

# Southeast Idaho Mule Deer Advisory Committee



# Outline

- ◆ Introductions & Ice Breakers
- ◆ Why are we here?
- ◆ Mule Deer History, Biology, SE Idaho Status
- ◆ Mule Deer Management & Season Setting
- ◆ Goals, Timeline, Expectations
  - ◆ Charter
- ◆ Set schedule for July – December
- ◆ Wrap up –
  - ◆ What information do you need to be successful?





# Southeast Idaho Mule Deer Advisory Committee

- Introductions
  - Who are you, where are you from?
  - How long have you been in Idaho?
  - Why are you interested in participating in this group?
  - What perspectives and knowledge to you bring to the committee?
- **Menti.com**
  - **Code: 5478 0465**



# Why are we here?

## 2008 Big Game Seasons & Rules



**Deer, Elk,  
Pronghorn**  
August 2008 -  
January 2009

**Bear,  
Mountain  
Lion**  
August 2008 -  
July 2009

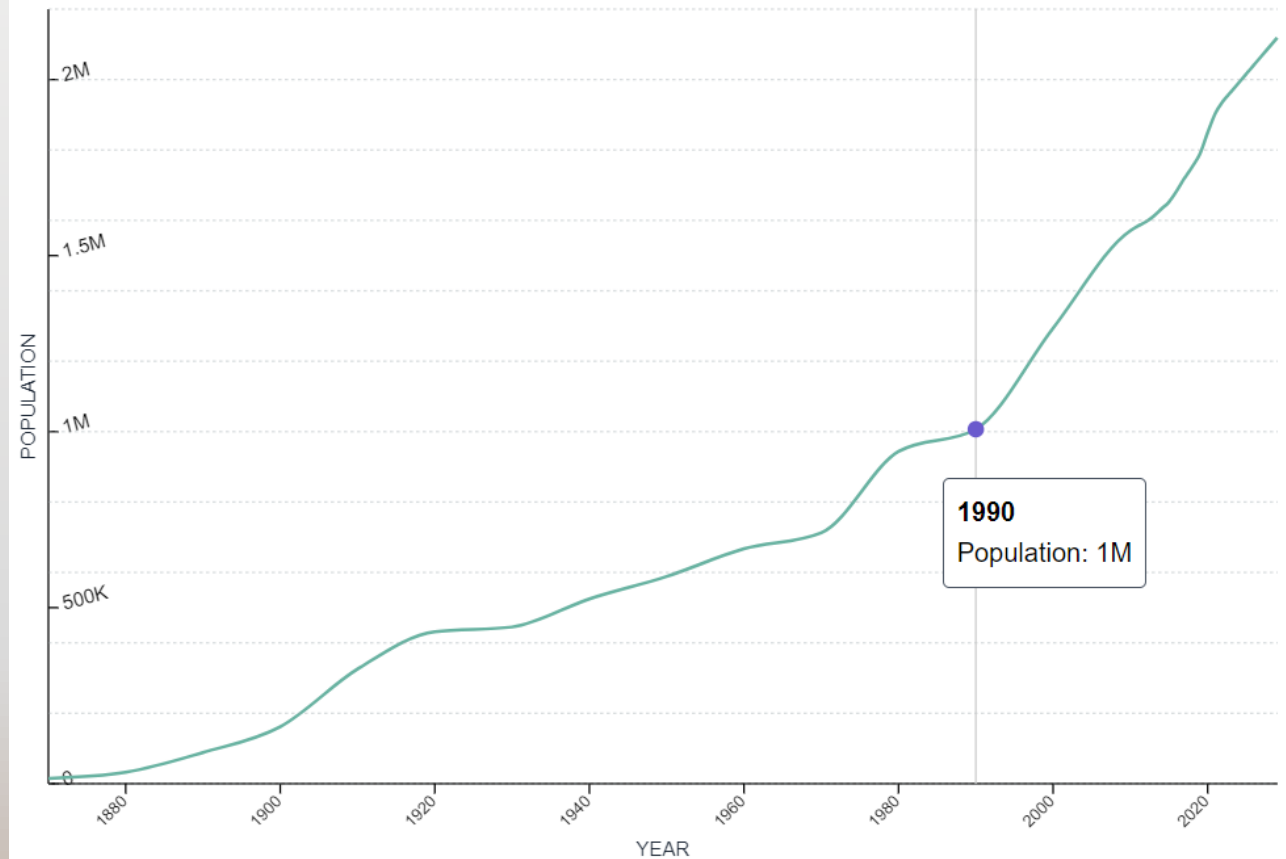
Including  
Controlled  
Hunts for  
Deer, Elk,  
Pronghorn, and  
Black Bear



