EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bookcliffs Deer Herd (DAU D-11)	**GMUs: 21 & 30**
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 10,000-12,000 deer; Estimate for 2020: 7,175. **Preferred Alternative: 5,000-8,000**	
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (Bucks: 100 Does): Previous Objective: 30-35; Post-hunt 2020 observed: 32; modeled: 30. **Preferred Alternative: 27-32 bucks:100 does**	

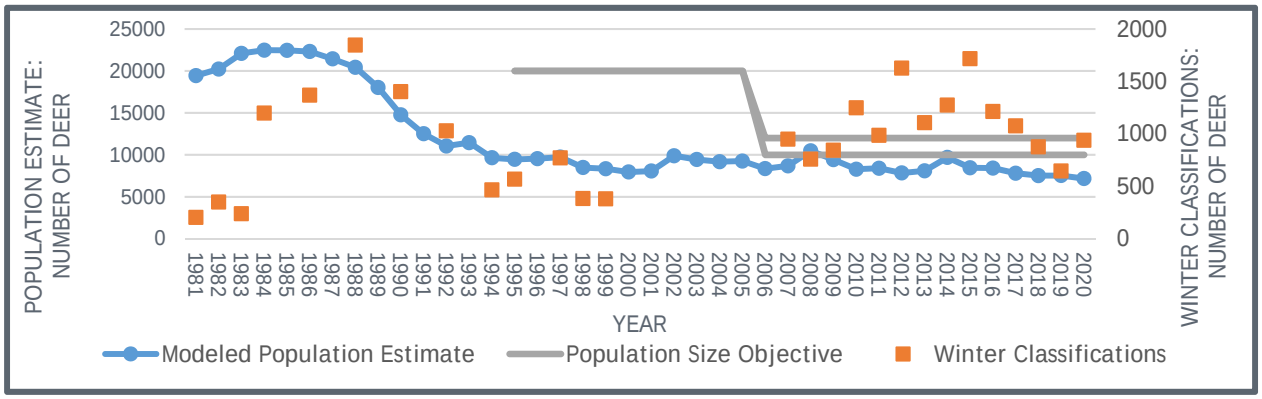

Figure 1. D-11 modeled post hunt population and objective range, 1981-2020.

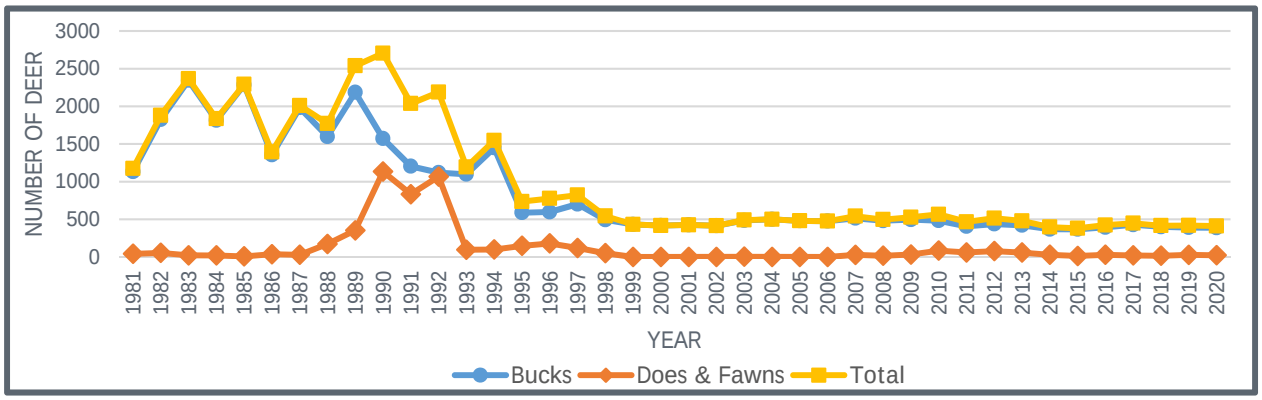

Figure 2. D-11 harvest estimates, 1981-2020.

