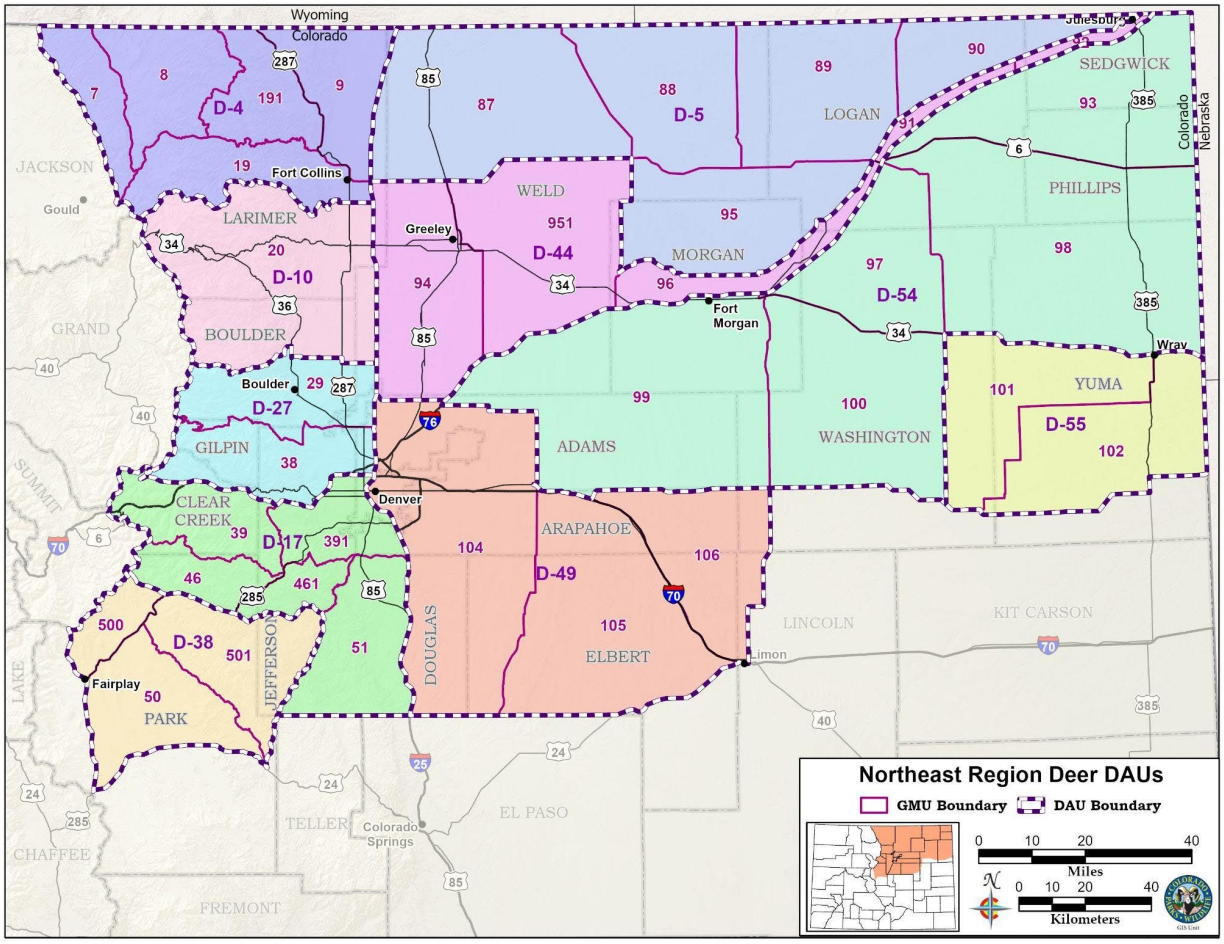
Final Deer Herd Management Plans

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Northeast Region



prepared for

COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE

by

NE TERRESTRIAL STAFF

Executive Summary

Deer herds in northeast Colorado continue to face numerous challenges. Loss of habitat from development on public and private lands, traditional and renewable energy development and production, loss of connectivity across the landscape as migration and travel corridors become restricted or blocked, competition with livestock, increasing highway traffic, increasing recreational activities on public lands, disease, and persistent drought related to climate change are all obstacles that are compounded by booming human population growth in the northeast Colorado. These challenges present deer with an uncertain future as we work to manage and conserve deer populations, other wildlife species, preferred habitats, and natural ecosystems for future generations.

The Herd Management Plans contained in this document will guide management of the 10 deer herds in the Northeast Region for the next 10 years, through 2035. These 10 deer herds contain approximately 53,000 deer, representing roughly 14% of the statewide population of 384,000 deer. For the 10 Herd Management Plans contained herein, CPW proposes complete revisions of four plans and extensions for six plans (Table 1). CPW staff propose a combination of status quo, an increase, or a reduction in the objective ranges for the four deer herds undergoing revision (Table 1). Each plan describes the strategies and techniques that will be used to achieve the desired herd objectives. These 10-year plans aim to manage for the most appropriate population level within the objective range, based on climatic patterns, habitat conditions, forage availability, disease, and public desires. The management objectives in these plans abide by statutes and policies set forth by CPW's Big Game Season Structure and Strategic Plan, the Parks and Wildlife Commission, and the State Legislature.

Table 1. Population and management status of the 10 deer herds in northeast Colorado.

DAU	Deer Herd	Current HMP Plan Approved	Current Post-Hunt Population Objective	2024 Post-Hunt Population Estimate	Current Post-Hunt Sex Ratio Objective	3-Yr Avg Post-Hunt Modeled Sex Ratio	Male CWD Prevalence (Female 2019)	Proposed Post-Hunt Population Objective	Proposed Post-Hunt Sex Ratio Objective
D-17	Bailey	2006	7,500–8,300	5,750	20–30	33	2% (0%)	6,500–7,500	30–35
D-27	Boulder Creek	2012	6,000–7,500	6,560	25–30	49	19%	Status Quo	Status Quo
D-38	South Park	2015	2,500–3,100	3,160	25–30	27	0%	2,500–3,500	30–35
D-49	Bijou Creek	2009	5,500–6,500	5,620	30–35	45	20% (2%)	5,000–6,000	Status Quo
D-04	Red Feather	2019	13,000–15,000	12,320	25–30	35	4%	Extension	Extension
D-05	North Tablelands	2021	2,500–3,000	1,820	30–35	30	26% (12%)	Extension	Extension
D-10	Big Thompson	2018	8,000–10,000	8,400	25–30	39	8%	Extension	Extension
D-44	South Platte River	2021	3,500–4,000	3,710	33–38	36	23% (8%)	Extension	Extension
D-54	South Tablelands	2021	3,500–4,000	3,460	30–35	36	34% (3%)	Extension	Extension
D-55	Arikaree	2018	2,300–2,700	2,160	35–40	40	39% (11%)	Extension	Extension

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Introduction and Purpose

The robust population of Colorado mule deer was not always so abundant. Mule deer numbered only around 45,000 in the late 1920s. But, thanks to early conservation efforts and restricted hunting, the population quickly increased. By the late 1950s, the abundance of mule deer and liberal hunting regulations produced large game harvests, with 114,529 deer taken in 1957. By 1990, Colorado's deer population was estimated to be over 600,000, but by the end of the decade, concern about low numbers of mule deer across the west was once again at the forefront of deer management. Today, Colorado maintains approximately 385,000 deer statewide.

Hunting, angling, and other wildlife-related recreation contributes over $5 billion annually to Colorado's economy. Funds generated by big game hunting license sales are used in the conservation of Colorado's wildlife in numerous ways, including habitat improvement and conservation projects that benefit a diversity of species. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and partner organizations continually engage with federal and state land management agencies and private landowners to promote habitat improvement projects that benefit deer and other wildlife species. These ongoing efforts help ensure a future for deer and other wildlife in Colorado. Conservation of Colorado's big game herds and overall wildlife habitat protection are among CPW's highest priorities[1].

In northeastern Colorado, white-tailed deer are the primary deer species within the larger riparian corridors east of I-25. In contrast, mule deer are the primary species in upland sagebrush habitats and canyon breaks on the eastern plains and throughout the foothills and mountains east of the Continental Divide. Both species can occupy any edge habitat, including suburban residential areas. Mule deer are browsers, feeding primarily on woody vegetation, including twigs and leaves of shrubs and trees, even ornamentals. They also forage on crops, especially alfalfa and corn. Because they eat little grass, they generally do not compete with livestock grazers. Whitetails are grazers, like elk and cattle, feeding mostly on grasses and forbs. They will also feed on crops, especially alfalfa and corn. Both species are popular big game species, and hunters must draw a license to have the opportunity to hunt deer in Colorado.

CPW manages big game for the use, benefit and enjoyment of the people of the State following CPW's Strategic Plan (2015). Management is also determined by mandates from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWC) and the Colorado Legislature. Colorado's wildlife require careful and increasingly intensive management to accommodate the many varied public demands and growing human impacts. CPW uses a "Management by Objective" approach to manage the State's big game populations (Figure 1).

The Management by Objective approach provides a data-driven process to achieve population objectives for each Data Analysis Unit (DAU), established by the Herd Management Plan (HMP). A DAU is a geographic area that includes the year-round range of a big game herd. The DAU includes the area where most animals in a herd are born, live and die. DAU boundaries are delineated to minimize the interchange of animals between adjacent DAUs. The geographic area may be divided into several Game Management Units (GMUs) to distribute hunters and harvest within a DAU.

[1] https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/About/StrategicPlan/CPWStrategicPlan.pdf

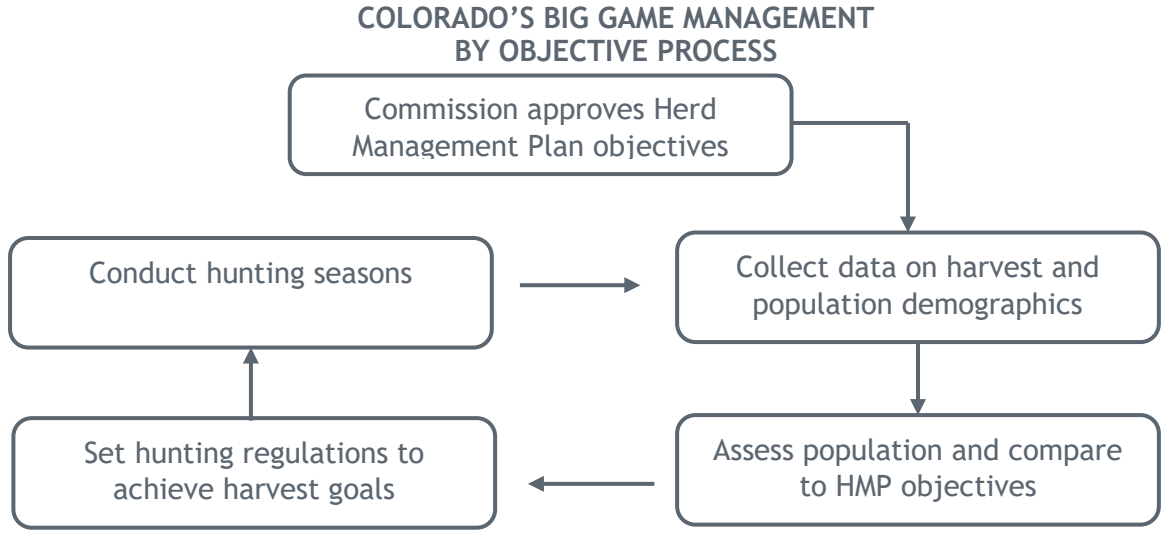


Figure 1. Management by Objective process used by Colorado Parks and Wildlife to manage big game populations by Data Analysis Unit (DAU).

The primary purpose of HMPs is to establish the population size and sex ratio (i.e., the number of males per 100 females) objectives for each DAU. The HMP also describes the strategies and techniques that will be used to reach these objectives. During the HMP planning process, CPW solicits and collects public input through questionnaires, public meetings, and comments. CPW's mission as wildlife stewards is integrated with the concerns and ideas of various stakeholders, including state and federal land management agencies, city and county governments, hunters, guides and outfitters, private landowners, local chambers of commerce, and the public. In preparing an HMP, agency personnel attempt to balance the biological capabilities of the herd and its habitat with the public's demand for wildlife recreational opportunities. HMPs are approved by the PWC and are reviewed and updated approximately every 10 years.

HMPs serve as the basis for the annual herd management decision cycle. In this cycle, CPW assesses the size and composition of the herd and evaluates them relative to the objectives defined in the HMP, from which harvest goals are set. Based on these goals, CPW determines specific harvest strategies to maintain the population or move it towards the objectives (e.g., license numbers and allocation are determined). Hunting seasons are then conducted, subsequently evaluated and the annual management cycle begins again (Figure 1).

Types of Herd Management Plan Updates

The HMPs presented are to set population and sex ratio objectives for the deer herds in the Northeast (NE) Region of Colorado for the next 10 years, with the expectation that they will be reviewed and updated in 2035. When drafting these HMPs, CPW considered different types of updates, including full revisions or extensions. We used several factors to determine whether to revise or extend an HMP. These factors included the profile of the plan, the length of time since the last HMP was approved, and the level of contention we expected during the planning process. The various updates required different levels of public involvement, which allowed CPW the flexibility to undertake a full planning process for HMPs warranting a high level of public involvement, while streamlining the HMPs that didn't require the same level of public input.

Revisions

We are recommending full HMP revisions for D-17, D-27, D-38, and D-49, because these HMPs were all more than ten years old (Table 1). We undertook a full planning process, including public surveys and in-person meetings for these DAUs. Survey results, for these four DAUs, are found in Appendix A (Small Landowner Surveys), Appendix B (Landowner Preference Program Surveys), Appendix C (Public Meeting Input), and Appendix D (Hunter Harvest Opt-In Survey).

Extensions

We are recommending HMP extensions for D-04, D-05, D-10, D-44, D-54, and D-55 (Table 1). These HMPs are current and were approved by the PWC in 2018, 2019 and 2021. These extensions will continue the current objectives, management actions and strategies. Therefore, we are not proposing any changes to the objectives or management approach for these HMPs. Hunter Opt-in survey results, for these DAUs, can be found in Appendix D.

Common Management Issues and Strategies

Deer populations, for the 10 deer herds in the NE Region of Colorado, have remained relatively stable over the past decade, with an estimated population of 52,960 deer in 2024. Several issues impact deer populations across the region, including game damage, habitat loss, energy development, and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Over the last 10 years, some of these deer herds have been reduced, often intentionally, in an effort to address CWD prevalence rates, habitat loss or to limit game damage conflicts on private property. Likewise, some deer herds have experienced natural die-off events caused by a combination of drought, above-average winter and CWD.

Game Damage

During the late summer and fall, when corn crops begin to mature, deer will feed regularly in dryland and irrigated corn fields, resulting in occasional game damage complaints from landowners. To address any game damage, CPW offers game damage licenses and other Game Damage programs for landowners experiencing deer conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons, on an individual basis. Additionally, CPW will continue looking for hunter access opportunities on or through private property. CPW will also work with land management agencies and landowners to make habitat improvements where possible.

Habitat Loss

Colorado's population has increased from 4.3 million people in 2000 to 5.8 million in 2020 (US Census Bureau, 2021), presenting more pressure on wildlife and their preferred habitats. With Colorado's population expected to increase from 5.8 to 8.1 million people by 2050 (https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/population/), there are growing concerns about the increase in housing developments, infrastructure, roads, traffic, and recreational activities. Factors such as competition with livestock, fences, vehicle collisions, and predation contribute to deer population declines. However, habitat loss and fragmentation, from residential and energy development, fueled by the effects of human population growth and climate change, present the most significant risks to Colorado's deer population.

Over the last 10 years, residential development has reduced the available deer habitat across the region, especially along the Front Range corridor, due to direct habitat loss and indirect factors such as human presence, pets, fences, and disturbance (Figure 2). In addition to housing, energy development, including oil, natural gas, wind, and solar, in the western portions of D-05 and western and central portions of D-49 and D-54, will continue to increase into the foreseeable future. Likewise, all deer DAUs along the Front Range corridor are experiencing growth of rural subdivisions and small-acreage developments. These impacts have resulted in direct and indirect loss of available habitat for deer and other wildlife. The direct loss of deer habitat due to the footprint left by these activities are often amplified by the indirect losses that occur from noise pollution or fragmentation of the available habitat that is left, which is further impacting the quality of habitat deer use through their life cycle from summer to winter ranges. Ultimately, these losses in available habitat limit deer populations. These development trends will continue to be the main concern for managers of these DAUs.

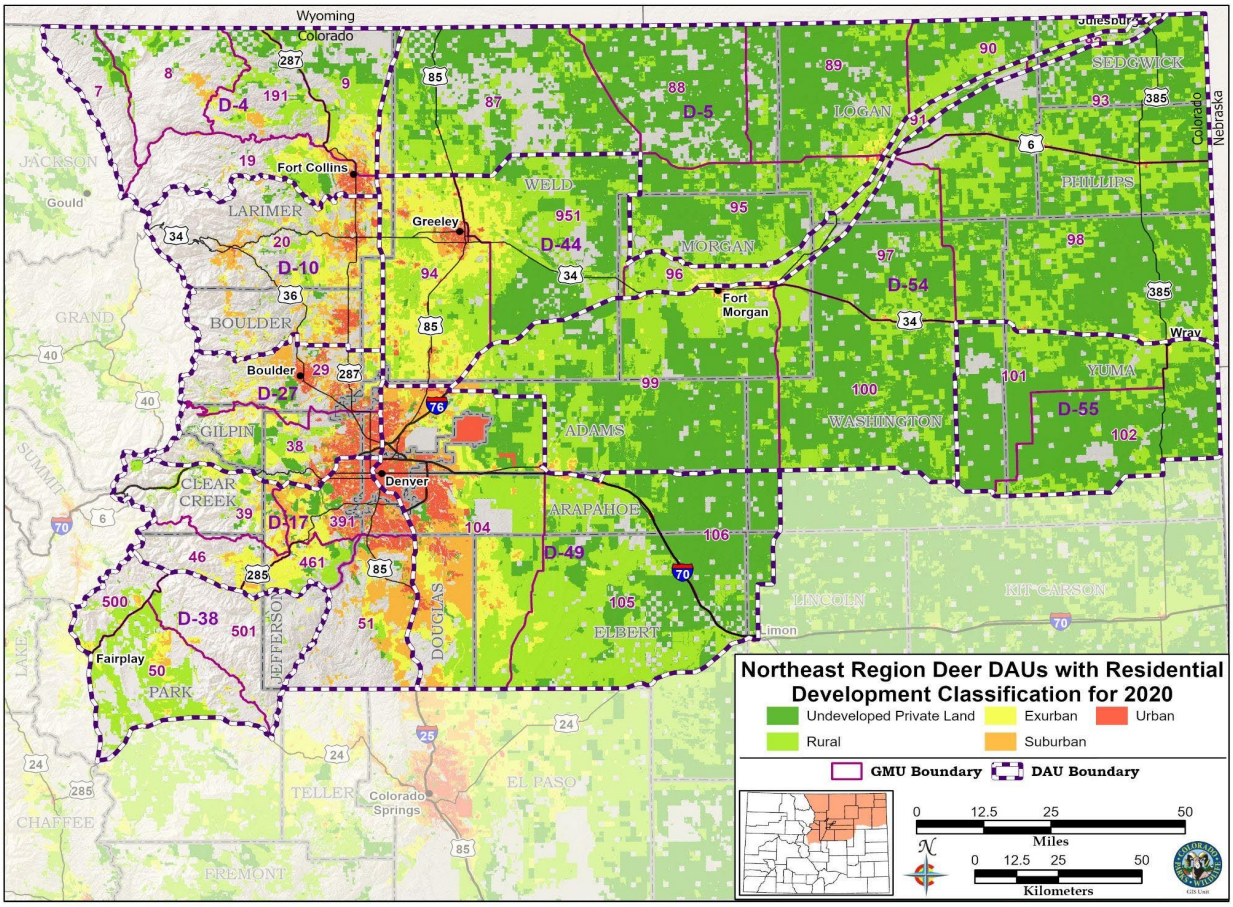


Figure 2. Northeast region deer DAUs with residential development classification for 2020.

Energy Development — Oil and Gas

Extraction of oil and gas has the potential to directly affect deer populations during the life of the wells (sometimes 40+ years) through habitat loss from pads, pipeline development, roads, and associated spread of noxious weeds. Likewise, there can be indirect effects from the increased human presence at pads and regular use of roads, and cumulatively from the combined impacts from new wells on the landscape. Oil and gas development across the

Denver-Julesburg Oil & Gas Basin, which includes northeast Colorado, has generally increased over the past 15 years, reaching a peak in 2018 and continuing steadily into 2023 (Figure 3). Recent market conditions and commodity price increases have resulted in slight upticks in the number of permits being submitted; however, active drilling rig counts have not increased significantly.

Colorado's recently enacted (2021) Senate Bill 19-181 (SB-181) sets oil and gas regulations that contain new provisions and requirements for the protection of wildlife resources, during oil and gas development. In particular, the new regulations contain measures to: reduce noise and light impacts, require compensatory mitigation to offset direct and indirect impacts to big game high priority habitats (HPH), limit the density of oil and gas development within big game seasonal ranges, and assess alternative development locations to minimize adverse impacts. These new regulations also expand CPW's involvement and consultative role during the Colorado Energy and Carbon Management Commission (ECMC) permitting process.

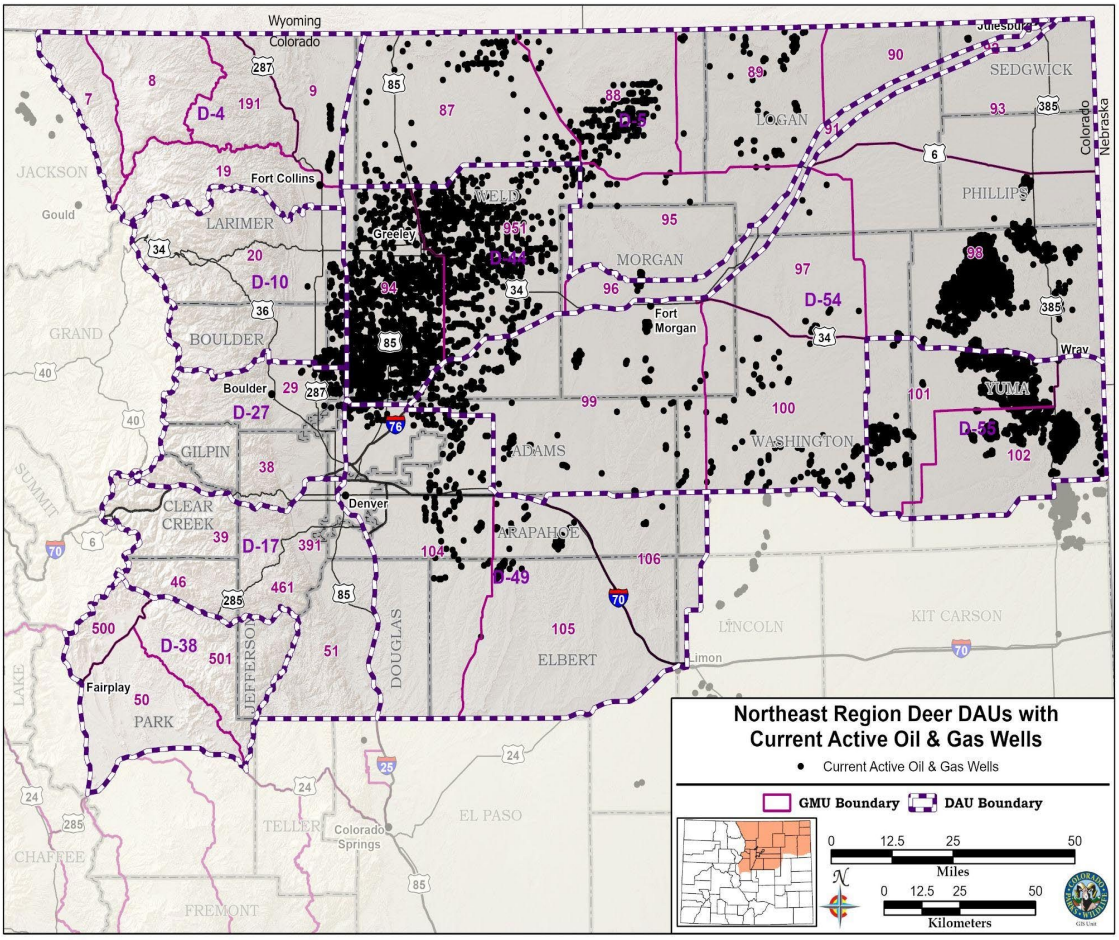


Figure 3. Northeast region deer DAUs with active oil and gas wells, 2024.

Renewable Energy Development — Solar and Wind

Across the Northeast Region, renewable energy development (existing, consulting, and proposed) brings additional individual and cumulative threats to sustaining these deer populations. The solar and wind project siting requirements of vast, flat lands overlap several of the NE Region's deer overall and winter ranges, particularly east of I-25.

The primary concern of new solar projects for deer herds, is that the National Electric Code requires that solar energy facilities be fenced for security. The 7–8 foot high fencing requirement acts as a wildlife exclusion fence. Extrapolating that barrier, around an average size of 880 acres for solar proposals in the Northeast Region, results in a complete loss of hundreds to thousands of acres of seasonal and wintering habitats crucial to deer. It often creates a significant barrier to daily and/or seasonal movement patterns for deer herds.

Proposed utility-scale photovoltaic (PV) solar project reviews have increased significantly in the past few years. From 2016 through 2023, CPW's Northeast Region has consulted on 158 proposed solar projects across 11 counties, totaling more than 117,000 acres. Seventy solar projects and 43,712 acres were proposed for NE Regional review in 2023 alone. It should be noted that not all of these projects will be built. As of 2024, 3,284 acres of solar farms (Table 2; Figure 4) were in operation in the NE Region with 3,040 acres within deer DAUs.

Furthermore, recent state solar legislation to study existing local permitting requirements for renewable energy projects (Senate Bill 24-212), could result in streamlining the permitting processes and increase the construction of renewable energy projects in the NE Region, as "Colorado will likely need to triple wind energy capacity and quintuple solar energy capacity by the year 2040". Table 2 shows the potential solar required in the NE Region in the next 15 years. While existing solar projects in the NE Region are currently at a modest 3,040 acres, current consults are 45 times that amount. Combined with favorable policies, this will likely lead to significantly more acres (upwards of 40,000 acres by 2040) requiring wildlife exclusionary fencing.

Table 2. Existing and potential acres of solar facilities in deer DAUs in the Northeast Region of Colorado.

NE Region Deer DAU	Existing Solar (Acres) (as of 12/31/24)	Potential Additional Solar (4x Existing Acres)	Total Potential Solar by the year 2040 (Existing + 4x Potential)
D-4	405	1,620	6,480
D-5	32	128	512
D-10	61	244	976
D-17	20	80	320
D-27	69	276	1,104
D-44	651	3,254	3,905
D-49	1,726	7,846	10,214
D-54	76	8,968	10,460
TOTAL	**3,040**	**22,416**	**33,971**

Finally, when locating sites for utility-scale solar projects, developers typically seek areas close to existing electrical transmission lines and substations to lessen the overhead costs of connecting their projects to the grid with a new transmission line. This results in a "Tetris effect", when multiple solar facilities strive to be centered around a substation, and a cumulative effect occurs, when these combined solar developments are fenced with wildlife exclusion fencing, which renders thousands of acres inaccessible to deer herds.

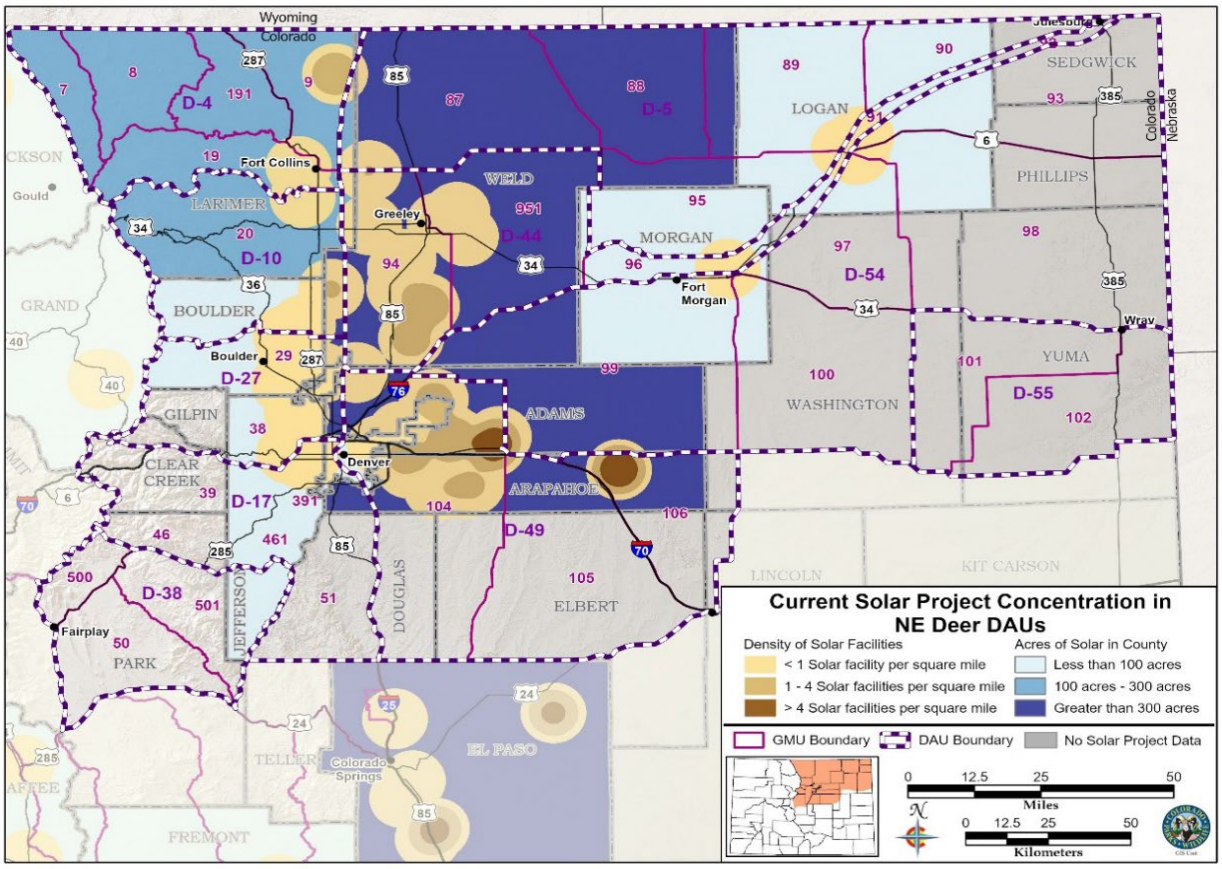


Figure 4. Existing solar projects within northeast region deer DAUs, 2024.

