5		Antlerless elk
87	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
87	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 5		Antlerless elk
87	6			Dec. 1	Jan. 31	75	Cow or calf valid south and east of Dell Creek, north and east of U.S. Highway 191, and west of the North Fork of Fisherman Creek

2019 Hunter Satisfaction: 64% Satisfied, 24% Neutral, 12% Dissatisfied

2020 Management Summary

1.) Hunting Season Evaluation: Additional antlerless harvest opportunities were available in 2008 through 2011 in Area 86 and the southern portions of Area 87, and then re-instated for the 2015 season. Liberal seasons were designed to help reduce elk numbers from surrounding herd units, as many of these animals move into the Hoback during the spring/summer/fall period. The 2018 harvest was the lowest reported during the past 10-year period due to a multitude of factors, but primarily attributed to the effects from a September wildfire (Roosevelt Fire) in the southeastern portion of this herd unit. Area closures, fire suppression activities and elk displacement from this wildfire resulted in a significant drop (~30%) in hunter numbers in 2018. The 2019 harvest survey indicated that total harvest and success increased as a result of liberal seasons, lack of fire activity and increased hunter participation, aligning closer with the past five-year averages compared to 2018.

The 2020 hunting season will continue opportunities for “general” license hunters, similar to the past few years. Late season cow/calf limited quota licenses (Type 6) are also available as in past years to address crop damage and livestock co-mingling in a portion of Area 87.

2.) Herd Unit Evaluation: A high proportion (>90%) of elk are typically counted in this herd unit and are located on feedgrounds during the winter due to deep snow conditions and little available native winter habitat. Elk are annually documented from ear tag returns and GPS collars moving into and out of this herd unit. In addition, winter trend counts can vary significantly from year to year. Elk depredation on private land haystacks and cattle and domestic bison feed lines continue to be a problem in most winters. A large wildfire (Roosevelt Fire) that occurred during the summer/fall of 2018 in the southeast portion of this herd unit appeared to have changed elk distribution somewhat in 2019. Increased forage availability and loss of security/thermal cover will potentially change elk distribution, hunting success and participation within and near the Roosevelt Fire in future years.

3.) Population and Trend Evaluation: Starting in 2012, a mid-winter trend count was used to manage this herd unit instead of hand-derived population model estimates. This is an extremely “leaky” herd unit and as a result, a functional computer simulation model has never been developed. The post hunt population trend objective for this herd is 1,100 elk ($\pm 20\%$), with a range of 880 to 1,320 animals. The 2019 postseason trend count of 1,428 elk were observed on Department-

operated elk feedgrounds and native winter ranges. The 2017-2019 mid-winter three-year trend count average is 1,104 elk, meeting the management goal for this herd objective. This herd unit is designated as a “recreational” herd with a bull:100 cow ratio management objective for 15 to 29 bulls:100 cows. The 2019 bull:cow ratio was 18 with the previous five year average (2014-2018) of 17, both meeting this management objective.

2019 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk
 HERD: EL106 - PINEY
 HUNT AREAS: 92, 94

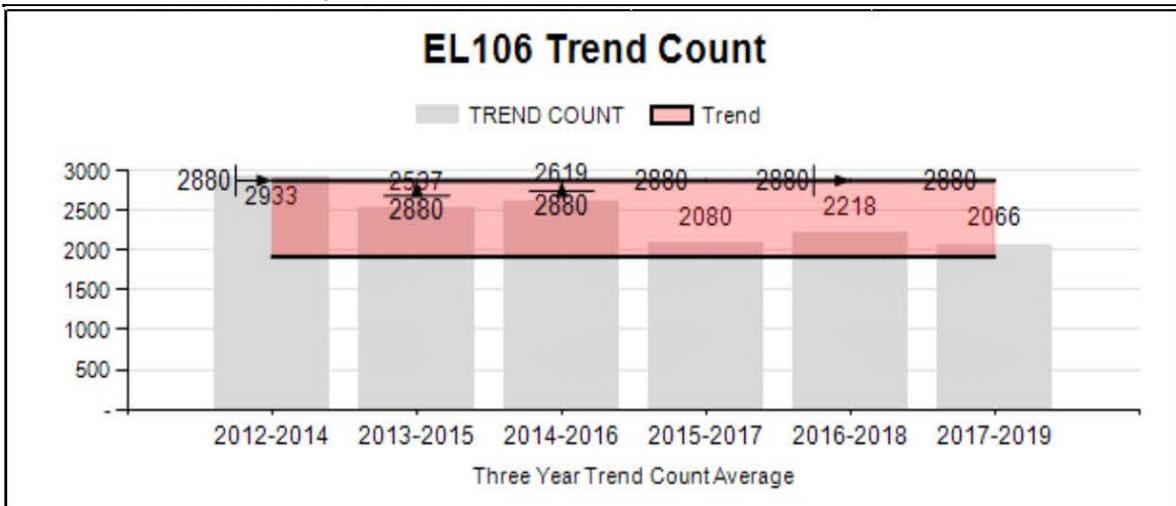
PERIOD: 6/1/2019 - 5/31/2020
 PREPARED BY: GARY FRALICK

	2014 - 2018 Average	2020 Proposed
Trend Count	2,300	2,557
Harvest	889	682
Hunters:	3,029	2,721
Hunter Success:	29%	25%
Active Licenses:	3,218	2,550
Active License Success	28%	27%
Recreation Days:	25,248	22,381
Days Per Animal:	28.4	32.8
Males per 100 Females:	37	40
Juveniles per 100 Females	32	36

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$) 2,400 (1920-2880)
 Management Strategy: Recreational
 Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: 7%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	JCR Year	Proposed
Females :: 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Males 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	NA%	NA%
Total:	NA%	NA%
Proposed change in post-season population:	NA%	NA%



**2020 HUNTING SEASONS
PINEY ELK HERD UNIT (EL106)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
92	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept.30	Oct. 15	Oct.31		Any elk
92	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept.30	Nov. 1	Nov.12		Antlerless elk
92	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov.23	200	Cow or calf
92	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Nov.24	Jan. 31		Cow or calf valid north of Hwy 354 and Sublette County Road 112, east of Sublette County Road 115, and south of South Beaver Creek
94	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept.30	Oct. 15	Oct.31		Any elk
94	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Nov. 1	Nov.12		Antlerless elk
94	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov.23	400	Cow or calf
94	7	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Nov. 1	Nov.30	100	Cow or calf valid north of Middle Piney Creek

2019 Hunter Satisfaction: 53% Satisfied, 24% Neutral, 23% Dissatisfied

2020 Management Summary

1.) **Hunting Season Evaluation:** The 2020 hunting seasons are designed to maintain hunting pressure throughout the herd, especially in Hunt Area 94. The emphasis to harvest adult female elk in both hunt areas will continue for the 13th consecutive year by opening the limited quota antlerless elk hunting on October 1. The number of days for the November portion of the general antlerless elk hunting season will be from November 1 to November 12. This season structure will allow general license hunter to maximize the November segment of the hunt to harvest elk that have moved to lower, more accessible areas.

