

Meeting Date: March 22, 2018

Agenda Item No. 15

Agenda Item: Mule Deer Hunter Survey Summary

Bureau Chief Approval:

Prepared by: Daryl Meints, Deer and Elk Program Coordinator

Background:

The Department's current mule deer management plan was implemented in 2008 and was intended to guide mule deer management decisions through at least 2017. The mule deer management plan was the result of an extensive public input process in which deer hunters were surveyed to identify their preferences and highest priorities. In response, the Department continued to focus on general season over-the-counter hunting opportunities to ensure that sportsmen would retain the opportunity to hunt with family and friends every year. Additionally, in response to hunter desire for more "high quality" hunting opportunities, the Department added additional hunts around the state that are managed to provide better opportunities to harvest trophy bucks in areas with lower hunter densities, a high percentage for 4 pt. bucks in the harvest and higher harvest success rates.

The Department initiated work in July 2017 to determine if preferences of mule deer hunters have changed over the last decade since the last major survey was conducted. Hunters were asked a series of questions pertaining to their hunting experiences and preferences. If they felt changes were needed, they were asked what other management options they would consider or favor. Hunters were asked specifically about their satisfaction concerning their 2016 hunting experience. Results of the survey were compared to the 2007 survey to determine if experiences and preferences have changed over time.

At the January 2018 Commission meeting, staff presented highlights of summary results from a few key questions from our 2017 survey. Staff will present a more complete summary of the results from the 2017 Mule Deer Hunter Survey at the Commission meeting.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

N/A

Public Involvement Process:

In July 2017 IDFG mailed questionnaires to 4,994 mule deer hunters selected at random from deer hunters who purchased a deer tag in 2016 and completed a hunter report at the end of their season that indicated they hunted for mule deer. Additionally, the same survey was emailed to 24,200 hunters who purchased deer tags in 2016 and for whom we had email addresses on file and who were not already included in the random mail survey. The same survey was also posted on our website Aug 27 – Sep 18 for anyone else who was interested in participating. We received 2,316 mail surveys, 4,400 email-prompted surveys, and 380 surveys from individuals who completed the questionnaire from the link available to anyone on our website.

Justification:

Information will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations or other input from the public, and will identify whether significant revisions are needed to our mule deer management plan

Staff Recommendation:

None. This agenda item is for Commission information.