



## **Director's Report**

**January 12, 2020, Monterey, CA**

Chair – Jim Heffelfinger, Arizona Game and Fish Department

### **Mule Deer Fact Sheets**

We have two more fact sheets that we feel are ready for approval at this meeting (*Using Teeth to Age Mule Deer & Mule Deer and the Farm Bill*). We have two other draft fact sheets in preparation. One of those (*Role of Private Lands in Mule Deer Management*) available as a draft at this meeting. This fact sheet is not finalized, but has been through internal review and will be sent out for external review before being finalized and brought to you at the summer meeting for approval. The second fact sheet in preparation is "*Economic Contributions of Mule Deer.*" We will have a draft available for the summer meeting.

We now have 33 mule deer fact sheets approved and available on the Mule Deer Working Group (MDWG) portion of the WAFWA website. WAFWA webmasters are doing a great job in getting these and everything else posted rapidly. We would like to continue to pursue determining which of our fact sheets and other MDWG documents are getting the most traffic (views/downloads) on the website to guide what information is in the highest demand by the public. This has not been possible thus far, but we will continue to pursue it.

When fact sheets are written, the MDWG (and cooperators) review the drafts (internal review), then the fact sheets are sent to 3-5 external reviewers, including federal partners, that are subject matter experts to review before preparing them for the Directors' approval. We always provide these early drafts to give you the opportunity to help steer the content and scope rather than only seeing it when we seek approval. The Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) has been providing professional layout free and they publish one in every issue of their MDF magazine, significantly expanding our reach to our target audience.

### **Rangewide Survival Analysis Update**

MDWG is collaborating with Paul Lukacs from University of Montana to conduct an analysis of mule deer survival data from throughout the West. A combined analysis will be a powerful tool to evaluate how mule deer survival varies across their range and to learn more about factors that affect survival. Paul is now pulling together the final results and discussing with MDWG members to have some final results at our next meeting in February. Once this analysis is done, it will be easy to add additional datasets in the future, making it a useful tool beyond the final report and peer-reviewed publication.

### **Reseeding Guidance Document Update**

MDWG has been working on a publication that will serve as a manual to guide states in reseeding – both wildlife habitat improvement and rehabilitation. Utah has been on the forefront of this work and has the lead on developing this document. Chapters are being drafted and our goal is to have a single cohesive first draft document together for our February MDWG meeting.

### **Mule Deer Book Update**

The MDWG is capitalizing on our network of mule deer colleagues to assemble a comprehensive book on mule deer. Much of our work over the last 20 years will serve as a foundation for this work. The book proposal was accepted by Cambridge Scholars Press and we are working on a timeline of 2-2.5

years. The MDWG will act as the editorial board for project. Chapter lead authors have been selected and those leads are now assembling their coauthor teams and developing chapter outlines.

### **Implementation of Secretarial Order 3362**

The implementation of SO3362 has been a good example of state-federal collaboration. Although a Department of Interior directive, it has been a productive state-led, voluntary, non-regulatory effort. States have submitted their second annual State Action Plans to guide priority research needs and habitat projects to identify, improve, and conserve winter range and migration habitat. Department of Interior (DOI) continues to support state agency research and habitat work with significant funding. The State Action Plans include habitat projects on and off DOI lands so that field offices of federal land management agencies and NGOs can look at that list and engage more easily on the projects we list as priorities. Federal partners and conservation groups should have local funds they can use to work on state-identified priorities in our identified corridors. We have important habitat improvement projects that span DOI and Department of Agriculture lands and we all need to work together for maximum effectiveness of all habitat used by these species.

For the second year, funds are being made available for habitat work in the state-identified priority corridors through a NFWF Proposal Process. This year, the funding will have more flexibility and \$500k more will be available to states through this process. Most funding in the first year went to corridors, but there is still a need for habitat work on winter range. USFS has the ability to add funds to the NFWF grant process and to partner locally through regional funds. We need to make sure we are taking care of summer range which is often on USFS lands.

Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and Wyoming Migration Initiative continue to update Migration Mapper software (v1.3), which has already been downloaded by 450 people. The Corridor Mapping Team (CMT) is led by USGS, but composed of state agency biologists and funded positions embedded in state agencies. CMT is meeting by phone each week to discuss the collection and analysis of this information. CMT is actively mapping with WY, ID, NV, AZ, and CO. There are plans in place to work with MT, OR, WA, and NM.

### **More Video Clips of MDWG Fact Sheets**

We are continuing to look for agency people with the skills to convert our Fact Sheets to short (~40sec) videos to convey those messages on social media. Washington and Arizona are interested and Utah is working on a few more. MDF is working on setting up a “green room” at the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo in February to record ~2 minute clips of biologists talking about fact sheet topics. Short videos like this are extremely popular for engaging the public on social media and very effective to conveying information.

### **2019 Rangewide Status**

The Rangewide black-tailed and mule deer status report is available on the MDWG portion of the WAFWA website to give the public and biologists an overview of this species in North America.

### **Next meeting**

Our next meeting will be in conjunction with the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo in Salt Lake City, UT February 12, 2020. Please send your representative so we can continue to advance all our projects.