The number of Type 6 licenses will decrease from the numbers issued in 2019. In Hunt Area 92, the only change is a reduction in the number of Limited Quota Type 6 cow/calf only licenses in response to lower elk numbers counted on Jewett and Franz feedgrounds. A total of 400 Type 6 licenses will be issued in Hunt Area 94, while the number of Type 6 licenses issued in Area 92 will decrease from 400 to 200 licenses. The number of Type 7 licenses will remain at 100 licenses.

2.) **Management Objective Review:** The Piney elk population objective was reviewed by the public and federal agency personnel in 2017. The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission approved the objective in 2017. Based on the input received from the public, the Piney elk herd trend based objective of 2400 elk will be continued. The next objective review is scheduled for 2022.

3.) **Herd Unit Evaluation:** Since discontinuing the use of the spreadsheet population model method to estimate population size and moving to the 3-year population trend count method, managers believe the latter method more accurately represents the population dynamics of this elk herd. The number of elk counted during annual trend counts has been the metric used to design and implement hunting seasons in this herd.

A total of 2,557 elk were counted during the most current year's trend count (Appendix A). Historically, the percentage of elk counted on feedgrounds in the herd comprised 82% and 18% of the total trend count, respectively, during the years 1988 – 2005 (Appendix B). During the more recent 5-year period (2015-2019) the average number of elk documented on herd unit feedgrounds and native winter ranges tallied 85% and 15%, respectively. Bull to cow ratios exceed the management minimum of at least 20 bulls:100 cows, and 28 calves:100 cows were observed during postseason surveys. High bull:cow ratios that may exceed 30 bulls:100 cow are frequently observed and sustained in this herd during consecutive years. Since 2011, the annual postseason bull:cow ratio was at or exceeded 30 bulls:100 cows, with all time high ratios observed at 46 bulls in 2013, 38 bulls in 2015 and 41 bulls:100 in 2016.

Multiple management strategies have been implemented over the last 20 years that have provided maximum hunter recreation opportunity while sustaining high bull:cow ratios. These strategies have encompassed opening limited quota cow and calf hunts on October 1, maintaining a maximum of 17 days of any elk, general license, continuing any elk hunting opportunity beginning October 15 which reduces pressure on the antlered segment of the population, and providing an array of closing dates in November for general and limited quota licenses holders to hunt antlerless elk. The consequence of these liberal hunting seasons resulted in sustaining bull numbers and ratios at or above management minimum, and maintaining the annual population dynamic near the trend objective of 2400 elk.

Concurrent with the annual hunt season structure described previously, there has been a more recent initiative to evaluate the effect of hunting seasons on the annual elk population dynamic over a three-year evaluation period. Previous management focused on annual changes to hunting season structure by typically becoming more liberal (i.e., additional limited quota cow or calf licenses, adjusting closing dates for longer November seasons) in successive years. Consequently, annual changes to hunt seasons proved difficult and, arguably, inconclusive to evaluate if seasons were successful in achieving the desired management goals. By developing a single season format and allowing that season to remain in place for at least 3 years provides the opportunity for managers to better evaluate the effectiveness of each season. To that end, the content of the management has focused on setting and maintaining the same hunting structure for multiple years.

Elk numbers on feedgrounds in Area 92 have generally been near the desired Commission-established quota over the last 9 years. Since 2011, Jewett has been the one feedground where elk numbers have typically met or exceeded Commission-established quota until 2017. Since that time, elk numbers have been below the quota of 650 elk. On Franz feedground, elk numbers have been below the Commission quota in every year since 2011 except in 2014 (N=475 elk) and 2016 (N=518 elk). The lower numbers of elk on Franz are believed to be due, in part, to emigration into the adjacent Hoback and Upper Green River herds. Until the current year, hunting season structure has been designed to maintain elk numbers near or slightly below these feedground quotas. The upcoming 2020 season is designed to promote higher elk numbers in Area 92 by reducing the number of Type 6 cow or calf only licenses.

Hunt Area 94, and specifically the Bench Corral feedground, has supported the highest increase in elk throughout the herd unit, both recently and historically, since elk that once wintered on the North Piney feedground were encouraged to winter on the Bench Corral feedground in 1996. Consequently, hunting opportunities, especially for antlerless elk in Area 94 where trend counts continue to remain high, have continued to be liberal in order to affect the desired population reduction. Limited quota Type 6 cow/calf licenses have focused harvest on the antlerless segment of the population since these license holders typically account for at least 35% of the antlerless harvest in the herd unit. Limited quota Type 7 cow/calf licenses have been designed to harvest elk that migrate to the Bench Corral feedground.

