

HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN – D-5 (NORTH TABLELANDS) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GMUs: 87, 88, 89, 90, and 95

Land Ownership: 92% Private, 8% Public

Post-Season Population:

Current Objective – 2,400–2,700; 2018 Estimate – 3,284; Future Objective – Pending

Post-Season Sex Ratio (Bucks/100 Does):

Current Objective – 35–40; 2018 Observed – 54; 2018 Modeled – 54; Future Objective – Pending

Figure I. D-5 Post-hunt Population Estimate

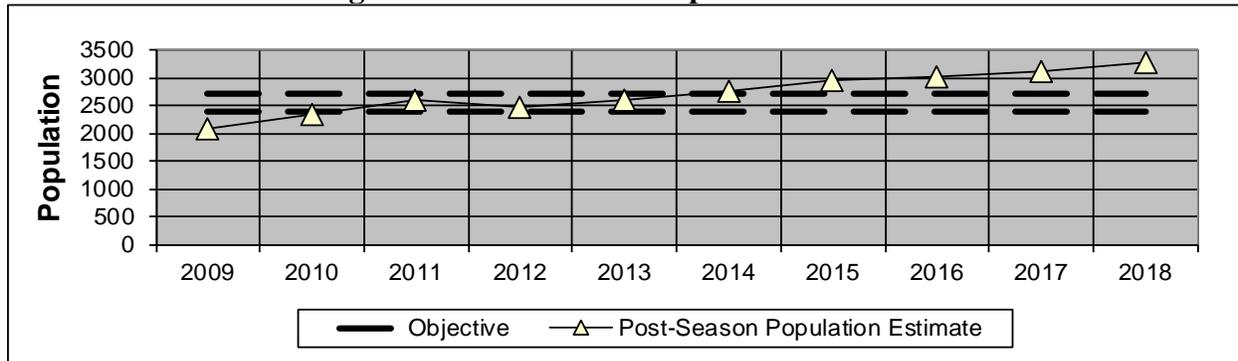


Figure II. D-5 Harvest

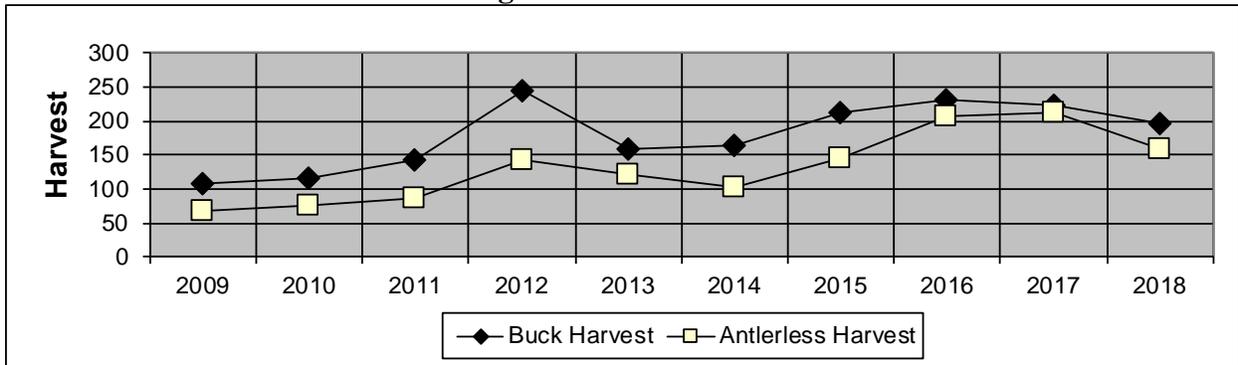
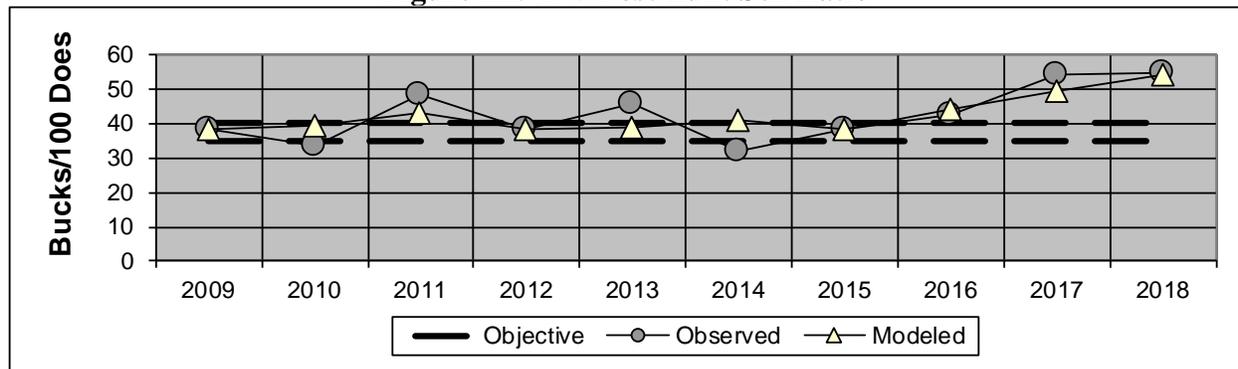