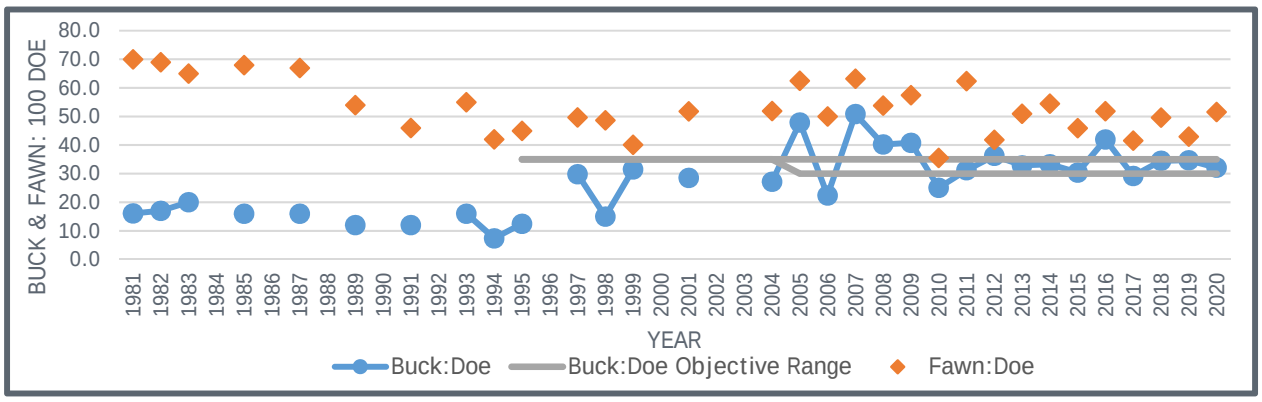

Figure 3. D-11 observed sex and age ratios, 1981 – 2020.

Background Information

The Bookcliffs deer herd (DAU D-11) is located in west central Colorado and includes portions of Mesa, Garfield, and Rio Blanco Counties. The D-11 DAU (Data Analysis Unit) consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 21 and 30. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages approximately 80% of D-11 and privately owned lands consisting of the remaining 19%. Livestock grazing is an important land use on public and private lands, while hay and row crops are grown on private lands at lower elevations.

Mule deer generally occupy the entire DAU, migrating from low–elevation winter ranges to high–elevation summer ranges in response to available forage and snow conditions. Small resident herds live year-round in the Grand Valley, relying on agricultural and low-density residential developments for forage.

Significant Issues

Significant issues facing this deer herd include declining fawn:doe ratios, population stagnation, recreation, energy development, disease, and degraded habitats due to feral horses, long-term drought, over-utilization, and wildfire. The deer population in D-11 has been stagnant at historically low levels for nearly two decades. Fawn:doe ratios are declining and buck:doe ratios are high. The habitat encompassed by the DAU is fragmented and degraded throughout much of the herd's important ranges. Predation may also be affecting fawn survival. Hemorrhagic and chronic wasting diseases have been documented in D-11 and may negatively influence the population size and survival.

Management Alternatives

Three alternatives were proposed for the population size and the buck:doe ratio objectives to guide the management of mule deer in D-11 for the next ten years. For each parameter, the three options were a comparison of the 2020 population size estimate of 7,175 deer and the current sex ratio objectives 30–35 bucks:100 does. The three options were a) to remain at status quo, b) a slight decrease from the current population size estimate and sex ratio objective and c) a moderate decrease from the current population size estimate and sex ratio objective.

Preferred Alternatives

Using the information outlined in this herd management plan, public feedback, and response letters from the BLM and county commissioners, and considering the potential and present conditions influencing the D-11 herd, CPW selected the final preferred population and sex ratio objectives. CPW staff recommend a moderate decrease in the population size objective from 10,000-12,000 to 5,000-8,000. A moderate decrease in the population size objective will allow CPW to manage the D-11 herd in sync with the habitat condition and capability while increasing the resiliency and sustainability of the herd. If habitat conditions improve, this broader population objective range will allow CPW the flexibility to manage for increased population levels at that time. CPW staff recommend a slight decrease from the current buck: doe ratio objective of 30-35 bucks:100 does to 27-32 bucks:100 does. A slight decrease to the buck: doe ratio objective will decrease the potential for increasing CWD prevalence as documented in adjacent units, potentially increase fawn: doe ratios, and maintain or increase hunting opportunity.