Wind energy has less of an impact on deer herds, primarily due to the lack of wildlife exclusion fencing (except for maintenance yards and substations). Wind energy consultations, across northeast Colorado, have also increased significantly in the past several years, with 14 new wind projects since 2022. Similar to solar, Table 3 shows the potential wind energy required in the NE Region, in the next 15 years, over and above the existing wind farms in NE deer DAUs (Figure 5). Also, developing new turbine access roads and installing turbines can fragment deer winter and overall ranges and increase human activity in an interior portion of a previously undisturbed landscape.

Table 3. Existing and potential wind facilities in the northeast region deer DAUs.

NE Region Deer DAU	Existing Wind (Acres) [# of Turbines]	Potential Additional Wind (3x Existing Acres) [3x turbines]	Potential Total Wind by the year 2040 [# of Turbines] (Existing + 3x Potential)
D-5	223,192 [980]	669,576 [2,940]	892,768 [3,920]
D-49	22,723 [156]	68,169 [468]	90,892 [624]
D-54	54,403 [133]	163,209 [399]	217,612 [532]
TOTAL	**300,318 acres [1,269 turbines]**	**900,954 acres [3,807 turbines]**	**1,201,272 acres [5,076 turbines]**

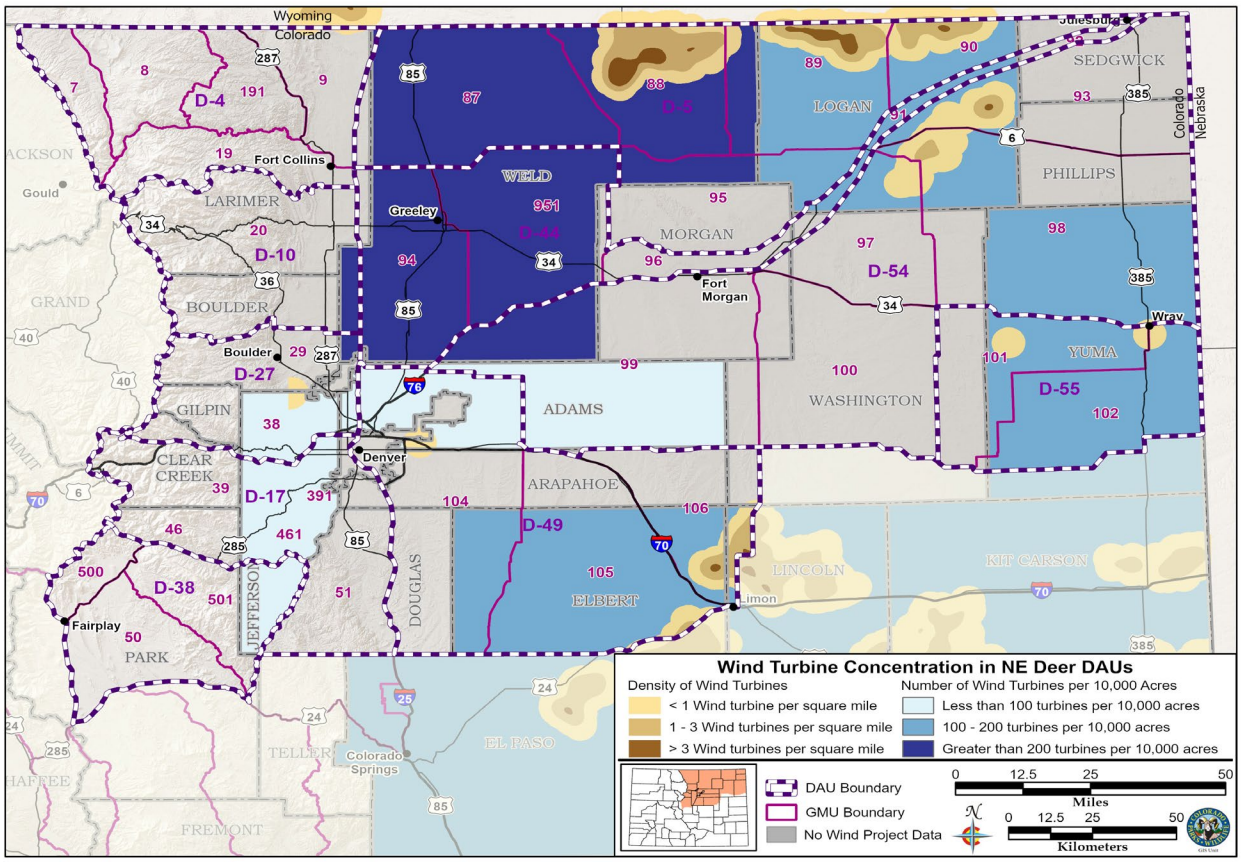


Figure 5. Current wind energy facilities within the northeast region deer DAUs, 2024.

Chronic Wasting and Other Diseases

Management efforts to control CWD in Colorado dates back to the late 1990s and initially focused on containing the geographic distribution by removing deer from the infection area. Colorado's CWD surveillance and monitoring efforts generally declined from 2002-2017. Most of the samples during those years came from voluntary submissions, largely from hunters with a strong interest in whether their animal was CWD positive. In 2017, surveillance shifted when CPW required mandatory submissions of all males harvested during rifle seasons in six mule deer herds. In 2018, CPW developed a CWD Response Plan, which was approved by the Parks and Wildlife Commission in 2019, to provide management actions and recommendations to control CWD prevalence. Since then, mandatory surveillance has rotated among all deer herds across the state and all deer DAUs are generally monitored on a 5-year rotation. As of July 2024, at least 45 of Colorado's 54 deer herds (83%) are known to be infected with CWD.

Five deer herds (D-04, D-05, D-10, D-27, D-44) in the northeast region are considered part of the original endemic area for CWD infection (Figure 6). All 10 of the deer DAUs in the northeast have been monitored through mandatory surveillance at least twice since 2017 (Table 4). During that time, CWD infection rates in some deer herds have remained relatively stable or have indicated a slight decline. In contrast, CWD prevalence, in the deer herds east of I-25, has increased over the past several years, with four herds now having the highest infection rates in the state (Figure 6; Table 4). In D-05 and D-55, CWD reached levels that large-scale die-offs were observed, reducing each of those deer herds by 30-50%.

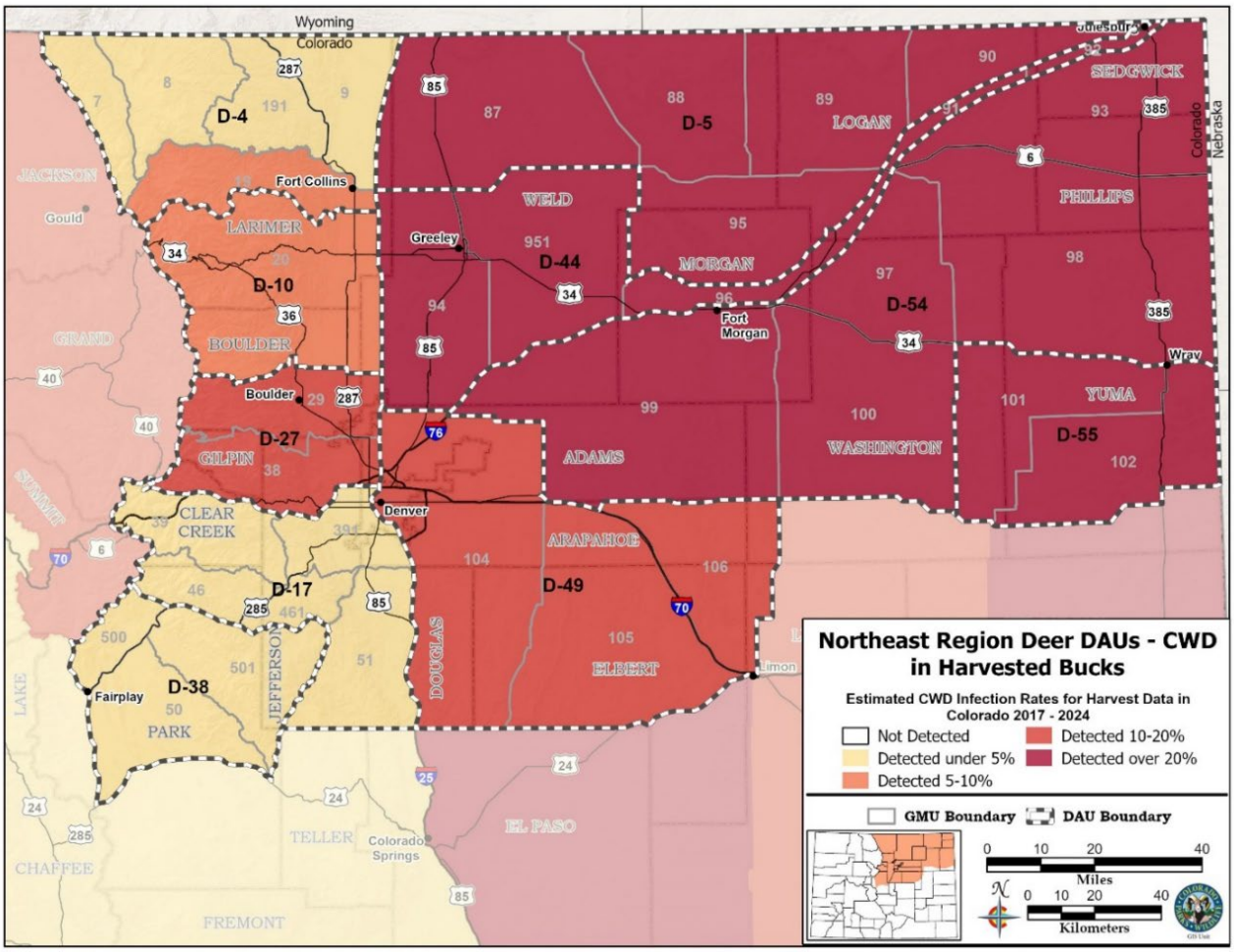


Figure 6. Current Chronic Wasting Disease infection rates in harvested adult bucks within the deer herds in the northeast region of Colorado, 2024.

Table 4. Summary of the current CWD prevalence rates in harvested male deer and the most recent year of mandatory testing for each deer herd in the Northeast Region, Colorado.

Deer Herd	D-04	D-05	D-10	D-17	D-27	D-38	D-44	D-49	D-54	D-55
Male CWD Prevalence Rate	4.2%	26.4%	7.6%	2.4%	18.9%	0%	23.4%	19.6%	33.8%	39.4%
Year Tested	2022	2023	2022	2022	2022	2024	2023	2024	2023	2023

From a management perspective, maintaining prevalence below the inflection point would prevent a rapid increase in CWD prevalence. According to both the modeled curve and the composite field data from Colorado, the inflection point is approximately 5%. (Miller et al. 2000; EFSA Panel on Biological Hazards 2018). Thus, CWD prevalence increases slowly until this inflection, or threshold is crossed, and then prevalence accelerates exponentially. Likewise, the threshold currently used was also based on the level of CWD-caused adult female mortality that would initiate a declining population trend (CPW 2018). Therefore, the threshold for CWD infection was determined to be 5%, or greater, in the two-year-old and older adult male segment of a deer population. Prevalence in adult males is the preferred

metric, because infection rates among adult males (≥2-years-old) tend to be about twice the rate measured in adult females in the same herd. In addition, annual male harvest tends to provide larger and more consistent sample sizes for assessing trends over time than female harvest. The primary recommendations to manage CWD prevalence in deer herds are: 1) Reduce population and density, 2) Reduce the sex ratio, 3) Reduce the age structure, 4) Maximize ability to remove diseased animals at the smallest scale possible (hot spot management), 5) Remove motivations that cause animals to congregate, and 6) Minimize prion point sources.

The primary tool for CWD management at the herd level is to manage for lower buck:doe ratios, as bucks carry CWD at roughly twice the rate of females. In addition, managing for lower population densities can also help reduce the prevalence of CWD. When possible, license allocation can be directed to later seasons and locations, to best address hot spots of higher CWD prevalence. When harvest is sufficient and sustained, it can be a tool for attenuating CWD prevalence in adult male mule deer, especially early in the course of an epidemic (Miller et al. 2020 and Conner et al. 2021). Increasing male harvest reduces male and overall deer abundance and density, male age structure, and the number of infected deer, all of which appear to reduce disease. Likewise, timing hunting seasons closer to the breeding season, when mature males are more vulnerable to harvest, is another strategy to reduce CWD prevalence (Miller et al. 2020 and Conner et al. 2021).

Most, if not all, of these management actions have been prescribed for many of the deer herds in the northeast region. For some deer DAUs, the effectiveness of those management actions appears to have been successful. For other DAUs, especially those east of I-25, management actions implemented over the past 25 years, such as population and density reductions, hot-spot culling, sex ratio and age structure reductions, and shifting more mule deer buck licenses to late seasons and whitetail buck licenses to the early season, to increase buck harvest during breeding seasons, appears to have had limited success. CWD surveillance will continue into the foreseeable future and CPW will continue to implement a variety of management actions to continue to address infection rates across the NE region deer herds.

In addition to CWD, other diseases have been found that could pose additional threats to deer herds across northeast Colorado. In 2022 and 2023, meningeal worm (*Parelaphostrongylus tenuis*) was found in seven white-tailed deer in three GMUs along the South Platte River in D-44 and one in D-54. While white-tailed deer normally harbor these brain worms without any signs of disease, in other cervidae, like mule deer, elk, and moose, *P. tenuis* can produce clinical neurological problems that often result in death. Thus, surveillance is ongoing to determine the extent of *P. tenuis* and its threat to other big game in the region and state.

Another more common disease known to periodically occur is hemorrhagic disease in white-tailed deer, which is caused by either epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) viruses or bluetongue (BT) viruses, which are related. While outbreaks of EHD have periodically occurred over the past 30+ years, mostly along the South Platte River in D-44, the extent of the outbreaks have been restricted to the far eastern plains, and the impact on deer herds has been minimal, thus far.

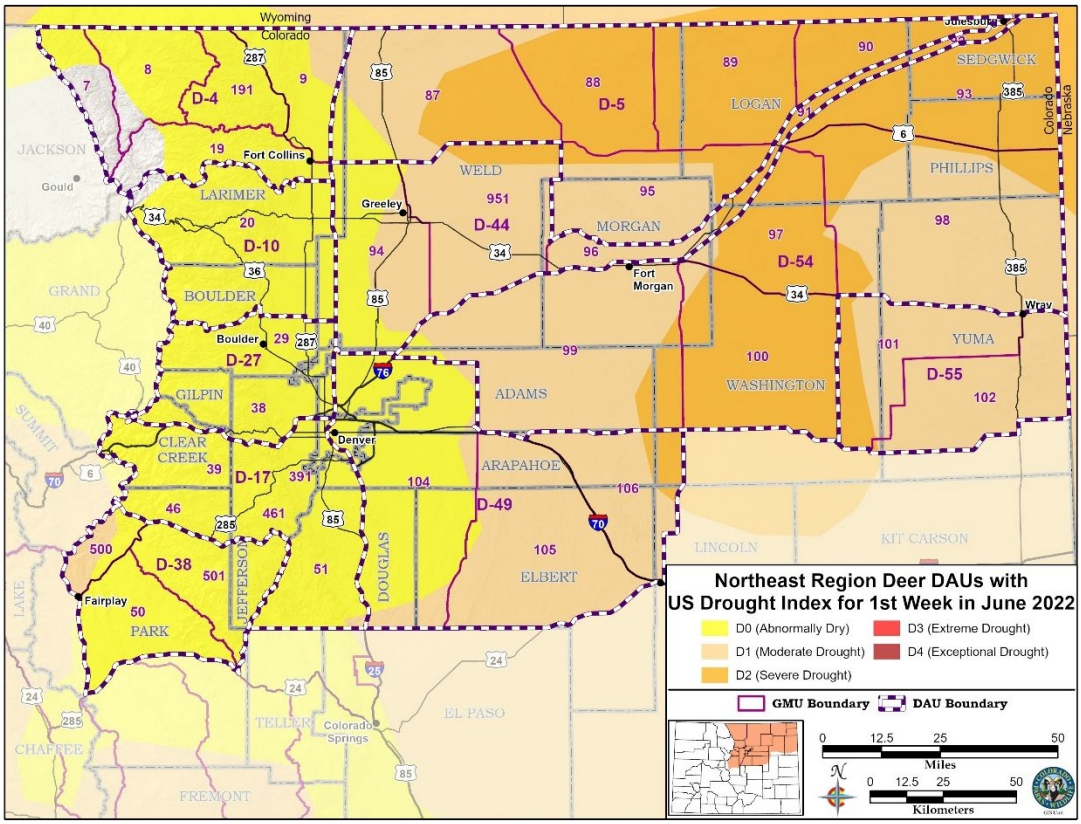
Climate Change

Climate change has been ongoing in Colorado and worldwide for several decades. Colorado has warmed substantially in the last 30 years and is expected to become even warmer over

the next 50 years. Future estimates project the average temperature will rise an additional 2.5˚-5˚F by 2050 (https://cwcb.colorado.gov/focus-areas/hazards/climate. It's only been more recently that the effects of these changes have become more prominent and noticeable across the landscape. Many of the impacts from climate change have not been revealed and we as managers are only beginning to see and understand the effects these changes are having on wildlife and the habitats they rely on. The uncertainty of what is to come in the future is concerning for all of Colorado's wildlife populations.

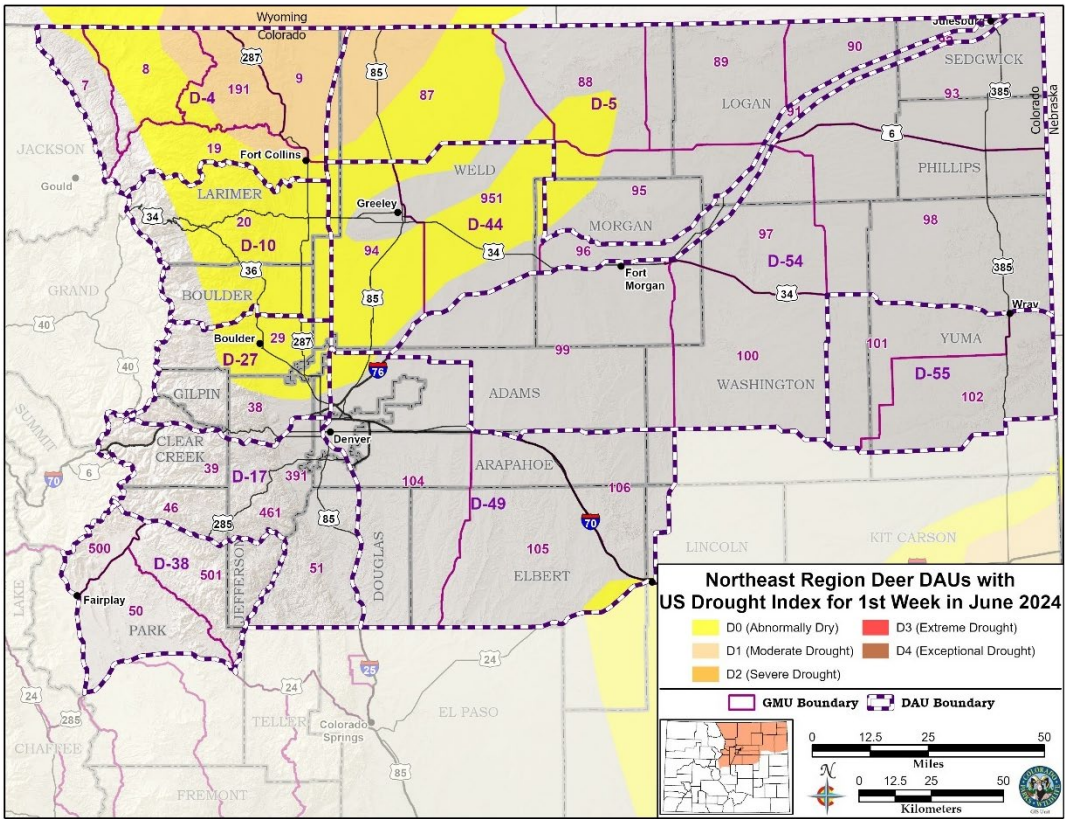
The most notable climate changes include seasonal shifts with warmer and drier conditions, increased average daily and seasonal temperatures and sporadic and erratic moisture patterns (Figure 7A-C). These changes have direct impacts on big game populations across Colorado and in the northeast region. Deer herds in northeast Colorado have suffered from drier and hotter summers and mild and drier winters over the past several years, which has negatively impacted the quality of big game habitats. One of the trickle-down effects of lower quality habitat for deer is lower fawn production. In 2024, several deer herds, on the northeastern plains, suffered from the lowest fawn production in over 40 years. While changes in climate are not the sole cause, it is certainly an ongoing contributor to the downward or stagnant trends in the status of several deer populations in the NE region, over the past few years.

As climate change continues, wildlife managers must remain flexible and proactive in their management strategies, as wildlife populations adapt to their changing environment. While we can only speculate as to the extent of changes that are to come, managers should already be monitoring conditions on the landscape, such as carrying capacity, to determine if changes are needed now for long-term sustainability of the deer herds in the NE region.



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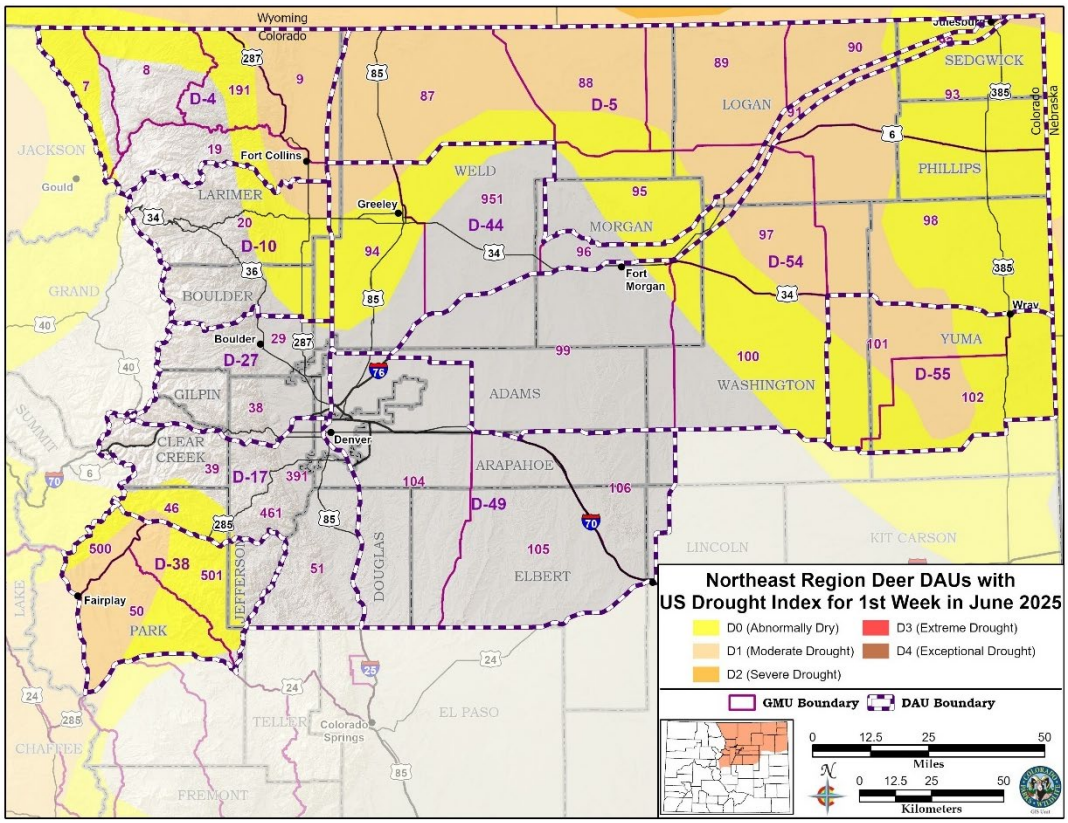


Figure 7. Drought indices across the Northeast Region from the 1st week in June in A) 2022, B) 2024, and C) 2025.

Recreation

Northeast Colorado experiences the highest level of human recreation, especially west of I-25, because the Region has the largest human population compared to the other three regions (Figure 8). Recreation causes direct loss of habitat, from the development of infrastructure (roads, trails, parking areas, etc.), and indirect loss of habitat, through the behavioral avoidance of those areas by wildlife. Human presence on the landscape, in the form of recreation, evokes a physiological stress response in deer that impacts habitat usage, competition, foraging, reproduction, and body condition. Wild animals minimize energy expenditure by reducing their spatial and temporal activity, but human disturbance disrupts this energy-saving behavior, by causing increased movement to escape or find cover. Deer react to the presence and activity of humans either by fleeing or by being vigilant, both of which reduce the animal's ability to feed and rest. Over time, the cumulative effects of year-round disturbance will lead to lower recruitment of fawns, higher mortality and overall reduction in population fitness over time.

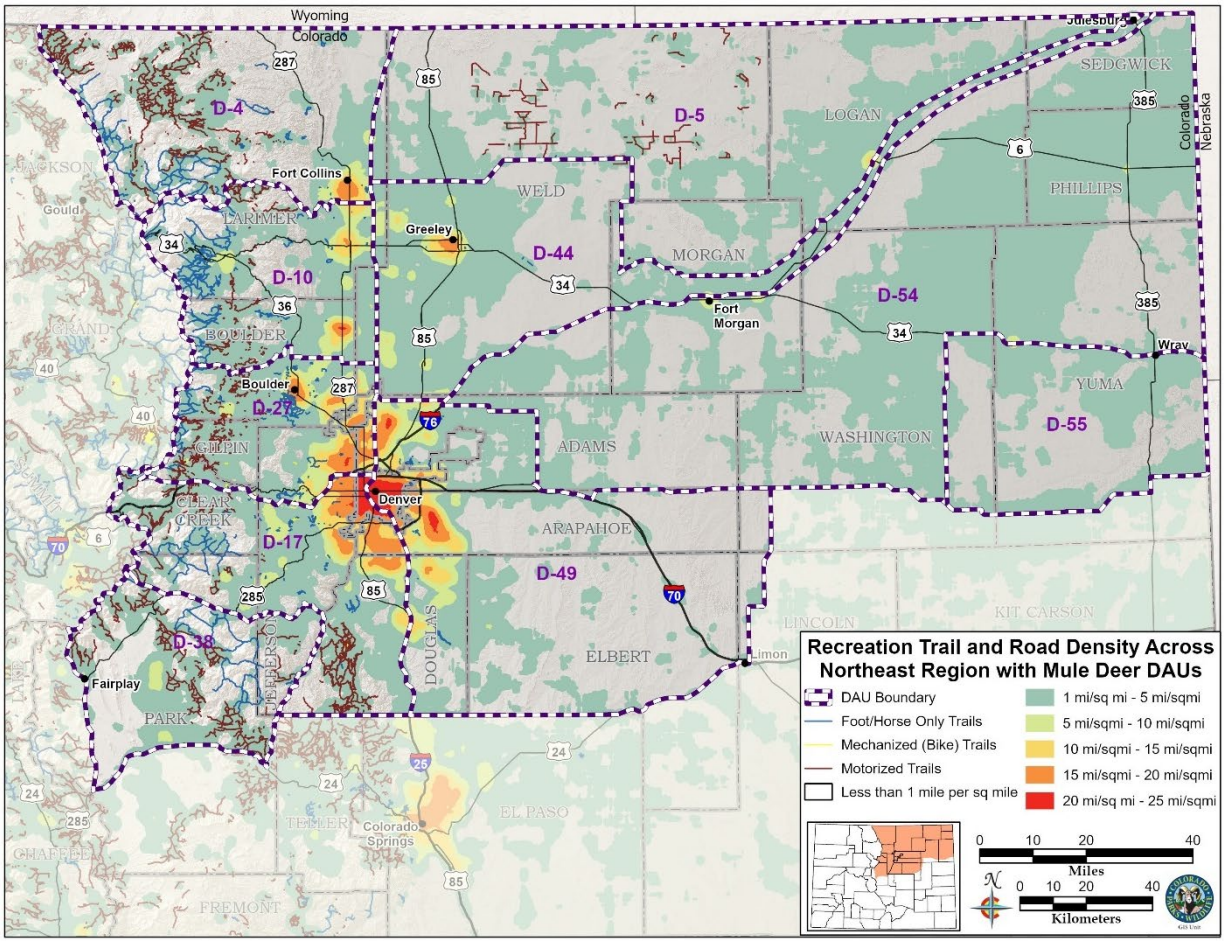


Figure 8. Density of trails and roads in deer DAUs across northeastern Colorado, 2025.

Avoidance of human recreation by animals effectively decreases the carrying capacity of an area, as deer adjust to the activity. Distances from roads and trails are an essential habitat feature for wildlife, and large-scale patches of land that remain unfragmented in Colorado are becoming increasingly rare, even in protected areas, such as wilderness. As road and trail densities continue to increase, the behavioral avoidance zone begins to shrink, reducing the

habitat effectiveness and can result in a barrier to movement and seasonal migrations for ungulates. Often, the indirect impacts, from noise and avoidance buffers, greatly outweigh the direct habitat loss, associated with recreation trails. Increased recreational activity leads to both immediate and long-term impacts on individual animals and populations, by displacing wildlife into less-optimal habitats. The result is a decrease in available energy for winter survival, growth, reproduction, and ultimately reduced fitness of a population.

Winter range forage and habitat for deer are becoming increasingly limited in Colorado, due to recreation, roads and development. Deer are highly vulnerable to disturbance, during the winter and early spring, when they struggle to maintain body condition and have limited energy reserves. Snow depths restrict animals to lower elevations where higher densities of roads and trails exist and subsequently have greater human use. Recreation on winter ranges, including hiking, snowshoeing, mountain biking, and skiing, can negatively impact ungulate behavior by causing them to flee and alter their feeding, resting and travel patterns. The presence of dogs accompanying recreationists also increases the zone of influence, flushing distances and temporal displacement for ungulates. Dogs are efficient at chasing deer, causing high energy expenditure and potential mortality, particularly for fawns. Deer concentrated on winter ranges are especially vulnerable to harassment and predation by dogs.

To ensure that essential habitats remain connected and usable for big game animals, CPW recommends the following when planning for recreation infrastructure:

- Avoid the highest-priority deer habitats when planning recreation infrastructure, wherever possible.
- Limit the density of motorized and non-motorized roads and trails in important wildlife habitats.
- Seasonal closures should be considered to benefit deer and other wildlife in the winter months and during fawning, when they are most vulnerable.
- Strategic seasonal closures of motorized routes should be considered during annual hunting seasons to promote big game use and fidelity to public lands where they are available for harvest.