Appendix A. Piney Elk Herd, posthunt herd composition data, 2014-2019.										
2014	Adult Males	Yrlng Males	Total Males	Cows	Calves	Total	Ratio:100 Females			
							Adult Males	Yrlng Males	Total Males	Calves
92 JFG	51	20	71	257	83	411				
92 FFG	40	20	60	NA	NA(415)	475				
92 NR	77	9	86	5	0(27)	118				
94 FFG	29	18	47	237	87	371				
94 NPF	0	0	0	0	0	0				
94 BCFG	207	84	291	NA	75(1034)	1400				
94 NR	54	6	60	22	4(250)	336				
TOTAL	458	157	615	521	249(1726)	3111	NA	NA	NA	NA
2015										
92 JFG	44	22	66	319	172	557				
92 FFG	22	7	29	136	25	190				
92 NR	41	0	41	1	1	43				
94 FFG	40	37	77	266	76	419				
94 NPF	0	0	0	0	0	0				
94 BCFG	147	73	220	488	100	808				
94 NR	43	13	56	63	22(30)	276				
TOTAL	337	152	489	1273	396(135)	2293	26	12	38	31
2016										
92 JFG	43	58	101	438	124	663				
92 FFG	119	40	159	271	88	518				
92 NR	13	1	14	0	1	15				
94 FFG	22	30	52	285	73	410				
94 NPF	0	0	0	0	0	0				
94 BCFG	211	88	299	599	262	1160				
94 NR	23	12	35	7	3(200)	245				
TOTAL	431	229	660	1600	551(200)	3011	27	14	41	34
2017										
92 JFG	33	49	82	330	66	478				
92 FFG	54	4	58	106	13	177				
92 NR	16	2	18	0	0(64)	82				
94 FFG	21	26	47	284	51	382				
94 NPF	0	0	0	0	0	0				
94 BCFG	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS				
94 NR	53	3	56	2	0(315)	315				
TOTAL	177	84	261	722	130(379)	1492	24	12	36	18
2018										
92 JFG	38	28	66	316	81	463				
92 FFG	76	11	87	107	19	213				
92 NR	8	0	8	10	3	21				
94 FFG	23	18	41	308	115	464				
94 NPF	0	0	0	0	0	NS				
94 BCFG	30	26	56	540	172	768				
94 NR	120	4	124	2	0(95)	221				
TOTAL	295	87	382	1283	390(95)	2150	23	7	30	30
2019										
92 JFG	44	34	78	273	69	420				
92 FFG	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	193				
92 NR	17	3	20	0	0	20				
94 FFG	41	41	82	300	101	483				
94 NPF	0	0	0	0	0	0				
94 BCFG	43	76	119	662	171	952				
94 NR	130	30	160	0	0(329)	489				
TOTAL	275	184	459	1235	341(522)	2557	22	15	37	28

WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Dave Freudenthal, Governor



Terry Cleveland, Director

"Conserving Wildlife - Serving People"

Appendix B

Number of elk counted on feedgrounds and on native range during annual herd unit trend counts for four elk herds in the South Jackson Wildlife Biologist District, 1988-2005.

YEAR	FALL CREEK		HOBACK		AFTON		PINEY	
	ON FEED	ON NATIVE RANGE	ON FEED	ON NATIVE RANGE	ON FEED	ON NATIVE RANGE*	ON FEED	ON NATIVE RANGE
1988	4878	478	1159	39	1890	579	2415	472
1989	4006	556	1199	62	1820	303	1916	297
1990	3687	665	1000	89	1822	398	1919	271
1991	4168	668	929	54	1759	647	1788	201
1992	4281	768	1044	119	1869	792	1971	305
1993	3548	715	799	106	1638	221	1875	482
1994	3561	735	743	81	1839	420	1578	657
1995	3528	940	893	40	1679	518	2032	787
1996	4116	262	869	53	1793	545	2263	675
1997	3481	450	433	48	1756	519	2154	681
1998	3859	355	652	44	1969	448	2221	741
1999	3844	192	660	70	1846	246	2193	777
2000	4160	172	745	22	1666	261	2208	301
2001	4768	125	800	48	1689	248	2109	354
2002	4087	299	673	144	1394	551	2135	263
2003	4965	203	1010	36	1611	332	2294	336
2004**	4293	401	858	13	1421	608	2167	53
2005**	4993	192	1036	6	1576	369	2614	494
AVG.	4123	454	861	60	1724	445	2103	453
%	90%	10%	94%	6%	80%	20%	82%	18%
POP. OBJ.	4392 Hunt Areas 84,85		1100 Hunt Areas 86,87		2200 Hunt Areas 88-91		2424 Hunt Areas 92,94	

* Afton Elk Herd- Numbers of elk counted on Native Range during years 1994-2005 reflect those elk counted in Areas 88-90, and only on the **eastern portion of Area 91**.

** 2004 Hoback Elk Herd - 70 elk counted on private horse feedline.

** 2005 Hoback Elk Herd - 60 elk counted on private horse feedline.

2019 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

PERIOD: 6/1/2019 - 5/31/2020

HERD: EL107 - UPPER GREEN RIVER

HUNT AREAS: 93, 95-96

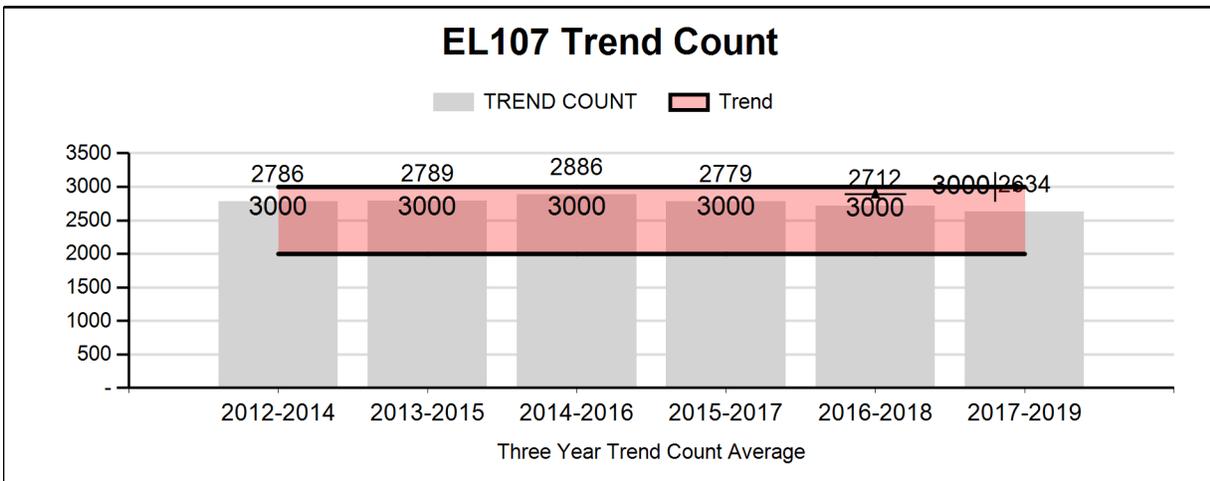
PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2014 - 2018 Average</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	2,743	2,845	2,700
Harvest:	428	372	450
Hunters:	1,272	1,214	1,275
Hunter Success:	34%	31%	35%
Active Licenses:	1,381	1,304	1,275
Active License Success	31%	29%	35%
Recreation Days:	11,245	10,561	11,250
Days Per Animal:	26.3	28.4	25
Males per 100 Females:	31	34	
Juveniles per 100 Females	33	38	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%) 2,500 (2000 - 3000)
 Management Strategy: Recreational
 Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: 14%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 0