Photo courtesy Jim and Holly Atenson



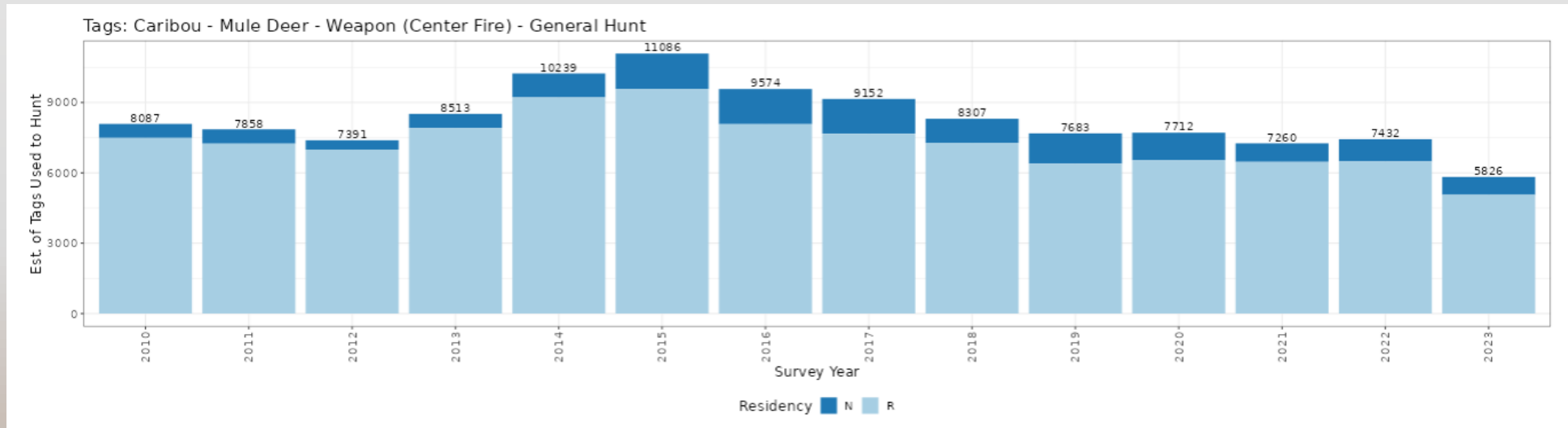
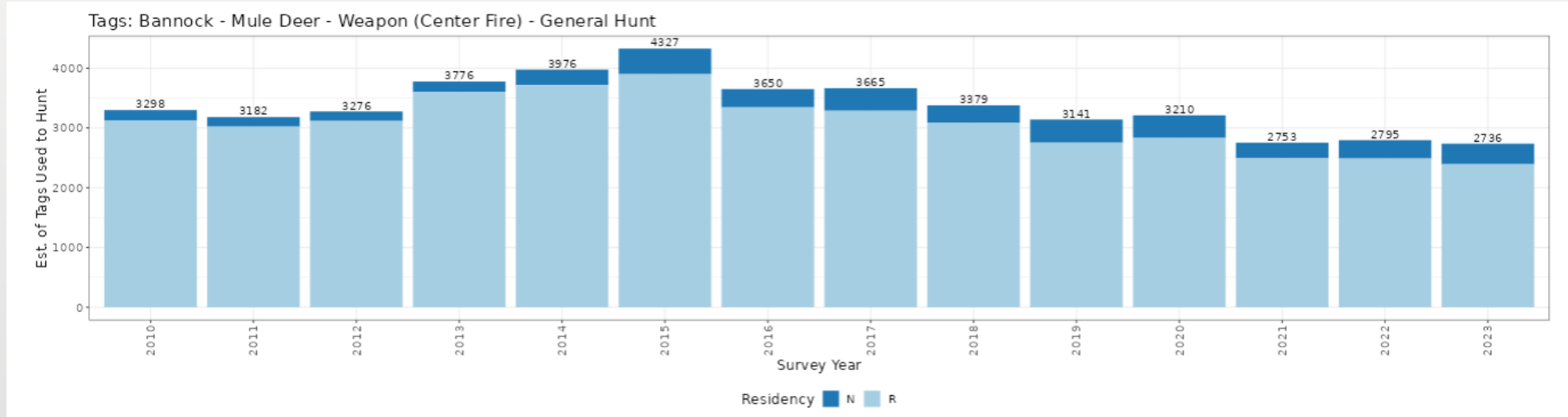
Idaho Population 2024  
1,990,456