Preserving contiguous swaths of shrubland, grassland, forest landscapes, and facilitating safe passage along migration and movement routes, within and between seasonal ranges, are priorities for wildlife and land managers in Colorado. CPW relies heavily on federal land management agencies, as well as, private property owners to conserve and enhance habitats for wildlife species.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Collaboration

Wildlife management is affected by many environmental and external anthropogenic factors, often with no easy solutions, and requires collaboration and compromise. CPW engages with various stakeholders, including local governments, federal land management agencies, private landowners, local land conservancies, conservation organizations, hunters, and wildlife enthusiasts, to proactively manage Colorado’s natural resources and habitats. These relationships and collaborations ensure deer and other wildlife remain on Colorado’s eastern plains and mountain valleys for generations. Therefore, CPW solicited letters of support from

multiple entities, held public meetings, surveyed landowners, and evaluated hunter opinions to engage and provide feedback on the HMPs undergoing revisions.

Landowner Outreach

Landowner input was essential to our HMP process because of the large amount of private land in northeastern Colorado. To better understand the opinions of landowners regarding deer management in northeast Colorado, we surveyed both small acreage landowners, owning property 35-160 acres in size (Table 5), and landowners owning >160 acres, who were registered in the Landowner Preference Program (LPP) (Table 6), for the HMPs undergoing full revisions, which included D-17, D-27, D-38, and D-49.

Table 5. Summary of the DAUs surveyed, the number of questions, landowners contacted, and the landowner response rates in the 2024 small landowner survey.

Data Analysis Unit	Number of Questions	Number of Surveys Mailed	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
D-17	6	300	99	33.0%
D-27	6	300	54	18.0%
D-38	6	300	95	31.7%
D-49	6	300	94	31.3%

Table 6. Summary of the DAUs surveyed, the number of questions, landowners contacted, and the landowner response rates in the 2024 Landowner Preference Program survey.

Data Analysis Unit	Number of Questions	Number of Surveys Mailed	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
D-17	5	53	18	34.0%
D-27	5	6	3	50.0%
D-38	5	86	36	41.9%
D-49	5	181	92	50.8%

In the fall of 2024, we mailed both cohorts of landowners a survey with a postage-paid return envelope. The survey included a link and instructions on how to complete online, if desired. We modified questions in each survey to address specific issues for each DAU. Survey results relevant to the proposed objectives are summarized in each HMP, and the complete survey results for each DAU can be found in Appendices A and B.

Public Meetings

CPW held public meetings in various areas to address the individual HMPs being rewritten, which included D-17 (Castle Pines, CO), D-27 (Denver, CO), D-38 (Bailey, CO), and D-49 (Byers, CO). At each public meeting, in-person and online participants were given a

presentation and asked to fill out an optional survey. In-person and online participation varied among the locations with 73 participants in Castle Pines, 4 in Denver, 4 in Bailey, and 21 in Byers. Survey results from the public meetings can be found in Appendix C.

Hunter Opt-In

Each year, Colorado Parks and Wildlife contracts with an outside firm to collect hunt and harvest information from deer hunters for the Big Game Harvest Survey, including questions that relate to where and when they hunted, did they harvest, what they harvested, were they satisfied with their hunt, and did they feel crowded by other people during their hunt. Each year, Colorado has over 350,000 deer, elk and pronghorn hunters. Approximately 190,000 hunters are randomly selected to participate in the annual harvest survey, which is designed to estimate harvest and participation for all seasons and manners of take at the herd level. This information is then used with information collected by CPW biologists to estimate deer, elk and pronghorn population numbers.

In 2024, there were seven additional hunter opt-in questions that were part of the Big Game Harvest Survey. These questions were optional and presented at the end of the harvest survey. They were designed to collect feedback from hunters to help inform herd management. CPW was interested in hearing hunter preferences on herd metrics and hunting opportunities, how satisfied hunters were with their hunt and how crowded they felt.

For this herd management planning process, we used the results from these hunter opt-in survey questions as hunter input. CPW staff reviewed the results for the 10 deer herds to gather input from hunters on their experience during the 2024 hunting season. Of the 23,635 deer licenses in northeastern Colorado, 4,638 hunters participated in the additional opt-in hunter survey. Survey results from 2024 for the 10 deer DAUs and the combined response for the NE region as a whole, can be found in Appendix D.

30-Day Public Comment Period

In the draft plans, we presented the proposed population and sex ratio objectives that balance the biological capabilities of the herds and desires expressed by landowners and hunters from the outreach surveys. The draft plans were posted for a 30-day comment period on CPW's webpage Herd Management Plans (HMP) in June, 2025.

Herd Management Plan Organization

We have organized the 10 NE Herd Management Plans according to the type of HMP update we are recommending. The first group of deer management plans presented are those that were revised and updated, and that we are recommending either status quo, objective range expansion, or reductions of the management objectives (Table 7). We then present the deer HMPs that were recently approved by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission and that we are recommending for extension (Table 8). Finally, we include the complete survey results collected from landowners, hunter opt-in responses, as well as, public comments and support letters in the appendices.

Herd Management Plan Revisions

Table 7. Population and management status of four deer herd management plans that were revised in northeast Colorado, 2025.

DAU	Deer Herd	Current Herd Management Plan Approved	Current Post-Hunt Population Objective	2024 Post-hunt Population Estimate	Current Post-Hunt Sex Ratio Objective	3-Yr Avg Post-Hunt Modeled Sex Ratio	Proposed Post-Hunt Population Objective	Proposed Post-Hunt Sex Ratio Objective
D-17	Bailey	2006	7,500—8,300	5,750	20—30	33	6,500-7,500	30—35
D-27	Boulder Creek	2012	6,000—7,500	6,560	25—30	49	Status Quo	Status Quo
D-38	South Park	2015	2,500—3,100	3,160	25—30	27	2,500-3,500	30—35
D-49	Bijou Creek	2009	5,500—6,500	5,620	30—35	45	5,000-6,000	Status Quo

BAILEY DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-17

Mark Fisher, Wildlife Biologist, Denver

GMUs: 39, 46, 51, 391, 461 Last HMP Approval Year: 2006
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 7,500—8,300; 2024 Estimate: 5,750. **Preferred Alternative: 6,500—7,500 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 20—30; 2024 observed: 31 **Preferred Alternative: 30—35 bucks:100 does**

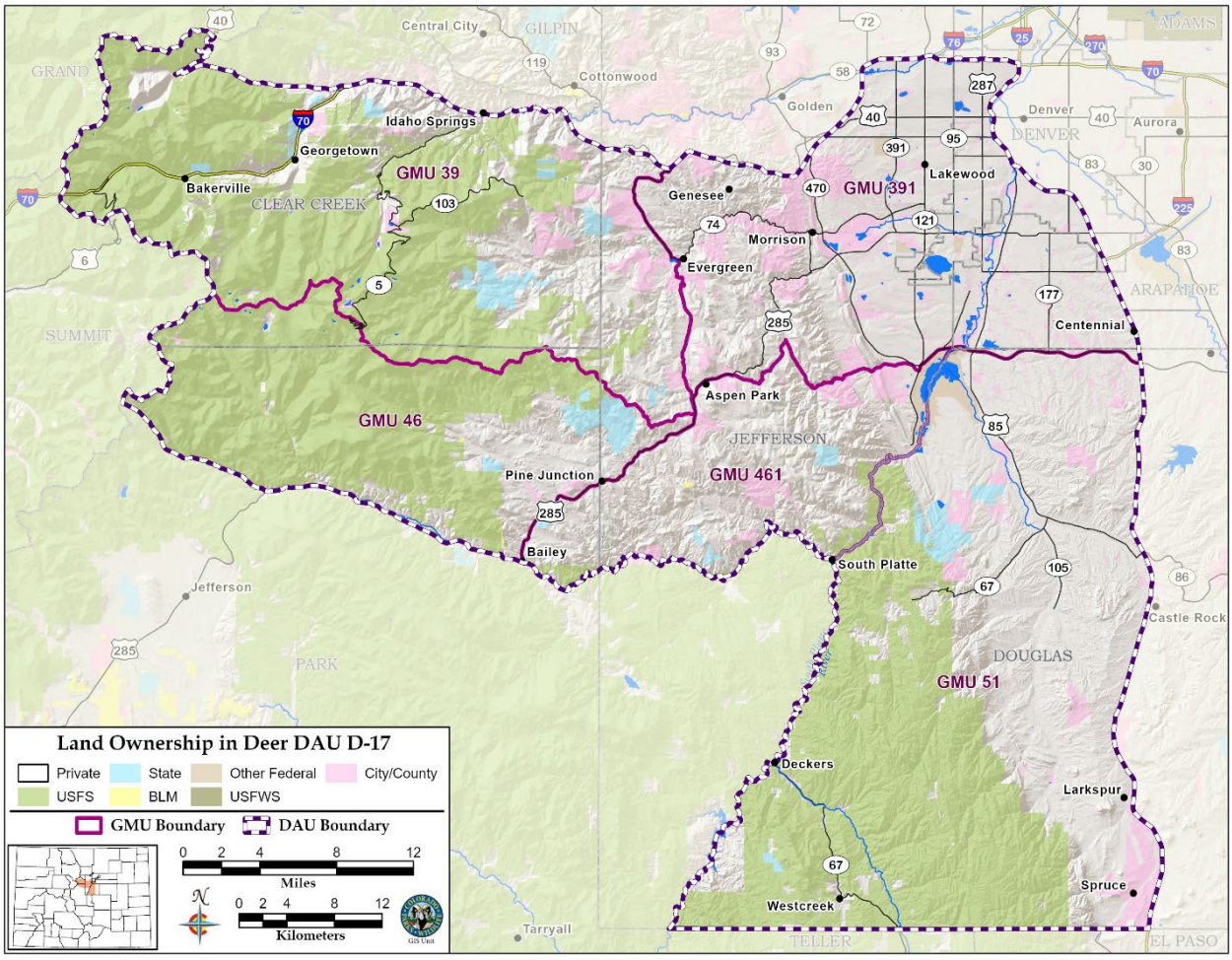


Figure D17-1. Location of deer DAU D-17 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in central Colorado.

Background Information

The D-17 deer management area encompasses approximately 1,505 mi^2 in central Colorado. The DAU consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 39, 46, 51, 391, and 461 and ranges in elevation from about 5,100 feet in the east to over 14,000 feet in the west (Figure D17-1). The western part of the DAU is mountainous and includes many heavily forested areas, high alpine tundra, rocky outcroppings, shrubs, and open grasslands. The southern part is mid-elevation grasslands, shrubs such as scrub-oak and mountain mahogany, and ponderosa pine forest. Relatively recent wildfires, most notably the Hayman Burn, have changed the landscape for deer by returning vegetation to an early successional stage. Much of the western portion of the DAU is in late succession with heavy timber, little understory, and a lack of heterogeneity, making it relatively poor deer habitat. The northeastern part of the DAU is urban, including the Denver metropolitan area. The eastern portion of the DAU has experienced continued increasing residential and commercial development, which has had the most dramatic detrimental effect on deer habitat.

Land ownership in the DAU is 43% state and federal public lands, 50% private land, and 7% open space managed by city, county, or non-governmental organizations. The DAU contains parts of the Arapahoe and Roosevelt National Forests and the Mount Blue Sky Wilderness Area. These national forests are all heavily used by the public, including hunters, anglers, hikers, off-road vehicles, backpackers, and people interested in viewing wildlife.

The climate varies across the DAU as a function of elevation. Conditions on the eastern edge are standard for the foothills/short-grass prairie interface, with relatively mild winters, small snow accumulations and hot summers. The higher elevation areas in the west experience a harsher climate, with cold winters, abundant snowfall and mild summers. Deer summer throughout much of D-17, but with the onset of winter temperatures and snows at higher elevations, they usually move to winter ranges below 9,000 feet, primarily along the foothills.

The D-17 deer herd consists almost exclusively of mule deer, which are found throughout the DAU. Although white-tailed deer have been harvested, they are a rare occurrence.

Estimated deer numbers in D-17 have declined over the last decade from a high of approximately 7,900 in 2015 to a low of 5,750 in 2024 (Figure D17-2). This deer herd has experienced a decline associated with the loss of habitat and increased harvest for CWD management. The 5 and 10-year population estimate averages for this deer herd are 6,500 and 7,000 animals, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 37 bucks:100 does ranging from 28 bucks:100 does in 2024 to 46 bucks:100 does in 2015 (Figure D17-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 60 fawns:100 does in 2023 to a high of 77 fawns:100 does in 2022 and has averaged 68 fawns:100 does since 2015 (Figure D17-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 1,053 deer in 2017 to a low of 718 in 2015 (Figure D17-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 900 deer. Buck harvest has ranged from a low of 513 bucks in 2015 to a high of 770 in 2020, averaging 645 animals. Doe harvest has ranged from a high of 306 animals in 2019 to a low of 174 in 2016.

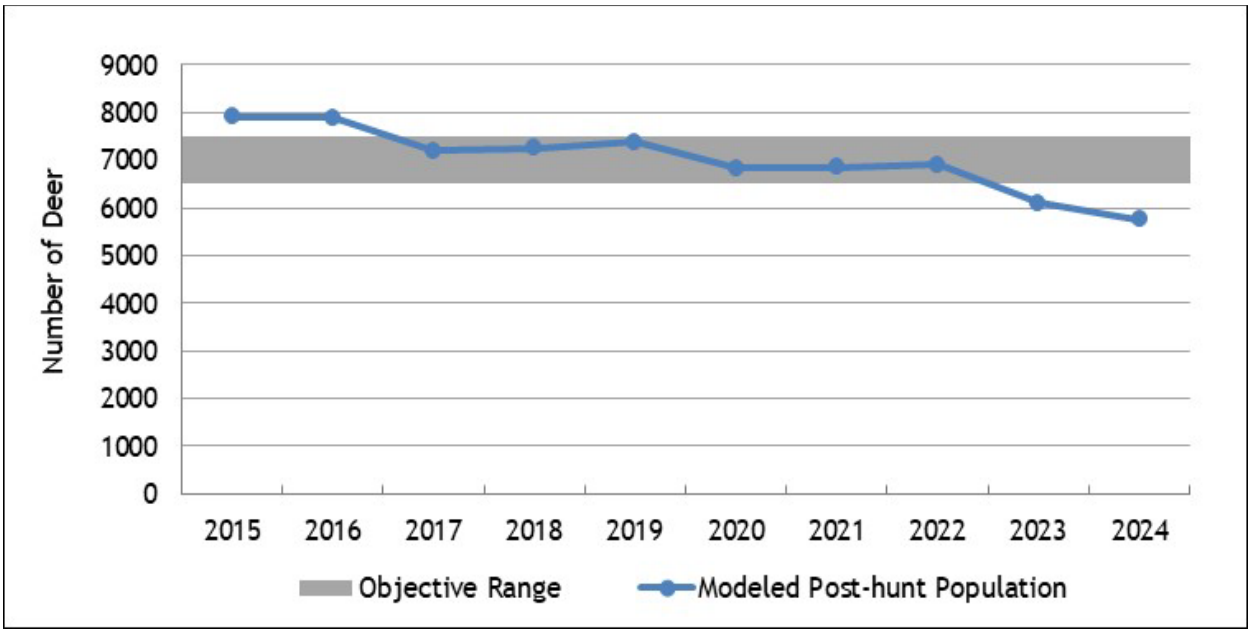


Figure D17-2. Deer DAU D-17 modeled post-hunt population and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

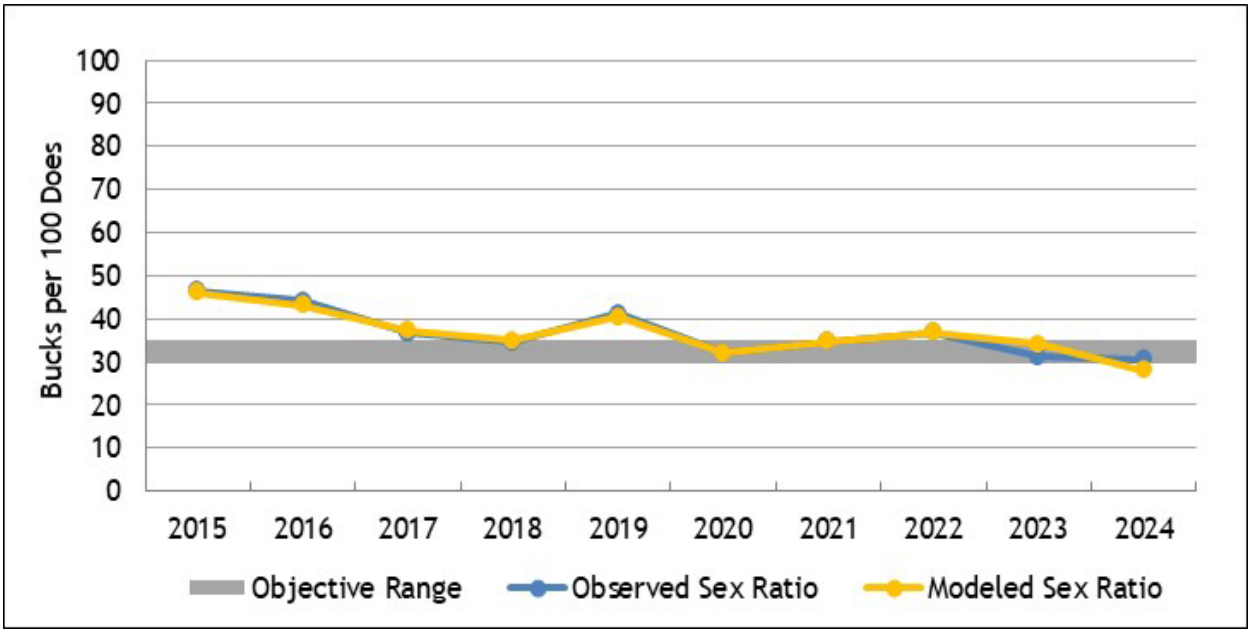


Figure D17-3. Deer DAU D-17 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

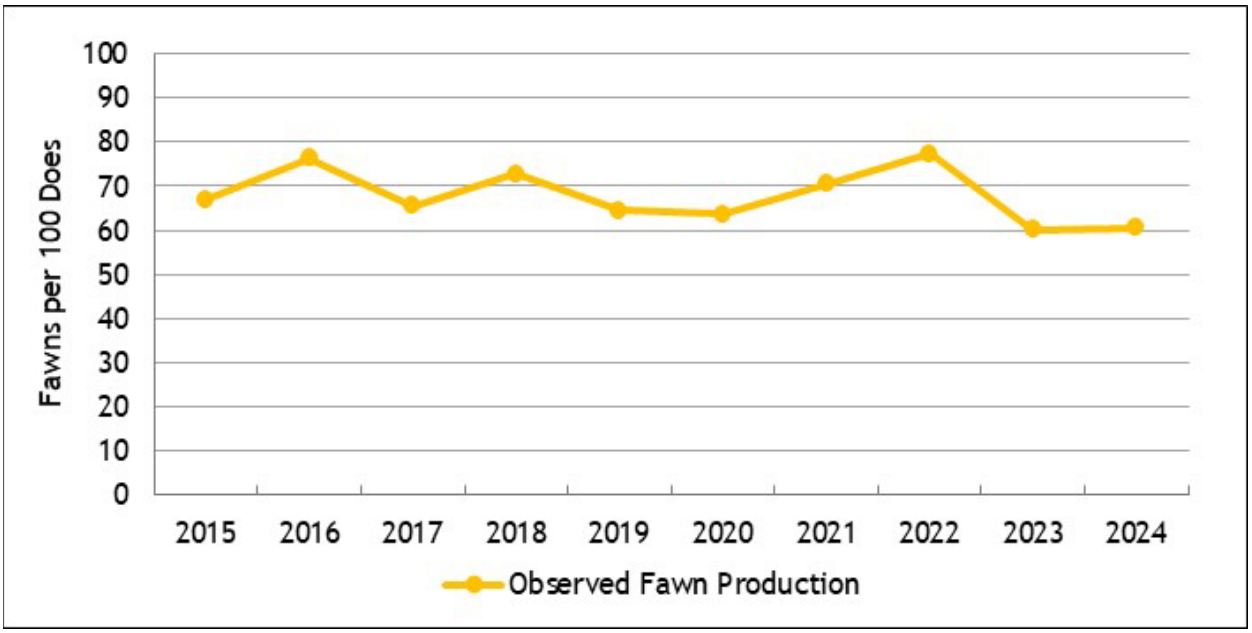


Figure D17-4. Deer DAU D-17 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

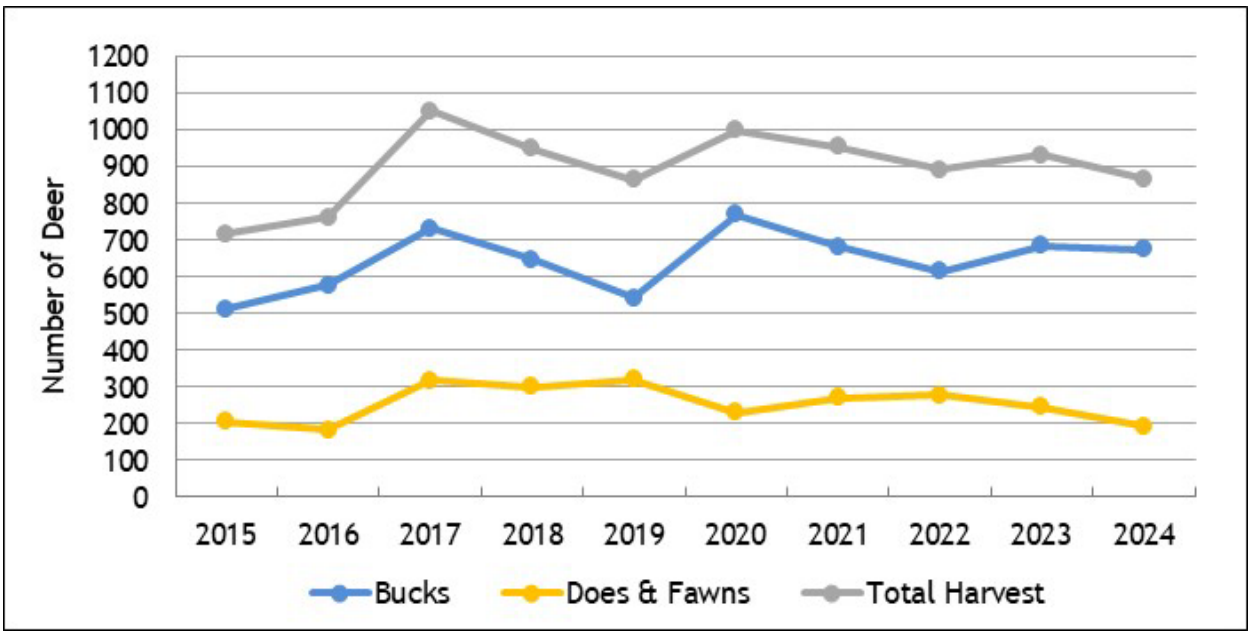


Figure D17-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-17, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The first CWD positive deer were found in 2002 in GMU 461. Since then, CWD has been detected in all GMUs. In 2019, mandatory testing for rifle buck hunters in the Bailey deer herd showed that CWD prevalence was 5.4% in mule deer bucks. Three years later, in 2022, mandatory testing of rifle buck hunters revealed that CWD prevalence had declined to 2.4% in mule deer bucks.

Significant Issues

The primary management issue facing the Bailey deer herd is the ongoing residential and commercial development into the foothills and mountain areas, which continues to fragment and reduce deer habitat in the DAU.

Management Alternatives

Since 2006, the Bailey deer herd has been managed under the current objectives of 7,500—8,300 deer and 20—30 bucks:100 does. Two alternatives were considered for the post-hunt population size (Table D17-1) and sex ratio (Table D17-2).

Table D17-1. Proposed population alternatives for D-17.

Population Objective Alternatives:	
7,500 to 8,300 deer	(1) Status Quo (Maintain current population objective)
6,500 to 7,500 deer	**(2) Maintain the current estimated population**

Table D17-2. Proposed sex ratio alternatives for D-17.

Sex Ratio Objective Alternatives:	
20—30 bucks:100 does ratio	(1) Status Quo (Maintain current sex ratio)
30—35 bucks:100 does ratio	**(2) Increase buck ratio objective by 5 bucks per 100 does**

Management Objectives

Preferred Population Objective: 6,500—7,500 deer
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend reducing the population objective to maintain or slightly increase the current estimated deer population. Under this scenario, the number of licenses would remain relatively similar to the present on the east side of the DAU, but would need to be reduced in western portions of D-17.

Preferred Sex Ratio Objective: 30—35 bucks:100 does
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend increasing the sex ratio objective to maintain or increase the current estimated buck:doe ratio. Buck license numbers would need to be reduced to improve quality buck hunting opportunities in the Bailey deer herd.

Strategies for addressing management issues and achieving objectives

To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer damage licenses and other game damage programs for landowners that are experiencing damage conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis.

Currently, CWD is not a major issue in this deer herd as the prevalence rate from the last mandatory testing in the DAU (2022) was below the statewide 5% threshold. If CWD prevalence increases in the future, management strategies would be implemented to address CWD in the Bailey deer herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. CPW will continue to communicate with other land management agencies, landowners, county governments, and Non-Governmental Organizations.

The current deer population size (~5,750), and modeled sex ratio (28 bucks:100 does) are below the proposed objective ranges. Buck and doe licenses will need to be reduced to increase the population and sex ratio to the objective ranges.

Stakeholder Outreach

The majority of the small landowners that responded (32%) would like to see the population maintained at current numbers, followed by 27% who would like to see a slight decrease in population. When asked whether D-17 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, 38% responded that they would like the herd to increase in quality (more older age class bucks), while only 9% would like an increase in quantity of opportunity. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix A.

The majority of the large landowners registered in the Landowner Preference Program that responded (77%) would like to see the deer population increase, 18% preferred the population be maintained at current numbers and only 6% recommended a decrease. When asked whether D-17 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, the results were evenly split. Fifty percent of large landowners would like the herd to increase in quality (more older age class bucks) and 50% were satisfied with the current management. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix B.

An in-person/virtual public meeting was held in January of 2024 and attendees were able to fill out either an in-person or online survey. The majority of people who returned a survey (72%) would like to see the deer population increase, 21% wanted to see the population stay the same and 6% wanted to see a decrease. When asked whether D-17 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, 37% said they would like the herd to increase in quality (more older age class bucks), while 26% would like to see an increase in quantity of hunting opportunity and 30% were satisfied with the current management. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix C.

Hunter input from the 2024 hunter satisfaction survey showed that 61% would like to see a slight to moderate increase in the overall population, while 37% reported that they were somewhat to very satisfied with the number of bucks seen and 42% were somewhat to very dissatisfied. When asked whether they would like to be able to hunt more often or would prefer to hunt more mature bucks, hunters were about evenly split (51% to 49%, respectively). Crowding by other hunters or other recreationalists was not an issue for most of the hunters surveyed. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix D.

It should be noted that the majority of the respondents from the small landowner survey and the in-person meetings indicated that their major interest was in GMUs 51 and 461, where the majority of the deer in the DAU reside.

BOULDER CREEK DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-27

Ben Kraft, Wildlife Biologist, Loveland

GMUs: 29, 38 Last HMP Approval Year: 2012
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 6,000—7,500; 2024 Estimate: 6,560. **Preferred Alternative: 6,000—7,500 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 25—30; 2024 observed: 51 **Preferred Alternative: 25—30 bucks:100 does**

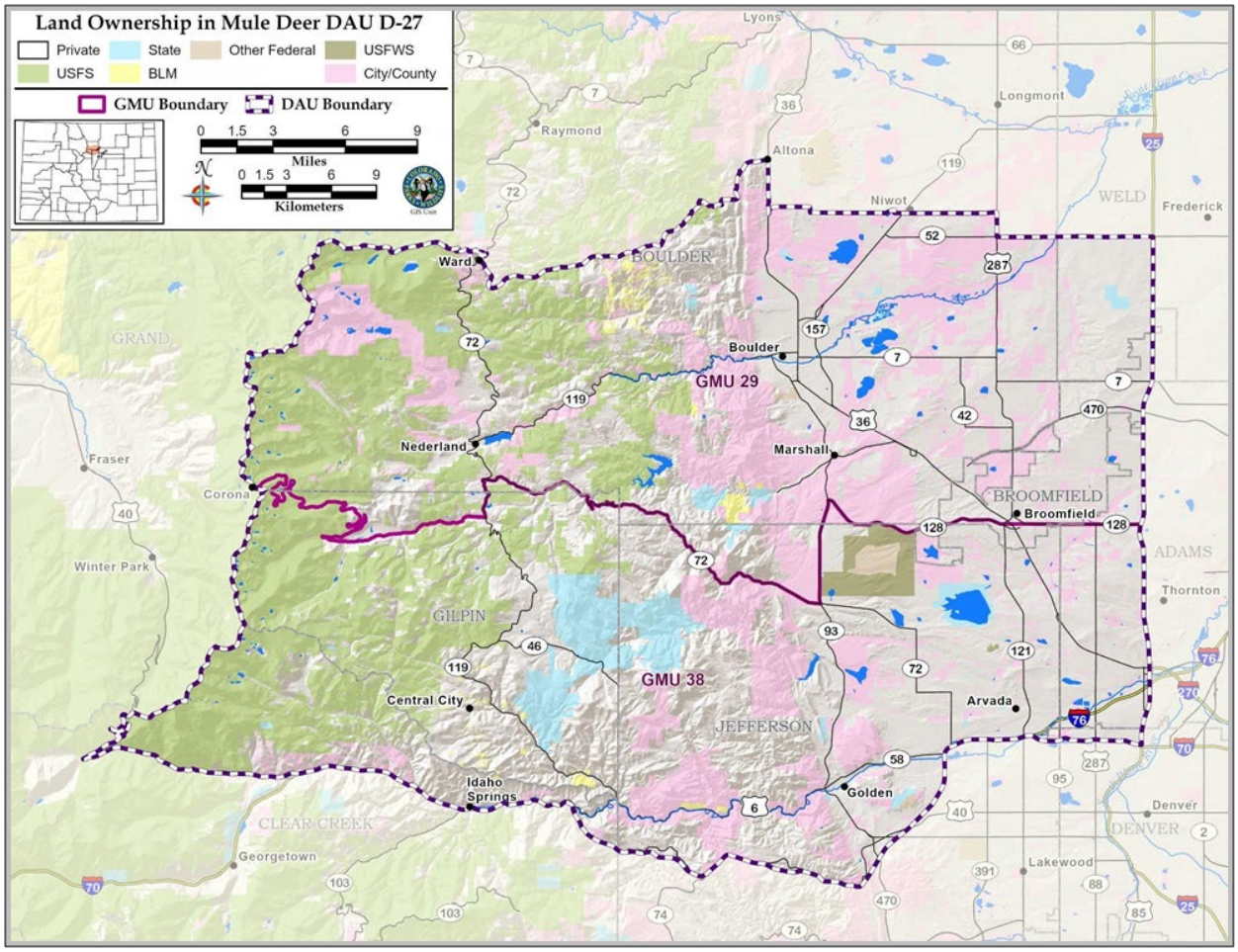


Figure D27-1. Location of deer DAU D-27 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in northcentral Colorado.

