



WAFWA

MULE DEER WORKING GROUP DIRECTORS REPORT

Tucson, Arizona ~ January 6, 2013

Chair – Jim Heffelfinger, Regional Game Specialist,
Arizona Game and Fish Department

2013 Workshop and Wallmo Award Committee

The Mule Deer Working Group (MDWG) serves to guide the transition of the biennial WAFWA-sponsored Deer/Elk Workshop from host agency to agency. The 2013 workshop will be hosted by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks in Missoula May 6-9, 2013. The MDWG discussed and suggested special session topics for this meeting.

<http://fwp.mt.gov/events/2013DeerAndElkWorkshop/default.html>

Darrel Weybright (NM) will serve as the Wallmo Award Chair for the 2013 award given in conjunction with this workshop. All past proceedings for the deer/elk workshops are posted on our website in PDF format.

Website Update

The working group website (www.muledeerworkinggroup.com) has been updated with the latest 2 publications and the newest Deer/Elk Proceedings. Also, the member list and status of various products has been updated. A new webpage was added for the Deer/Elk Workshop since that is not always easy to locate because the sponsorship moves from host agency to agency. Our website will provide a portal for interested people to find the latest information. The MDWG website simply links to the current host agency website so that when updates are made to the workshop information, our access point will always be updated.

Mule Deer Fact Sheets

These are single-page documents that are easy to read, free of jargon, and pleasing to the eye. At the last MDWG meeting we reviewed, edited, and expanded the list of potential topics to write about as "Fact Sheets." Our idea is to have a concise nugget of information that can be used and distributed at sportsman's expos or public meetings that help get our science-based message to the public on complex issues we seem to always field questions about. We agreed to start with what we thought were the highest priority issues. I provided drafts of the first 4 at the summer meeting for your review and have an additional 2 topics in draft form at this meeting. Some of these drafts are very preliminary, but others already have external reviewer comments incorporated. The MDWG has always shared their work with the directors at early stages to allow for comments and direction from the ground up as we develop these written products. These drafts are not for distribution, as we are still working on them and need to assure each agency has the opportunity to provide pertinent technical information and review. The 6 Fact Sheets we now have in draft form are: 1) Winter feeding, 2) Antler restrictions, 3) Predation, 4) Highways, 5) Deer and Elk Competition, and 6) Carrying Capacity. We anticipate all 6 will be finalized and ready for final approval and publication at the summer meeting, with several other drafts available to share at that time.

TWS Wildlife Professional article

Anis Aoude (UT) wrote an article for The Wildlife Society's "Wildlife Professional" highlighting the collaborative work done by the MDWG and the products that are available. The article will appear in the next issue and is also available now on the TWS website. This is one more way we can highlight the information that is available to mule deer and habitat managers.

<http://news.wildlife.org/twp/2012-winter/working-group-takes-on-mule-deer/>

"Mule Deer: Saving the Icon of the West"

The 45-minute video produced as a MDWG collaboration with Orion Entertainment was aired many times on the Sportsmen's Channel in the last year. This was yet another way the MDWG sought to get their information out to the widest possible audience. The 1-year rights to the video held by Orion has now expired and all agencies are free to use the entire production or any portion for live-streaming on their websites or at department events. Several organizations and agencies already have website links to this program posted on Youtube.com.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vY1s9Q3l-Po>

High Resolution Files of Publications

High resolution digital copies of most MDWG publications are available to agencies if they want to make smaller print runs of any of these publications.

Mule Deer & Highways Handbook

The next big project of the MDWG is a document that will inform practitioners about this increasingly important issue, give an overview of the research that's been done, and provide suggested solutions based on what has worked on the ground. There is a lot of new information available in widely scattered documents and it is hard for those working on this issue to have the latest information. Our handbook will focus on pre-planning, implementation of solutions, and important post-project monitoring. We have an outline that has been vetted among the leading professionals in the country who are working on this issue and we have a couple of coauthors who have agreed to write sections.

Reseeding Guidance

Another project the MDWG is planning is a guide to seeding mixes by ecoregion. Seed mixes are sometimes selected more for emergency soil stabilization than for wildlife benefit. There are probably opportunities to increase the value of these mixes for mule deer and other wildlife without jeopardizing the ability to stabilize the soil. This may help suppliers of native seed decide what they should be growing and supplying to agencies. We have received feedback from federal partners and others that this will be very useful to practitioners.

"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."