

# HERD MANAEMENT PLAN – D-44 (SOUTH PLATTE RIVER) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**GMU's:** 91, 92, 94, 96, and 951

**Land Ownership:** 98% Private, 2% Public

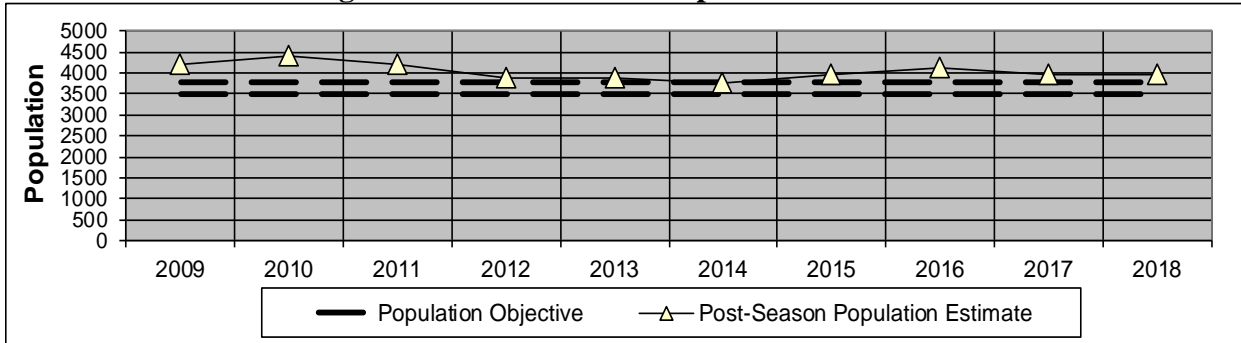
**Post-Season Population:**

*Current Objective – 3,500–3,800; 2018 Estimate – 3,950; Future Objective – Pending*

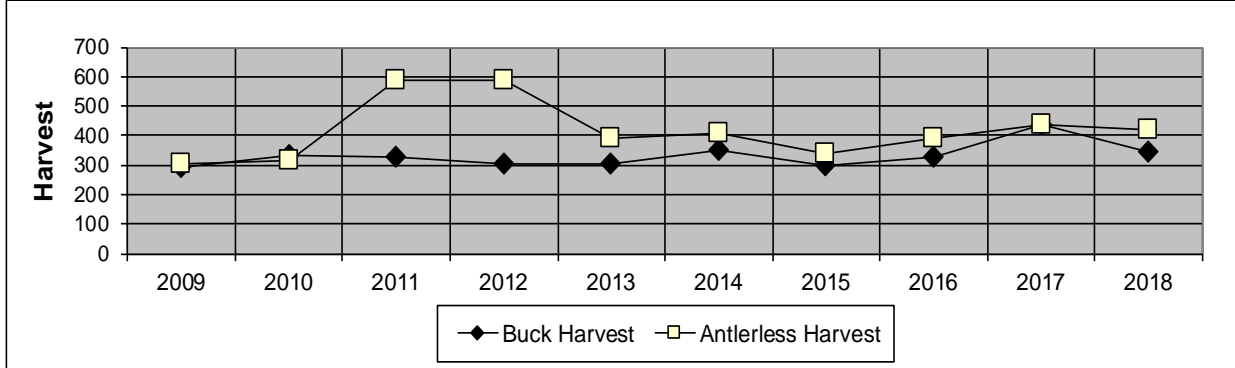
**Post-Season Sex Ratio (Bucks/100 Does):**

*Current Objective – 35–40; 2018 Observed – 40; 2018 Modeled – 39; Future Objective – Pending*