\*Since 2010, Idaho increased by ~300,000 people\*



# Have hunter numbers increased?







## THE BEST HIKES IN BEAUTIFUL *Idaho*



# OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION

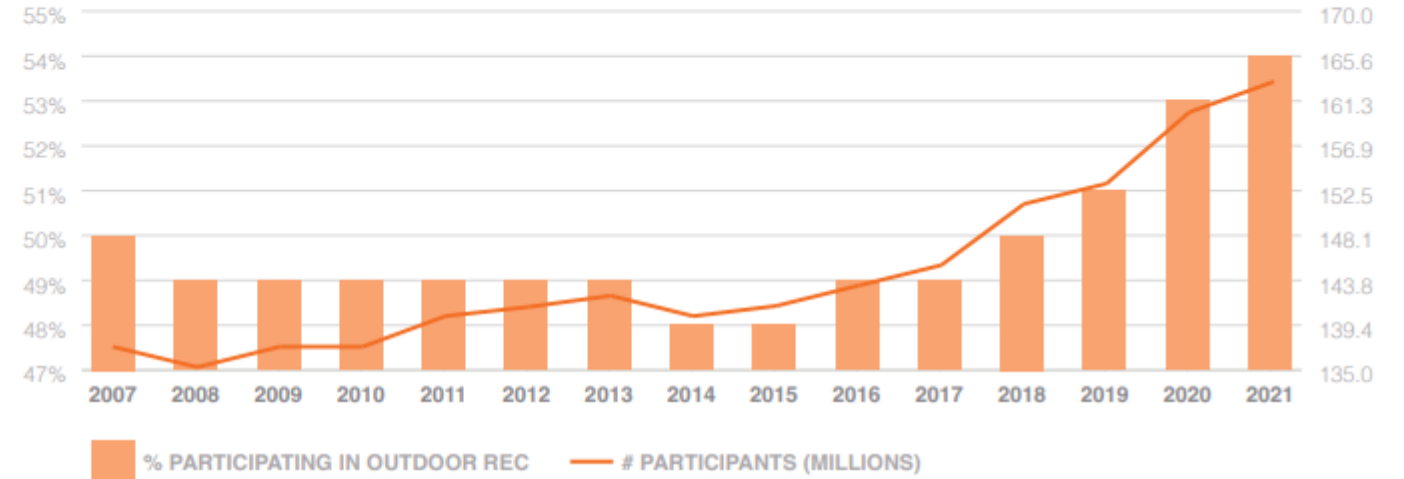
## KEY FINDINGS

Since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March of 2020, the number of new and returning (lapsed) outdoor participants has increased 26%. The growth in new participants and returning participants in 2021 was the highest ever recorded.

There was a reasonable expectation that during 2021, the second year of the pandemic, outdoor participation would return to 2019 levels as indoor activity including, dining, sporting events, and fitness centers and gyms, reopened. The 2021 data indicates that participation in outdoor recreation retained momentum in 2021. This data indicates that outdoor recreation is “sticky;” once someone begins to participate, they are likely to continue to participate.

## OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION GROWTH TRENDS

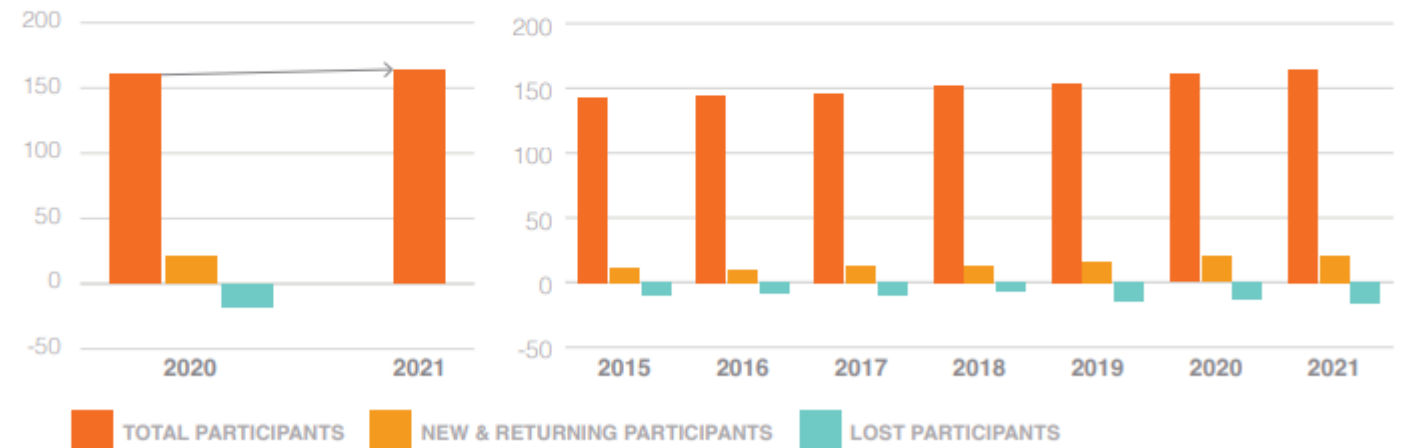
2007 TO 2021



## TOTAL, NEW/LAPSED, & LOST PARTICIPANTS (MILLIONS)

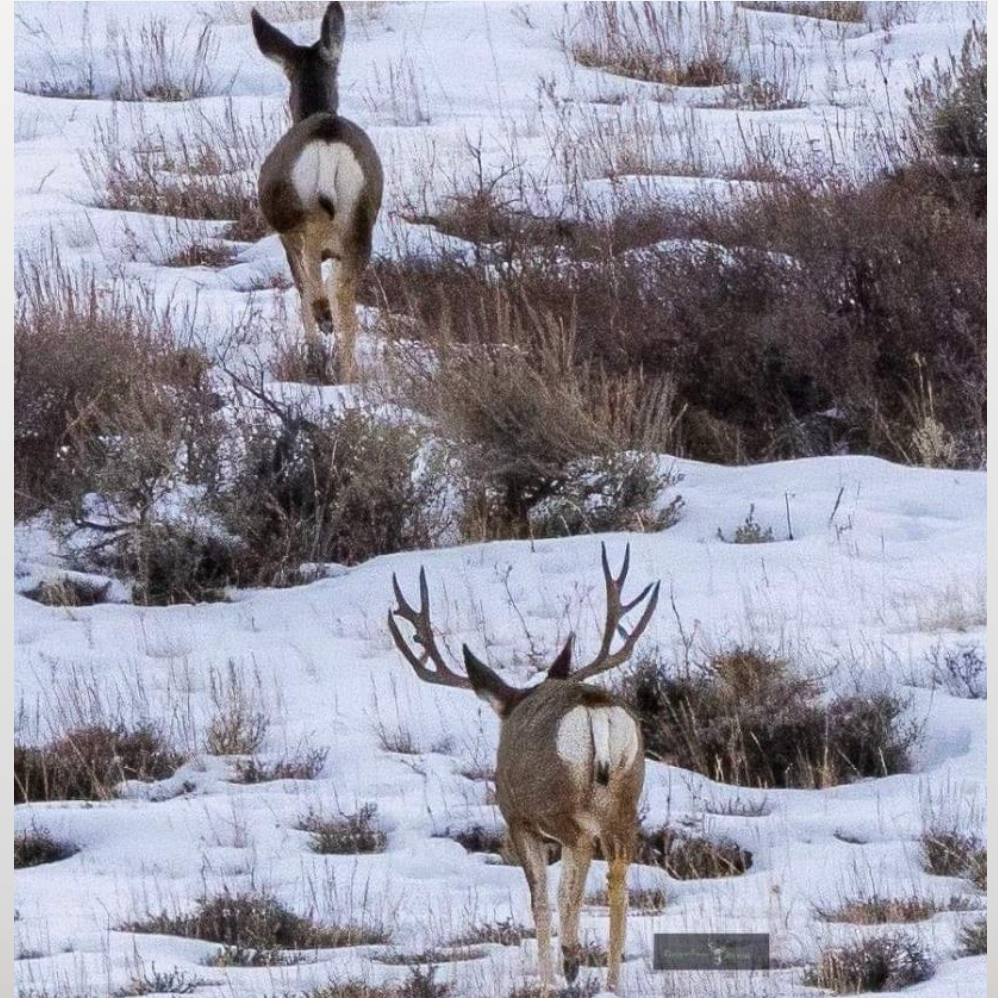
2021

2015 - 2021



# Time to revisit

- ◆ In the past 15 years, mule deer hunting opportunities in the Southeast Region largely have not changed
- ◆ The state of Idaho, however, has experienced significant change
  - ◆ Population growth
  - ◆ Increased outdoor recreation
  - ◆ Landscape changes
  - ◆ Perspectives, attitudes, and expectations from the hunting community and citizens of Idaho?
  - ◆ New information - research