Figure III. D-5 Post-hunt Sex Ratio



Background

Over the past decade, the North Tablelands deer herd has been managed under the current objectives of 2,400–2,700 deer and 35–40 bucks/100 does that were established in 2007. This Herd Management Plan (HMP) and the population and sex ratio alternatives presented are the result of an update and revision of that plan.

Over the past 10 years, the North Tablelands deer herd has been managed to provide quality mule deer hunting opportunities by maintaining a high proportion of 3+ year-old bucks in the population. Since 2009, the mule deer buck/doe ratio has averaged 42 bucks/100 does ranging from 32 bucks/100 does observed in 2014 to 54 bucks/100 does observed in 2017 and 2018. Estimated mule deer numbers for the North Tablelands has increased over the last decade from a low of approximately 1,930 in 2008 to a high of 3,285 in 2018. The 5-year population average for this deer herd is 3,030 mule deer. Observed fawn/doe ratios have varied from a low of 62 fawns/100 does in 2012 to a high of 82 fawns/100 does in 2010 and has averaged 72 fawns/100 does over the past decade.

Significant Issues

The North Tablelands is part of the endemic area for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) infection, which was first discovered in 1997. In 2019, mandatory testing of harvested bucks and does revealed that CWD prevalence in mule deer bucks was 32%. Therefore, management changes will be implemented to address CWD in this herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. The management actions for the North Tablelands mule deer herd may include reducing the sex ratio, reducing the deer density, or some combination of these management strategies.

The North Tablelands deer herd has been managed to maintain mule deer numbers within the current population and sex ratio objectives. To address white-tailed deer in the North Tablelands, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) created season choice white-tailed deer only licenses in 2013, which continue to be used in D-5 to provide additional hunter recreation without the risk of over harvesting mule deer.

Preferred Alternatives

The CPW preferred alternatives for D-5 are to manage for a post-hunt population of **2,500–3,000 mule deer** with an observed post-hunt sex ratio of **30–35 bucks/100 does**. Public comments supported maintaining the mule deer population near the current population objective in the North Tablelands. The public also supported to make CWD management an important factor in the future management of this deer herd. Therefore, the sex ratio objective will be reduced to 30-35 bucks/100 does to address the high CWD prevalence in this mule deer herd. Buck licenses will be increased over the long-term to achieve and maintain this sex ratio objective.

Other alternatives considered in this HMP are: 1) reduce the population by 25% to 1,800–2,100 mule deer, 2) increase the population objective to 3,000–3,500 mule deer, 3) maintain the sex ratio objective at 35–40 bucks/100 does, and 4) reduce the sex ratio objective to 25–30 bucks/100 does.