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	0%	0%



**2020 HUNTING SEASONS
Upper Green River (EL107)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
93	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	175	Any elk
93	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
93	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 20	275	Cow or calf
95	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	200	Any elk
95	2	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 5	30	Any elk valid within the Green River drainage upstream from the outlet of Lower Green River Lake, including that portion east and south of Mill Creek
95	4	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	125	Antlerless elk
95	5	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 5	25	Antlerless elk valid within the Green River drainage upstream from the outlet of Lower Green River Lake, including that portion east and south of Mill Creek
95	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	25	Cow or calf
96	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
96	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	200	Any elk
96	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 30		Antlerless elk
96	2			Dec. 1	Jan. 31	20	Any elk valid west of the elk fence and south of New Fork Lakes Road.
96	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	275	Cow or calf
96	7			Dec. 1	Jan. 31	50	Cow or calf valid west of the elk fence and south of New Fork Lakes Road

2019 Hunter Satisfaction: 58% Satisfied, 21% Neutral, 21% Dissatisfied

2020 Management Summary

1.) Hunting Season Evaluation: Hunting seasons in the past years have remained similar and successful in maintaining this herd unit within management goals. As a result of mild fall weather conditions during 2018 and 2019, hunting success and overall harvest rates have declined in this herd. Based on the 2018 and 2019 harvest survey data for the three hunt areas in this herd. Area 93 showed a slight decrease in harvest during both years, Area 95 harvest decreased in 2018 and Area 96 harvest was lower in 2019. Decreased harvest during the past two hunting seasons has resulted in an upward population trend in postseason 2019.

The 2020 hunting season remains similar to past years for this herd unit, using a combination of general and limited quota licensed hunters, and has shown to maintain herd unit objectives. A late season hunt will remain in Area 96 (Type 7) west of the elk fence and south of New Fork Lake Road to discourage elk from damaging stored crops and reducing co-mingling with livestock on private lands. An additional late season opportunity in Area 96 (Type 2) was added this year in an effort to harvest any elk in this same area (west of the elk fence and south of the New Fork Lake Road) that have been a persistent problem damaging stored hay.

2.) Herd Unit Evaluation: Managers believe a very high proportion (>90 %) of elk are typically counted in this herd unit and are located on feedgrounds during most winters. Large carnivores (wolves and grizzly bears) have reduced hunter participation in the northern portion of this herd unit (Area 95), and are likely influencing elk productivity and survival. Lack of public access on private lands in Area 93 is limiting harvest and compromising female harvest goals within this herd. A large portion of occupied elk habitat in Area 96 lies within the Bridger Wilderness, limiting hunter accessibility, resulting in poor harvest rates on years with mild fall conditions when elk remain at higher elevations.

3.) Population and Trend Evaluation: Since 2012 a mid-winter trend count has been utilized to manage this herd unit instead of hand-derived population model estimates. This is a “leaky” herd unit and as a result, a functional computer simulation model has never been developed. The mid-winter trend objective for this herd is 2,500 elk ($\pm 20\%$), with a range of 2,000 to 3,000 animals. The 2019 trend count was 2,845 elk observed on Department-operated feedgrounds and native winter ranges. The 2016-2018 3-year trend average is 2,634 elk, which is within this herd objective. Winter and habitat conditions, wolf activity and timing of classification surveys have resulted in fluctuating trend count data on all three feedgrounds and native winter ranges in past years. This herd unit is designated as a “recreational” herd with a bull:100 cow ratio management objective for 15 to 29 bulls:100 cows. The 2019 bull:cow ratio was 34 with the previous five year (2014-2018) average of 31, slightly exceeding this management objective.

2019 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk
 HERD: EL108 - PINEDALE
 HUNT AREAS: 97-98

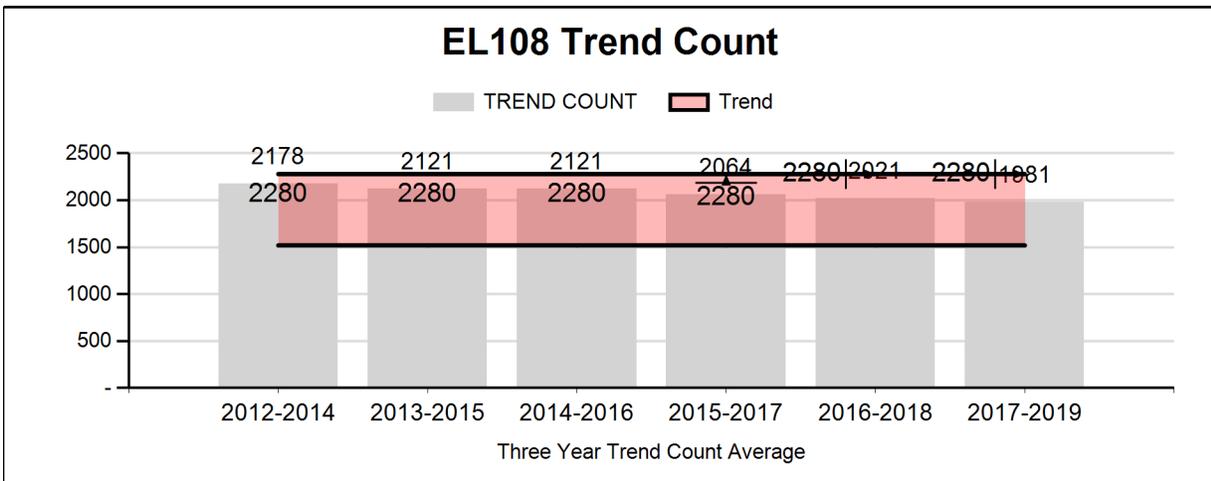
PERIOD: 6/1/2019 - 5/31/2020
 PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2014 - 2018 Average</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	2,059	2,011	1,950
Harvest:	480	334	500
Hunters:	1,587	1,388	1,550
Hunter Success:	30%	24%	32%
Active Licenses:	1,661	1,460	1,550
Active License Success	29%	23%	32%
Recreation Days:	11,316	10,793	11,300
Days Per Animal:	23.6	32.3	22.6
Males per 100 Females:	22	26	
Juveniles per 100 Females	28	31	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%) 1,900 (1520 - 2280)
 Management Strategy: Recreational
 Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: 6%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 0