Background Information

The D-27 deer management area encompasses approximately 896 mi^2 in central Colorado. The DAU consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 29 and 38 (Figure D27-1). The majority of the area is private land (52%), primarily in the eastern half of the DAU. Almost 22% of the DAU consists of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. The national forests are heavily used by the public, including hunters, anglers, hikers, campers, bikers, and off-road vehicle users. City and county open space is approximately 20% of the DAU and is used intensively by deer. CPW manages less than 3% of the area. United States Fish and Wildlife Service lands are approximately 1% of the DAU. Major municipalities include Denver and neighboring communities, Boulder, Broomfield, and Golden.

Climate varies across the DAU as a function of the west to east elevation gradient. Elevation ranges from over 13,000 feet in the west to less than 5,000 feet in the east. The higher elevations in the west experience a harsh climate, with cold winters, abundant snowfall, and cool summers. Conditions in the eastern portions are typical of the foothills/short-grass prairie interface, with relatively mild winters, low snow accumulation, and hot summers. There are several habitat types within D-27, primarily based on elevation. Habitats range from alpine tundra in the west to subalpine forests, ponderosa pine and aspen communities, canyons, mountain meadows, riparian corridors, foothills shrublands, and rolling plains in the east. The coniferous vegetation types are most common, followed by shrublands, mixed conifer/deciduous forest, grass/forbs, deciduous forest, and riparian. Shrublands along the foothills are mostly composed of antelope bitterbrush, mountain mahogany, and serviceberry. The central portion of D-27 has unincorporated subdivisions and the eastern portion is urban. Commercial and residential development continues to increase, reducing and fragmenting habitat.

Mule deer are the predominant deer species in the Boulder Creek herd and occur throughout the DAU. Small, localized herds of white-tailed deer occur in riparian areas along the foothills-plains interface and the periphery of urban areas. Deer summer throughout much of D-27, but with the onset of winter and snow accumulation at high elevations they move to low elevation winter range, primarily along the foothills below 8,000 feet.

Estimated deer numbers in D-27 have remained stable over the last decade from a high of approximately 6,560 deer in 2024 to a low of 6,055 deer in 2021 (Figure D27-2). The 5 and 10-year population averages for this deer herd are 6,290 and 6,295 deer, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 50 bucks:100 does, ranging from 48 bucks:100 does in 2024 to 52 bucks:100 does in 2015 (Figure D27-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 63 fawns:100 does in 2021 to a high of 89 fawns:100 does in 2024 and has averaged 75 fawns:100 does since 2015 (Figure D27-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 671 deer in 2015 to a low of 397 in 2022 (Figure D27-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 486 deer. Buck harvest has ranged from a low of 241 bucks in 2022 to a high of 370 in 2015, averaging 302 animals. Antlerless harvest has ranged from a high of 301 in 2015 to a low of 122 in 2019, averaging 302 deer.

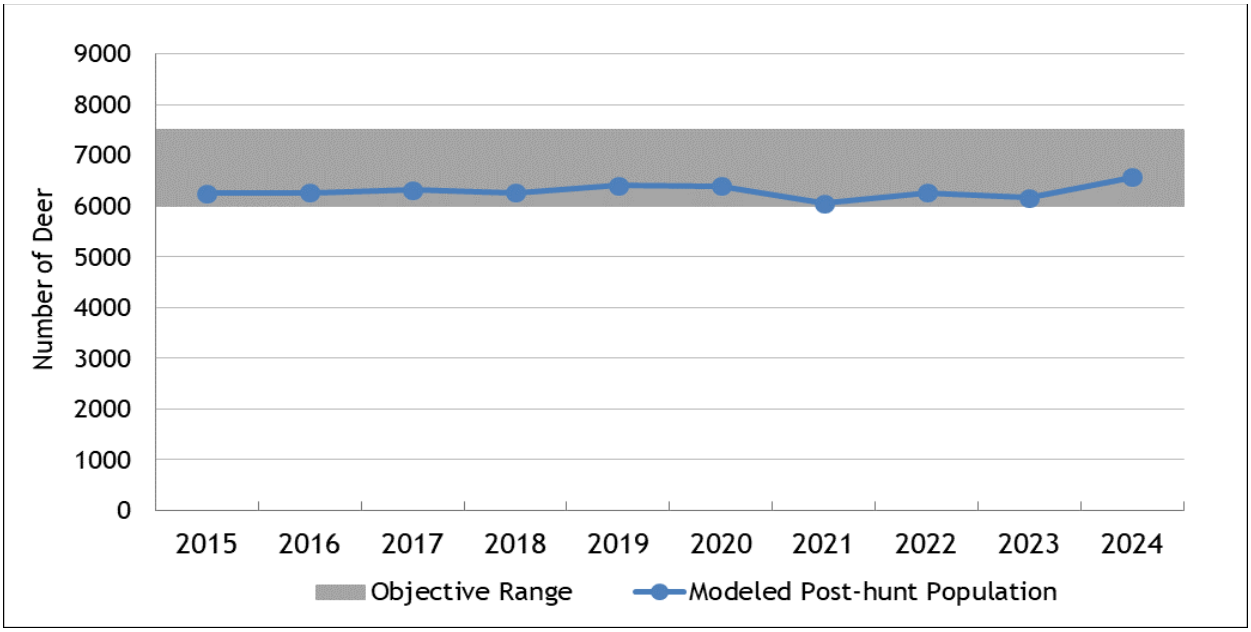


Figure D27-2. Deer DAU D-27 modeled post-hunt population and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

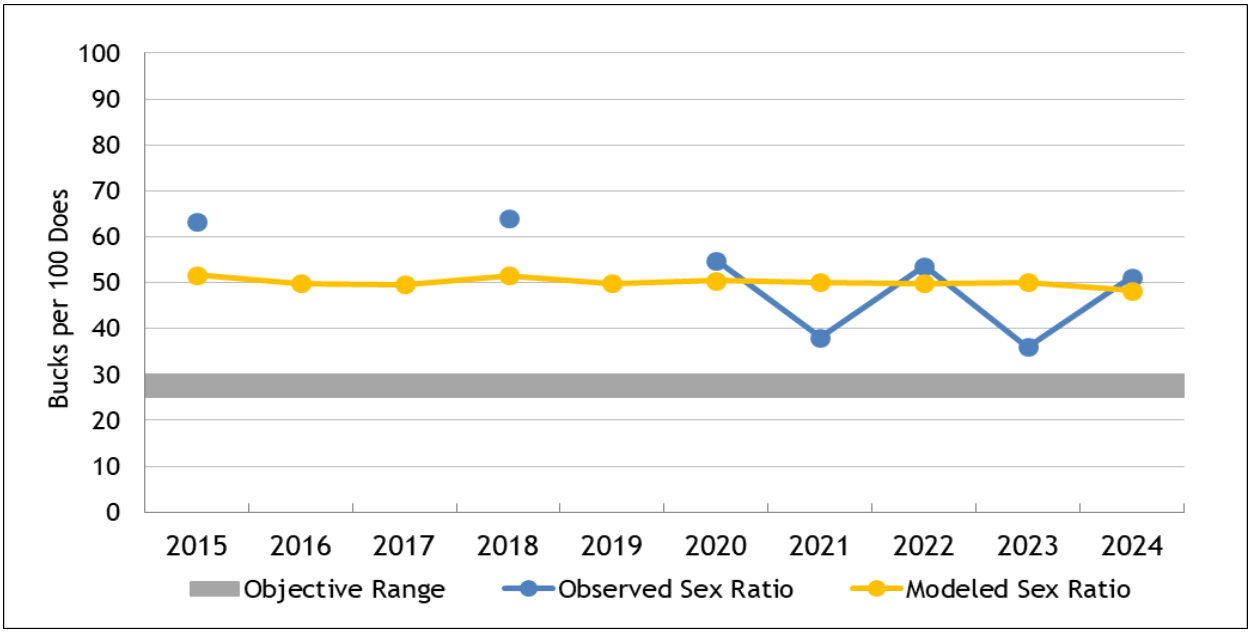


Figure D27-3. Deer DAU D-27 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

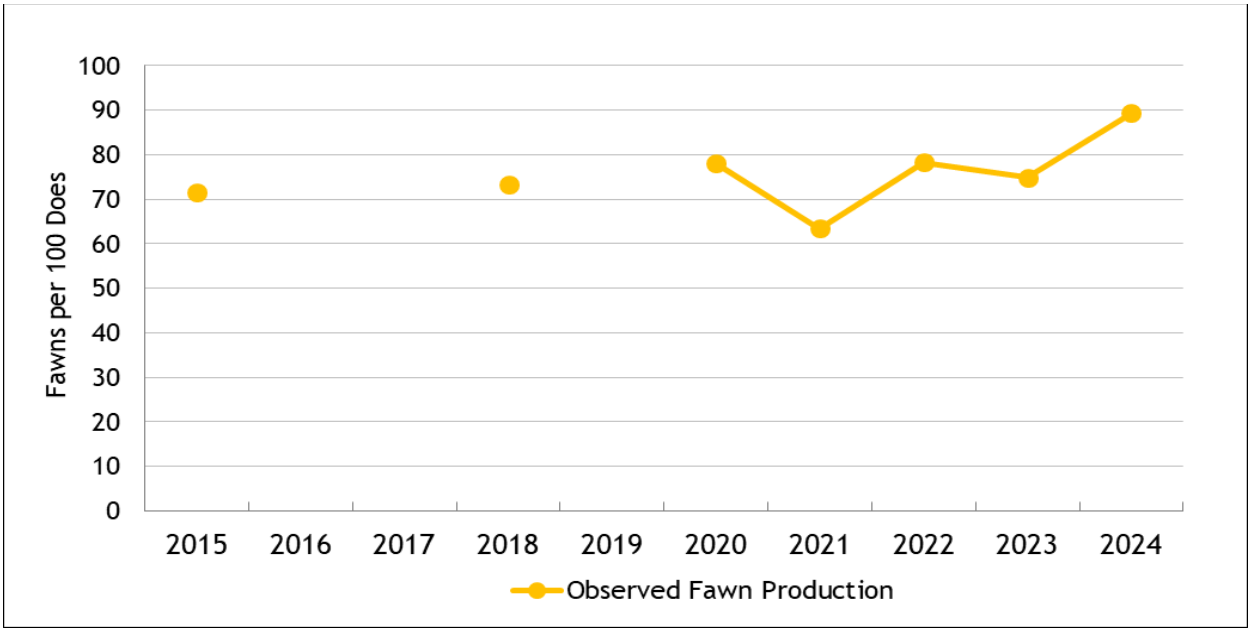


Figure D27-4. Deer DAU D-27 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

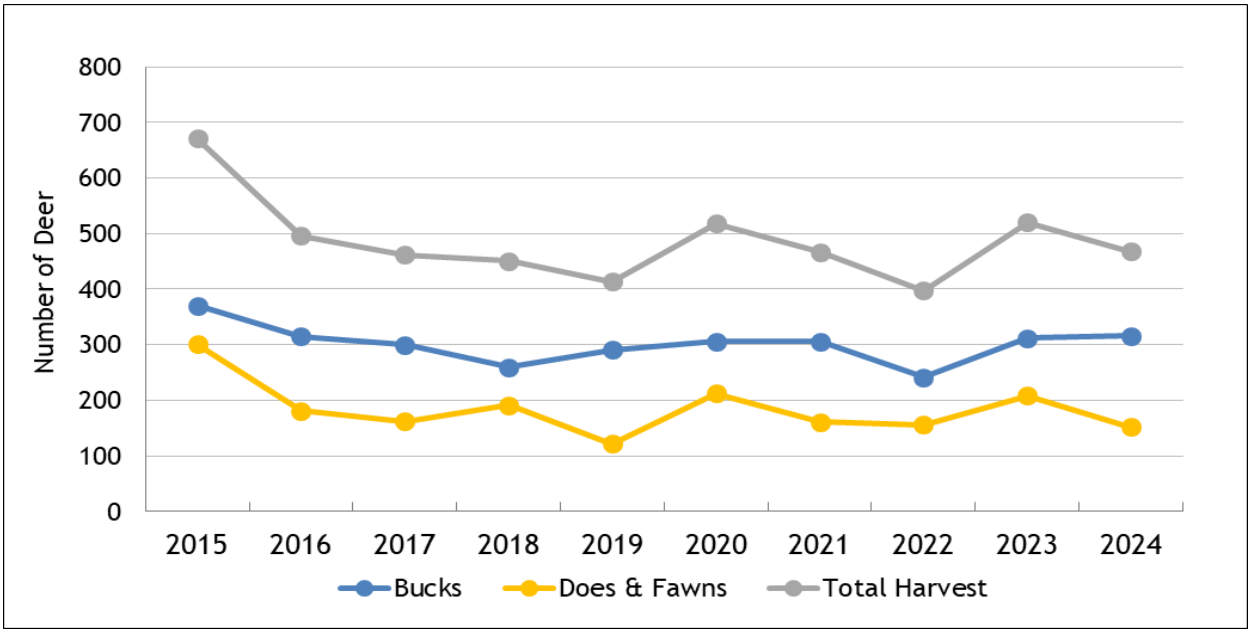


Figure D27-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-27, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The Boulder Creek Deer Herd is part of the endemic area of chronic wasting disease (CWD) infection. In 2019, mandatory testing from rifle buck hunters resulted in 20% (95% CI, 14-28%) CWD prevalence in harvested adult (≥ 2 years old) male mule deer. Three years later, in 2022, mandatory testing from rifle buck hunters again resulted in 20% (95% CI, 13-29%) CWD prevalence in harvested adult (≥ 2 years old) male mule deer.

Significant Issues

A significant issue in the Boulder Creek deer herd is obtaining sufficient harvest to meet herd objectives and manage CWD prevalence. Since the mid-1990s, the herd has been above the sex ratio objective. The high sex ratios are the result of a considerable proportion of D-27 being comprised of areas where deer management and hunting does not occur, such as city and county open space and certain private lands. Sex ratios and CWD prevalence are highest in those areas. The high sex ratio is concerning because according to CPW's Colorado CWD Response Plan, the primary means to reduce CWD prevalence are to reduce a herd's sex ratio, buck age structure, and density. Previous intensive harvest management to reduce the sex ratio and CWD prevalence, in combination with the expansion of open space and changes in private land use (reduced hunting), have resulted in significantly reduced deer numbers on National Forest Land, proportionally more deer on open space and private land, and high dissatisfaction among hunters. Chronic wasting disease prevalence estimates from hunter submissions remain high and have been documented much higher on open space.

Another continual issue is development. The increasing human population in the area has led to increased residential and commercial development, particularly in the plains and foothills. Development has resulted in habitat loss and fragmentation and the loss of traditional land use practices on certain private lands, including hunting.

Management Alternatives

Since 2012, the Boulder Creek deer herd has been managed under the objectives of 6,000—7,500 deer and 25—30 bucks:100 does. Two alternatives were considered for the post-hunt population size (Table D27-1) and sex ratio (Table D27-2).

Table D27-1. Proposed population alternatives for D-27.

Population Objective Alternatives:	
6,000 to 7,500 deer	**(1) Status Quo (Maintain current population objective)**
5,000 to 6,000 deer	(2) Reduce the current estimated population

Table D27-2. Proposed sex ratio alternatives for D-27.

Sex Ratio Objective Alternatives:	
25—30 bucks:100 does ratio	**(1) Status Quo (Maintain current sex ratio objective)**
30—35 bucks:100 does ratio	(2) Increase sex ratio objective by 5 bucks per 100 does

Management Objectives

Preferred Population Objective: 6,000—7,500 deer
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend maintaining the current population objective range.

Preferred Sex Ratio Objective: 25—30 bucks:100 does
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend maintaining the current sex ratio objective range to manage CWD prevalence in the herd and promote buck hunting opportunities.

Strategies for Addressing Management Issues and Achieving Objectives

CWD prevalence in D-27 has been above the statewide 5% threshold for many years and management actions have been implemented in the Boulder Creek deer herd since the early 2000s, and years following in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. CPW will continue to work with local government agencies, private landowners and non-governmental organizations to reduce the prevalence of CWD in the herd.

The current size of the deer population (6,560) is within the objective range and antlerless licenses will be adjusted accordingly to stay within the objective range. The sex ratio (51 bucks:100 does) is well above the objective range. The sex ratio objective has not, and cannot, be achieved with such reliance on harvest from National Forest Land and those private lands where hunting currently occurs. Deer harvest from the National Forest Land is not great enough to manage the herd's sex ratio, CWD prevalence, and to some extent the population size. Therefore, CPW will improve and maintain deer numbers on National Forest Land, while collaborating with local government agencies, open space managers, and private landowners to better manage the herd's sex ratio and CWD prevalence. This herd will continue to be managed to sustain a viable deer population in the DAU.

To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer damage licenses and other game damage programs to landowners that are experiencing damage that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis.

Stakeholder Outreach

The majority of the small landowners that responded (73%) would like to see the population size decrease, while only 22% reported having ever hunted deer in D-27. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Only six landowners were enrolled in the Landowner Preference Program in D-27, and all were surveyed. From the three large landowners that responded, two indicated they would like to see the deer population increase and increase the age structure of bucks in the herd. One landowner commented that there was no longer demand for their licenses.

Hunter input from the 2021—24 hunter satisfaction surveys showed that most hunters were dissatisfied with the number of deer and the number of bucks seen while hunting. In addition, the majority of hunters would rather hunt more often, than hunt mature bucks, and think the deer population should be increased over the next 10 years. Crowding by other hunters was not an issue for most hunters, while crowding by non-hunters was more of a concern. Overall satisfaction among public land hunters is low. Complete survey results for 2024 can be found in Appendix D.

An in-person and virtual public meeting was also held in Denver in December, 2023. Four people attended, but no public comments were received.

A support letter from Jefferson County Open Space is in Appendix E.

SOUTH PARK DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-38

Mark Fisher, Wildlife Biologist, Denver

GMUs: 50, 500, 501 Last HMP Approval Year: 2015
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 2,500—3,100; 2024 Estimate: 3,160. **Preferred Alternative: 2,500—3,500 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 25—30; 2024 observed: 29 **Preferred Alternative: 30—35 bucks:100 does**

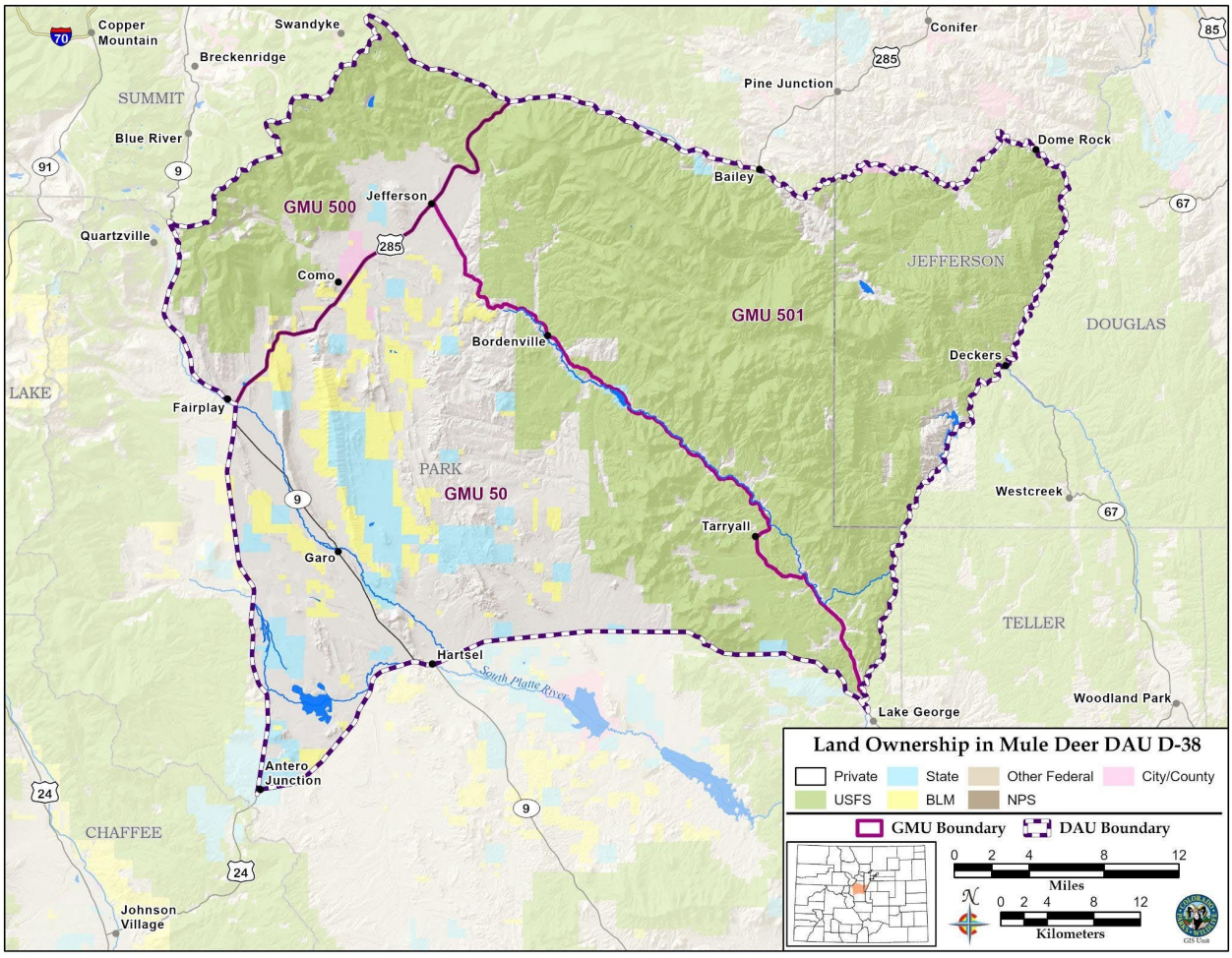


Figure D38-1. Location of deer DAU D-38 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in central Colorado.

Background Information

The D-38 deer management area encompasses approximately 1,163 mi^2 in central Colorado consisting of Game Management Units (GMUs) 50, 500, and 501, and ranges in elevation from about 6,500 feet in the east to over 13,000 feet in the north (Figure D38-1). The central and northern part of the DAU is mountainous and includes many heavily forested areas, high alpine tundra and rocky outcroppings. Southern and western portions include intermountain grasslands, sage flats and open ponderosa pine forest. Relatively recent wildfires, most notably the Hayman Burn and Buffalo Creek Burn, have changed the landscape for deer by returning vegetation to an early successional stage.

Weather varies greatly across the DAU depending on location and elevation. The northwest portions, along the Continental Divide have lower overall temperatures and more significant snowfall accumulations than the southern and eastern portions of the DAU. Winds off the east side of the Continental Divide keep open habitat on the west and south facing slopes, and through the central valley floor during the winter months. The lower elevation portions in the west-central part of the DAU have generally milder winters and melting periods, reducing the severity of winters for deer. Winter mortality is typically not an issue given that most of the winter range in this DAU has milder winter conditions.

Deer are found throughout the DAU at some point during the year. Mule deer summer range occurs throughout most of the DAU, but winter range is more limited and concentrated in areas below 9,000 feet. Most deer winter in GMU 501 in areas where fires have occurred, due to improved quality of forage and the generally milder winters at the lower elevations. Winter concentration areas for mule deer are located along Tarryall Creek, the South Platte River, and western and southern facing grass and shrub hillsides. White-tailed deer occur in very low numbers and are mainly located along riparian corridors.

Estimated deer numbers in D-38 have remained relatively stable over the last decade from a high of approximately 3,700 in 2019 to a low of 3,160 in 2024 (Figure D38-2). This deer herd has experienced normal population fluctuations associated with weather conditions, hunting pressure, and population dynamics. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 29 bucks:100 does ranging from 23 bucks:100 does in 2021 to 34 bucks:100 does in 2016 (Figure D38-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 54 fawns:100 does in 2023 to a high of 87 fawns:100 does in 2016 and has averaged 71 fawns:100 does over the past decade (Figure D38-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 457 deer in 2020 to a low of 309 in 2024 (Figure D38-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 362 deer. Buck harvest has ranged from a low of 228 bucks in 2015 to a high of 368 in 2020, averaging 297 antlered animals. Doe harvest has ranged from a high of 123 animals in 2015 to a low of 49 in 2024 and averages 90 antlerless animals per year.

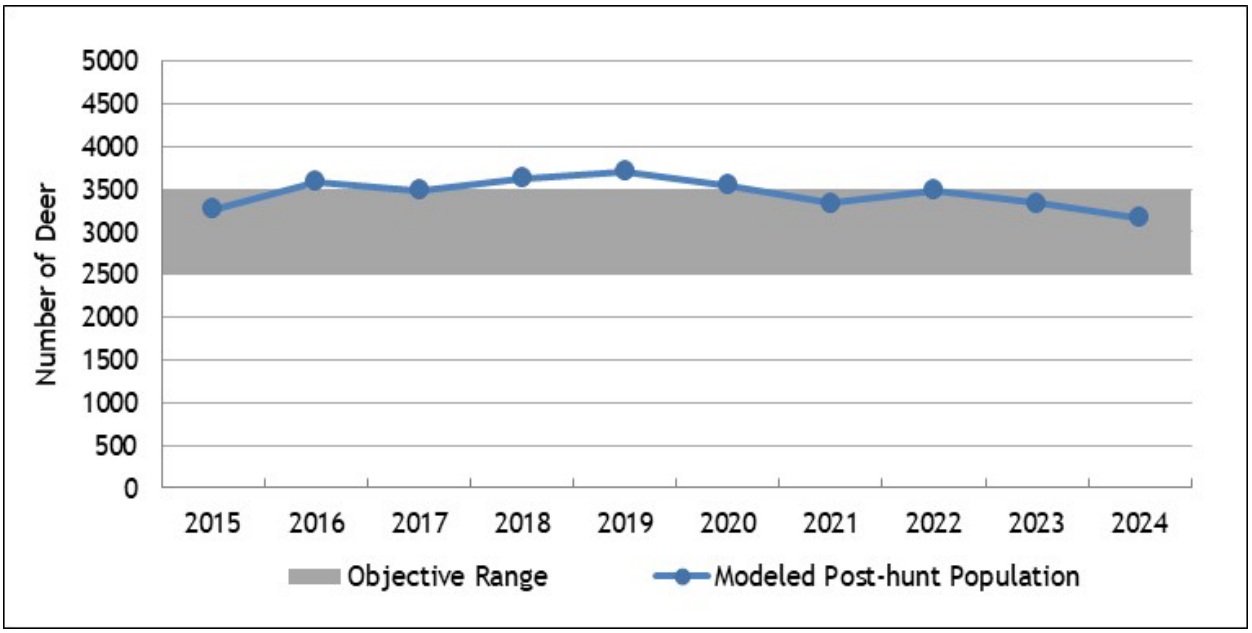


Figure D38-2. Deer DAU D-38 modeled post-hunt population and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

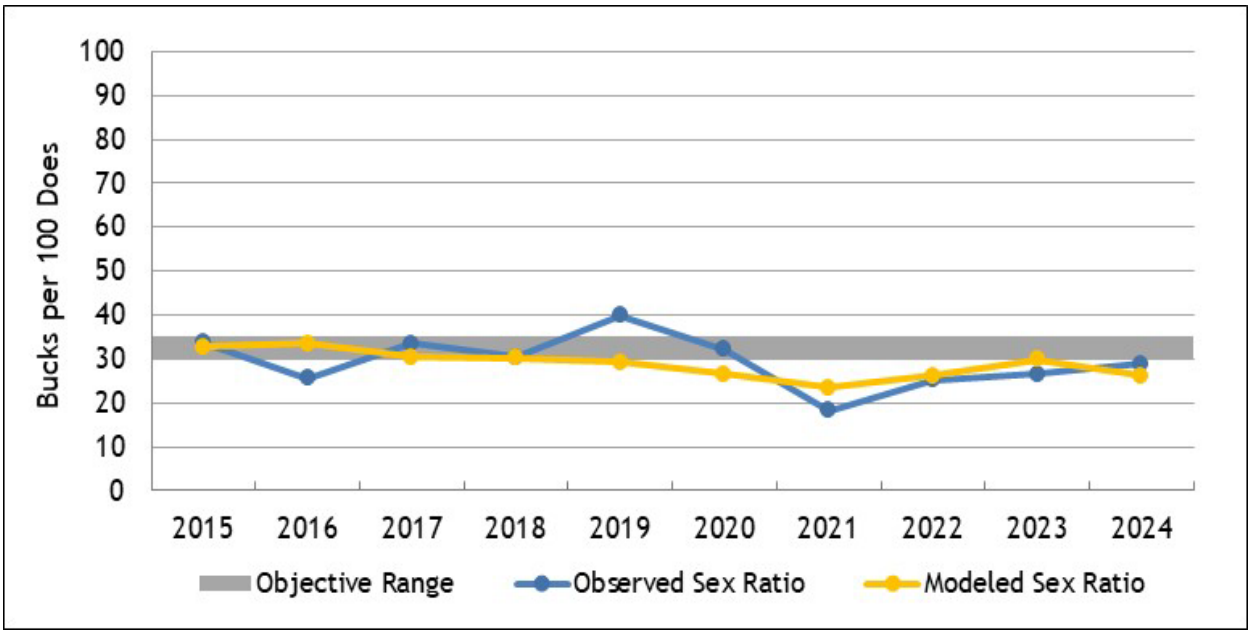


Figure D38-3. Deer DAU D-38 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

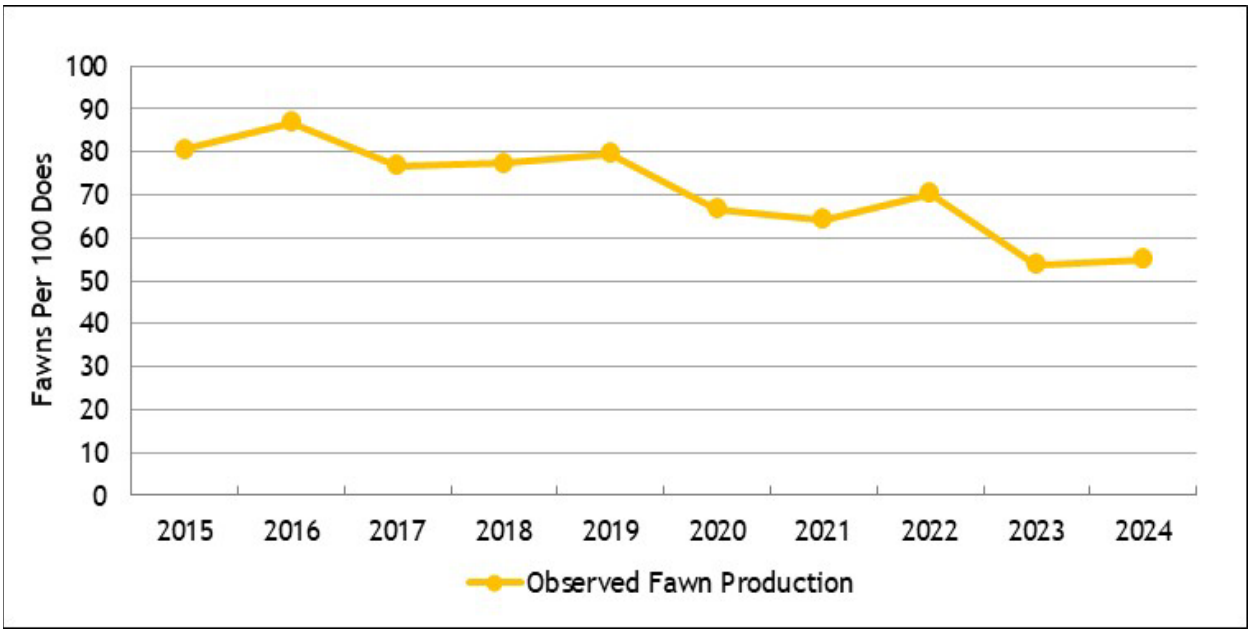


Figure D38-4. Deer DAU D-38 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

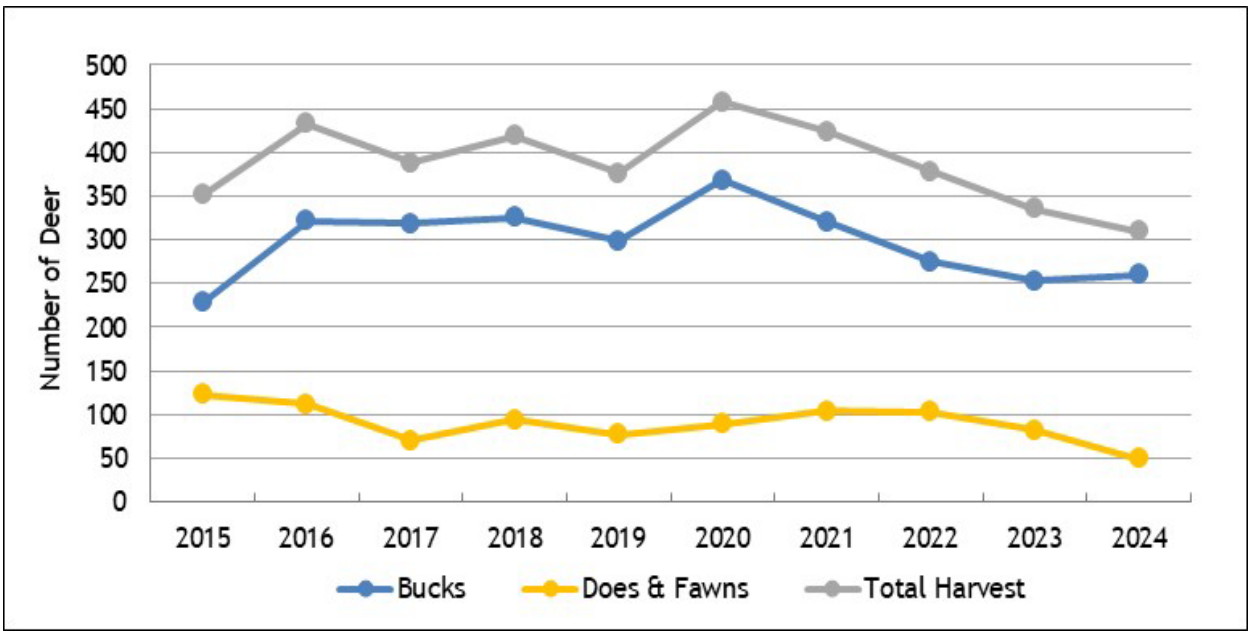


Figure D38-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-38, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

In 2020, mandatory testing for the South Park deer herd showed that CWD prevalence was less than 1% in mule deer bucks and 0% in mule deer does. No samples were submitted for white-tailed deer. Four years later, in 2024, mandatory testing for rifle buck hunters revealed that no positive animals were detected and CWD prevalence was 0% in mule deer bucks.