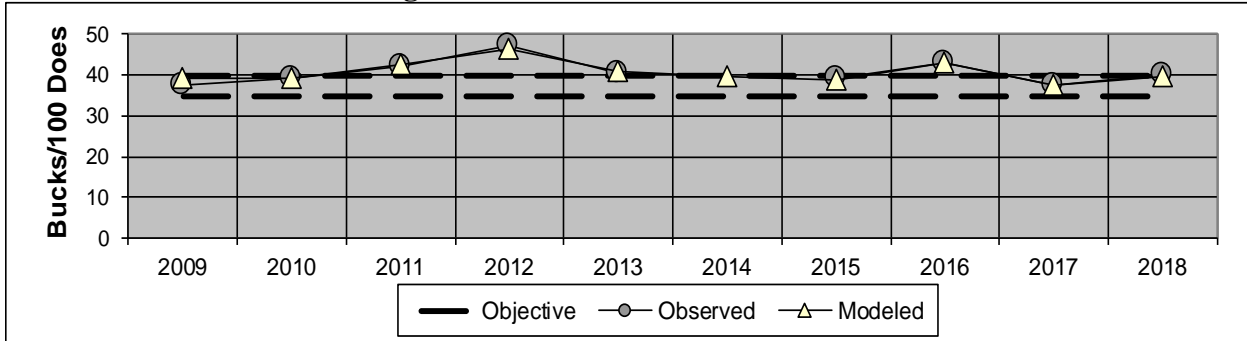
**Figure I. D-44 Post-hunt Population Estimate**



**Figure II. D-44 Harvest**



**Figure III. D-44 Post-hunt Sex Ratio**



## Background

Over the past decade, the South Platte River deer herd has been managed under the current management plan objectives of 3,500–3,800 deer and 35–40 bucks/100 does that were established in 2009. This Herd Management Plan (HMP) and the population and sex ratio alternatives presented are the result of an update and revision of that plan.

Much of the focus in D-44, the South Platte River deer herd, has been to provide quality deer hunting opportunities by maintaining a high buck/doe ratio and a higher proportion of 3+ year-old bucks in the population. Over the past 10 years, estimated deer numbers have ranged from a high of 4,420 in 2010 to a low of 3,750 deer in 2014. The 5-year estimate average is 3,950 deer. Since 2009, the buck/doe ratio has ranged from a low of 37 bucks/100 does observed in 2009 to a high of 47 bucks/100 does observed in 2012. Over the last 5 years, the buck/doe ratio has averaged 40 bucks/100 does. Observed fawn/doe ratios have varied from a low of 52 fawns/100 does in 2011 to a high of 76 fawns/100 does in 2016 and has averaged 65 fawns/100 does over the past decade.

## Significant Issues

The South Platte River is part of the endemic area for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) infection, which was first discovered in the South Platte River deer herd in 1997. In 2019, mandatory testing of harvested bucks and does revealed that CWD prevalence was 26% in mule deer bucks and 16% in whitetail bucks. Therefore, management changes will be implemented to address CWD in this herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. The management actions for the South Platte River deer herd may include reducing the age structure of the herd, reducing the deer density, or some combination of these management strategies.

## Preferred Management Alternatives

The CPW preferred alternatives for D-44 are to manage for a post-hunt population of **3,500–4,000 deer** with an observed post-hunt sex ratio of **30–35 bucks/100 does**. Public comments supported maintaining the deer population near the current level and provide some quality buck hunting opportunities in the South Platte River deer herd. However, the public also supported implementing different management strategies to address CWD prevalence in mule deer and white-tailed deer. Therefore, the sex ratio objective will be 30–35 bucks/100 does with mule deer managed at the low end of the objective to address the higher CWD prevalence and whitetails managed at the upper end of the objective. Mule deer only buck licenses will be used to target and increase mule deer buck harvest, and general buck licenses will be increased to reduce and maintain whitetail bucks with the objective.

Other alternatives considered in this HMP are: 1) reduce the population objective to 2,800–3,200 deer, 2) increase the population objective to 4,000–4,500 deer, 3) maintain the current sex ratio objective of 35–40 bucks/100 does, and 4) reduce the sex ratio objective to 25–30 bucks/100 does.