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	0%	0%



**2020 HUNTING SEASONS
Pinedale Elk (EL108)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
97	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Oct. 1	Oct. 15		Any elk
97	Gen			Oct. 16	Nov. 12		Antlerless elk
97	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Oct. 31	225	Any elk
97	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
97	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Nov. 20	150	Cow or calf elk
98	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Oct. 1	Oct. 15		Any elk
98	Gen			Oct. 16	Nov. 12		Antlerless elk
98	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Oct. 31	350	Any elk
98	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
98	1			Nov. 21	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid between Scab Creek and the East Fork River
98	4	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Nov. 20	75	Antlerless elk
98	4			Nov. 21	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid between Scab Creek and the East Fork River
98	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Nov. 20	300	Cow or calf elk
98	6			Nov. 21	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid between Scab Creek and the East Fork River

2019 Hunter Satisfaction: 52% Satisfied, 25% Neutral, 23% Dissatisfied

2020 Management Summary

1.) Hunting Season Evaluation: Hunting seasons in the past years have remained similar and successful in maintaining this herd unit within management goals. Fall weather, especially snow accumulation at higher elevations, greatly influences antlerless harvest in the herd unit. Mild fall weather conditions during 2019 resulted in low hunter success, increased hunter effort (days/harvest), and poor female harvest, well below the 5-year average. Based on the 2019 harvest survey data for the two hunt areas in this herd, Area 97 showed a bigger drop in harvest compared to Area 98, especially the Type 6 cow/calf licenses. The 2017 harvest was below average, although the 2016 season resulted in harvest rates well above the 5-year average due to heavy snow accumulations at high elevations that persisted through almost the entire hunting season.

The 2020 hunting season remains similar to past years for this herd unit, using a combination of general and limited quota licensed hunters for both Area 97 and Area 98. A late season hunt will remain in Area 98 to keep elk out of stored hay and reduce co-mingling with livestock on private lands.

2.) Herd Unit Evaluation: Managers believe a very high proportion (>90%) of elk are typically counted in this herd unit and are located on feedgrounds during most winters. Some interchange (~10%) of elk has been documented between the Pinedale herd and the adjacent herd unit to the southeast (South Wind River Herd Unit) via GPS collars and ear tags. More than half of the U.S. Forest Service lands are designated as Wilderness (Bridger Wilderness) where access is limited to foot or horseback travel. The remaining Forest Service lands outside Wilderness have moderate vehicle and trail access. Lack of public access on private lands in Hunt Area 98 along Scab and Silver Creeks provides a refuge for elk and limits harvest opportunities. Years with persistent and

deep snow at higher elevations results in elk distributing to lower elevation where access is better for hunters, resulting in increased harvest. Weather is a very influential factor on harvest rates, especially for antlerless elk, in this herd unit.

3.) Population and Trend Evaluation: Beginning in 2012, a mid-winter trend count has been utilized to manage this herd unit instead of a hand-derived population model estimates. This is a somewhat “leaky” herd unit and a functional simulation model has not been developed. The mid-winter trend objective for this herd is 1,900 elk ($\pm 20\%$), with a range of 1,520 to 2,280 animals. The 2019 trend count was 2,011 elk observed on Department-operated feedgrounds and native winter ranges. The 2017-2019 three-year trend average is 1,981 elk, which is within the herd objective. This herd unit is designated as a “recreational” herd with a bull:100 cow ratio management objective for 15 to 29 bulls:100 cows. The 2019 bull:cow ratio was 26 with the previous five-year (2014-2018) average of 22, meeting this management objective. The bull harvest annually reported for this herd is questionable. Managers are confident that most elk are classified each year, yet reported bull harvest ranges from 50% to 60% of the total classified on most years.

2019 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Moose

PERIOD: 6/1/2019 - 5/31/2020

HERD: MO105 - SUBLETTE

HUNT AREAS: 3-5, 10, 20-25

PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2014 - 2018 Average</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	1,138	1,251	1,250
Harvest:	177	148	145
Hunters:	197	162	160
Hunter Success:	90%	91%	91 %
Active Licenses:	197	162	160
Active License Success	90%	91%	91 %
Recreation Days:	1,581	1,401	1,400
Days Per Animal:	8.9	9.5	9.7
Males per 100 Females:	71	73	
Juveniles per 100 Females	43	40	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%) 1,500 (1200 - 1800)

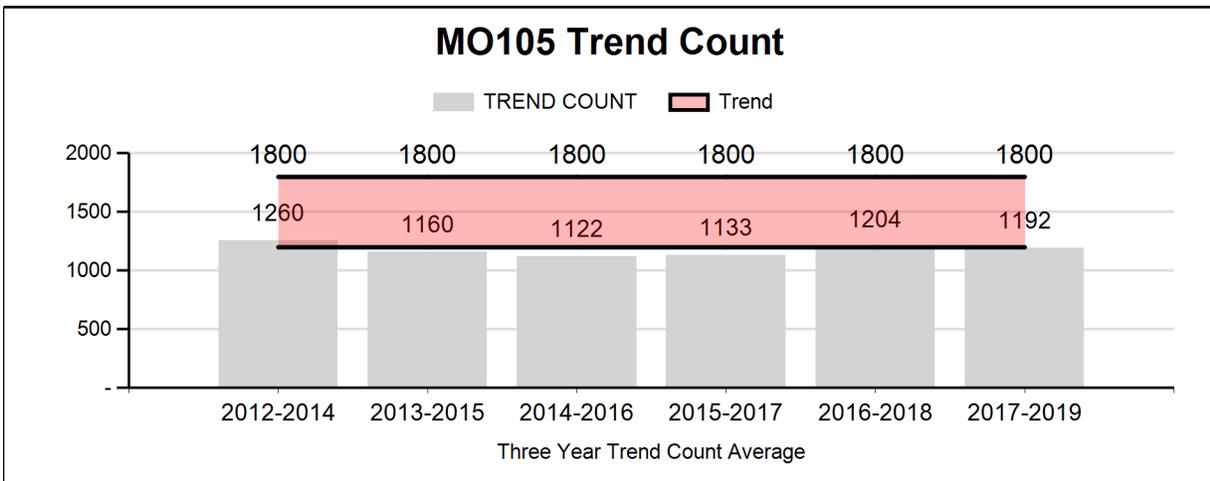
Management Strategy: Special

Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: -16.6%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 0

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	0%	0%



2020 HUNTING SEASONS
Sublette Moose (MO105)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
3	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Oct. 31	15	Antlered moose
3	4	Sept. 1	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	Oct. 31	5	Antlerless moose, except cow moose with calf at side; valid off national forest
5	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	25	Antlered moose
10	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sept. 15	Oct. 31	8	Antlered moose (6 residents; 2 non-residents)
20	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sept. 15	Oct. 31	15	Antlered moose
21	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sept. 15	Oct. 31	2	Antlered moose (2 residents)
22	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	5	Antlered moose
23	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sept. 15	Oct. 31	15	Antlered moose
24	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sept. 15	Oct. 31	20	Antlered moose
25	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	47	Antlered moose (37 residents; 10 non-residents)
25	4	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	5	Antlerless moose, except cow moose with calf at side