Significant Issues

With recent wet springs and mild winters, it is believed that the DAU can support a wider population objective range of 2,500–3,500 deer. Additionally, the public and area staff have expressed interest in seeing more deer within the South Park deer herd and an increase in the sex ratio. The previous herd composition objective of 25–30 bucks:100 does is relatively low compared to surrounding DAUs, and mature bucks have been in short supply. There is no history of game damage related to the South Park deer herd, so there is little concern with increasing the population objective range.

Uneven deer distribution across the DAU remains a challenge, as most of the deer are concentrated in the areas where wildfires occurred over the last 20 years in GMU 501 and parts of GMU 50. Strategies for achieving a more even deer distribution within the DAU will be difficult to accomplish, given the variation in habitat quality across the landscape. However, initial boosts in habitat quality, after the wildfires in the early 2000s, are beginning to wane and deer may become more evenly distributed in the future. The western and northern portions of DAU are dominated by high elevation grasslands, which are less preferred by deer than habitats with forbs and browse. Fire suppression over the last 100 years, in those areas, has also contributed to dense stands of forest consisting of lower quality deer forage.

Management Alternatives

Since 2015, the South Park deer herd has been managed under the current objectives of 2,500—3,100 deer and 25—30 bucks:100 does. Two alternatives were considered for the post-hunt population size (Table D38-1) and sex ratio (Table D38-2).

Table D38-1. Proposed population alternatives for D-38.

Population Objective Alternatives:	
2,500 to 3,100 deer	(1) Status Quo (Maintain current population objective)
2,500 to 3,500 deer	**(2) A 13% increase to the maximum**

Table D38-2. Proposed sex ratio alternatives for D-38.

Sex Ratio Objective Alternatives:	
25—30 bucks:100 does ratio	(1) Status Quo (Maintain current sex ratio)
30—35 bucks:100 does ratio	**(2) Increase buck ratio objective by 5 bucks per 100 does**

Management Objectives

Preferred Population Objective: 2,500—3,500 deer
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend widening the population objective to maintain the current estimated deer population, and allow for additional growth. Under this scenario, the number of licenses would need to be reduced for a few years.

Preferred Sex Ratio Objective: 30—35 bucks:100 does
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend increasing the sex ratio objective to increase the number of mature bucks on the landscape. Buck licenses would need to be reduced until the objective is reached to maintain some quality buck hunting in the South Park deer herd.

Strategies for addressing management issues and achieving objectives

Currently, CWD is not an issue in this deer herd as mandatory testing in 2024 showed the prevalence rate was 0% in adult bucks and D-38 will continue to be tested on a five year rotation. If a mandatory testing prevalence rate exceeds 5%, management strategies will be implemented to address CWD in the South Park deer herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. CPW will continue to communicate with other land management agencies, landowners, county governments and Non-Governmental Organizations.

The current deer population size (~3,160) is within the proposed objective range and the modeled sex ratio (26 bucks:100 does) is below the objective range. Buck licenses have been reduced over the past four years to increase buck numbers back to within objective and increase the number of mature bucks. Doe licenses will need a short term decrease to maintain and expand the current population.

Stakeholder Outreach

The majority of the small landowners that responded (35%) would like to see the population maintained at the current numbers, followed by 28%, who would like to see a slight decrease in population. When asked whether D-38 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, 30% responded that they would like the herd to increase in quality (more older age class bucks). In comparison, only 11% would like to see an increase in the quantity of hunting opportunity. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix A.

The majority of the large landowners registered in the Landowner Preference Program that responded (69%) would like to see the deer population increase, 18% preferred the population be maintained at current numbers and only 6% recommended a decrease. When asked whether D-38 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, 38% said they would like an increase in quality (more older age class bucks), while only 10% wanted an increase in quantity of opportunity and 38% stated they were satisfied with current management. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix B.

An in-person meeting was held in January, 2024. Four people provided input that they would like to see the herd size increase greatly, two also would like to see the herd managed for increased quality of opportunity, one would like to see increased quantity of opportunity, and one was satisfied with the current management.

Hunter input from the 2024 hunter satisfaction survey showed that 70% of hunters would like to see a slight to moderate increase in the overall population, while 38% reported that they were somewhat to very satisfied with the number of bucks seen and 40% were somewhat to very dissatisfied. When asked whether they would like to be able to hunt more often or prefer to hunt more mature bucks, 58% of hunters preferred hunting more mature males compared to 42% who preferred to hunt more often. Crowding by other hunters or other recreators was not an issue for most of the hunters surveyed. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix D.

Finally, input was gathered from the South Park HPP Committee. The committee supports the proposed population and sex ratio objectives and provided a letter of support (Appendix E).

BIJOU CREEK DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-49

Mark Fisher, Wildlife Biologist, Denver

GMUs: 104, 105, 106 Last HMP Approval Year: 2009
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 5,500—6,500; 2024 Estimate: 5,620. **Preferred Alternative: 5,000—6,000 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 30—35; 2024 observed: 50 **Preferred Alternative: (Status Quo) 30—35 bucks:100 does**

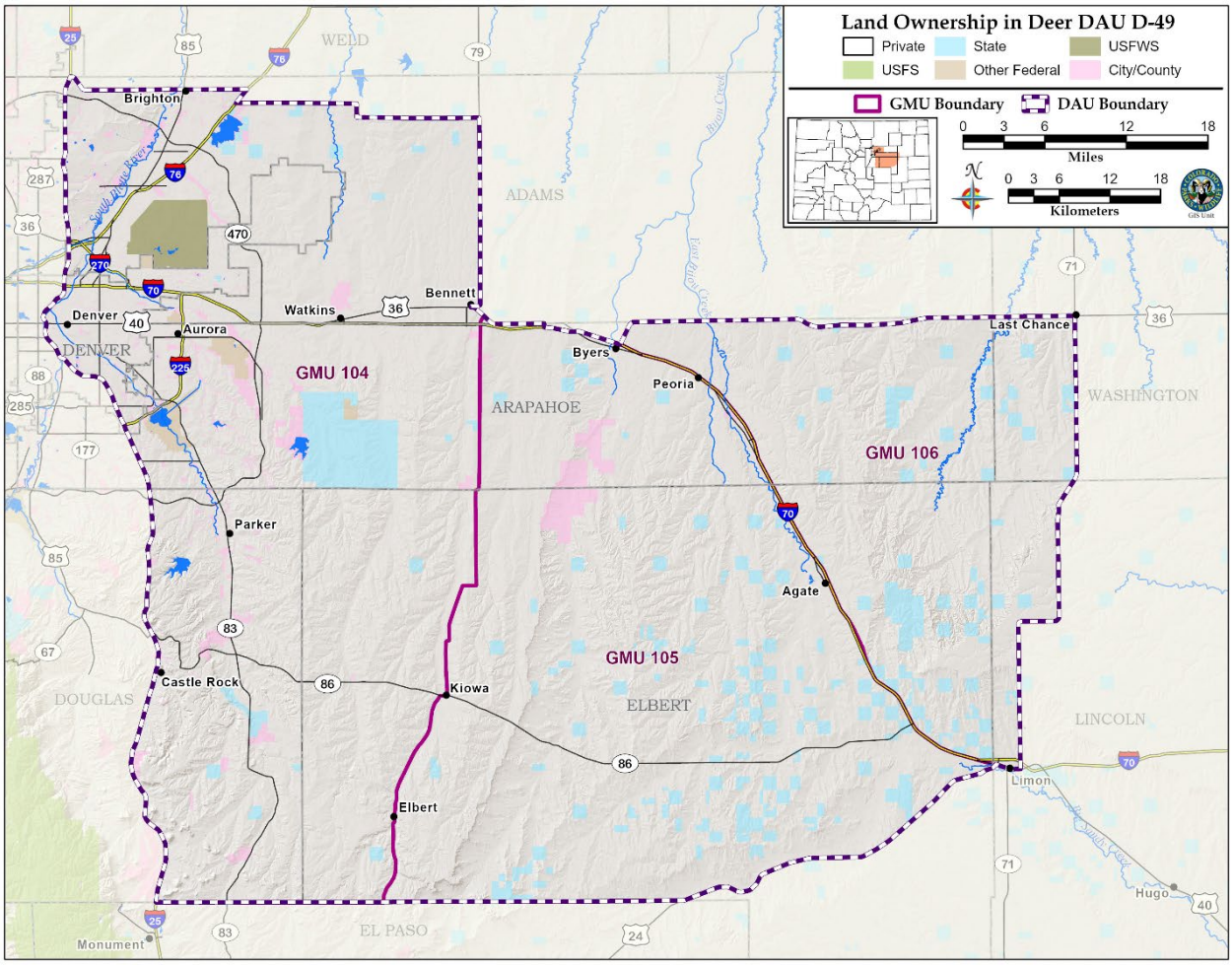


Figure D49-1. Location of deer DAU D-49 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in central Colorado.

Background Information

The D-49 deer management area encompasses approximately 3,193 mi^2 in eastern Colorado and consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 104, 105 and 106 (Figure D49-1). Most of the topography is flat to gently rolling prairie. There are some moderately steep areas, including rocky buttes with steep cliffs in the southwest corner of GMU 104. Along the eastern boundary of GMU 106 there is an area of steep dry ravines and rock outcroppings, which supports both conifer and deciduous trees and shrubs. There are several habitat types in the Bijou Creek DAU, including urban, shortgrass prairie, ponderosa pine woodland, cottonwood-willow riparian, dryland agricultural, and irrigated agricultural. In the eastern part of the DAU, the most common habitat type is shortgrass prairie interspersed with ephemeral streams supporting cottonwood-willow riparian habitat. The western part of the DAU is a densely populated metropolitan area, including the eastern Denver metropolitan area. Thus, nearly all of the land is private property and there is no hunting allowed on most of the public lands. The DAU has experienced continued increasing residential and commercial development, which has had the most dramatic detrimental effect on deer habitat.

The climate is semi-arid, with average annual precipitation of approximately 14 to 18 inches per year. Typically, there are a few large snow events, mostly in the late winter or early spring. Summer days are often hot, with daily high temperatures reaching the mid to upper 90s. Daily monsoon rains from afternoon thunderstorms are not unusual, but this pattern does not occur in all years. Seventy to eighty percent of annual precipitation falls during the period of April through September.

The Bijou Creek deer herd consists primarily of mule deer and some white-tailed deer, of which, both can be found throughout the DAU. Estimated mule deer numbers in D-49 have remained relatively stable over the last decade from a high of approximately 5,620 mule deer in 2024 to a low of 4,600 mule deer in 2015 (Figure D49-2). This deer herd has experienced normal population fluctuations associated with weather conditions, hunting pressure, and population dynamics. The 5 and 10-year population estimate averages for this deer herd are 5,367 and 5,188 animals, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt buck:doe ratio has averaged 44 bucks:100 does ranging from 38 bucks:100 does in 2015 to 49 bucks:100 does in 2021 (Figure D49-3). Observed fawn:doe ratios have varied from a low of 54 fawns:100 does in 2023 to a high of 89 fawns:100 does in 2016 and has averaged 69 fawns:100 does (Figure D49-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 1,109 deer in 2020 to a low of 775 deer in 2015 (Figure D49-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 931 deer. Buck harvest has ranged from a low of 360 bucks in 2015 to a high of 621 in 2017, averaging 500 animals. Doe harvest has ranged from a high of 573 animals in 2020 to a low of 354 in 2022.

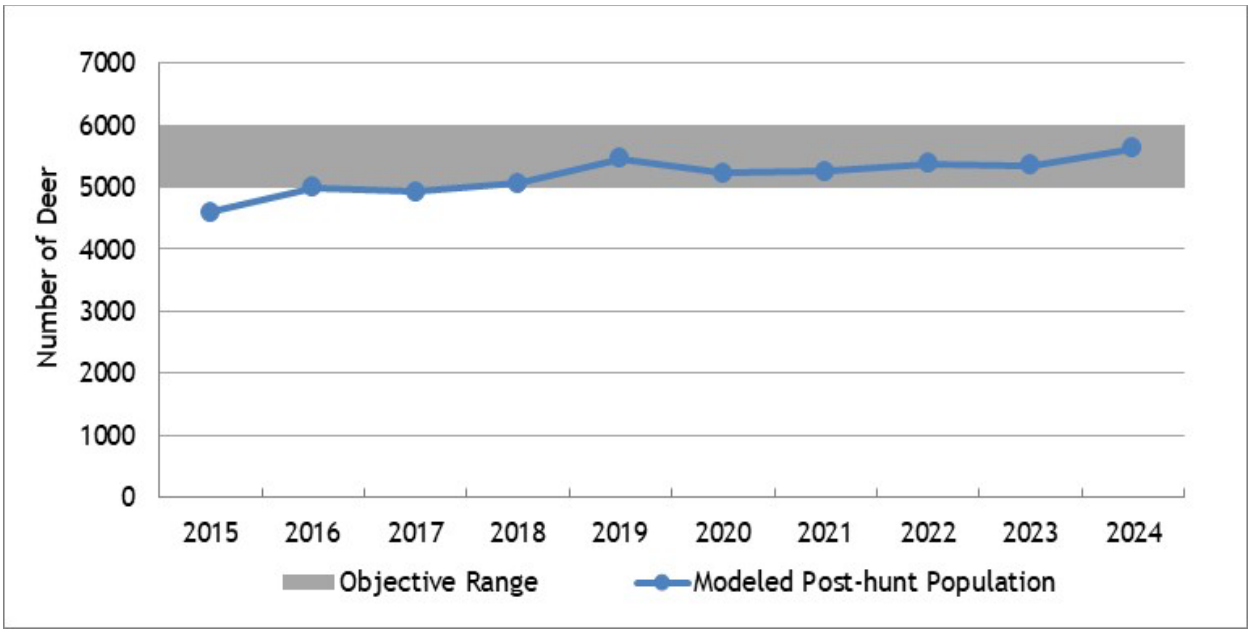


Figure D49-2. Deer DAU D-49 modeled post-hunt population and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

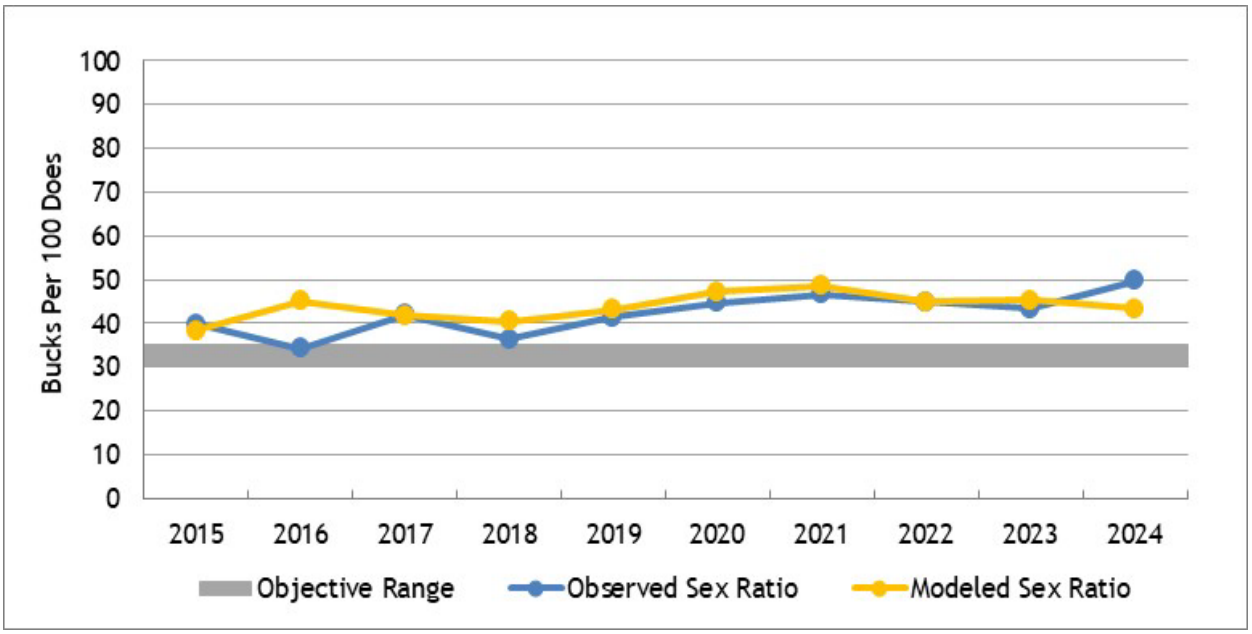


Figure D49-3. Deer DAU D-49 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and proposed objective range, 2015-2024.

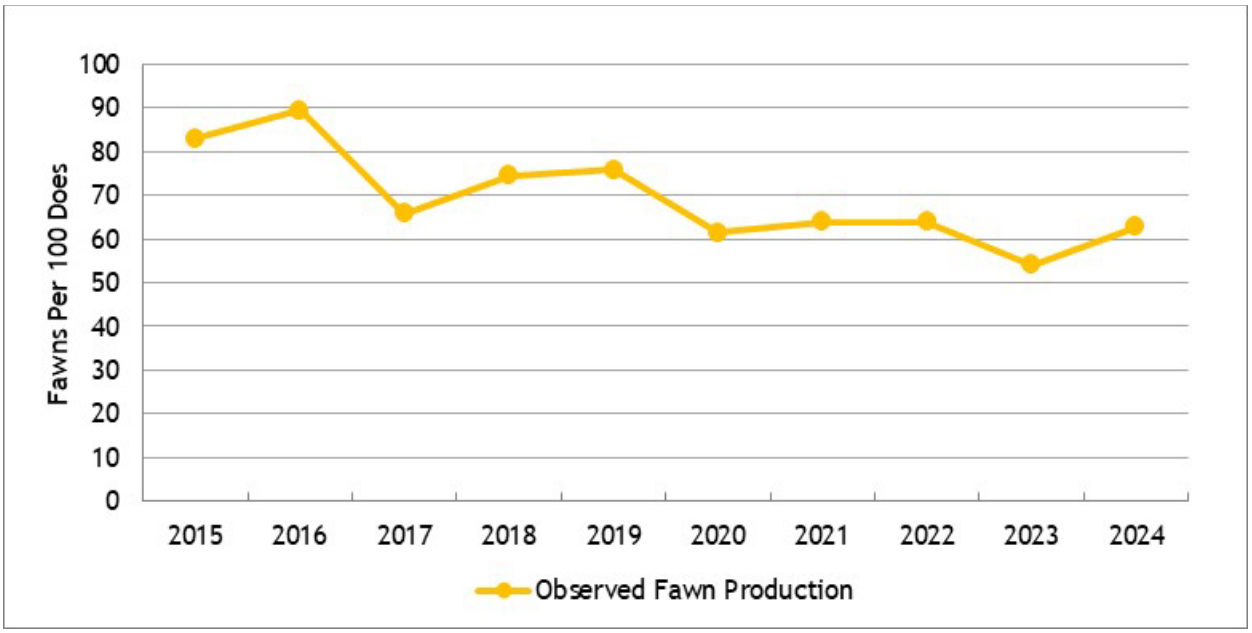


Figure D49-4. Deer DAU D-49 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

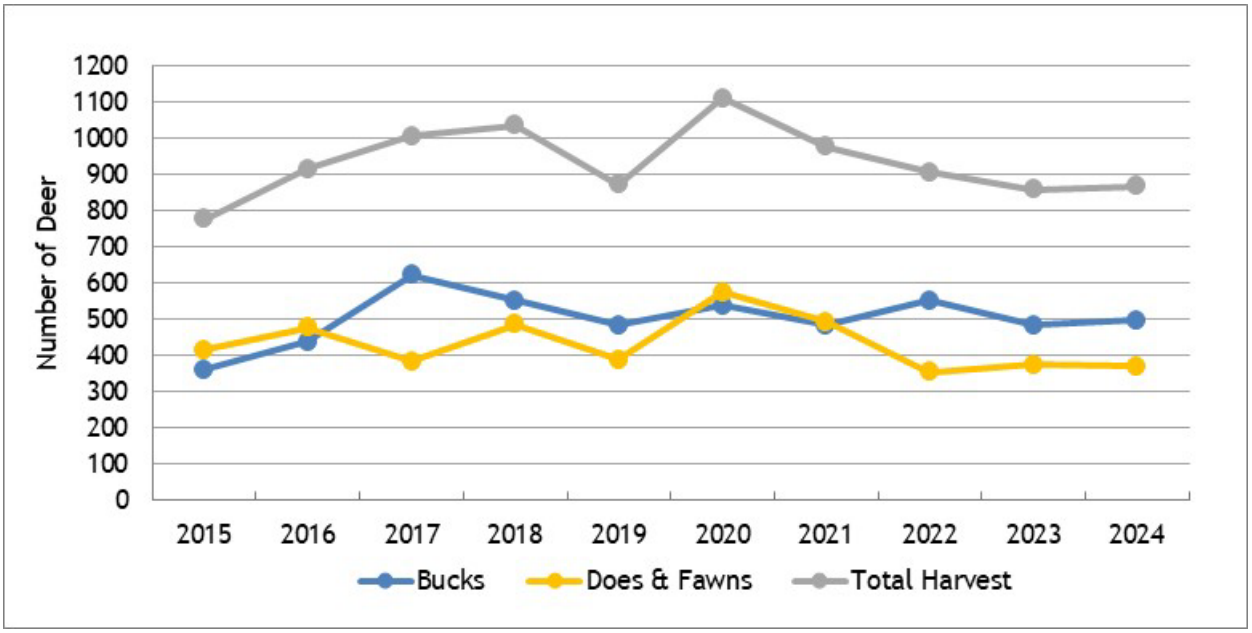


Figure D49-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-49, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

In 2019, mandatory testing for rifle buck and doe hunters in the Bijou Creek deer herd showed that CWD prevalence was 10.5% in mule deer bucks and 2.0% in mule deer does, and prevalence was not detected in white-tailed deer, possibly due to low sample size (37 total samples). Five years later, in 2024, mandatory testing for rifle buck hunters revealed that CWD prevalence had increased to 19.6% in mule deer bucks.

Significant Issues

The primary management issue facing the Bijou Creek deer herd is the continued residential and commercial development eastward throughout the DAU, which continues to fragment and reduce deer habitat. Limited access to private property in D-49 will continue to present challenges to population and disease management.

Management Alternatives

Since 2009, the Bijou Creek deer herd has been managed under the current objectives of 5,500—6,500 deer and 30—35 bucks:100 does. Two alternatives were considered for the post-hunt population size (Table D49-1) and the sex ratio (Table D49-2).

Table D49-1. Proposed population alternatives for D-49.

Population Objective Alternatives:	
5,500 to 6,500 deer	(1) Status Quo (Maintain current population objective)
5,000 to 6,000 deer	**(2) Maintain the current estimated population**

Table D49-2. Proposed sex ratio alternatives for D-49.

Sex Ratio Objective Alternatives:	
30—35 bucks:100 does ratio	**(1) Status Quo (Maintain current sex ratio)**
25—30 bucks:100 does ratio	(2) Decrease buck ratio objective by 5 bucks per 100 does

Management Objectives

Preferred Population Objective: 5,000—6,000 deer
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend reducing the population objective to maintain the current estimated deer population. Under this scenario, the number of doe licenses would remain relatively similar.

Preferred Sex Ratio Objective: 30—35 bucks:100 does
Based on CPW and public input, we recommend maintaining the same sex ratio objective. Buck licenses would be increased until the objective is reached and then licenses would be adjusted to maintain quality buck hunting opportunities in the Bijou Creek deer herd.

Strategies for Addressing Management Issues and Achieving Objectives

To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer damage licenses and other game damage programs for landowners that are experiencing damage conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis. In 2014, an urban public harvest program was initiated in the Town of Elizabeth to address concerns about conflicts with the local deer in town. Education, mitigation, trap and transplant operations, fertility control, and professional culling were all considered. Town ordinances were amended and a plan was written outlining administrative roles, communication, participant selection criteria, proficiency test guidelines, program participation policy, and population monitoring and harvest recommendation measures were established.

Currently, CWD is an issue in this deer herd as the prevalence rate is above the statewide 5% threshold. Management strategies have been implemented to address CWD in the Bijou Creek deer herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. CPW will continue to communicate and work with other land management agencies, landowners, county governments, and Non-Governmental Organizations to reduce CWD prevalence in this deer herd.

The current deer population size (~5,620) is within the proposed objective range and the modeled buck:doe ratio (43 bucks:100 does) is above the objective range. Buck licenses will need to be increased in accordance with the Colorado CWD Response Plan to reduce buck numbers to the lower end of the objective range and doe licenses should be adjusted to maintain the current population. This herd will continue to be managed to sustain a viable deer population.

Stakeholder Outreach

The majority of the small landowners that responded (37%) would like to see the population decrease slightly, followed by 23% who would like to see a large decrease in population and only 19% wanted to see the population maintained at current numbers. When asked whether D-49 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, 25% said they would like the herd to increase in quality (more older age class bucks), while only 10% wanted an increase in quantity of opportunity and 31% of small landowners were satisfied with current management. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix A.

The majority of the large landowners registered in the Landowner Preference Program that responded (68%) would like to see the population increase, 28% preferred the population be maintained at current numbers and only 4% recommended a decrease. When asked whether D-49 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, 45% said they would like the herd to increase in quality (more older age class bucks), while only 5% wanted an increase in quantity of opportunity and 38% stated that they were satisfied with current management. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix B.

An in-person/virtual public meeting was held in January of 2024 and attendees were able to fill out either an in-person or online survey. The majority of people that returned a survey (85%) would like to see the population increased, and only 10% wanted to see deer numbers reduced. When asked whether D-49 should be managed for increased quality or increased quantity of hunting opportunity, 76% said they would like the herd to increase in quality (more older age class bucks), while 19% stated they were satisfied with current management. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix C.

Hunter input from the 2024 hunter satisfaction survey showed that 54% would like to see a slight to moderate increase in the overall population, while 38% preferred the numbers to stay the same and only 9% wanted to see a decrease. Most hunters (42%) reported they were somewhat to very satisfied with the number of bucks seen, while 30% were somewhat to very dissatisfied and 28% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. When asked whether they would like to be able to hunt more often or prefer to hunt more mature bucks, 53% preferred hunting more mature males, compared to 47%, who preferred hunting more often. Crowding by other hunters or by other recreators was not an issue for most hunters surveyed. Complete survey results can be found in Appendix D.

Herd Management Plan Extensions

Table 8. Population and management status of six deer herd management plans being recommended for extension of objectives in northeast Colorado, 2025.

