



WAFWA Mule Deer Working Group (MDWG)

Directors Report
Paradise Point, San Diego, CA
January 7-8, 2012
Chair, Jim Heffelfinger, Arizona

Mule Deer
Working Group

Mule Deer Video Production

With the \$2,000 assessment from WAFWA member agencies approved at the last mid-winter, we completed the funding and proceeded with production. The MDWG is happy to announce the final production was delivered to Orion Entertainment two weeks ago and is already airing on the Sportsman Channel. WAFWA retains ownership of the production, but the Sportsman Channel has exclusive broadcast rights to the show for one year. After the first year, the agencies can broadcast all or part of it themselves, sell DVDs, or use it in any way they desire.

The show was announced to the public on December 27, 2011:

Denver, Colorado - Officials from Orion Entertainment, America's largest producer of outdoor adventure programming, have announced that the much anticipated documentary Mule Deer: Saving the Icon of the West will debut New Years Eve, Saturday December 31 at 7PM EST on The Sportsman Channel. The documentary is presented in partnership with the Mule Deer Foundation and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and will take an in-depth look at the plight of the mule deer.

The special will explore the factors that have led to the decline of mule deer and what is being done to turn the tide. We'll meet the hunters, volunteers and wildlife professionals who have each devoted a significant portion of their lives to the conservation of this magnificent species. Along the way, viewers will be motivated to do their part to conserve the mule deer that is truly an icon of the West.

This documentary will air at the following times:

- *December 31 - 7 PM ET*
- *January 2 - 6 PM ET*
- *January 7 - 7 PM ET*
- *January 9 - 6 PM ET*
- *January 14 - 7 PM ET*
- *January 16 - 6 PM ET*



This program will continue to air in one-hour time slots throughout the year.

Methods for Monitoring Mule Deer Populations

This document was approved for publication at the summer meeting in Montana and was shipped last week to all agencies who pre-ordered copies. The title of the document was changed from "Guidelines" to "Methods" because of the impossibility of prescribing the best method in all areas under all jurisdictions. The document explains what things should be measured to monitor black-tailed and mule deer populations and what methods are available to collect those kinds of data.

"Mule Deer Working Group Purpose: "To find solutions to our common mule deer management problems and to optimize cooperative research and management in the Western states and provinces."

Further, it provides advantages and disadvantages of each method and the inherent assumptions that managers must be aware of. This will allow practitioners to be well informed and select what is the most effective and efficient method for their agency.

Given the length of this document (120 pages) and its intended audience (agency biologists), we didn't feel the need to publish with professional layout on high-quality glossy paper. The cost of each document would likely exceed \$10 each for the agencies. Instead, it was published in a spiral bound format with a full-color cover (designed free of charge) and is also available in PDF format on our website.

Energy Development Guidelines for Mule Deer

This document was also approved for publication at the summer meeting in Montana and was published in a more appealing form for a wider external audience. These are being shipped to the agencies who preordered copies. This publication is also available as a PDF file on our website.

Website

Our website has been up for a couple years and is a one-stop-shopping portal for all the products and activities of the MDWG. It has recently been updated and is being heavily used. Visit www.muledeerworkinggroup.com. One addition the MDWG has discussed is adding a section on research priorities, which will let the research community know what North America's leading mule deer biologists consider to be the most pressing needs for mule deer. This will be added to the website after more discussion at our next meeting.

Deer/Elk Workshop

The 2011 workshop in NM was a success with a total of 153 persons registered for the event. Most of the western states and a couple of provinces were represented. The Workshop theme was "Top – down versus bottom-up mechanisms regulating deer and elk populations." A preliminary report was emailed to Larry Kruckenberg for the summer WAFWA meeting. Darrel Weybright is waiting to get final printing costs before sending the final report and returning leftover money to Steve Barton. WA has not published their 2009 proceedings so they are working with NM to get them both printed as separate documents at the same time. They will also be scanned as searchable PDF files as the past proceedings have been and placed on the website.

The 2013 workshop will be hosted by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks with the contact being Justin Gude. Heffelfinger has been in contact with Justin and he was provided the transition document the MDWG developed last year. This document was very helpful to NM as they planned their workshop and will help foster a smooth transition and temporal consistency. Darrel Weybright (NM) will serve as the Wallmo Award Chair for 2013 and already has the Wallmo Award files in his possession.

Mule Deer "Fact Sheets"

The next project the MDWG is starting to work on is a series of "Fact Sheets" to address the most common mule deer issues we deal with. These will be limited to one sheet of paper and will cover the information that we are frequently asked to provide to our constituents and sometimes legislators. A brainstorming of potential topics identified thus far include:

- Urban deer-conflict issues – Lutz, Wasley, Aoude, Schwantje
- Winter feeding – Lutz, Wasley, Carpenter
- Winter range management, including antler collection
- Antler restrictions – Heffelfinger, Wasley, Carpenter

- Predation
- Translocations – Wakeling
- Immunocontraception – Heffelfinger and Schwantje
- Fencing – Aoude and Lutz
- Economic contributions of mule deer recreation
- Doe harvest and carrying capacity
- Deer-elk competition – Keegan and Wakeling
- Monitoring and management – Keegan and Heffelfinger
- Population objectives and staying with guidelines
- Trade offs between managing for opportunity and quality – Holland and Lutz
- Disease
- Highway mortality, crossing, and movement
- Nutrition
- Modeling

Mule Deer and Highway Mortality

The MDWG is also in the planning stages of assembling a document to summarize what is known about the emerging issue of highway mortality and facilitating the use of crossing structures.

Topics that should serve as subheadings in the document:

- Population impacts
- Preservation of migration corridors, genetic isolation or mixing.
- Cost:benefit
- Needs assessment - Metrics or considerations
- Placement of structure
- Design
- Monitoring (Pre and Post)
- DOT coordination

Reprinting Publications

There is an interest in reprinting small runs of the *Mule Deer: Changing Landscapes, Changing Perspectives* (blue book), *North American Mule Deer Conservation Plan*, *Habitat Guidelines*, etc. These are all provided in PDF on the website but there is sometimes a need for a small quantity of hardcopies for a special event. Heffelfinger has procured high resolution digital copies of these documents from the printer and they are posted on an ftp site on our website. Agencies (with a password) can then download those large high-resolution files for printing.

Upcoming Meetings

The MDWG will meet in conjunction with the Mule Deer Foundation convention in Salt Lake City February 8 & 9, 2012. Please allow your MDWG representative to attend so we can continue our work on the Fact Sheets and Mule Deer and Highway Mortality projects.