2020 Management Summary

1.) Hunting Season Evaluation: Moose harvest during the 2019 season continues to maintain high success around 90% with hunter effort ranging around 8 to 9.5 days/harvest for the overall herd unit. Managers also attempt to maintain an average age of harvest for bulls around 4.0 or higher to provide hunters with opportunities to harvest “trophy” class bulls. The past 5-year average age for harvested bulls is 4.1. An average antler width of 36 inches for bull moose was reported in this herd during 2019, derived from 64% of successful moose hunters that submitted antler information with tooth collections. Success, hunter effort and bull quality vary among individual hunt areas somewhat due weather conditions and license allocations. Although license allocations have remained similar at 160 (150 Type 1 & 10 Type 4) the past few years, the total number of licenses issued declined from 630 in 2002, to 160 in 2019, a total decrease of 460 (74%). These reductions by license type since 2002 equates to declines of 96% (230 to 10) cow/calf (Type 4) licenses and 63% (400 to 150) bull (Type 1) licenses.

The 2020 moose seasons in this herd unit are the same, with the exception of Area 3 and Area 4 that are now combined into one hunt area (Area 3). The license quotas were combined and remain the same for the two Areas, totaling 15 (Type 1) and 5 (Type 4) for Area 3. The Area 3 Type 4 (antlerless moose) licenses are valid only off national forest lands and address private land damage concerns.

2.) Herd Unit Evaluation: Undetermined moose deaths have been documented within this herd unit during past years. The significance of these spring mortalities are currently unknown, and it appears other factors besides hunter harvest is slowing population growth. A study conducted during 2011-2014 within a portion of this herd unit documented moose demographics, body condition and survival rates to help managers better understand issues and problems within this moose population. Findings from this study indicate lower than expected adult female survival,

fluctuating and low pregnancy rates and high calf survival rates. Fat measurements from study animals indicated overall poor body condition, suggesting poor quality habitat. A combination of factors such as habitat conditions, disease, parasites, predation, etc. may all be attributing to limited population growth in this herd

3.) Population and Trend Evaluation: Data for this herd unit suggest this moose population declined during the late 1990’s, stabilized in 2004 and 2005, slowly increased through 2013, and either stabilized or slightly decreased to the present. Starting in 2013, a mid-winter trend count was approved as the management objective for this herd unit instead post-hunt population estimates. The mid-winter trend objective for this herd is 1,500 moose ($\pm 20\%$), a range of 1200 – 1800 animals. The 2019 mid-winter trend count was 1,251 moose and the most recent 3-year average (2017-2019) trend is 1,192 moose. Past population modeling efforts for this herd have typically produced estimates higher, usually ~75% higher, than what annual trend counts document. Maintaining comparable classification survey efforts (flight time) compared to past years provide managers a reliable data set that reflect population trends in this herd unit (Table 1). These mid-winter trend counts do not reflect the actual moose population, as not all areas with wintering moose are surveyed and not all moose are observed in those areas that are surveyed.

Table 1. Trend counts by Hunt Area for the Sublette Moose Herd Unit, 2009-2018.

<u>Hunt Area</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
3	18	38	21	24	22	32	20	26	10	288
4	261	320	319	346	224	235	366	280	314	-
5	100	44	82	79	34	73	33	65	47	53
10	10	8	4	0	10	31	16	19	36	22
20	16	28	13	32	65	49	36	60	35	54
21	30	23	18	11	7	17	23	1	11	15
22	23	27	49	47	17	13	2	11	2	0
23	46	26	52	55	37	32	17	32	16	25
24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>25</u>	<u>679</u>	<u>754</u>	<u>742</u>	<u>806</u>	<u>664</u>	<u>517</u>	<u>774</u>	<u>620</u>	<u>739</u>	<u>794</u>
Total	1183	1268	1300	1400	1080	999	1287	1114	1210	1251

*Areas 3 and 4 combined into Area 3 starting postseason of 2019

4.) Harvest Age and Antler Width Data: A total of 100 teeth representing approximately 68% of the reported 2019 harvest were aged using cementum annuli analysis. The 2019 tooth age results from the WGFD lab showed an average age of 3.7 (median age = 3.0) derived from 69% of reported harvest for bulls and an average age of 2.3 (median age = 2.0) derived from 75% of reported harvest for cows. Average age of harvest for bulls has remained relatively similar at approximately 4.0 years during the past 10+ years (Figure 1), with significant harvest age increase in 2018 and decrease in 2019 that can’t be explained. The low sample sizes used to derive female ages in recent years results in erratic and unreliable trends (Figure 1).

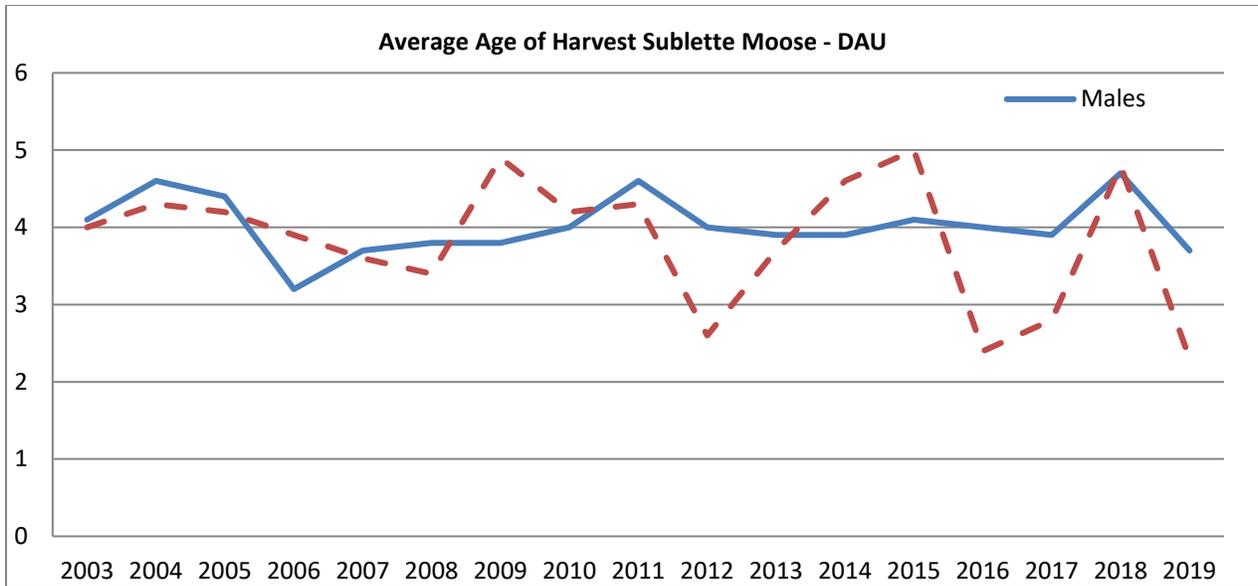


Figure 1. Average age of harvested male and female moose, Sublette Herd Unit, 2003-2019.

