IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

November 2026 Commission Meeting ***Agenda Item No.:*** *15*
Agenda Item: *Mule Deer Buck Vulnerability Project Update* ***Supervisor Approval:*** *SR*
Presented by: *Paul Atwood*
Position/Title: *Senior Wildlife Research Biologist*

Background:
In 2019, IDFG began a multi-phase project to study the vulnerability of mule deer bucks to various types of harvest regulations. The first phase of the project (2019 – 2024) was focused on two-point restricted general seasons utilized in game management units (GMUs) 22, 40, 41, and 42. We are still collecting data for the second phase of the project, which focused on survival differences between controlled, unlimited controlled, and general hunting seasons in GMUs 70, 73, 73A, and 56.

During 2019 to 2023, we caught and radio-collared 121 adult and 290 yearling male mule deer to evaluate how different hunting regulations affected buck survival in five GMUs in Region 3. Three of these GMUs (22, 40, and 41) have a two-point restriction during their general deer seasons where only antlered deer with ≤2 points on at least one side may be harvested. The other two GMUs (32 and 39) do not have any antler point restrictions. The two-point restrictions were implemented to maintain annual hunting opportunities while also reducing hunting pressure on older age classes of bucks. In addition to general season opportunity, there are also six controlled hunts in these 5 GMUs.

This presentation will provide the Commission with an update on the results for phase 1 of the project.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:
Idaho Statute 36-104 authorizes the Commission to establish rules for the taking of wildlife consistent with state policy. Species management plans provide Commission direction for population and harvest management.

Public Involvement Process:
N/A.

Justification:
This presentation is for Commission and public information on ongoing IDFG wildlife research activities to inform management.

Staff Recommendation:
N/A – Informational only.