



MULE DEER WORKING GROUP DIRECTORS REPORT



January 6, 2018 ~ San Diego, CA
Chair – Jim Heffelfinger, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Reseeding Guidance Document Update

We are continuing to work with Ashley Green (UT) and others in a collaborative effort to assemble a document to serve as a guideline to reseeding habitat in a manner beneficial to mule deer and black-tailed deer. This document is being written by subject experts to guide practitioners on the ground in cases of habitat restoration after disturbance and habitat improvement projects. This project is coming together with about half of the chapters drafted and in review now. This will be an important agenda item at our next meeting in February with the goal to have a complete first draft by the summer WAFWA meeting. This will be a good product for agencies when dealing with the aftermath of fires. When we have a draft it will be reviewed by the WAFWA Habitat and Invasive Species committees and external groups involved in habitat restoration.

Rangewide Survival Analysis Update

Our ongoing rangewide mule deer survival analysis collaboration with Paul Lukacs and Josh Nowak (UofMT) is still in the data gathering phase. This effort will pull together radiotelemetry information into a rangewide black-tailed and mule deer survival analysis. Paul Lukacs and Josh Nowak are still in the process of collecting and sorting through data from agencies. The goal is to have preliminary results to discuss at the summer WAFWA MDWG meeting in July. Josh has been building some models to facilitate the analyses.

Mule Deer Fact Sheet Status

We now have 22 Fact Sheets completed and available on our website as PDFs that can be downloaded and shared. We have 4 Final Draft Fact Sheets that we are asking for approval to publish with the approval of this report. These Fact Sheets were distributed to directors in early December for review. An additional Fact Sheet on *Population Management and Objectives* is also provided here for a “first look” and is in the first round of MDWG review now. As always, we like to provide our products at the earliest opportunity to give directors and others a chance to guide the development of the document from the start.

Final Fact Sheets for approval at this meeting

- **White-tailed and Mule Deer Ecological Interactions**
- **Encountering Newborn Deer Fawns**
- **Mule Deer and Water Development**
- **Mule Deer Antler Development**

Draft Fact Sheets undergoing internal review

- **Managing for Hunting Opportunity or Mature Bucks**
- **Population Management and Objectives**

Future Fact Sheets

- **Harvest data reporting (Don Whittaker)**
- **White-tailed x Mule Deer Hybridization (Jim Heffelfinger)**
- **Economic Contributions (Toby Boudreau)**
- **Aerial Inventory: a necessary Management Tool (Shannon/Holland/White)**
- **Feral Horses and Burros (Daryl Lutz/Mike Cox)**

New Mule Deer Book

The MDWG is working on an outline for a new comprehensive book on mule deer ecology and conservation. The “Wallmo” book was published 37 years ago and there is a need for an updated reference book on this species. The outline will be finalized for further discussion at the next meeting in February to be submitted to Johns Hopkins University Press.

Wildlife Movement and Migration Workshops

As presented in the Director’s Forum, this effort strives to provide guidance, resources, analysis tools and examples to states in an effort to better identify and document movement and migration corridors. We are working on a series of workshops throughout the West to share some proven methods of collecting, storing, analyzing, and visualizing movement data. We have held the first workshop in Salem, OR last October and it was a success. Participants from Oregon, Washington, Utah, and California learned a simple and proven way to analyze movement data to maximize its usefulness. The 1-day workshop consisted of a morning of presentations and discussion about migration research being done (Matt Kauffman), tools available for analyses (Hall Sawyer), migration policies that exist (Matt Skroch), and an interactive Skype session with Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Scott Smith and Doug Brimeyer). The afternoon was spent with state representatives working with their own datasets and the new “Migration Mapper” software to analyze their own movement data. Another workshop is planned for the first week in June when representatives from Nevada, Utah, and Arizona will meet in Mesquite, NV.

Since the summer WAFWA meeting, the MDWG has been in close communication with WAFWA CHAT coordinator Eric Sproles and other CHAT team members to capitalize on the synergy of our efforts. Jim Heffelfinger and Matt Skroch of PEW Charitable Trusts, attended the CHAT meeting prior to this mid-winter WAFWA meeting and presented the work being done by the MDWG and discussed ways to work together. One outcome of these discussions was plans to conduct the remaining MDWG Wildlife Movement and Migration Workshops as 2-day workshops with the first day being similar to the original workshop, but with an afternoon break-out session for a focus group of policy-oriented attendees while the other state representatives learn how to analyze the datasets they bring with them. On Day 2, all attendees will reconvene to discuss how to maximize the value of CHAT to all users and how to best use the growing mass of

ungulate movement data to inform policy at the state and federal level. This close collaboration between WAFWA CHAT and the MDWG furthers the goals of WAFWA and supports the Western Governors resolution for an increased use of state-gathered data in federal land management decisions. Future planned and potential workshops include:

- Colorado, New Mexico, West Texas (Denver, CO)
- Utah, Arizona, Nevada (Mesquite, NV. June 4-8, 2018)
- Idaho, Montana
- Great Plains States
- Wyoming

Mule Deer Foundation Podcast

MDWG is collaborating with Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) to provide content to a new MDF Podcast. The format will be short 5-10 minute podcasts that will cover all the topics of current and future Fact Sheets. We will begin to record content for the podcasts at the February MDWG meeting in conjunction with the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo in Salt Lake City.

BLM Webinar for Mule Deer

We are planning for a mule deer webinar for BLM employees to describe mule deer issues and showcase the MDWG products that are available. This would occur in Spring of 2018 and the webcast would then reside on the internet for anyone to watch at any time. MDWG, MDF, and Linda Cardenas with BLM are currently working to plan the details of the webinar.

Wildlife Health Committee (WHC) collaboration on CWD management in free-ranging populations

Since the summer meeting, we continued to work with the WHC to produce a draft document suggesting protocols for management experiments to determine the effects of different harvest management scenarios on prevalence and spread of CWD. This draft document was discussed in the Joint Directors/Commissioners Meeting.

Miscellaneous

- The 2019 Deer/Elk Workshop will be in Alpine Texas in late May.
- Our next MDWG meeting is in conjunction with the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo in Salt Lake City, UT, February 7, 2018, 9a-5p.
- International Deer Biology Congress will be held in Estes Park, CO August 6-10, 2018. This meeting is held every 4 years and is returning to the US in 2018. Encourage your staff to participate to share a North American perspective on the latest cervid research and management. CWD will be one of the primary topics with several CWD-specific symposia.

<http://www.deerbiologycongress.org>