An average antler width of 36 inches for bull moose was reported in this herd during 2019, derived from 64% of successful moose hunters that submitted antler information with tooth collections.

2019 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

PERIOD: 6/1/2019 - 5/31/2020

HERD: MD104 - SUBLETTE

HUNT AREAS: 130-131, 138-142, 146, 150-156, 162

PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

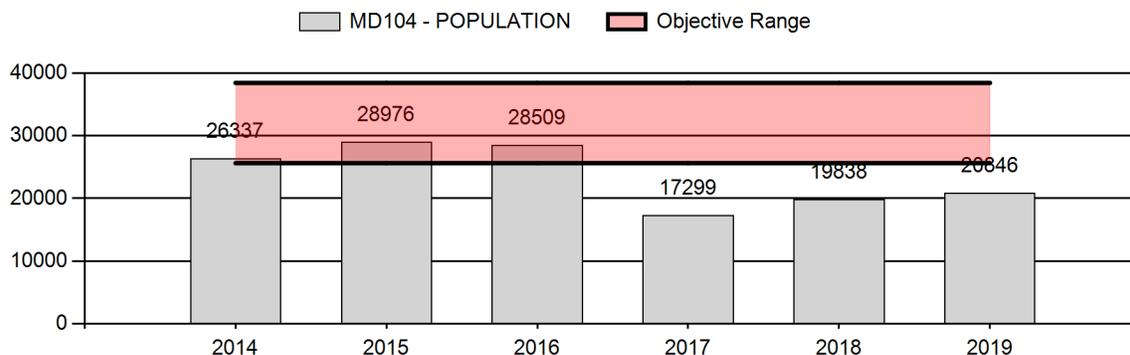
	<u>2014 - 2018 Average</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 Proposed</u>
Population:	24,192	20,846	23,000
Harvest:	1,598	1,249	1,400
Hunters:	4,367	4,131	4,200
Hunter Success:	37%	30%	33 %
Active Licenses:	4,384	4,160	4,200
Active License Success:	36%	30%	33 %
Recreation Days:	23,842	21,342	21,500
Days Per Animal:	14.9	17.1	15.4
Males per 100 Females	39	38	
Juveniles per 100 Females	62	67	

Population Objective (\pm 20%) :	32000 (25600 - 38400)
Management Strategy:	Special
Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective:	-34.9%
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:	3
Model Date:	2/20/2020

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females \geq 1 year old:	0.6%	0.8%
Males \geq 1 year old:	29%	25%
Total:	6%	6%
Proposed change in post-season population:	+4%	+7%

Population Size - Postseason



**2020 HUNTING SEASONS
Sublette Deer (MD104)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
130	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
130	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31	15	Antlered mule or any white-tailed deer
130	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	75	Doe or fawn valid on private land within Sweetwater County
131	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer three (3) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
131	3	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	25	Any white-tailed deer
131	6	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	50	Doe or fawn valid within the Farson-Eden Irrigation Project
131	7	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	50	Doe or fawn valid west of the Blue Rim (Sweetwater County Road 5) and west of the Old Stauffer Roads (Sweetwater County Road 7) and south of the OCI Entrance Road (Sweetwater County Road 6)
138	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
138,139, 140, 142	3	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	50	Any white-tailed deer
139	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
140	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
141	1	Sept. 1	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 21	80	Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
141	1			Oct. 22	Oct. 31		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer on national forest
142	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
146	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
150	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule or any white-tailed deer
150,151, 152	3	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 30	25	Any white-tailed deer
151	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
152	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
153	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
154	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
155	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule or any white-tailed deer
156	Gen	Sept. 1	Sept. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer

2020 Region H nonresident quota: 600 licenses

2019 Hunter Satisfaction: 48% Satisfied, 25% Neutral, 27% Dissatisfied

2020 Management Summary

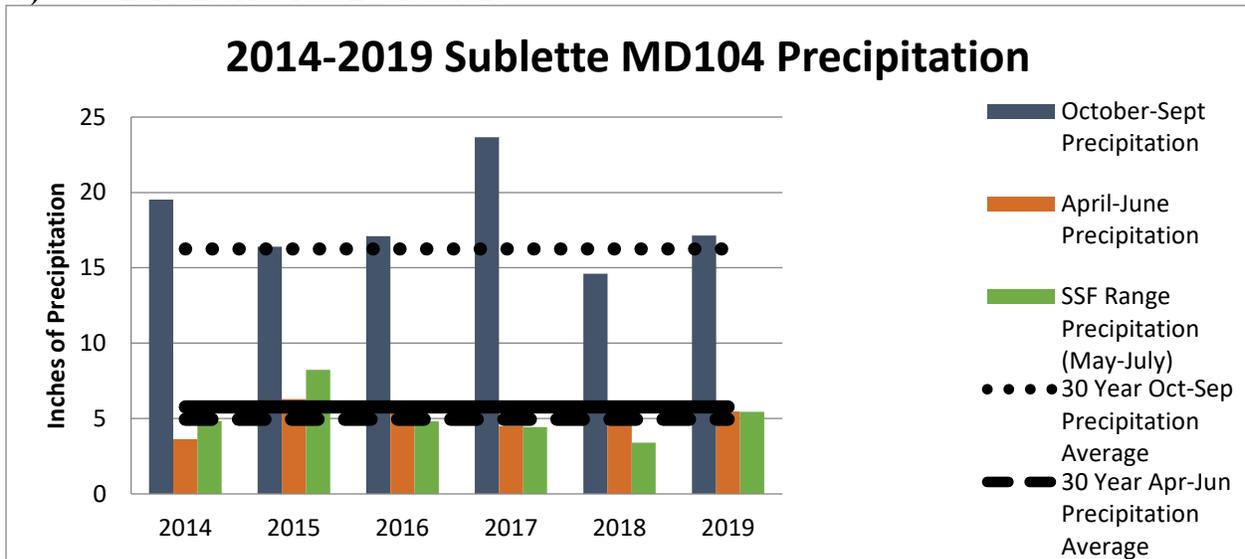
1.) Hunting Season Evaluation: The 2019 hunting seasons continued to be conservative as in past years to allow for population growth in the herd unit. An antler point restriction (APR) limiting buck harvest to three points or better has been in place the past three years (2017-2019) to maintain a buck ratio objective between of 30 to 45 bucks: 100 does. These APR's were instated following the extremely harsh winter of 2016/17 and may have helped keep buck:doe ratios around 36 bucks:100 does these past three years. Doe/fawn harvest has been limited to youth hunters and some Type 6/7 licenses. Since 2016, this herd has seen little growth and remains below the population objective range of 25,600 to 38,400 deer. The 2020 hunting seasons limit harvest to bucks using general license hunters for most hunt areas, opening on September 15 and closing October 6, except for youth hunters and limited quota doe/fawn licenses (125 Type 6 & 7) near the town of Farson and lower Green River to address damage concerns on private lands. Limited quota license (Type 1 & 3) numbers are maintained as in past years. APR's are eliminated in most all general and limited quota hunt areas.