# Why an Advisory Committee?

- ◆ Public Opinion Surveys
  - ◆ Good for general big picture opinions, trends, preferences
  - ◆ Not great for understanding complex topics or issues
- ◆ Advisory groups
  - ◆ Allows for better dialog
  - ◆ More thorough investigations
  - ◆ Better at finding palatable solutions
  - ◆ Citizen driven management = broader support





# How was the group selected?

- ◆ Solicited interest via press releases, social media posts, and articles
- ◆ Interested individuals received an application
- ◆ Selection based on:
  - ◆ Idaho resident residing in the Southeast Region
  - ◆ Good geographic representation across the region
  - ◆ Willing to interact with the public within their interest groups



# Objectives

- ◆ Develop proposals/rule changes for Department and Commission consideration that will:
  1. Maintain Idaho's general OTC deer hunting opportunity
  2. Improve hunter experience and satisfaction during mule deer seasons
  3. Increase buck abundance and age structure
  4. Others?
  
- ◆ If changes are implemented – this will be treated as an experiment and won't be applied across the board. This is an opportunity to explore novel ideas to harvest management, test to see if they achieve objectives, then consider broad scale implementation





# What we need from each other for success

- ◇ Come to each meeting prepared and with an open mind
  - ◇ Be engaged and participate
  - ◇ Embrace differing thoughts, ideas, opinions
  - ◇ Foster respectful space to problem solve, explore, and discuss
- ◇ Think holistically –
  - ◇ What is best for Idaho deer hunters as a whole and best for the future of deer hunting in Idaho?
  - ◇ Don't just think about individual hunts/experiences



# Authority & Process

- ❖ This group is a recommending body only
- ❖ Decisions are made by the Governor appointed 7-member Commission
- ❖ 2-types of Laws governing wildlife in Idaho
  - ❖ Biological – season dates, bag limits
    - ❖ Public, Staff, Commission – 2 year season setting process
  - ❖ Non-biological – weapon restrictions (e.g. muzzleloader bullets or lighted nocks), wait periods for successful controlled hunt applicants, shed antler season
    - ❖ Requires legislative approval – different process and timeline
- ❖ This group can pursue biological and/or non-biological changes





# Considerations & Options

- ◇ Habitat improvement, winter feeding, predator management, etc. are all important topics that play a role with mule deer populations – this committee will focus on harvest management
- ◇ Not an option
  - ◇ Shutting the season down
  - ◇ Making all hunts controlled
  - ◇ Caution: Extremely complex regulations
- ◇ IDFG staff will:
  - ◇ Submit products from this committee to the Directors Office
  - ◇ Provide meeting summaries for the group
  - ◇ Provide background information and present on any topics requested by the group
  - ◇ Group will begin their discussions at the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting with IDFG staff facilitating



## MULE DEER ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARTER

### 1) Purpose:

The purpose of the Mule Deer Advisory Committee is to evaluate and develop potential input/suggestions for mule deer harvest seasons in the Southeast Region. Potential changes developed by the committee will be considered during the 2025-2026 season setting process. Proposals would need to be taken to the public for broader input and ultimately to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission (hereafter Commission) for consideration.

### 2) Authority:

- a) Working under the guidance of the Commission, IDFG manages the fish and wildlife of the State of Idaho. Idaho Code (Section 36-103) states "All wildlife, including all wild animals, wild birds, and fish, within the state of Idaho, is hereby declared to be the property of the state of Idaho. It shall be preserved, protected, perpetuated, and managed. It shall only be captured or taken at such times or places, under such conditions, or by such means, or in such manner, as will preserve, protect, and perpetuate such wildlife, and provide for the citizens of this state and, as by law permitted to others, continued supplies of such wildlife for hunting, fishing and trapping."
- b) One of the major goals of IDFG's Strategic Plan (2017-2020) is to improve public understanding of and involvement in fish and wildlife management. One of the objectives to accomplish this is to improve citizen involvement in the decision-making process.
- c) As stated in the 2020-2025 Mule Deer Management Plan, a major objective is to provide a diversity of hunting opportunities and direction to continue to offer annual mule deer hunting opportunities where sustainable. One strategy to accomplish this is through the development of citizen groups to help provide suggestions/ideas for big game seasons.
- d) IDFG holds the following Core Values with particular relevance to the Mule Deer Advisory Committee:
  - i) Public Service – IDFG believes in having open, two-way communication with the public, facilitating understanding and participation in management decisions, and providing diverse hunting-based recreational opportunities.
  - ii) Science – IDFG believes that scientifically developed knowledge and information are the foundation of wildlife management, and that the Department is obligated to develop, use, and share such knowledge and information.
  - iii) Sustainability – IDFG believes our management responsibility is to foster solutions to wildlife issues that are ecologically viable, economically feasible, and socially acceptable.
- e) The authority of the Mule Deer Advisory Committee is limited to that of assisting IDFG staff in developing proposals describing hunting season structure in portions of the Southeast Region. Proposals developed by the committee can include the rationale for IDFG staff, the Commission, and the public as to why they will best meet the needs of hunters, surrounding communities and the resource.
- f) The committee will be key in the development of ideas/suggestions, but ultimately the Commission (in some cases, approval may be required by Legislature) has the authority to modify and/or approve any rule proposal put forth by this group.

