

BIG THOMPSON DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN

DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-10

GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 20



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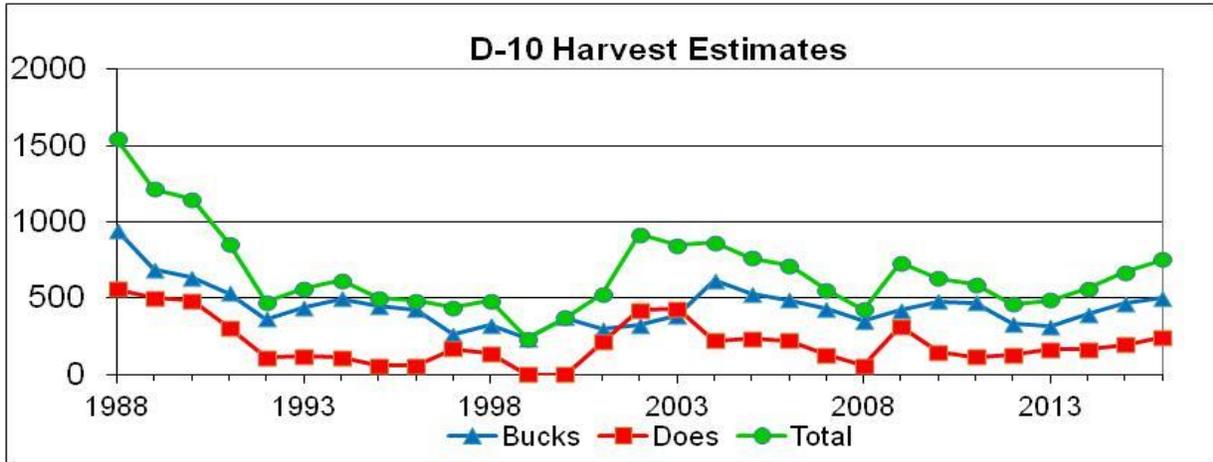
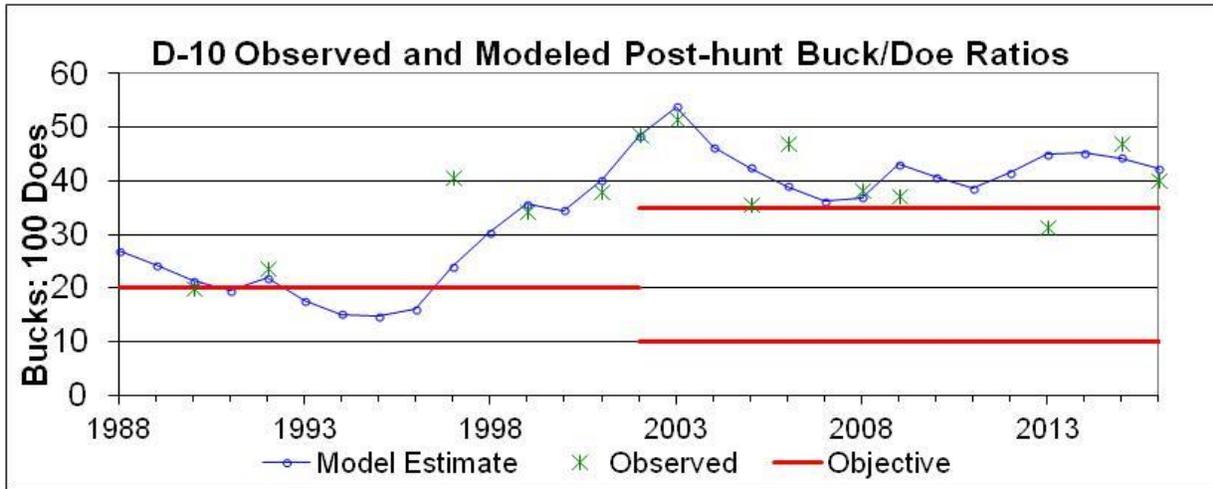
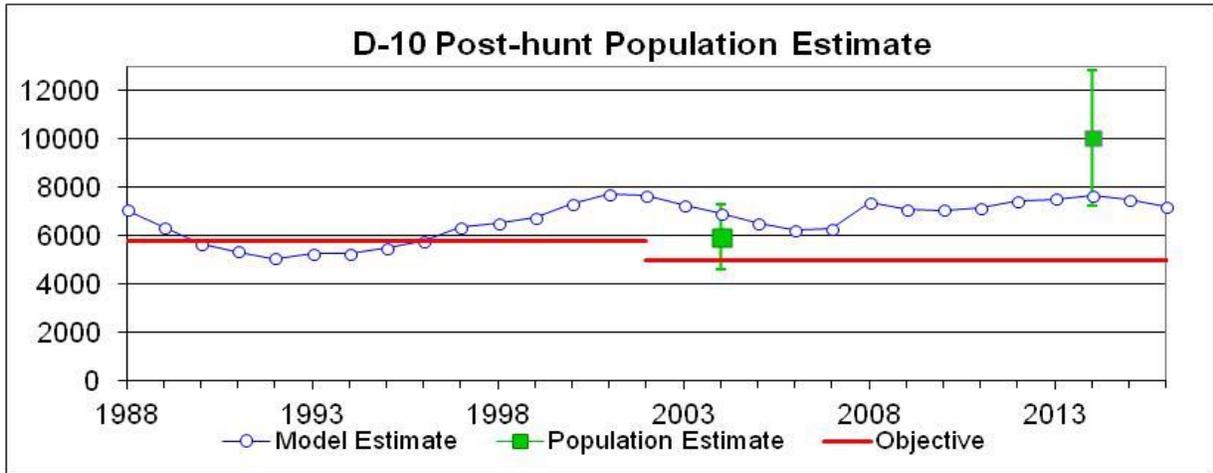
Colorado Parks & Wildlife