2.) Herd Unit Evaluation: Winter survival, habitat condition and quality on winter ranges, and habitat loss (direct and indirect) from gas and residential development are the primary issues influencing population dynamics in this herd unit. During the past 10 years this deer herd experienced three winters that resulted in above average fawn mortality (> 50% loss). Winter conditions experienced in 2018-19 resulted in winter fawn loss of 50+% and the winter of 2016-17 resulted in a significant deer die-off where fawn loss was estimated near 85% and adult mortality near 35%. During the winter of 2010-11, fawn mortality estimates exceeded 70%. Winter fawn mortality estimates average around 30% on years when winter severity is moderate to average. Current annual growth on key winter browse species has varied among years, but the overall habitat conditions remain poor with some improvement on certain years.

Gas field development has and will continue to impact deer numbers within this herd unit. The Pinedale Anticline gas field development overlaps with crucial winter range located on the Mesa, where annual abundant estimates indicate deer numbers have declined by roughly 55% from 2001–2019. Studies have demonstrated that deer avoid areas with intensive winter gas development, resulting in less forage available for wintering deer within and adjacent to gas development. Overall hunter satisfaction has been good within this herd in most years, even following years with winter die-off and fewer deer.

3.) Population and Trend Evaluation: A spreadsheet model uses harvest, sex/age ratios, and survival data to project population estimates and trends for this herd unit. The Time-Specific Juvenile and Constant Adult Survival (TSJ,CA) Model has always exhibited the best overall fit compared to the other models (Fit = 101 and Relative AICc = 212) resulting in a 2019 postseason population estimate of approximately 21,000 deer, below the desired objective of 32,000 (+ 20%) for this herd unit. Trend counts from postseason classification counts also reflect the population trends quite well in this herd since survey time and coverage has remained similar in the past.

4.) Weather and Habitat Evaluation:



Precipitation

Overall precipitation during the water year (October 2018 through September 2019) was slightly above average when evaluated across the entire herd unit. The general characteristics throughout the water year included a severe winter in parts of the Sublette Herd Unit with increased snow accumulation, especially along the Wind River Front, followed by near average spring and summer moisture. Both growing season (April through June) and summer (May-July) precipitation were at the 30-year average and resulted in normal growing conditions across the herd unit.

Winter Severity

The 2019-2020 winter started fairly mild but the months of January and February have been increasingly difficult for wildlife due to additional snow accumulations, excessive wind, and below average temperatures on winter ranges. Southern winter range conditions were fairly open in regards to accessing forage, with winter ranges close to Pinedale having slightly above normal snow levels. Winter conditions were more severe along the Wind River Front in 2018-2019 which resulted in lower fawn and adult survival, reducing overall fawn production in 2019. As of May 7, 2020, SNOTEL locations in the high elevations of the Sublette herd indicate snow water equivalent ranging from 50-200% of average and the Green River Basin watershed is near 95% of average.

Habitat Production and Winter Availability

In 2019, annual leader production on important forage shrubs was slightly higher than the last three years. This increase in productivity may be attributable to the increased snowfall associated with the late spring in 2019, affectively increasing the amount of soil moisture available to the plants not accounted for by precipitation. During the 2019-2020 winter, sagebrush and other forage in the southern winter ranges was readily available while forage was less available due to persistent snow on those winter ranges closer to Pinedale.

Significant Habitat Events

Habitat treatments were conducted at several locations in 2019 throughout the herd unit. The Sublette Mule Deer Mitigation project implemented its fourth year of treatments including 627 acres of sagebrush mowing. Other projects include over 17 miles of fence modified to wildlife-

friendly standards, 496 acres of aspen mechanical treatments, 190 acres of aspen prescribed burns, 259 acres of conifer pile burning, and over 9,400 acres of cheatgrass treated with herbicide. Lastly, livestock management and noxious weed control was cooperatively implemented in the 34,000 acre Cliff Creek Wildfire (2016) and the 62,000 acre Roosevelt Wildfire (2018) in the Hoback basin as well as within the Sublette Mule Deer sagebrush treatments completed in 2017 on BLM land. On-going restoration projects, such as noxious weed management, is slated to continue over the next three years within each wildfire. More detailed information can be obtained by reading the Pinedale Region report in the 2019 Strategic Habitat Plan (SHP) Annual Report.

Habitat Monitoring and Rapid Assessments

Winter Range Shrub transects were not monitored in 2019 by Department personnel, but monitoring associated with past and future treatments was conducted throughout the herd unit and is discussed in more detail in the 2019 SHP Report. In 2015, Department personnel initiated the Rapid Habitat Assessment methodology to survey important mule deer habitats. This method strives to capture large-scale habitat quality metrics to better understand how the habitat is providing for the current population of mule deer. The overall end result of this effort is to provide a standardized habitat component for discussions about how mule deer objectives should or should not be adjusted based on the general concept of carrying capacity. In the Sublette Herd during 2019 a total of five aspen, nine rangeland, four riparian, and six special RHAs were completed totaling 6,766 acres within the Pinedale and Jackson Regions.