



# Mule Deer Habitat Treatment Opportunities



# Mule Deer Needs

- **Quality habitat**
- **Open spaces**
- **Connectivity between ranges**





# General Habitat Preference

- **Shrublands, sagebrush-grasslands, and mixed-mountain shrublands during fall months**
- **Riparian areas to replenish fat reserves and provide fawning cover**
- **Aspen stands provide high quality forage and hiding and thermal cover**







# Threats to Mule Deer Habitat

- Severe weather
- Invasive Annual Grasses
- Fire suppression
- Development







**ACTIONS TO  
IMPROVE  
MULE DEER HABITAT**

# Habitat Improvement Projects

- **Invasive annual grasses**
- **Prescribed fire**
- **Sagebrush mowing**
- **Improving aspen stands**
- **Enhancing riparian habitat**
- **Wildlife friendly fencing**







# Invasive Annual Grass

- **Converts productive habitat to invasive grasses  
- not palatable by deer**
- **Seeds dispersed by wind, animals, humans, and  
machinery**
- **Acts as a fine fuel for fires**
- **Treated by spraying herbicide**
- **Treated an average of over 80,000 acres per  
year for the last 5 years**







# Prescribed Fire

- **Fire signals rebirth of the plant community**
- **Plant life begins re-growing within weeks**
- **New plants have high protein content**
- **Aspen depend on periodic fires to remove conifer trees**





# Sagebrush Mowing

- **Sagebrush provides food for mule deer, sage-grouse, and pronghorn**
- **Mule deer eat primarily the new plant growth of sagebrush plants**
- **Mowing helps reinvigorate plant communities, resulting in more food for wildlife**
- **Plants will grow back stronger and young sagebrush plants have a chance to germinate**





# Improving Aspen Stands

- **Aspen provide habitat for mule deer, elk, moose, and birds**
- **Understories provide important food resources**
- **Treated mechanically with saw crews to diversify age classes and to improve understories**







# Enhancing Riparian Areas

- **Riparian habitats make up less than 4% of Wyoming's land**
- **Provide forage and cover for mule deer during all seasons**
- **Improve conditions through the use of Beaver Dam Analogs, Zeedyk structures, and planting willows and cottonwoods**





# Wildlife Friendly Fencing

- **Wildlife friendly fences are designed to contain livestock while still allowing wildlife to pass through without harm**
- **Enhance habitat connectivity by reducing negative wildlife-fence interactions and easing fence crossings**
- **Crossing non-wildlife friendly fencing depletes important energy reserves**



# Commission Funding to Improve Habitat

The Commission has  
approved more than \$29  
million to improve mule  
deer habitats over the last  
ten years







# Habitat Focus Through the Years

- **1960s-1980s** Habitat management focused on Commission-owned lands
- **1980s-1990s** Expanded habitat management to public and private land
- **1990s-2000** Habitat treatments largely focused on other species, such as elk
- **2000-Today** Focus on treating habitats for all big game species, emphasis on mule deer



# Partnerships are Essential





## **Partnerships are essential to success:**

- **Federal Agencies: USFS, BLM, NRCS**
- **USDA Big Game Migration Initiative on private land**
- **County Weed and Pest and Conservation Districts**
- **NGOs**







# For More Information

**Statewide Habitat Plan Annual Reports**

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/habitat/habitat-plans>

**WAFWA MD Factsheets:**

<https://wafwa.org/publications/mdwg-factsheets/>

