

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**













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

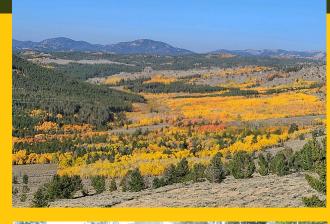






Improving Aspen Stands

- 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/