### 3) Expectations and Time Frame:

The Mule Deer Advisory Committee is expected to meet on a regular basis (up to 6-8 meetings) in an effort to provide suggestions/ideas for review by the IDFG's Wildlife Bureau and Directors Office by December 2024. This group should be available to respond to comments and questions that IDFG staff and the Commission may have through March 2025 when the season setting process is finalized.

### 4) Roles and Responsibilities:

- a) Members of the Mule Deer Advisory Committee are expected to:

- i) Read and become familiar with information provided to them throughout this process.
  - ii) Regularly attend scheduled meetings.
  - iii) Articulate interests, concerns, and perspectives on issues pertaining to the management of mule deer in the Southeast Region.
  - iv) Complete committee assignments as needed.
  - v) Maintain an open mind regarding the views and/or concerns of other committee members.
  - vi) Work as a team member to address the responsibilities of this committee.
  - vii) Participate collaboratively in group decision-making.
  - viii) Constructively manage conflict between committee members.
  - ix) Communicate on a regular basis with constituents of the committee each individual member was selected to represent. Contact information for members of this advisory committee, including a short bio outlining their area of interest, will be made available to the public.
  - x) Not actively seek to undermine committee decisions.
  - xi) Commit to participate in the committee until the Commission sets seasons and rules for the 2025-2026 season.
- b) IDFG Wildlife personnel are expected to:
    - i) Post information on IDFG's website about the advisory committee including their purpose, membership, contact information, and affiliation.
    - ii) Provide draft agendas for meetings.
    - iii) Organize facilities where meetings will occur.
    - iv) Facilitate meetings fairly and without bias.
    - v) Take notes and capture decisions made by the committee.
    - vi) Be available to answer questions honestly and without bias.
    - vii) Provide the best information available concerning biology and management of mule deer in Idaho.
    - viii) Provide IDFG press releases of decisions the advisory committee may make.
    - ix) Review broad public input on proposals the advisory committee develops.

### 5) Funding and Support:

Mule Deer Advisory Committee operating expenses (meeting facilities/ equipment/ etc.) will be funded by IDFG. Meals, snacks, and/ or drinks will be provided at the discretion of IDFG during meetings. Any travel and housing needs will be covered by committee members. Meeting locations could occur at various locations in the Southeast Region, but ultimately will be determined by members of the advisory committee and involved IDFG staff.

I have read and understand the Mule Deer Advisory Committee Charter. I desire to be a participant, and I agree to make every effort to fulfill the roles and responsibilities as outlined in this charter.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





# Timeline Meeting Dates

- ◆ July 1<sup>st</sup> – Overall Orientation, Intro to Mule Deer Ecology and Management
  - ◆ August 5<sup>th</sup> – Harvest Strategies (deep dive) – Committee Discussion
  - ◆ September 3<sup>rd</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> ? – Staff Topic Presentation? – Committee Discussion/Idea Development
  - ◆ October 7<sup>th</sup>– Staff Topic Presentation? – Possible Committee Suggestion Development
  - ◆ November 4<sup>th</sup>– Finalize Committee Suggestions/Proposals
  - ◆ December 2<sup>nd</sup> – If necessary – Finalize Committee Suggestions/Proposals
- 
- ◆ Meeting Locations – Soda?
  - ◆ Meeting Times – 6 – 9 pm? (maximize time)
  - ◆ Meals – Suggestions Welcome



# What do you need from us to be successful?

- ◆ Ideas you currently have that we need to research, present, consider?





# Homework

- ◆ Short Bio
- ◆ State of Deer and Elk

