

BAGGS MULE DEER HERD WORKING GROUP Baggs, Carbon County Higher Education Building March 14, 2017

Approved: March 28, 2017

An organizational meeting of the Baggs Mule Deer Herd Working Group (BMDHWG) took place on March 14, 2017 in Baggs at the Carbon County Higher Education Building. The following people attended:

Working Group Members:

Frank Blomquist, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Larry Hicks, Little Snake Conservation District
Chris Herold, Warren Resources, industry representative
Tony Mong, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Kim Olson, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Katie Cheesbrough, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Lucy Diggins-Wold, WGFD note taker
Cindy Mosteller, Mule Deer Foundation
Ed Arnett, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Jennifer Lamb, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
John Sjogren, Range Management Specialist Bureau of Land Management

Absent Working Group Members:

Wendy Haas, USDA Forest Service
Patty Waldron, local Baggs resident
Jim Espy, landowner public representative
Andy Warren, Bureau of Land Management
Bo Stocks, Chairperson

Members of the public:

None

6:30 pm

1. Where this deer herd is at March 2017:

"2016-2017 higher than expected mortality in adults and fawns; adult bucks had a survival rate of 62% and 70% survival in adult does and fawns collared in CO had 32% survival." Population is 19,000, just above objective. We dropped down buck- ratios took a bigger hit; now at 23 bucks per 100 does and CO saw similar ratios. Overall, population is about where we want them except buck ratios. Adult doe deer that died were 9 years of age or older. Not much winter kill in December. Moving forward cautiously with our low buck ratios. Decline in buck ratios was not unanticipated. Put out an additional 20 collars- over 50 buck collars out and around 40 collars out on does in the Atlantic Rim. Bucks in the class 2 and 3 remain the same; yearling and class 1 showed the biggest decline. Larry Hicks thinks we will see an uptick in hunters this year due to severe winter conditions in western Wyoming.

2. Habitat Plan (Draft):

Prime Objective: *To improve habitat conditions to allow for a sustainable deer herd at objective level.*

Tony put up the Baggs Mule Deer Herd Habitat Plan for members to review. **Tony said he wants to have a complete draft in one month and needs group members to go through the plan with a fine tooth comb. This is a starting point.**

- Katie said this is document is super helpful to start with and then focus on each portion of the plan; will provide direction.
- Frank wondered how we address any of the Colorado issues. Tony says he and Darby are working on joint habitat project funding requests with Darby in CO to work on some of these concerns.
- Larry thinks it would be good to include CO deer data. We have a highly-fluid boundary with CO and WY mule deer. *Tony will add a separate section on interstate management.
- Katie said there might be some CO funding opportunities.
- EQUIP money can be used on federal lands. Local/county officials aren't interested in spending money on federal lands.
- There might be some issues with GAP data. Still gives us a general idea.
- 25 RAPID habitat assessments were conducted in 2015 and 7 RAPID habitat assessments were done in 2016. Have polygons drawn on aerial images and fine-scale GIS data.
- Several folks go out every time and not just Katie with her notebook.
- Chris Herold said there were not a lot of assessments done in migration or winter ranges-and asked if we can we do more assessments in those areas.
- **Habitat Treatment Priority Blocks** is the terminology Tony used in the plan. These include Wild Horse, Dad, Poison Basin, and Battle Mountain Treatment Blocks. Tony went ahead and prioritized the treatment blocks. Create a collaborative habitat treatment group to review each area, projects and how to get funding
- Tony and Larry secured \$65,000 from WWNRT for Baggs MDH treatment projects in 2017. The \$105,000.00 was secured from the WGF Commission for habitat treatments.
- How much do you really want to do in Poison Basin or other areas where it may not be worth the money and effort to do projects there?
- At least put drainages on the maps to have a better reference to where the habitat treatment blocks are located.
- Use local historical data if you know you are missing a chunk of deer and not capturing them and getting collar data.
- Focus on summer range habitat and focus habitat improvement projects going and treat a lot of acres.
- Adaptive management is critical to how the WGFD and working group will handle new data and proceed.
- Katie is writing the funding outline and all the documentation so that administrators can be kept up to speed.
- USFS LAVA **landscape vegetation analysis** process has begun. Need to put those polygons in our plan. USFS is hoping to have this completed within one year.

3. Population Management/hunting proposals:

- BMDH is a fast growing and heavily hunted population.
- Tony put together historical data.
- Harvest satisfaction went down due to ATV misuse, fewer quality bucks and hunter crowding.
- BMDH was managed as a recreational herd and now is managed as a Special mgt area and the objective was raised to 19,000.
- Unlimited limited quota system discussion; you have to pick a week to hunt according to the license you bought or drew if this system is adopted.
- The plan is to collect more public comments at the 2017 open houses and if they like it, implement this in 2018. Probably have to run those seasons for a few years to get any real meaningful data.
- Public survey and season questionnaire results for hunt area 100 yielded 62% supportive and 31% non supportive (74 respondents) and for hunt area 82, 62% supportive and %32 non-supportive (85 respondents).

4. Where the group is headed:

- *Group will focus on finishing habitat and population management plan.*
- *Please get comments to Tony by March 30, 2017.*

8:40 pm
Meeting adjourned.
Respectfully submitted,

Lucy Diggins-Wold