

# RED FEATHER-POUDRE CANYON DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN

## DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-4 Game Management Units 7, 8, 9, 19, 191



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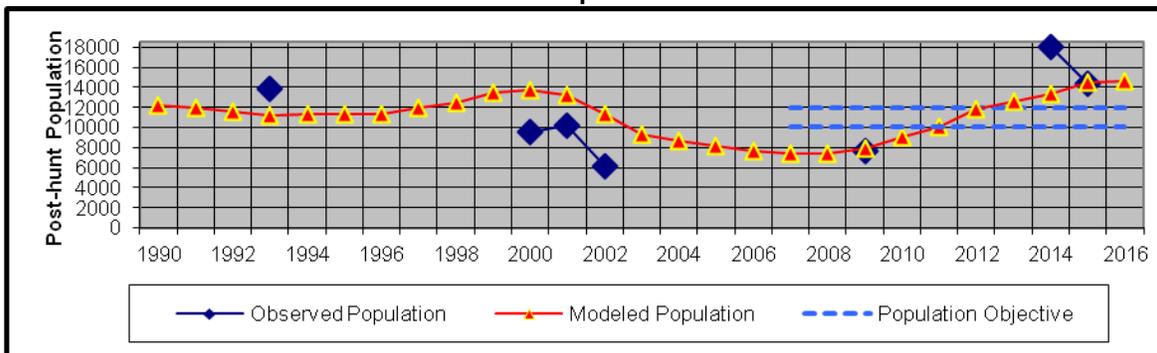


# HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR D-4

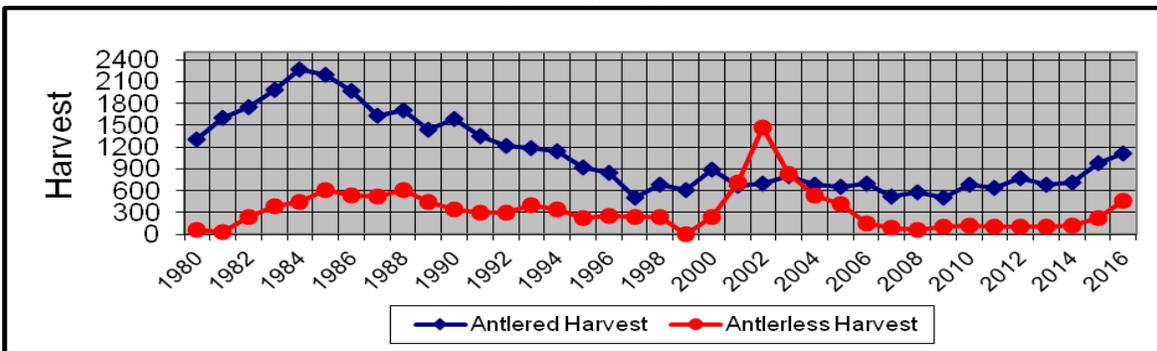
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GMUs: 7, 8, 9, 19 and 191 (Northern Larimer County)  
 Land Ownership: 40% Private, 46% USFS, 6% City/County, 5% State, 2% BLM Post-hunt Population:  
 Previous Objective: 10,000-12,000                      2016 Estimate: 14,600  
    Preferred Objective: 13,000 - 15,000  
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks: 100 does):  
 Previous Objective: 25-30                              2016 Observed Estimated: 33  
    Preferred Objective: 25-30