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - THE BIG THOMPSON DEER HERD, D-10

Game Management Unit: 20 **Area: 1,206 mi²**
Land Ownership: 44% Private, 25% USFS, 22% NPS, 8% Local Government, 0.1% CPW,
 0.7% State Land Board, 0.6% Other Federal, & 0.1% BLM
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective <5,000 2016 Model Estimate 7,200
 Preferred Objective Range: 8,000 - 10,000
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (Bucks/100 Does): Previous Objective 10 - 35 2016 Observed Estimate 40
 Preferred Objective Range: 25 - 30



Background and Management Issues

The Big Thompson deer herd is located in southern Larimer and northern Boulder counties. The previous herd management plan was implemented in 2002 to focus on management of chronic wasting disease (CWD). However, the previous population and sex ratio objectives were not obtainable due to refuges from hunting created by hunting restrictions on city and county open space, private land and Rocky Mountain National Park. Refuges lead to high concentrations of deer, high buck: doe ratios and the establishment of resident herds. Refuges also complicate management of CWD by creating conditions favorable for high CWD prevalence (high buck: doe ratios). This herd consistently ranks high for CWD prevalence. Contrary to refuge areas, hunters complain about the lack of deer and difficulty of harvesting deer on public land open to hunting. Loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitat due to human population growth and development remain major concerns. Development has occurred most extensively in the eastern two-thirds of the data analysis unit (DAU).

According to the public input process, the majority of respondents would like to see an increase in the size of the deer herd and to maintain or increase the proportion of males in the herd. Respondents would like to see the deer herd at levels similar to what was on the landscape prior to population reductions related to CWD management in the mid 2000s. In addition, people are concerned about habitat loss from development, revenue generated from deer-related tourism and deer-vehicle collisions. The majority of respondents stated that the opportunity to see large-antlered male deer was most important to their wildlife viewing experience, but the majority of respondents also supported male and population reductions to manage CWD.

Post-hunt Population Objective Alternatives

Alternative 1: 7,000 - 9,000

Alternative 2: 8,000 - 10,000 - Preferred

This alternative will result in intermediate levels of hunting, harvest, viewing opportunity and human-deer conflicts relative to the other population objective alternatives. This alternative will result in fewer licenses available in the short-term, but once the population objective range is achieved, more licenses will be available in the long-term. This alternative is preferred because the public input process clearly indicated a public desire to increase the size of the herd. This alternative will increase hunting, harvest and viewing opportunities.

Alternative 3: 9,000 - 11,000

Post-hunt Herd Composition Objective Alternatives

The observed and modeled sex ratio estimates will both be considered in managing for the sex ratio objective.

Alternative 1: 20 - 25 bucks: 100 does

Alternative 2: 25 - 30 bucks: 100 does, with 10% CWD prevalence trigger - Preferred

This alternative will result in intermediate levels of male hunting opportunity, male harvest success, viewing opportunity and number of males on the landscape. This alternative is preferred because it provides a balance between public desire for more bucks in the herd, with the goal of reducing or stabilizing CWD prevalence in the herd. If CWD prevalence exceeds triggers specified in the Colorado Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan, appropriate adaptive management actions listed in that plan will be implemented. In addition, if CWD prevalence is $\geq 10\%$ in adult males, the sex ratio will be managed to lower end of the herd composition range at 25 bucks: 100 does. If CWD prevalence is $< 10\%$ in adult males, the sex ratio will be managed to 30 bucks: 100 does.

Alternative 3: 30 - 35 bucks: 100 does

Strategies to Achieve Objectives

Population

Initially, antlerless licenses will be reduced to move the population within the objective range. Once the population objective is achieved and to maintain the population within the objective range, doe harvest will be adjusted as needed; this will be accomplished through allocation of antlerless licenses in 2nd, 3rd, 4th and private-land-only seasons. Municipalities with large open space tracts will continue to be encouraged to include active management of deer in their plans.

Herd Composition

To achieve the herd composition objective range, buck harvest will be increased in those areas with high deer densities and high buck: doe ratios. This will be accomplished primarily through collaboration with open space programs to obtain the necessary harvest of buck deer. Ultimately, this will be accomplished through allocation of buck licenses in the rifle and private-land-only seasons.

This herd management plan was approved by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission on XX XXXXXX 20XX.