DAU	Deer Herd	Current Herd Management Plan Approved	Current Post-Hunt Population Objective	2024 Post-hunt Population Estimate	Current Post-Hunt Sex Ratio Objective	3-Yr Avg Post-Hunt Modeled Sex Ratio	Proposed Post-Hunt Population Objective	Proposed Post-Hunt Sex Ratio Objective
D-04	Red Feather	2019	13,000—15,000	12,320	25—30	35	Extension	Extension
D-05	North Tablelands	2021	2,500—3,000	1,820	30—35	30	Extension	Extension
D-10	Big Thompson	2018	8,000—10,000	8,400	25—30	39	Extension	Extension
D-44	South Platte River	2021	3,500—4,000	3,710	33—38	36	Extension	Extension
D-54	South Tablelands	2021	3,500-4,000	3,460	30-35	36	Extension	Extension
D-55	Arikaree	2018	2,300—2,700	2,160	35—40	40	Extension	Extension

RED FEATHER-POUDRE CANYON DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-04

Joe Halseth, Wildlife Biologist, Fort Collins

GMUs: 7, 8, 9, 19, 191 Last HMP Approval Year: 2019
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 13,000—15,000; 2024 Estimate: 12,320 **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 13,000—15,000 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 25—30; 2024 observed: 34 **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 25—30 bucks:100 does**

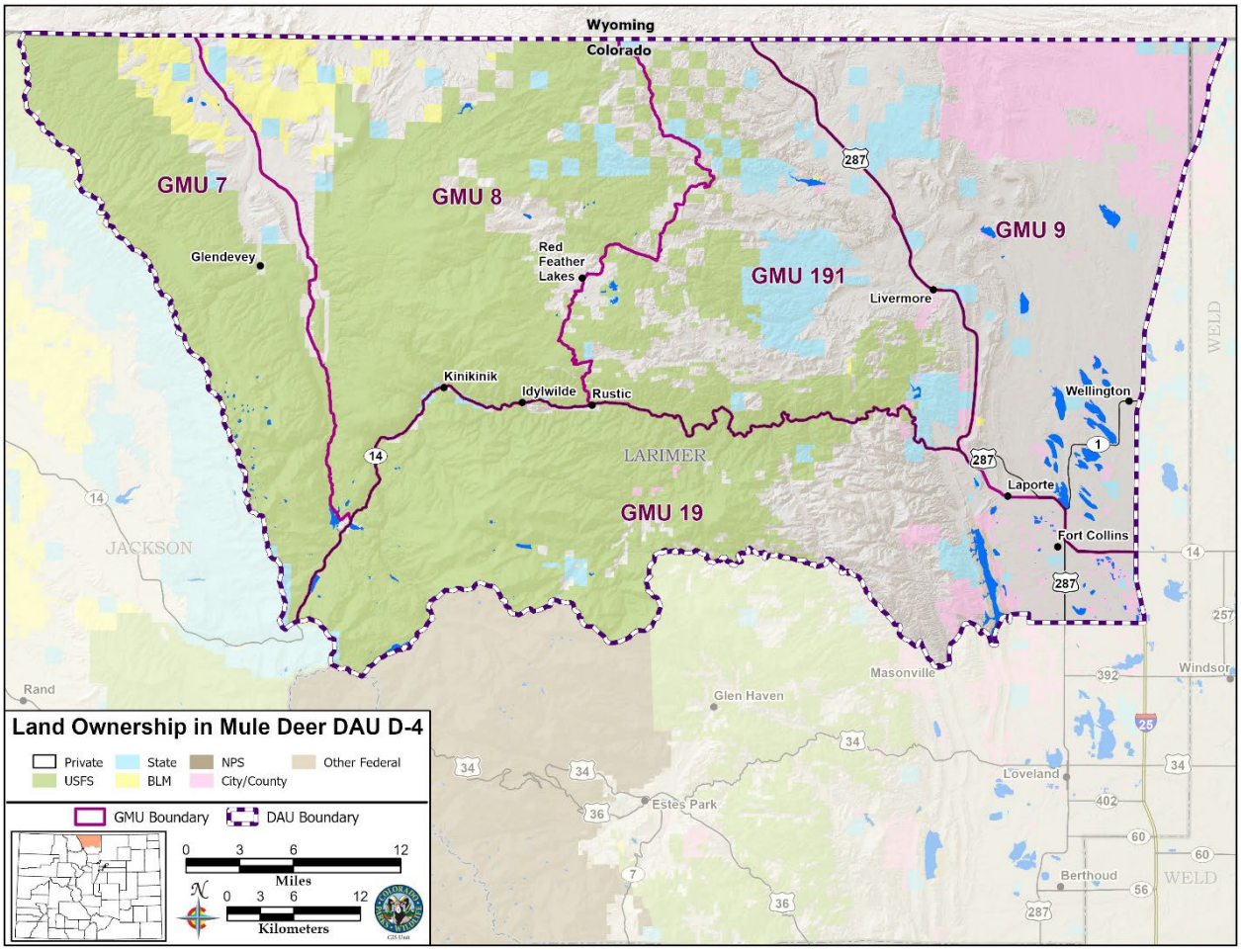


Figure D04-1. Location of deer DAU D-04 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in northern Colorado.

Background Information

The D-04 deer management area encompasses approximately 1,789 mi^2 in northern Colorado, primarily within Larimer County and consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 7, 8, 9, 19, and 191 (Figure D04-1). Elevation ranges from 12,795 feet at the highest point in the southwestern portion of the DAU to 4,921 feet along the eastern border. There are several habitat types within D-04. Various shrub species with localized diversity and ponderosa pine characterize the lower elevation foothills shrub community (5,500-8,000 feet). Beginning around 7,500-8,000 feet in elevation, ponderosa communities transition into Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine and aspen forest communities. Aspen and spruce/fir communities are the dominant forest type in upper elevations until around 11,500 feet, as transition occurs into the subalpine zone, which is mostly present in the far western and southwestern portions of the DAU. Dry and irrigated croplands occur primarily in the eastern portion of the DAU, while ranching is the dominant land use in the western part of the DAU.

Land ownership, within this DAU, varies with 40% private, 46% USFS, 6% City/County, 5% State, and 2% BLM. The DAU covers much of the northern parts of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins manage large parcels of land in D-04, all of which is good deer habitat, yet limited hunting opportunities exist. Other public lands include multiple State Wildlife Areas (SWAs), owned by CPW, and some State Trust Land parcels. Increasing development and land use changes continue to encroach into deer habitat. Most of the development is characterized by an increase in small-acreage pasturing, home construction and road expansion. Most of this development exists in the lower elevation shrub communities and in areas of mule deer winter range on the eastern side of the DAU.

In the last 20 years, several major fires have occurred in D-04. The 2004 Picnic Rock fire burned 8,900 acres, the 2012 High Park fire burned 87,000 acres, and the 2020 Cameron Peak fire burned 209,000 acres. While these fires have generally improved deer forage, many areas within the Cameron Peak fire scar, are still in early stages of recovery.

Mule deer are found throughout the Red Feather-Poudre Canyon area and densities are highest in the eastern half of the DAU. White-tailed deer are found in isolated areas and in low densities in most of the GMUs. The climate in D-04 is relatively dry with low humidity and varies with elevation. Higher elevation areas in the western portion of the DAU consist of a more typical Rocky Mountain climate characterized by cool, short summers and long, cold winters. Lower elevations on the eastern side of the DAU can have hot summers and relatively mild winters.

Estimated mule deer numbers in D-04 have remained stable over the past 10 years, ranging from a low of 12,320 deer in 2024 to a high of 14,390 in 2015 (Figure D04-2). Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 31 bucks:100 does ranging from 27 bucks:100 does in 2019 to 35 bucks:100 does in 2023 (Figure D04-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 42 fawns:100 does in 2016 to a high of 76 fawns:100 does in 2022 and has averaged 60 fawns:100 does over the past 10 years (Figure D04-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 1,800 deer in 2018 to a low of 1,209 in 2015 (Figure D04-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 1,397 deer. Mule deer buck harvest has ranged from a low of 787 bucks in 2022 to a high of 1,262 in 2018, averaging 969 animals. Mule deer doe harvest has ranged from a high of 506 animals in 2019 to a low of 215 in 2015.

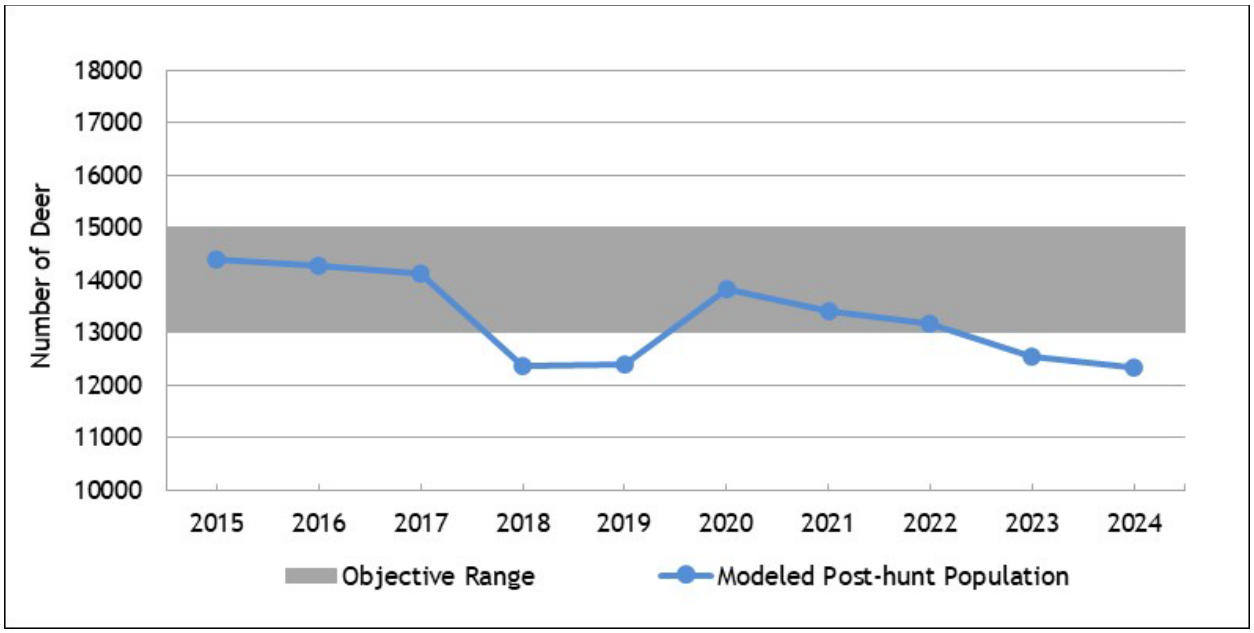


Figure D04-2. Deer DAU D-04 modeled post-hunt population and objective range, 2015-2024.

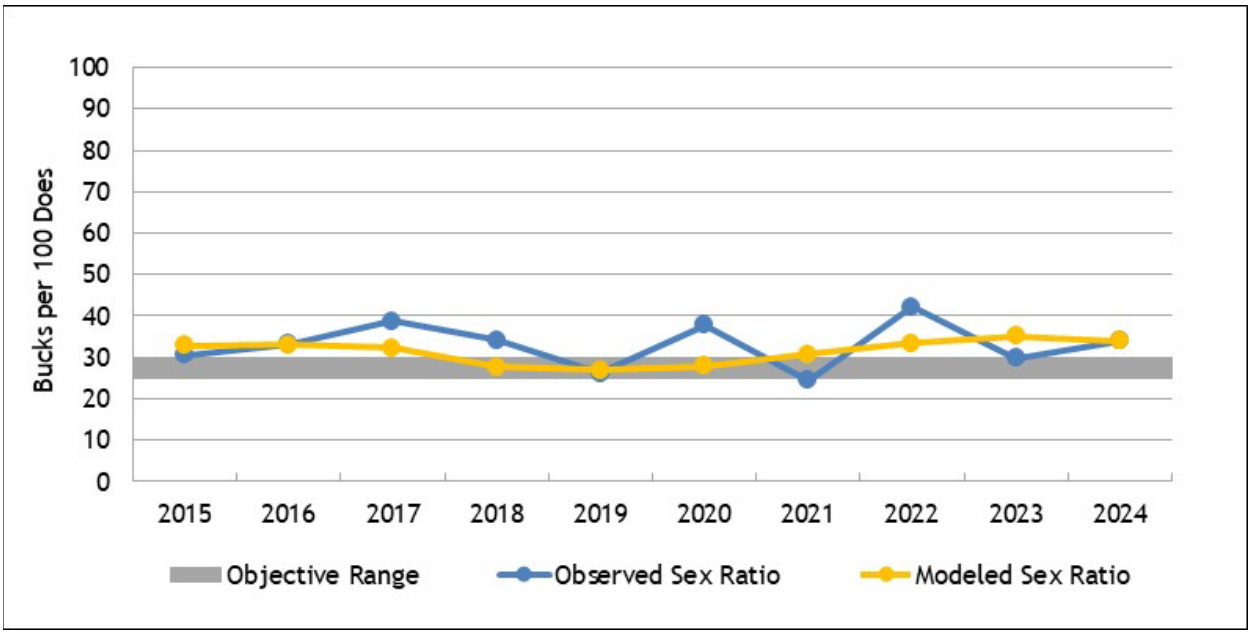


Figure D04-3. Deer DAU D-04 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and objective range, 2015-2024.

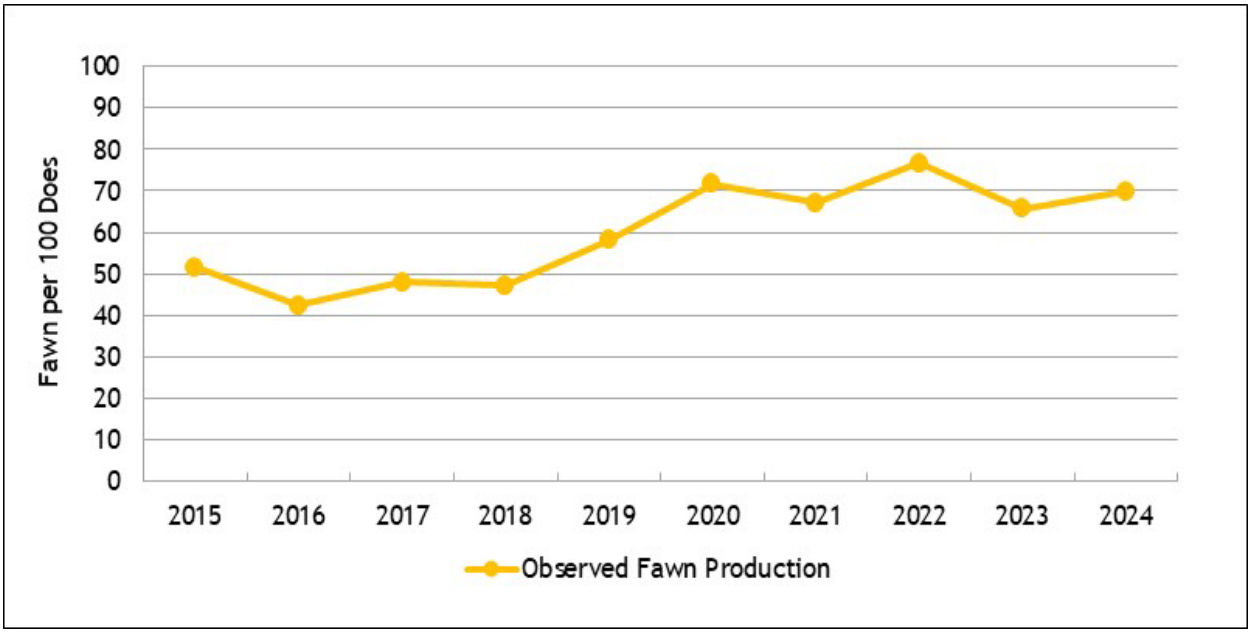


Figure D04-4. Deer DAU D-04 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

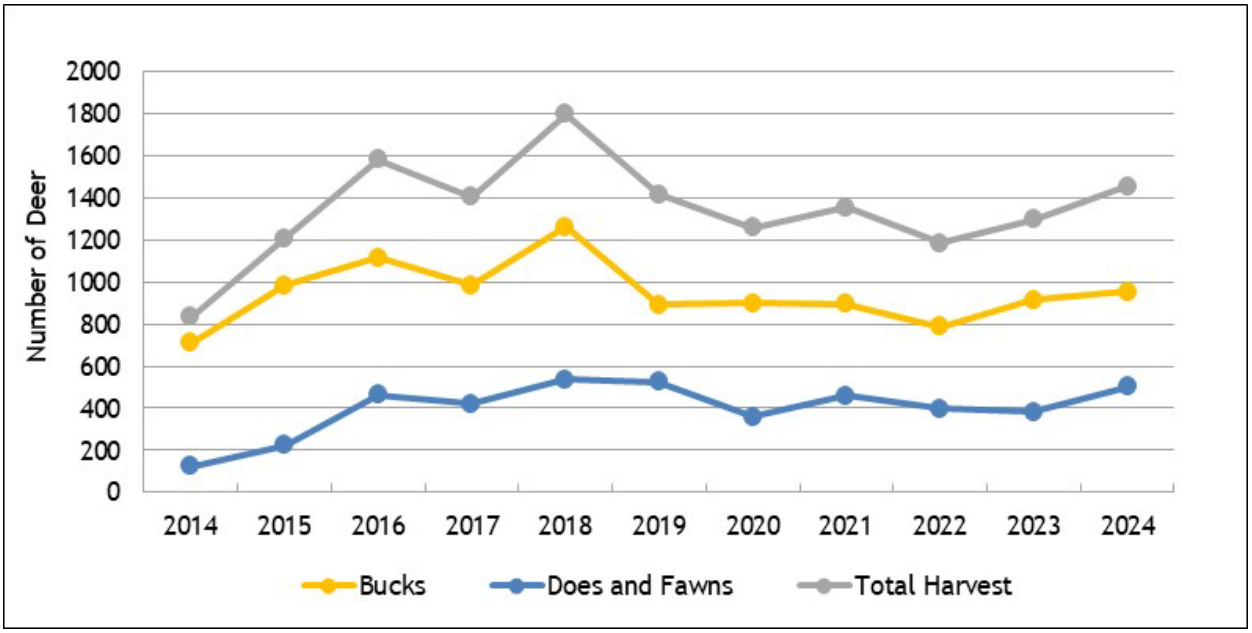


Figure D04-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-04, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The Red Feather-Poudre Canyon deer herd is part of the endemic area for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) infection. In 2017, mandatory testing of rifle buck hunters showed CWD prevalence was 5.6% in mule deer bucks. Five years later, in 2022, mandatory testing showed CWD prevalence dropped to 4.7% in mule deer bucks.

Management Alternatives

The D-04 deer herd has been managed under the current management plan objectives of 13,000—15-000 mule deer and 25—30 bucks:100 does, which were established in 2017. This Herd Management Plan (HMP) and the population and sex ratio objectives presented are a continuation of that plan. Therefore, no management alternatives were developed.

Management Objectives

Current Objective: 13,000—15,000.
Maintain the population at the current target objective of 14,000 mule deer. Doe licenses are used to maintain the population near the target objective.

Current Objective: 25—30 bucks:100 does.
Maintain the sex ratio at the current objective of 25—30 bucks:100 does. Buck licenses have been increased to reduce the sex ratio to the objective range.

Strategies for addressing management issues and achieving objectives

Game damage from deer in D-04 is low, but CPW will continue to offer dispersal licenses and other game damage programs to landowners who are experiencing damage conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons. Additionally, we will continue to look for opportunities for hunter access on or through private and city/county property to address distribution, refuging, and CWD concerns.

Management strategies have been implemented to reduce the prevalence of CWD in the Red Feather-Poudre Canyon deer herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. The actions taken included reducing the age structure of bucks and keeping the sex ratio near the objective. Additional management actions may be implemented in the future, including further reductions in the age structure, reducing the deer density, or some combination of these management strategies on a DAU or more localized level.

The current mule deer population (~12,320) is below the objective range. The modeled sex ratio (34 bucks:100 does) is above the objective range. Over the past three years, doe licenses have been slightly reduced to stabilize the population within the objective range and buck licenses have been slightly increased to reduce the sex ratio to the objective range. This population will continue to be managed to sustain a viable mule deer population while addressing disease management and stakeholder opportunities.

Stakeholder Outreach

Input for the current Red Feather-Poudre Canyon herd management objectives was solicited through a public survey before they were approval by the Wildlife Commission in 2018. This current herd management plan was posted on the CPW website for 30-day public comment.

NORTH TABLELANDS DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-05

Marty Stratman, Wildlife Biologist, Brush

GMUs: 87, 88, 89, 90, 95 Last HMP Approval Year: 2021
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 2,500—3,000; 2024 Estimate: 1,820. **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 2,500—3,000 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 30—35; 2024 observed: 35 **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 30—35 bucks:100 does**

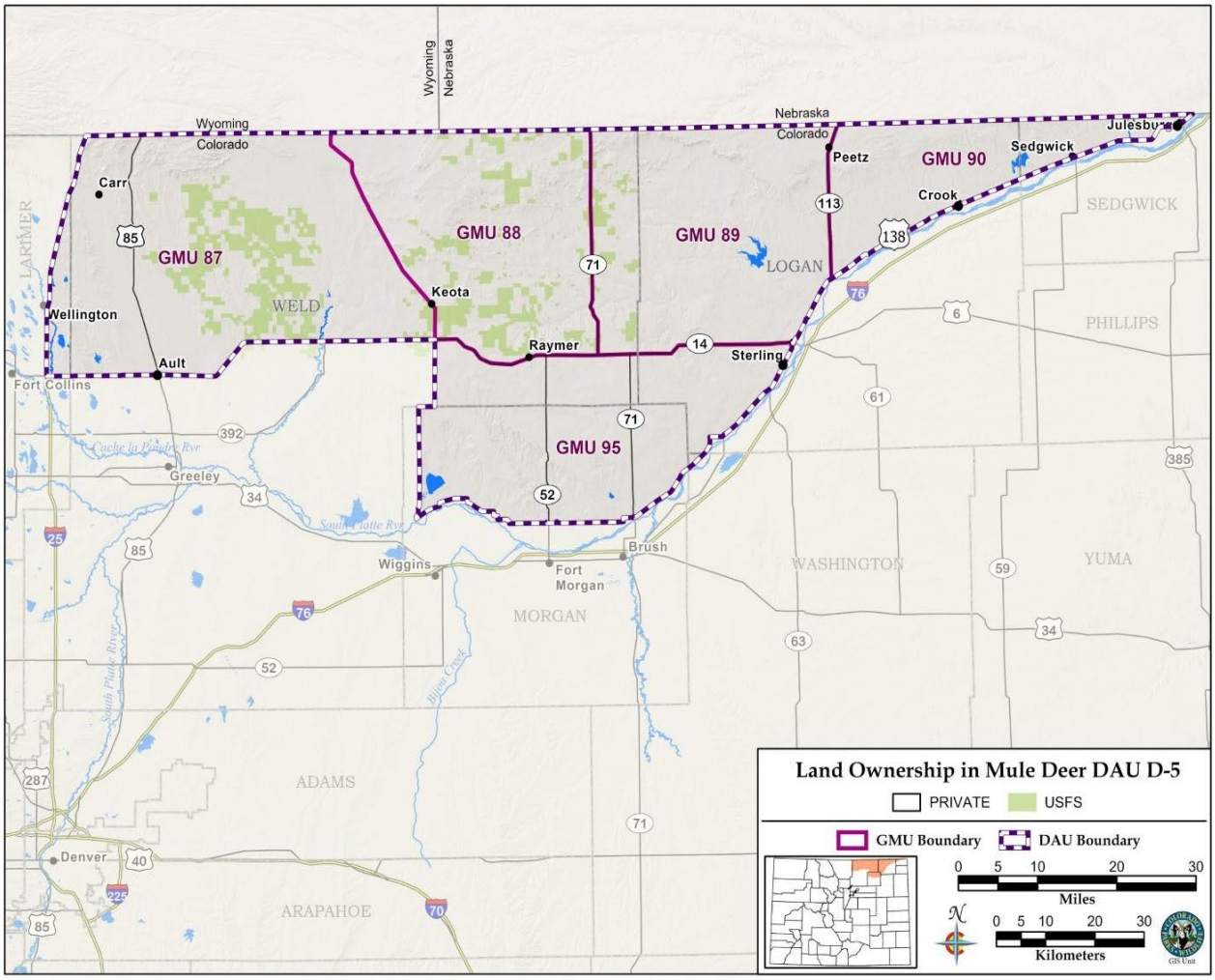


Figure D05-1. Location of deer DAU D-05 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in northeast Colorado.

Background Information

The D-05 deer management area encompasses approximately 4,030 mi^2 in northeast Colorado and consists of Game management Units (GMUs) 87, 88, 89, 90 and 95 (Figure D05-1). There are several habitat types within D-05, including dry cropland, irrigated cropland, mid-grass prairie, short-grass prairie, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. Nearly 50% of the North Tablelands consists of short-grass prairie. However, residential development is encroaching into the short-grass prairie on the western end. Habitat quality has remained stable in the North Tablelands due to CRP lands, managed grazing systems within the short-grass rangelands, and changing cropping practices emphasizing corn and alfalfa.

Land ownership in the North Tablelands is primarily private land. The most notable exception is the Pawnee National Grasslands, which encompasses 193,000 acres scattered across a large portion of GMUs 87 and 88. Other public lands include those administered under the State Trust Lands Program and small parcels owned by CPW. Public lands comprise 8% of the North Tablelands. Land use is primarily agricultural with the majority of irrigation occurring on the eastern and southern portions of the North Tablelands. Corn, wheat, and alfalfa are the primary crops produced.

Mule deer are found throughout the North Tablelands, although densities are highest in irrigated cropland settings, CRP lands, and often concentrate in the juniper breaks, canyons, and riparian areas during winter. White-tailed deer are also found throughout most of the North Tablelands, with the highest numbers occurring in GMUs 89, 90, and 95 in the eastern and southern portions, primarily in agricultural areas adjacent to the South Platte River. Since 2013, season choice white-tailed deer only licenses have been used to increase the harvest of white-tailed deer in this DAU and minimize further expansion into traditional mule deer habitats. The climate in the North Tablelands is characterized by hot, dry summers and relatively mild winters. Annual precipitation ranges from 13–16 inches with most occurring during intense summer thunderstorms. Snowfall can be variable in the area and recent winters have been moderate with seasonably colder temperatures.

The primary focus is to manage mule deer in the North Tablelands. Estimated mule deer numbers in D-05 remained relatively stable until 2021. Over the last 10 years, the population remained fairly stable and then dramatically declined over the past 3 years, ranging from a high of 3,310 in 2018 to a low of 1,760 mule deer in 2022 (Figure D05-2). Since 2021, this mule deer herd has experienced a significant die-off, primarily due to a combination of drought, above-average winter and CWD. The 5 and 10-year population estimate averages for this mule deer herd are 2,065 and 2,630 deer, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 40 bucks:100 does ranging from 26 bucks:100 does in 2023 to 54 bucks:100 does in 2018 (Figure D05-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 50 fawns:100 does in 2022 to a high of 75 fawns:100 does in 2015 and has averaged 65 fawns:100 does (Figure D05-4).

Over the last 10 years, mule deer harvest has ranged from a high of 485 animals in 2020 to a low of 184 animals in 2023 and 2024 (Figure D05-5), averaging 370 mule deer since 2015. Mule deer buck harvest has ranged from a low of 97 bucks in 2023 to a high of 313 in 2019, averaging 219 animals. Mule deer doe harvest has ranged from a high of 189 animals in 2017 to a low of 79 in 2023. In D-05, white-tailed deer are managed to provide additional hunting opportunities. White-tailed deer harvest over the last decade has ranged from a low of 95 animals in 2023 to a high of 240 animals in 2020, averaging 172 white-tailed deer annually.

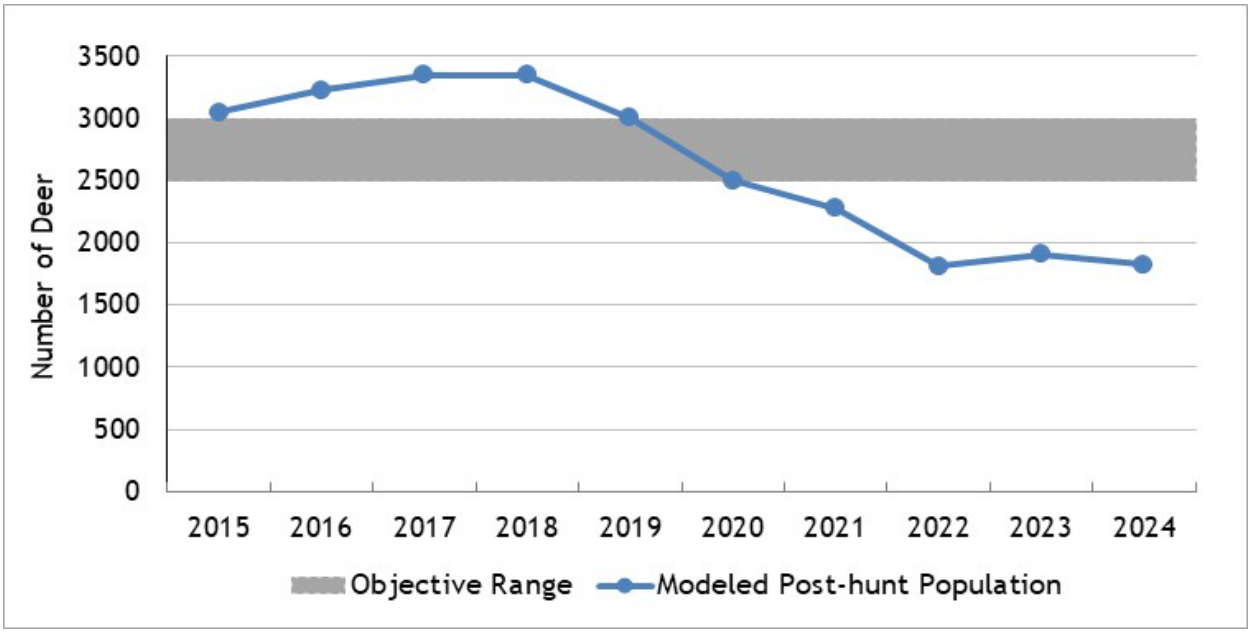


Figure D05-2. Deer DAU D-05 modeled post-hunt population and objective range, 2015-2024.