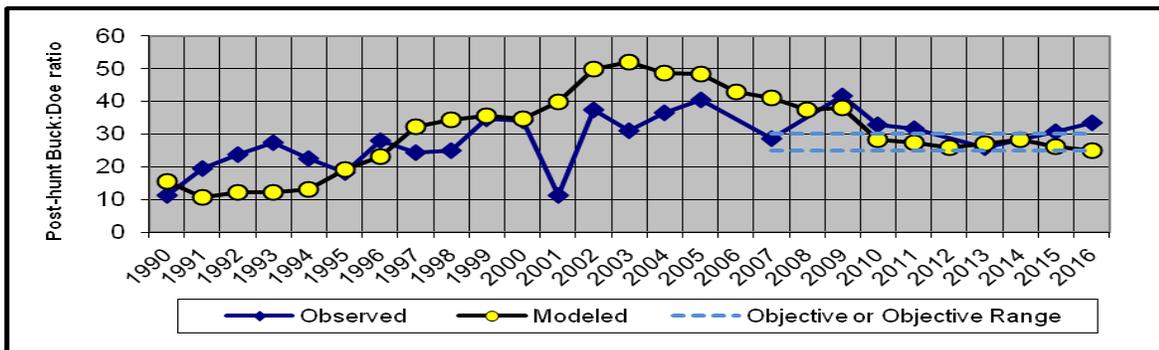
D-4 Post-hunt Population Estimate



D-4 Harvest



D-4 Post-hunt Sex Ratios



## **Background and Management Issues**

The Red Feather-Poudre Canyon deer herd (D-4) is located in northern Larimer County, north and west of Fort Collins, and consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 7, 8, 9, 19 and 191. The previous management plan was implemented in 2007 where the management objectives were set to increase the herd to between 10,000 to 12,000 animals and maintain a herd composition sex ratio of 25 to 30 bucks per 100 does. The 2016 population estimate for this herd is 14,600 with an observed herd composition sex ratio of 33 bucks per 100 does. The observed and modeled sex ratio estimates will both be considered in managing for the sex ratio management objective.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) remains a significant issue although prevalence has decreased from where it was during the 2000-2010 period. This may be due to management strategies that focused on reducing deer density, harvest timing, and maintaining a moderate proportion of mature bucks in the population. Habitat destruction, degradation, and fragmentation due to development are of concern. Fires that have occurred over the past decade along with an increase in moisture in 2013 - 2016 have enhanced and increased deer habitat through much of D-4 allowing for an increase in deer populations. A significant issue identified by hunters and landowners is the continued desire to maintain a large, robust deer herd. Negative stakeholder comments about the decreased numbers of deer and lower management objectives during the 2000-2010 period still are frequent. Landowner damage is non-existent and informal input from landowners is similar to most hunter comments, which is to strongly support the current deer population size in D-4.

## **Post-hunt Population Objective Alternatives**

Alternative 1: 10,000 - 12,000

Alternative 2: 13,000 - 15,000 - Preferred

Maintains current population level. This alternative is selected because it is within the biological carrying capacity and was supported by public input. This is about a 30% increase in herd population from the previous management objective (10,000-12,000). This alternative allows for maintaining the current estimated herd population.

Alternative 3: 15,000 - 17,000

## **Post-hunt Herd Composition-Sex Ratio Objective Alternatives**

Alternative 1: 20 - 25 bucks: 100 does

Alternative 2: 25 - 30 bucks: 100 does - Preferred

Maintains hunting opportunity similar to last 5 years. This alternative is preferred because this ratio provides a balance between desires expressed by hunters to see mature bucks, and will likely allow hunters to hunt frequently, while also stabilizing the proportion of older age-class males in the population. CWD rates in harvested adult bucks will be periodically evaluated. Once CWD prevalence exceeds triggers specified in the Colorado Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan, appropriate adaptive management actions listed in the Colorado Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan will be implemented. In addition, if CWD prevalence is  $\geq 10\%$  in adult bucks, the sex ratio will be managed to 25 bucks: 100 does.

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Alternative 3: 35 - 40 bucks: 100 does

## **Strategies to Achieve Objectives:**

***Population-*** To maintain the population within objective, doe harvest will be adjusted as needed; this will be accomplished through allocations of doe licenses primarily in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> rifle seasons. Late deer seasons will be considered as needed.

***Herd Composition-*** To maintain the herd within objective, buck harvest will be increased; this will be accomplished primarily through allocations of buck licenses in the rifle seasons, in private land only longer seasons, and to GMUs with higher buck: doe ratios. Municipalities with large open space tracts will continue to be encouraged to include active management of deer populations in their management plans.