

MULE DEER WORKING GROUP
Directors Report - Summer WAFWA
Omaha, NE July 22-23, 2013



MDWG Members – Jim Heffelfinger (Chair), Toby Boudreau (ID), Anis Aoude (UT), Tony Wasley (NV), Brian Wakeling (AZ), Shawn Gray (TX), Lloyd Fox (KS), Andy Lindbloom (SD), Daryl Lutz (WY)

Guests: Steve Belinda (TRCP/MDF), Tom Keegan (ID), Miles Moretti (MDF), Stewart Liley (NM), Jim Unsworth (ID), Ron Anglin (OR), Susan Boston (WY), Greg Schirato (WA), Colin Gillin (OR), Geoff Walsh (BLM), Ken Mayer (WAFWA), J.W. Harris (AZ-Commissioner), Ryan Bronson (Federal Premium Ammo), Jane Darnell (USFS), Jeff Abegglen (USFS), Jeremy Drew (NV-Commissioner), Todd Nordeen (NE), Chad Bishop (CO), Kathy Boydston (AFWA), Tom Ryder (WY), Ross Melinchuk (TX)

Approval of the 2012 Working Group Meeting Minutes

The 2012 Summer WAFWA meeting minutes were reviewed and approved by the MDWG with no changes.

Managing Deer-Vehicle Collisions Document

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. The outline for this document has been completed and coauthors have been identified for most of the sections. Brian Wakeling (AZ) will coordinate with the coauthors and produce a draft for the 2014 midwinter WAFWA meeting.

Survey of Urban Mule Deer Issues

Jim Heffelfinger discussed the results of the brief on-line survey he conducted of MDWG representatives regarding urban mule deer issues and how their agency addressed them. The results of the questionnaire served as points of discussion for various aspects of dealing with this issue.

Rangewide Mule and Black-tailed Deer Status

Gerry Kuzyk (BC) compiled a summary of the current status of mule and black-tailed deer from each representative of the 23 member agencies. This gives an updated overview of the status of this species throughout their range. The MDWG discussed improvements to the document which will be included in next year's status update. One important improvement is to acknowledge in the table that although mule deer populations are listed as "stable" in most states and provinces, they are at levels below the agency's population goals or what the habitat will support. We do not want to give the impression that mule deer no longer need our attention. Next year the abstract will be expanded and the summary table will be modified to clarify how the current population status relates to objectives or goals.

Rangewide Analysis of Mule Deer Survival Data

The MDWG sees value in using the data collected from thousands of deer radiocollars deployed throughout the West in the last 2 decades. Similar to the paper by Unsworth et al. (1999), there is a lot of value to the agencies in pooling these radio data to investigate survival through time under different environmental conditions and how survival differs across the landscape. This information could help inform how we survey deer herds and provide important input data for population models. George Pauley has coordinated with Mark Hebblewhite, Justin Gude, and Paul Lukacs about conducting such an analysis. Paul Lukacs developed a proposal to conduct this analysis. The MDWG discussed this proposal and agreed this is valuable and we will be working on helping to raise the funding for this in the future. Something similar is currently being done for elk. This may be something that we will want to ask for an assessment from each agency to get his done, but we first need to explore all our options.

Mule Deer Fact Sheet Status

The Fact Sheets in **BOLD** below (a-f) are ready for director approval. They have been through internal and external review by the MDWG and subject matter experts. We also have 4 additional DRAFT Fact Sheets (g-j) we are sharing with you. These are the very first drafts and have not been reviewed by the MDWG. We traditionally share the rough first drafts with the directors at the meetings to allow for comments and guidance from the very beginning of the development of our documents. The remaining topics (k-q) will be the next topics we work on. Finalized sheets will be posted on our website in PDF format and we are currently discussing a partnership with Federal Premium Ammunition to sponsor the printing of hardcopies on glossy paper to be used where digital copies cannot be used.

- a. ***Predation***
- b. ***Winter Feedings***
- c. ***Antler Restrictions***
- d. ***Elk/Mule Deer***
- e. ***Carrying Capacity***
- f. ***Highways***
- g. *Doe Harvest*
- h. *Urban Deer*
- i. *Herd Health (in conjunction with the Wildlife Health Committee)*
- j. *Poaching*
- k. *Translocation*
- l. *Winter Range Disturbance*
- m. *Shed antler hunting*
- n. *Fencing*
- o. *Migration Corridors*
- p. *Immunocontraception*
- q. *Forestry Practices*

Correction of the Energy Development Guidelines

The MDWG was made aware of an incorrect date in our Energy Development Guidelines for Mule Deer. The dates to encompass the peak of the mule deer fawning period should have been “1 May – June 30” (rather than “1 May – June 15”). We are asking the directors’ approval to correct this by editing the PDF available on-line and inserting an errata sheet in the remaining hardcopies to correct the error in the timing stipulation (page 18, point #8).

Reseeding Guidance Document

The MDWG is developing a guide to reseeding mule deer habitat in the 7 ecoregions we have defined. Seed mixes are sometimes selected more for emergency soil stabilization than for wildlife benefit. There are opportunities to increase the value of these mixes for mule deer and other wildlife without jeopardizing the ability to stabilize the soil. This will also help suppliers of 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. The document will not be a detailed cookbook of reseeding because of the incredible complexity of this issue, but we intend it to provide consistent overall guidance while directing practitioners to local resources that are applicable in their area.

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 appeared after the mid-winter meeting. This is one more way we can highlight the information that is available to mule deer and habitat managers.

Other Business

Publication Use (frequency of citations)

The MDWG is tracking the use of our publications on line through Google Scholar. This tallies the number of times each document has been cited in other sources. The graph below represents a summary as of July 2013.



Mule Deer Video

The 45-minute mule deer video program that was produced with the help of the MDWG is currently available on-line in its entirety. Also, as promised, all the raw footage from the production is available to WAFWA member agencies. Arizona currently has all footage from Orion Entertainment and will share it with any agency that requests it. Agencies will need to supply a 1 TB (Terabyte) external harddrive to transfer the material.

North American Mule Deer Conservation Plan MOU

The MOU that was signed in 2008 between WAFWA and federal partners expired last month and needs to be renewed. The MDWG would like to request that the directors send a letter to each signatory requesting that the MOU be renewed.

Stewardship Project Areas

The MDWG discussed helping the Mule Deer Foundation identify “focus” areas where match dollars are needed for landscape scale projects on BLM and USFS land. Each MDWG representative will supply at least 3 areas in their state/province that are high priority areas.

Federal Budget Priorities

The MDWG feels it will be very important to specifically identify “mule deer” in the rules of implementation language of the Farm Bill so they are considered a priority species.

With the approval of this report, we ask that you approve:

- The publication of the 6 final Fact Sheets
- Approve the correction to the Energy Development Guidelines
- Request to federal partners to renew mule deer MOU.

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.”