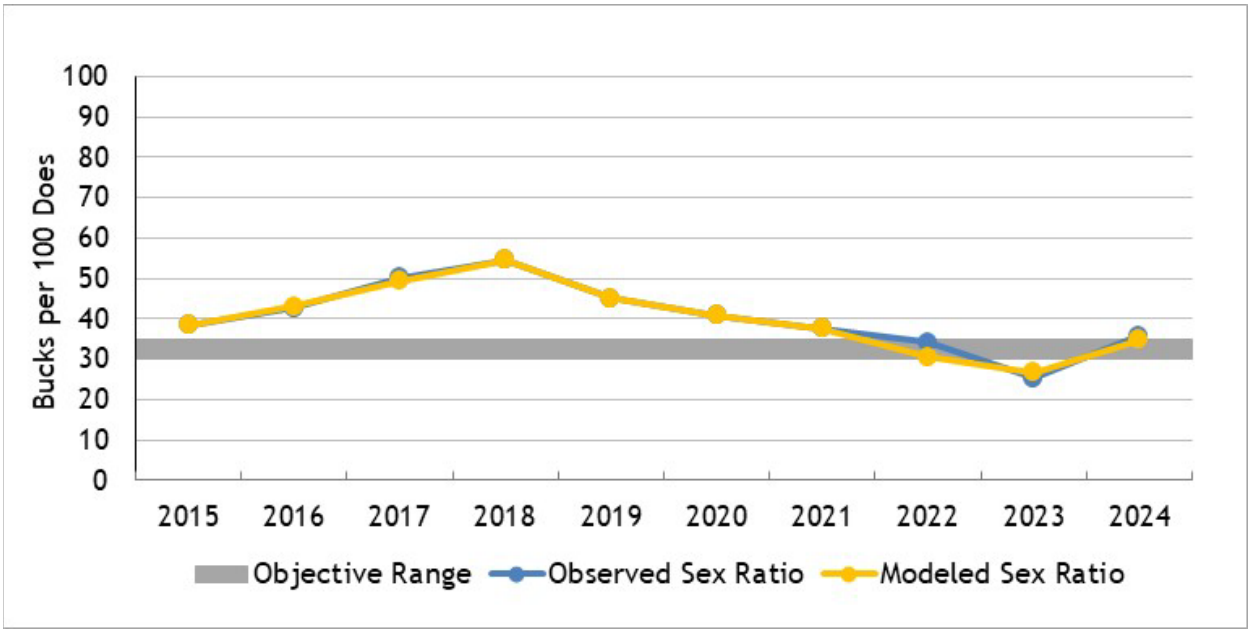


Figure D05-3. Deer DAU D-05 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and objective range, 2015-2024.

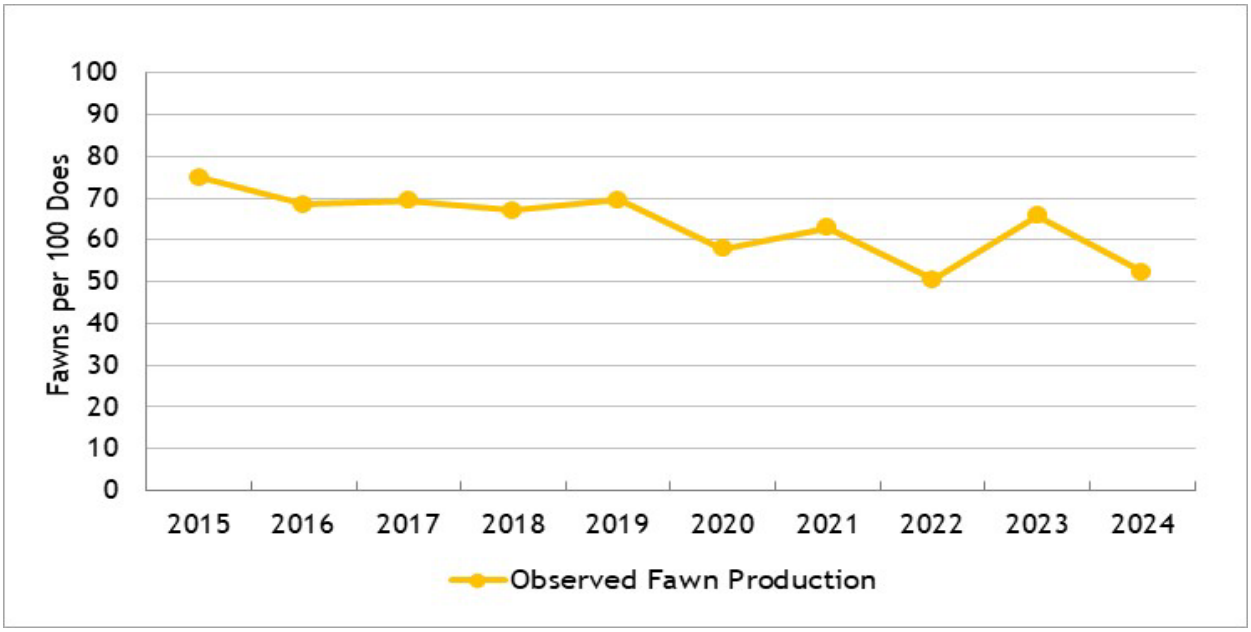


Figure D05-4. Deer DAU D-05 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

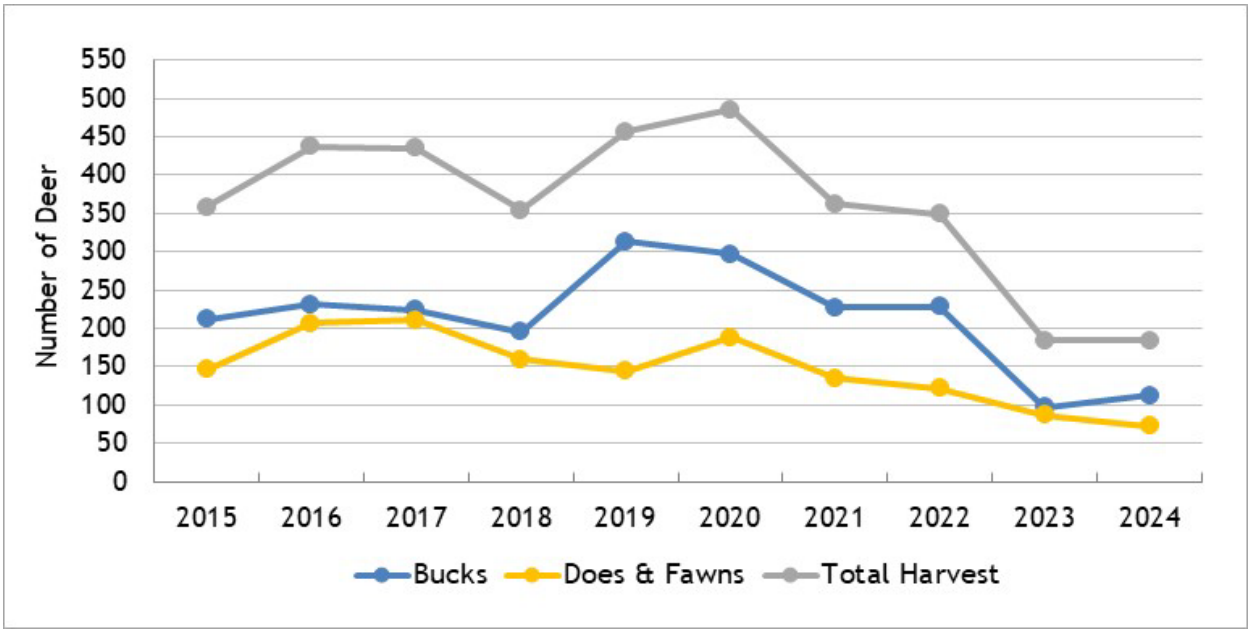


Figure D05-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-05, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The North Tablelands deer herd is part of the endemic area for CWD infection. The first CWD positive deer was found in GMU 95 in 1997. In 2019, mandatory testing for rifle buck and doe hunters in the North Tablelands showed that CWD prevalence was 31.9% in mule deer bucks, 12.0% in mule deer does, 17.3% in whitetail bucks, and 5.9% in whitetail does. Four years later, in 2023, mandatory testing for rifle buck hunters only revealed that CWD prevalence had declined to 28.3% in mule deer bucks and 15.4% in whitetail bucks.

Management Alternatives

The D-05 deer herd has been managed under the current management plan objectives of 2,500—3,000 mule deer and 30—35 bucks:100 does, which were established in 2021. This Herd Management Plan (HMP) and the population and sex ratio objectives presented are a continuation of that plan. Therefore, no management alternatives were developed.

Management Objectives

Current Objective: 2,500—3,000.
Maintain the population at the current target objective of 3,000 mule deer. Doe licenses have been reduced to increase the population to the target objective.

Current Objective: 30—35 bucks:100 does.
Maintain the sex ratio at the current objective of 30—35 bucks:100 does. Buck licenses would remain relatively the same as the herd is within the objective range.

Strategies for addressing management issues and achieving objectives

To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer dispersal licenses and other game damage programs for landowners that are experiencing damage conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis. Additionally, we will continue to look for opportunities for hunter access on or through private property.

To address CWD in this herd, management strategies have been implemented to reduce the prevalence of CWD in the North Tablelands deer herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. The management actions taken included reducing the age structure of bucks in the mule deer herd. Additional management actions may be implemented in the future that may include further reductions in the age structure, reducing the deer density, or some combination of these management strategies.

The current mule deer population (~1,820) is well below the current objective range. The sex ratio (35 bucks:100 does) is within the objective range. Doe licenses have been reduced over the past 2 years to grow the population back to the objective range and buck licenses have remained relatively the same to maintain the sex ratio at the objective. This population will continue to be managed to sustain a viable mule deer population, while continuing to suppress white-tailed deer numbers in this DAU.

Stakeholder Outreach

Input for the current North Tablelands herd management objectives were solicited through a public survey prior to their approval by the Wildlife Commission in 2021. This current herd management plan was posted on the CPW website for a 30-day public comment.

THE BIG THOMPSON DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-10

Ben Kraft, Wildlife Biologist, Loveland

GMU: 20 Last HMP Approval Year: 2018
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 8,000—10,000; 2024 Estimate: 8,400. **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 8,000—10,000 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 25—30; 2024 observed: 45 **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 25—30 bucks:100 does**

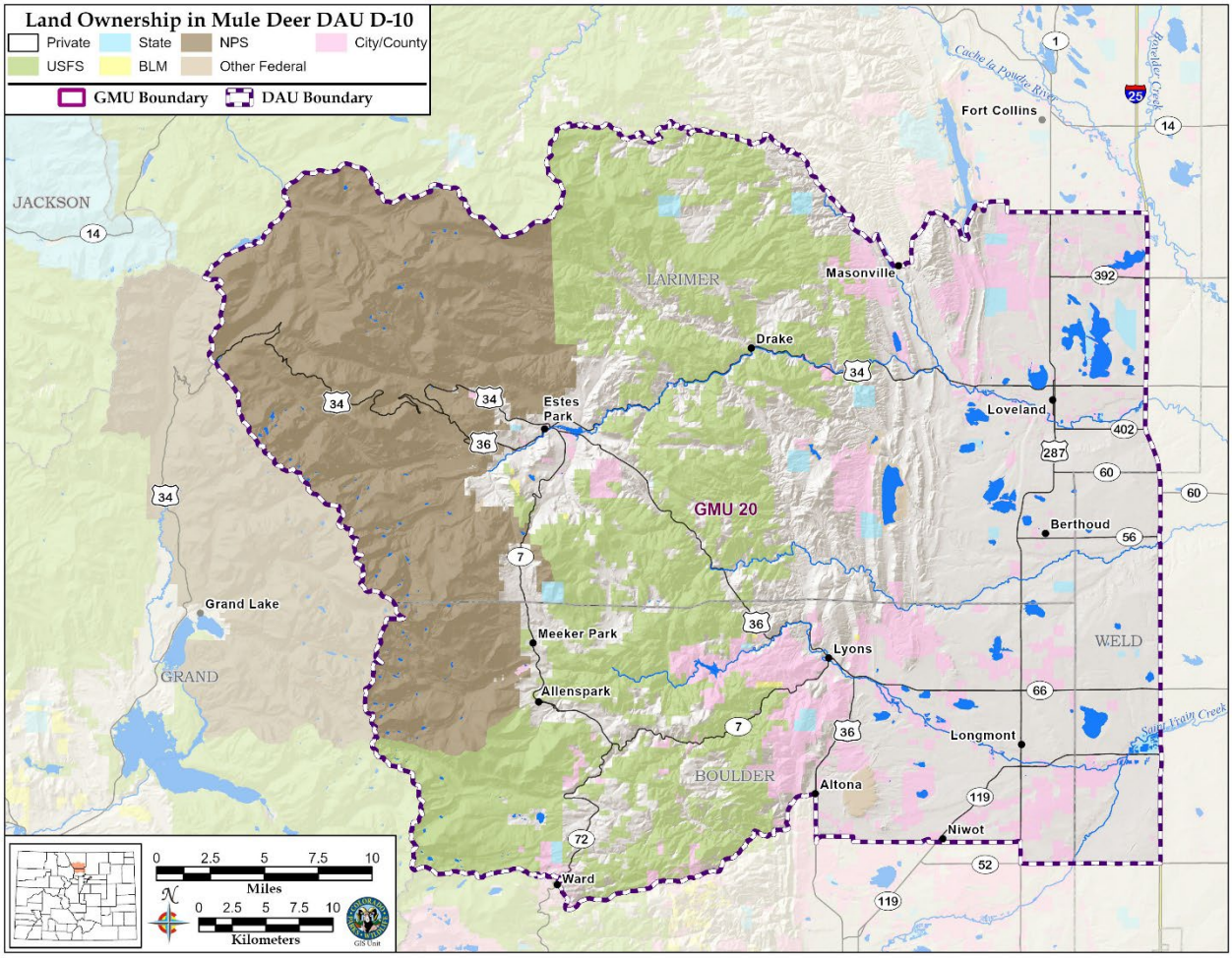


Figure D10-1. Location of deer DAU D-10 and associated Game Management Unit (GMU) in northcentral Colorado.

Background Information

The D-10 deer management area encompasses approximately 1,206 mi^2 in northcentral Colorado and consists of Game Management Unit (GMU) 20 (Figure D10-1). Land ownership in D-10 is mostly private land (42%), located primarily in the eastern portion of the DAU. Nearly 25% of the area is Arapahoe and Roosevelt National Forest. The national forests are heavily used by the public, including campers, bikers, hunters, anglers, hikers, and off-road vehicle users. Rocky Mountain National Park accounts for 22% of the DAU, while city and county open space is roughly 8% of the DAU and is used intensively by deer. CPW manages less than 1% of the area. Major municipalities in D-10 include Estes Park, Longmont, Loveland, and Lyons.

The climate varies across the DAU as a function of the west to east elevation gradient. Elevation ranges from over 14,000 feet in the west to less than 5,000 feet in the east. The higher elevations in the west experience a harsh climate, with cold winters, abundant snowfall, and cool summers. Conditions in the eastern portions are typical of the foothills/short-grass prairie interface, with relatively mild winters, low snow accumulation and hot summers. There are several habitat types within D-10, primarily based on elevation. Habitats range from alpine tundra in the west to subalpine forests, ponderosa pine and aspen communities, canyons, mountain meadows, riparian corridors, foothills shrublands, and rolling plains in the east. The coniferous vegetation types are most common, followed by shrublands, mixed conifer/deciduous forest, grass/forbs, deciduous forest, and riparian. Shrublands along the foothills are mostly composed of antelope bitterbrush, mountain mahogany and serviceberry. In the last five years, several wildfires have improved habitat for deer by creating large areas in early seral stages. Commercial and residential development continues to increase across the DAU, reducing and fragmenting habitat.

Mule deer are the dominant deer species in the Big Thompson Herd and occur throughout the DAU, while smaller localized herds of white-tailed deer can be found in riparian areas along the foothills/plains interface and the periphery of urban areas. Deer summer throughout much of D-10, but with the onset of winter and snow accumulation at high elevations, they move to low elevation winter range below 8,000 feet, primarily along the foothills.

Over the last 10 years, the Big Thompson deer herd has been increasing, ranging from 6,640 in 2015, to 8,400 in 2024 (Figure D10-2). The 5 and 10-year population averages are 7,615 and 7,120 deer, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 41 bucks:100 does, ranging from 37 bucks:100 does in 2018, to 49 bucks:100 does in 2015 (Figure D10-3). Since 2015, observed fawn production has varied from a low of 57 fawns:100 does in 2016, to a high of 87 fawns:100 does in 2024, averaging 71 fawns:100 does (Figure D10-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 858 in 2021 to a low of 648 deer in 2018 (Figure D10-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 754 deer. Buck harvest has ranged from a low of 465 bucks in 2015, to a high of 612 in 2024, averaging 550 bucks. Antlerless harvest has ranged from a low of 134 in 2019, to a high of 273 animals in 2021, averaging 204 animals.

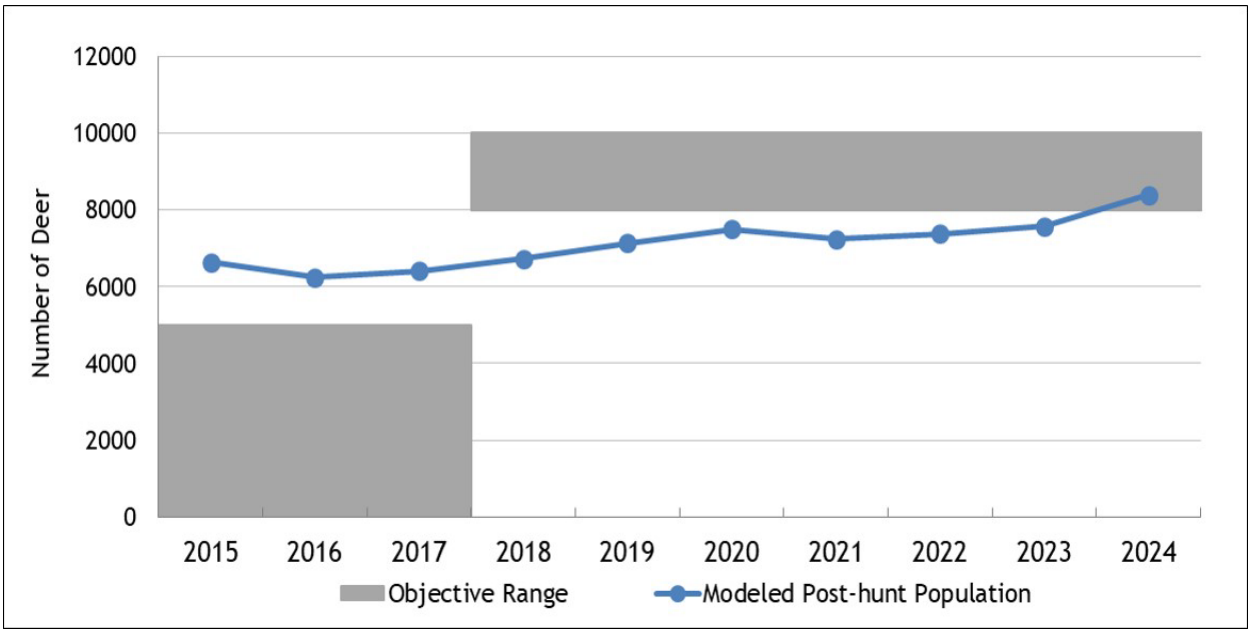


Figure D10-2. Deer DAU D-10 modeled post-hunt population and objective range, 2015-2024.

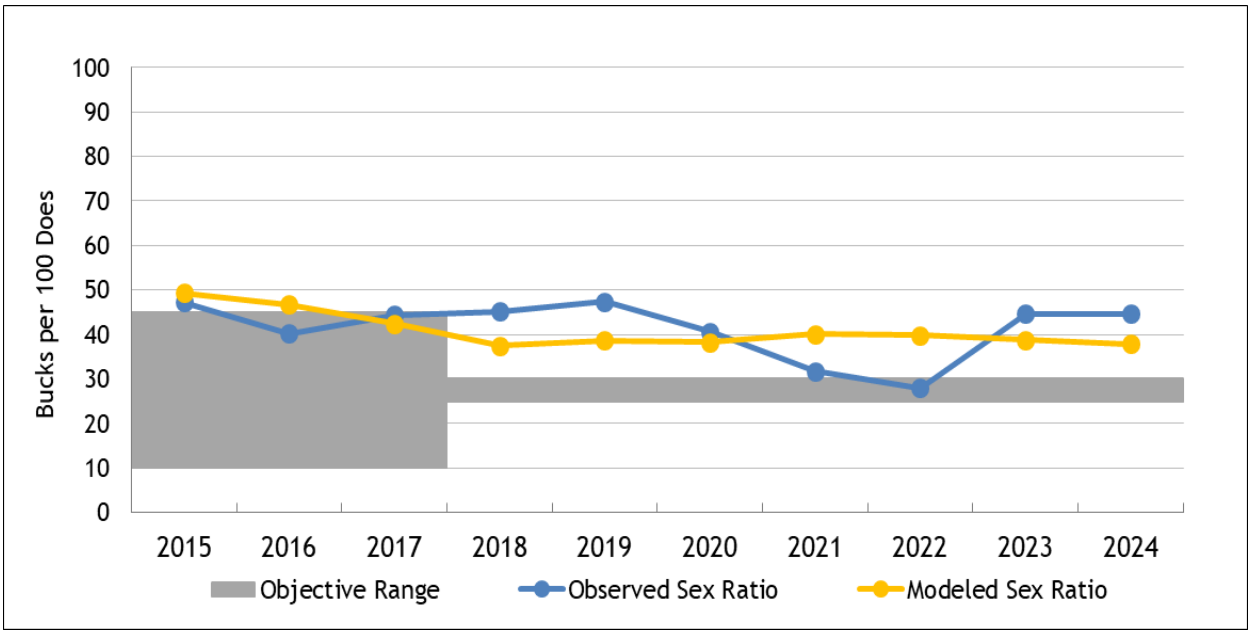


Figure D10-3. Deer DAU D-10 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and objective range, 2015-2024.

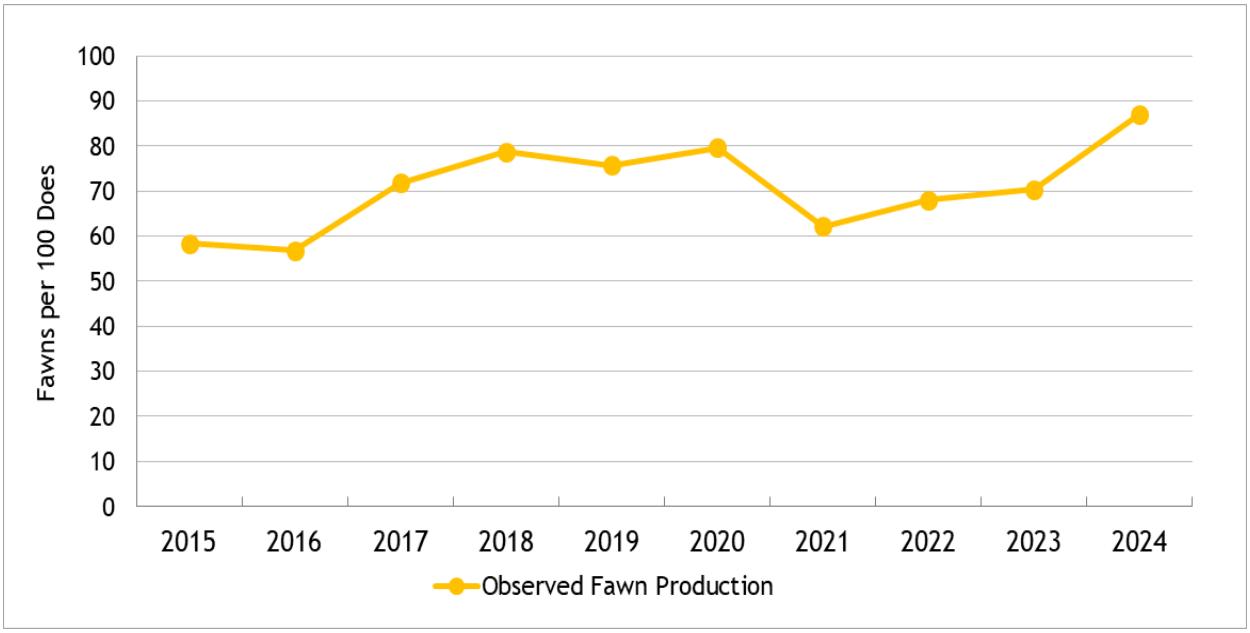


Figure D10-4. Deer DAU D-10 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

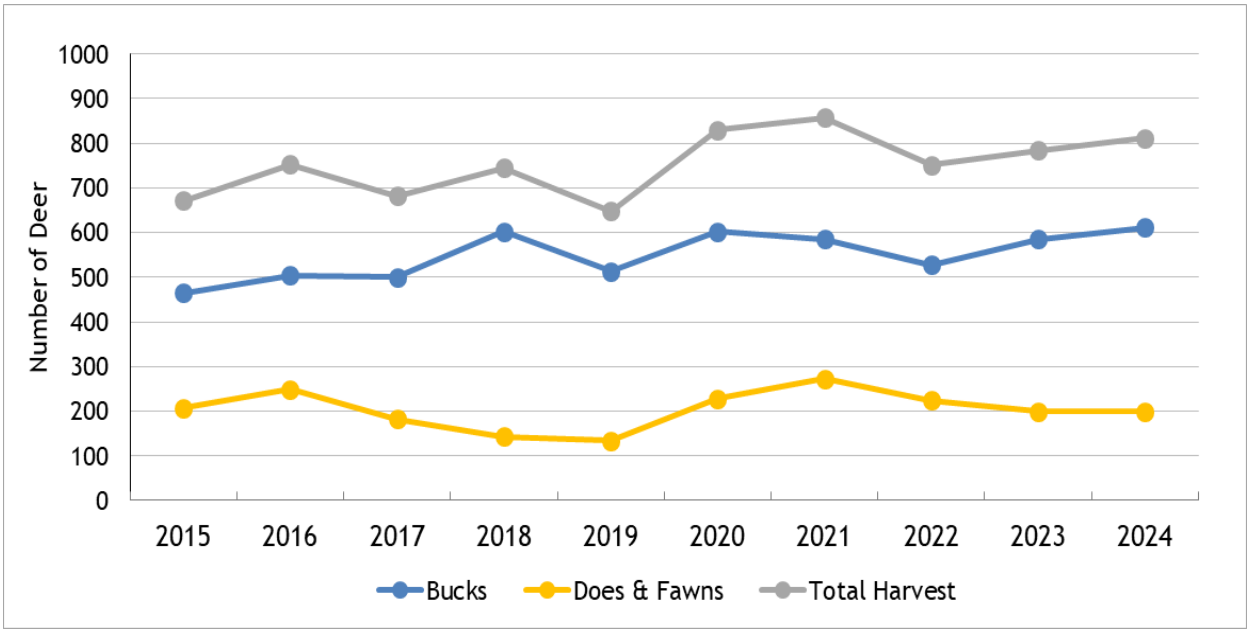


Figure D10-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-10, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The Big Thompson Deer Herd is part of the endemic area of chronic wasting disease (CWD) infection. Chronic wasting disease is known to have occurred in the DAU since the early 1980s. In 2017, mandatory testing from rifle buck hunters resulted in 12% (95% CI, 8-17%) CWD prevalence in harvested adult (≥ 2 years old) male mule deer. Five years later, in 2022, mandatory testing from rifle buck hunters resulted in 8% (95% CI, 5-13%) CWD prevalence in harvested adult (≥ 2 years old) male mule deer.

Management Alternatives

The Big Thompson deer herd has been managed under the current Herd Management Plan (HMP) objectives of 8,000—10,000 mule deer and 25—30 bucks:100 does, which were established in 2018. This HMP and the population and sex ratio objectives presented are a continuation of that plan. Therefore, no management alternatives were developed.

Management Objectives

Current Objective: 8,000—10,000.
Maintain the population within the current objective range.

Current Objective: 25—30 bucks:100 does.
Manage the sex ratio within the current objective range.

Strategies for Addressing Management Issues and Achieving Objectives

Despite management efforts over the past 25 years to reduce the herd's CWD prevalence and sex ratio, CWD prevalence in adult bucks remains above 8% and the herd's sex ratio is consistently above the objective range. This is because a considerable proportion of D-10 has areas where hunting does not occur, such as Rocky Mountain National Park, city and county open space, and certain private land. Chronic wasting disease prevalence and sex ratios are highest in those areas. Additionally, previous intensive harvest management strategies, such as liberal license quotas and extended hunting seasons, have changed deer distribution and resulted in proportionally more deer using open space and private land. In contrast, few deer remain on National Forest Land.

The current sex ratio objective has not, and cannot, be achieved with such reliance on harvest from National Forest Land and those private lands where hunting currently occurs. Deer harvest from the National Forest Land is not substantial enough to manage the herd's sex ratio, CWD prevalence, and to some extent the population size. In addition, hunters are dissatisfied with the number of deer on National Forest Land and would like to see that segment of the herd increase. Therefore, CPW will improve and maintain deer numbers on National Forest Land, while collaborating with local government agencies, open space managers, and private landowners to better manage the herd's sex ratio and CWD prevalence. This herd will continue to be managed to sustain a viable deer population in the DAU.

To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer damage licenses and other game damage programs to landowners who are experiencing damage that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis.

Stakeholder Outreach

Input for the current Big Thompson herd management objectives were developed through a public input process prior to their approval by the Wildlife Commission in 2018. This current Herd Management Plan was posted on the CPW website for 30-day public comment.

SOUTH PLATTE RIVER DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-44

Marty Stratman, Wildlife Biologist, Brush

GMUs: 91, 92, 94, 96, 951 Last HMP Approval Year: 2021
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 3,500—4,000; 2024 Estimate: 3,710. **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 3,500—4,000 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 33—38; 2024 observed: 39 **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 33—38 bucks:100 does**

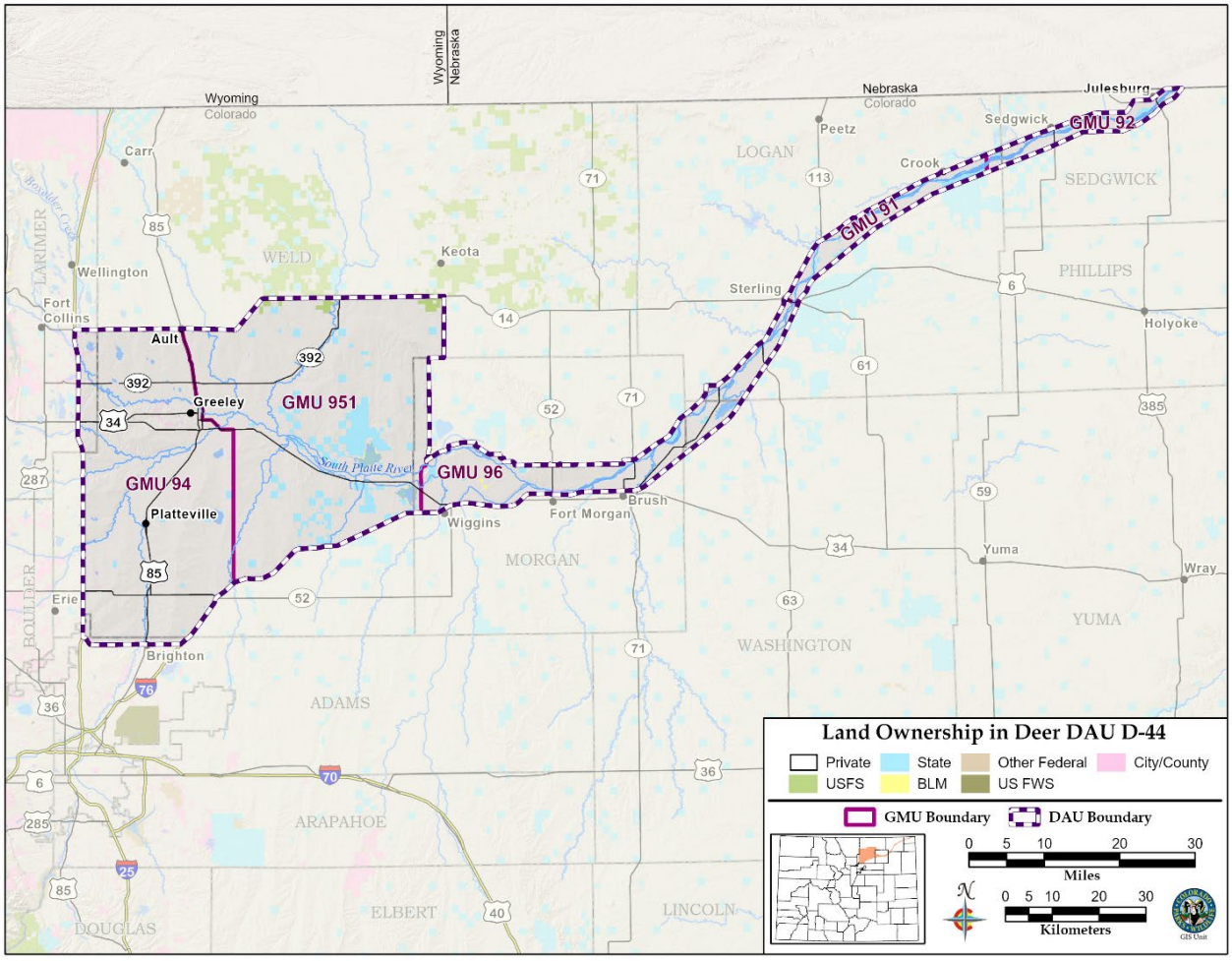


Figure D44-1. Location of deer DAU D-44 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in northeast Colorado.

Background Information

The D-44 deer management area encompasses approximately 2,021 mi^2 in northeast Colorado and consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 91, 92, 94, 96 and 951 (Figure D44-1). Three habitat types, irrigated cropland, sandsage/mid-grass prairie, and cottonwood riparian, dominate the landscape, comprising 65%, 20%, and 10% of the habitat composition, respectively, along the South Platte River. In GMUs 91, 92, and 96 in the central and eastern end, cottonwood riparian and adjacent irrigated cropland comprise 85-90% of the habitats. In the western GMUs of 94 and 951, irrigated cropland and sandsage/mid-grass prairie are the dominant habitat features, comprising 60% and 25% of the habitats, respectively. The South Platte River is the primary riparian drainage that extends through this DAU.

The majority of land along the South Platte River is privately owned. Most of the public land is owned and managed by CPW, with the State Land Board and Bureau of Reclamation also having several small holdings. Public lands comprise about 2% of the DAU, with 89% of the public acreage located in the central and eastern portion of GMUs 91, 92, and 96. Land use is a combination of agriculture and recreation. Frequently, private lands are purchased or leased for deer and waterfowl hunting, often to the exclusion of other uses. Both center pivot and flood irrigation occur throughout the area. Corn, alfalfa, and sugar beets are the primary crops under irrigation. On the western end in GMUs 94 and 951, commercial and residential development has steadily increased, impacting deer habitat.

Both mule deer and white-tailed deer can be found throughout the South Platte River. The majority of mule deer are found in the open habitat settings in the western GMUs of 94 and 951, and the far western portion of GMU 96. White-tailed deer are more numerous in the central and eastern GMUs of 91, 92, and 96, which primarily encompass just the South Platte riparian corridor. While most white-tailed deer are residents of D-44, some move out into adjacent uplands, just prior to fawning season. As corn crops are harvested in the fall and winter approaches, many of those white-tailed deer return to the South Platte River corridor. The climate along the South Platte River is characterized by hot, dry summers and relatively mild winters. Annual precipitation ranges from 13–16 inches with most occurring during intense summer thunderstorms. Snowfall can be variable in the area and recent winters have been moderate with seasonably colder temperatures.

Estimated deer numbers in D-44 have remained relatively stable over the last decade from a high of approximately 4,565 in 2018 to a low of 3,710 in 2024 (Figure D44-2). This deer herd has experienced normal population fluctuations associated with weather conditions, hunting pressure, and population dynamics. The 5 and 10-year population estimate averages for this deer herd are 4,080 and 4,260 animals, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 40 bucks:100 does ranging from 37 bucks:100 does in 2021 and 2023 to 43 bucks:100 does in 2016, 2018, and 2019 (Figure D44-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 55 fawns:100 does in 2024 to a high of 76 fawns:100 does in 2016 and has averaged 65 fawns:100 does (Figure D44-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 1,000 deer in 2020 to a low of 529 in 2023 (Figure D44-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 756 deer. Buck harvest has ranged from a low of 288 bucks in 2023 to a high of 498 in 2022, averaging 373 animals. Doe harvest has ranged from a high of 470 animals in 2020 to a low of 216 in 2023.

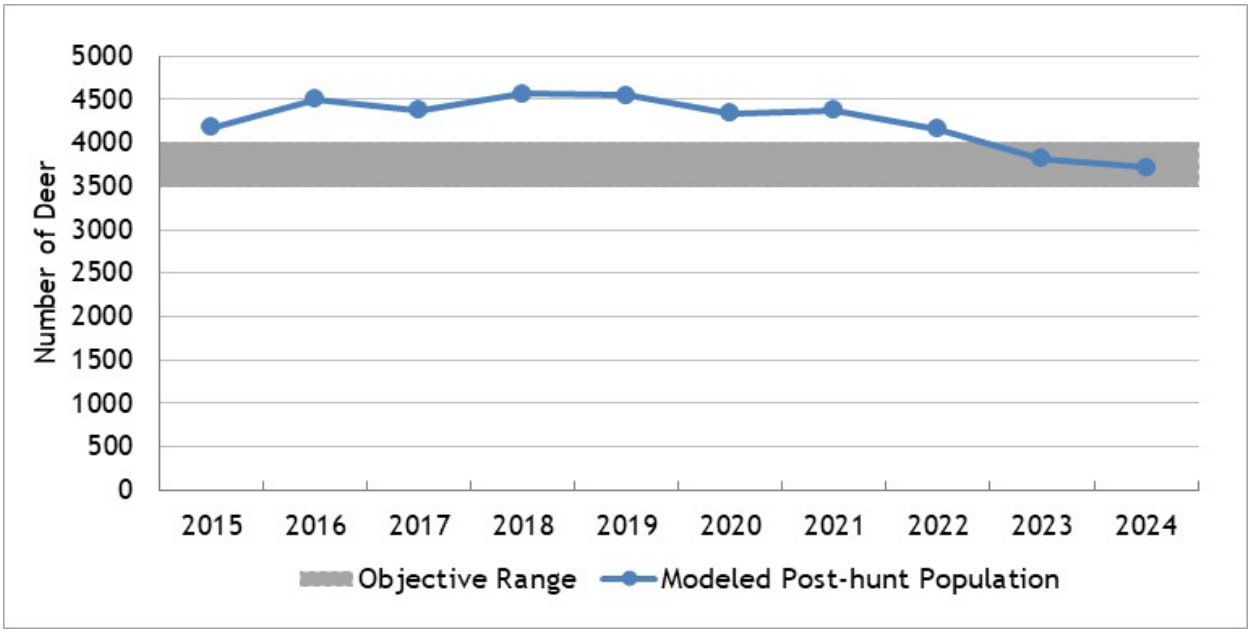


Figure D44-2. Deer DAU D-44 modeled post-hunt population and objective range, 2015-2024.

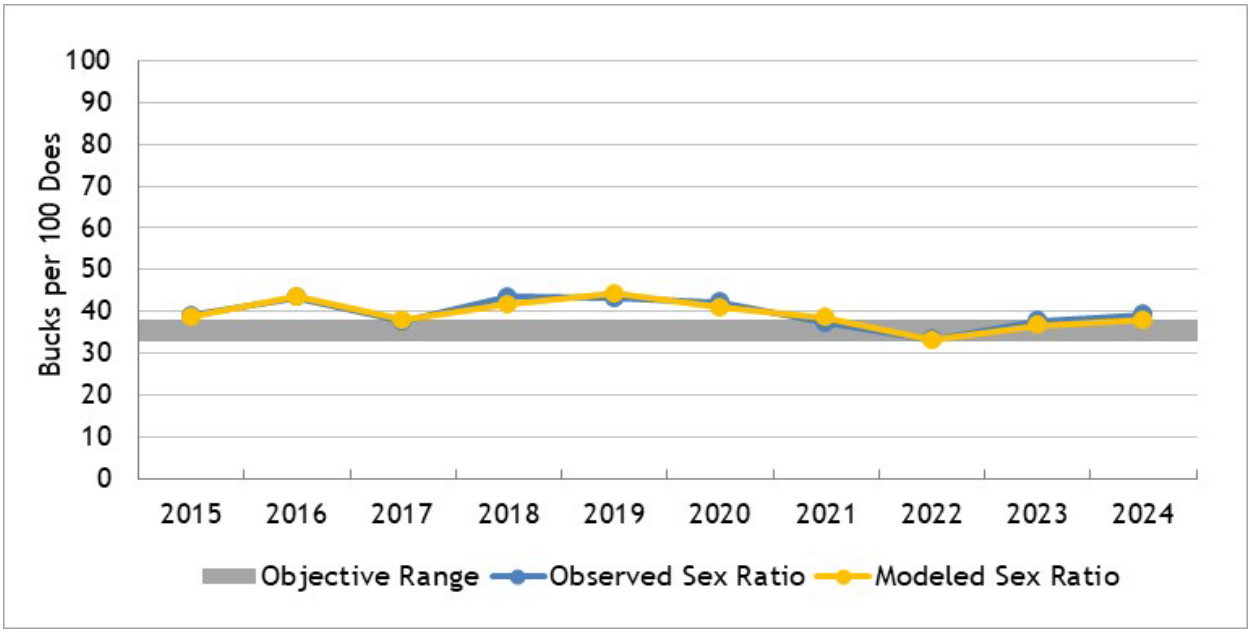


Figure D44-3. Deer DAU D-44 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and objective range, 2015-2024.

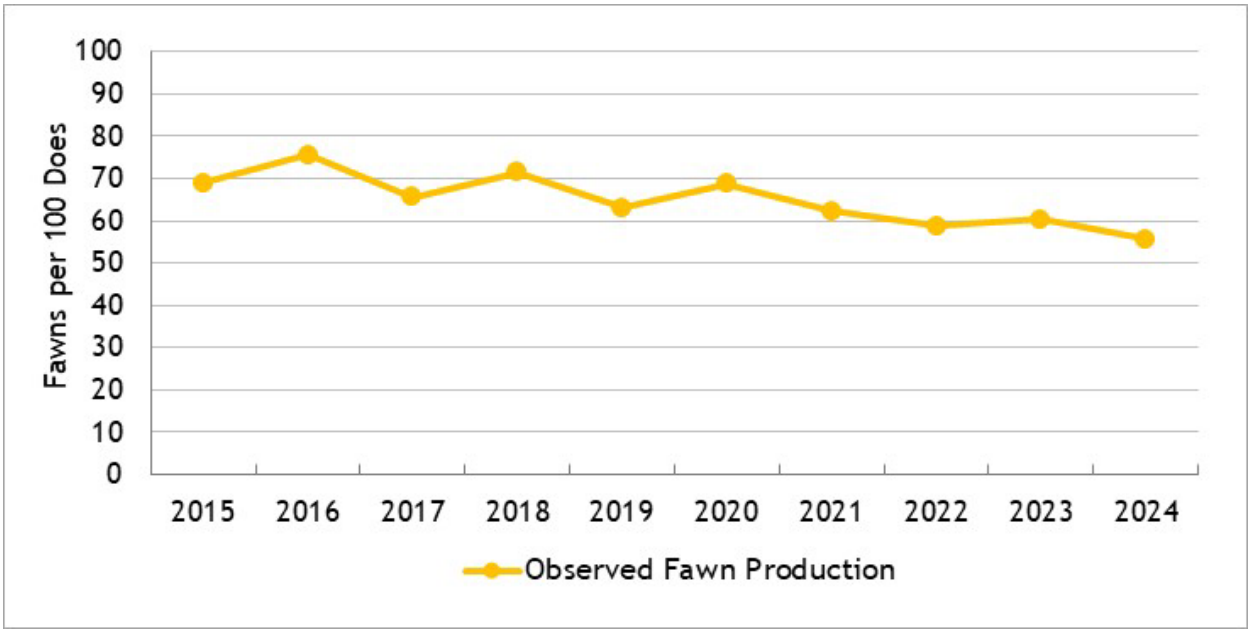


Figure D44-4. Deer DAU D-44 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

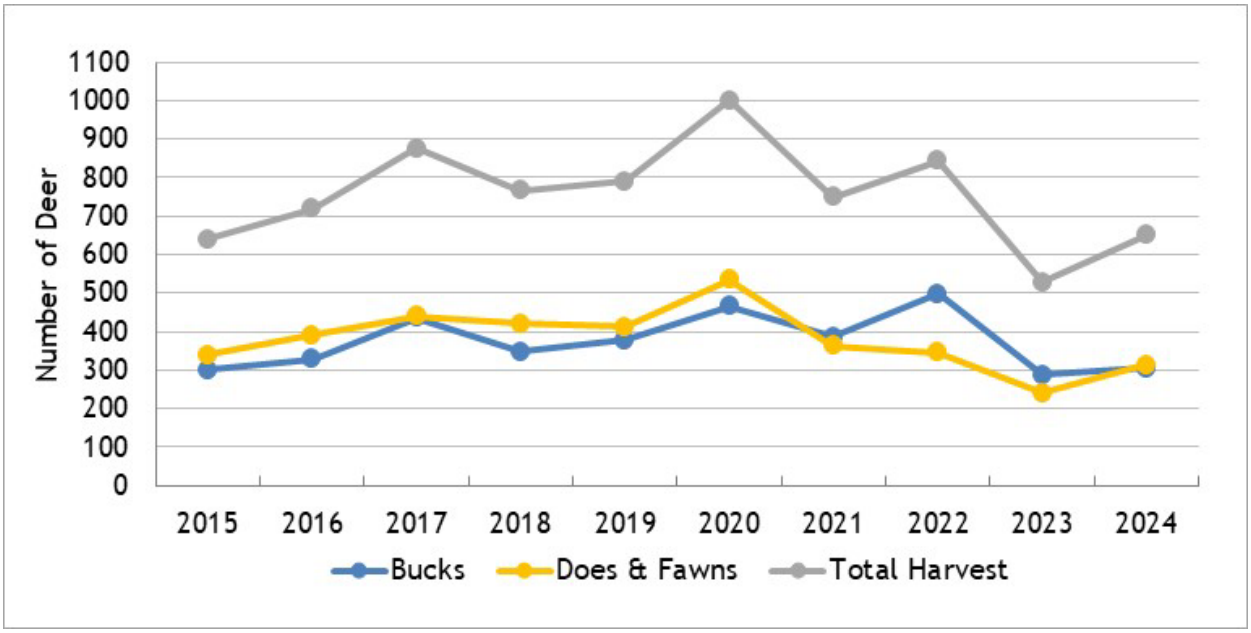


Figure D44-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-44, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The South Platte River deer herd is part of the endemic area for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) infection. The first CWD positive deer were found in 1997 in GMUs 91, 96, and 951. In 2019, mandatory testing for rifle buck and doe hunters showed that CWD prevalence was 25.6% in mule deer bucks, 12.2% in mule deer does, 15.9% in whitetail bucks, and 9.1% in whitetail does. Four years later, in 2023, mandatory testing for rifle buck hunters revealed that CWD prevalence was 20.0% in mule deer bucks and 24.3% in whitetail bucks.

Management Alternatives

The South Platte River deer herd has been managed under the current management plan objectives of 3,500—4,000 deer and 33—38 bucks:100 does, which were established in 2021. This Herd Management Plan (HMP) and the population and sex ratio objectives presented are a continuation of that plan. Therefore, no management alternatives were developed.

Management Objectives

Current Objective: 3,500—4,000.
Maintain the population at the target objective of 3,800 deer. Doe licenses have been increased to reduce the population to the target objective.

Current Objective: 33—38 bucks:100 does.
Manage the sex ratio at the current objective of 33—38 bucks:100 does. Buck licenses would be increased to maintain the herd within the objective range.

Strategies for addressing management issues and achieving objectives

Irrigated and dryland corn fields provide an important food source for both deer species, which can result in high concentrations of animals and game damage complaints from landowners. Landowner intolerance of deer numbers has been a concern in the central and eastern GMUs of 91, 92, and 96. At current population levels, deer damage in these GMUs has averaged 1–2 deer damage claims filed annually. To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer damage licenses and other game damage programs to landowners who are experiencing damage conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis.

To address CWD in this herd, management strategies have been implemented to reduce the prevalence of CWD in the South Platte River in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. The management actions will include reducing the age structure of bucks in the South Platte River deer herd. Additional management actions may be implemented in the future that may include reducing the age structure of the entire herd, reducing the deer density, or some combination of these management strategies.

The current deer population (~3,710) is within the objective range. The sex ratio (39 bucks:100 does) is above the objective range. Doe licenses have been increased to maintain the population at the target objective and buck licenses have been increased to reduce the sex ratio to the objective. This population will continue to be managed to sustain a viable deer population while continuing to seek out new hunter opportunities in the DAU.

Stakeholder Outreach

Input for the current South Platte River herd management objectives were solicited through a public survey prior to their approval by the Wildlife Commission in 2021. This current herd management plan was posted on the CPW website for 30-day public comment.

SOUTH TABLELANDS DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-54

Marty Stratman, Wildlife Biologist, Brush

GMUs: 93, 97, 98, 99, 100 Last HMP Approval Year: 2021
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 3,500—4,000; 2024 Estimate: 3,460. **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 3,500—4,000 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 30—35; 2024 observed: 34 **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 30—35 bucks:100 does**

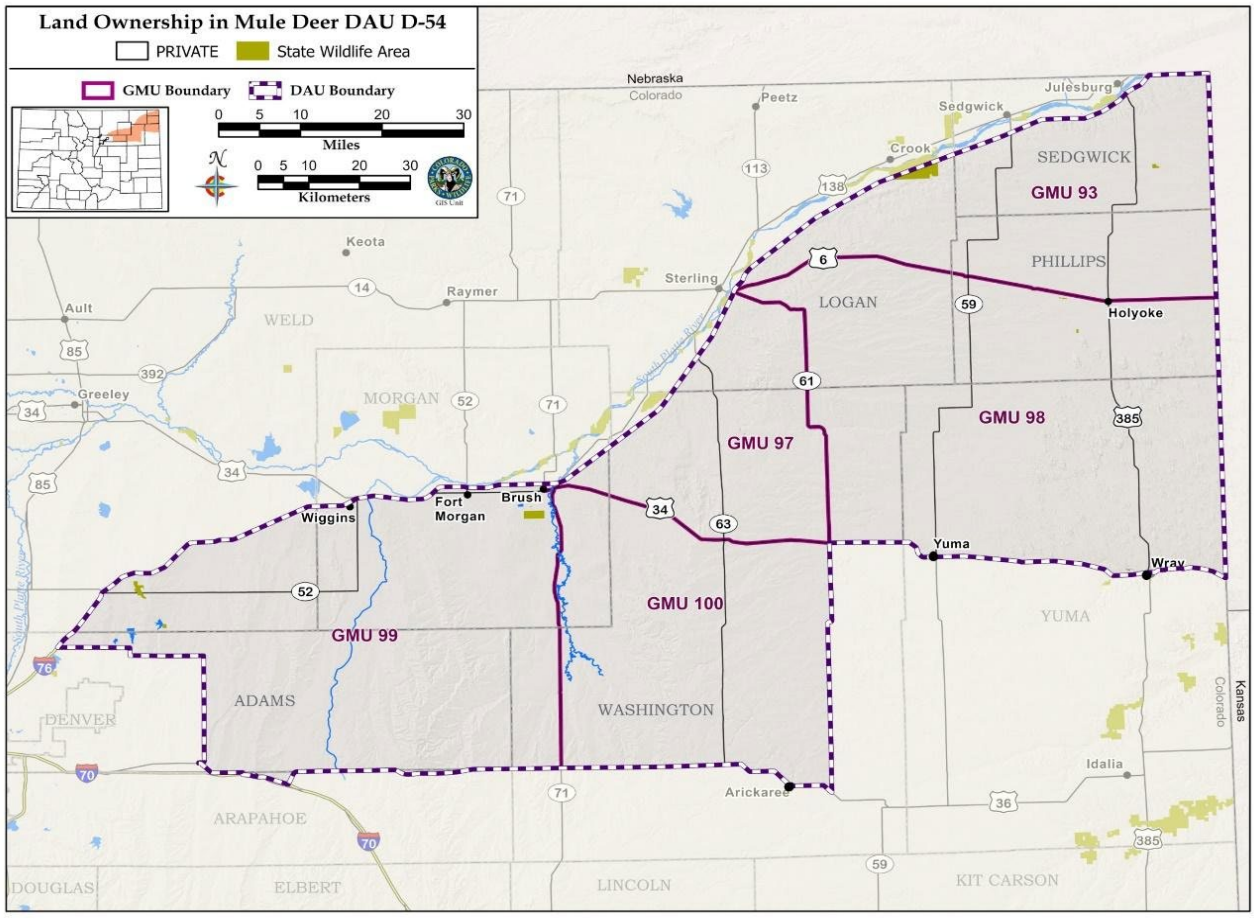


Figure D54-1. Location of deer DAU D-54 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in northeast Colorado.

Background Information

The D-54 deer management area encompasses approximately 6,042 mi^2 in northeastern Colorado and consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 93, 97, 98, 99 and 100. There are several habitat types within the South Tablelands, including dry cropland, irrigated cropland, tall-grass prairie, sandsage/mid-grass prairie, short-grass prairie, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. Nearly 30% of the South Tablelands comprises two sandsage/mid-grass prairie Sandhill complexes. One extends along the entire northern boundary and the other is located in the southeastern portion adjacent to the Nebraska border. Habitat quality has remained stable across large portions of the area due to CRP lands, managed grazing systems within the sandsage and short-grass rangelands, and changing cropping practices that emphasize dryland and irrigated corn.

Land ownership in the South Tablelands is typical of eastern Colorado, with the majority of the area being private land. Notable exceptions include the South Tamarack State Wildlife Area and several smaller parcels owned by CPW, which comprise <1% of the South Tablelands. Land use is almost exclusively agricultural based. Center pivot irrigation occurs throughout the area, including the Sandhill complexes, with the majority occurring on the eastern end of the South Tablelands. Corn, wheat, and alfalfa are the primary crops produced. On the western end, residential development is encroaching into GMU 99, although impacts on deer habitat have not been significant.

Both mule deer and white-tailed deer can be found in the South Tablelands. Mule deer are commonly found in all habitat types, although densities are highest in the sandsage rangeland, irrigated cropland settings, and within large complexes of CRP lands. White-tailed deer can also be found throughout the South Tablelands, with the highest concentrations occurring in GMU 98 on the east end and along Bijou Creek in GMU 99 on the west end. Annual precipitation ranges from 13–16 inches with most occurring during intense summer thunderstorms. Snowfall can be variable in the area and recent winters have been moderate with seasonably colder temperatures.

The primary focus is to manage mule deer in the South Tablelands. Since 2012, season choice white-tailed deer only licenses have been used to increase the harvest of white-tailed deer and minimize expansion into traditional mule deer habitats. Estimated mule deer numbers in D-54 have decreased over the last decade from a high of 4,950 mule deer in 2015 to a low of 3,460 in 2024 (Figure D54-2). This mule deer herd has experienced normal population fluctuations associated with weather conditions, hunting pressure, and population dynamics. The 5 and 10-year population estimate averages for this mule deer herd are 4,000 and 4,430 animals, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 44 bucks:100 does ranging from 34 bucks:100 does in 2024 to 48 bucks:100 does in 2017 and 2018 (Figure D54-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 53 fawns:100 does in 2024 to a high of 68 fawns:100 does in 2021 and has averaged 61 fawns:100 does (Figure D54-4).

Over the last 10 years, mule deer harvest has ranged from a high of 813 animals in 2020 to a low of 488 in 2023 (Figure D54-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 601 mule deer. Mule deer buck harvest has ranged from a low of 271 bucks in 2023 to a high of 435 in 2020, averaging 352 animals. Mule deer doe harvest has ranged from a high of 347 animals in 2020 to a low of 189 in 2024. In D-54, white-tailed deer are managed to provide additional hunting opportunities. White-tailed deer harvest over the last decade has ranged from a low of 78 animals in 2023 to a high of 206 animals in 2020, averaging 138 white-tailed deer annually.

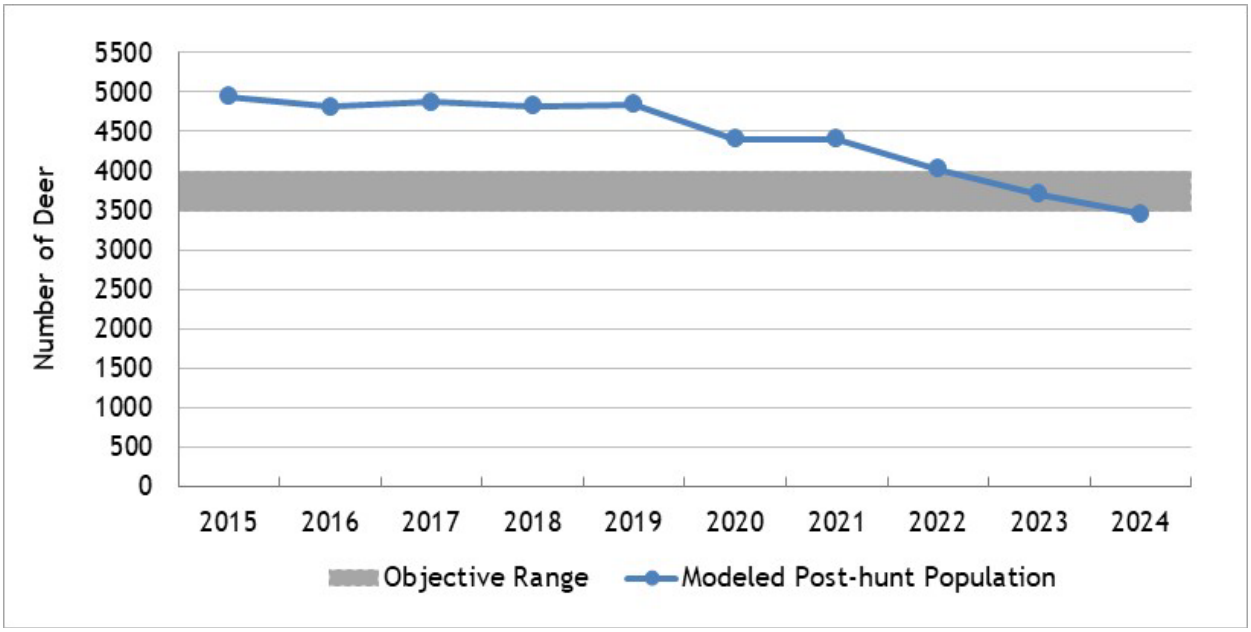


Figure D54-2. Deer DAU D-54 modeled post-hunt population and objective range, 2015-2024.

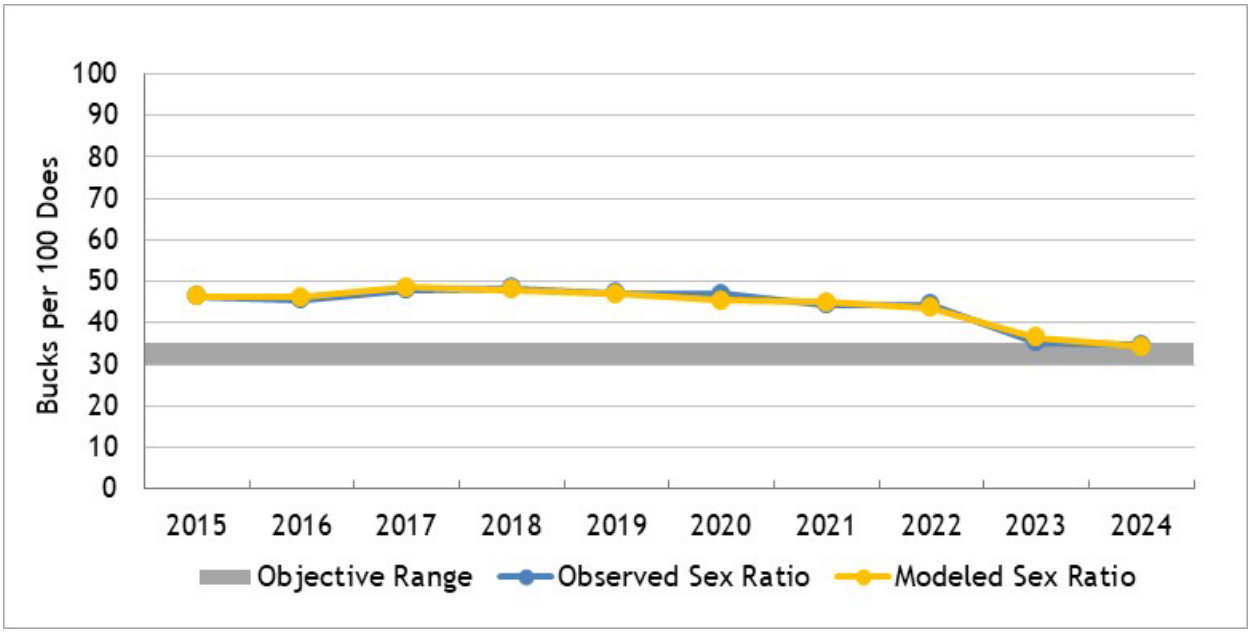


Figure D54-3. Deer DAU D-54 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and objective range, 2015-2024.

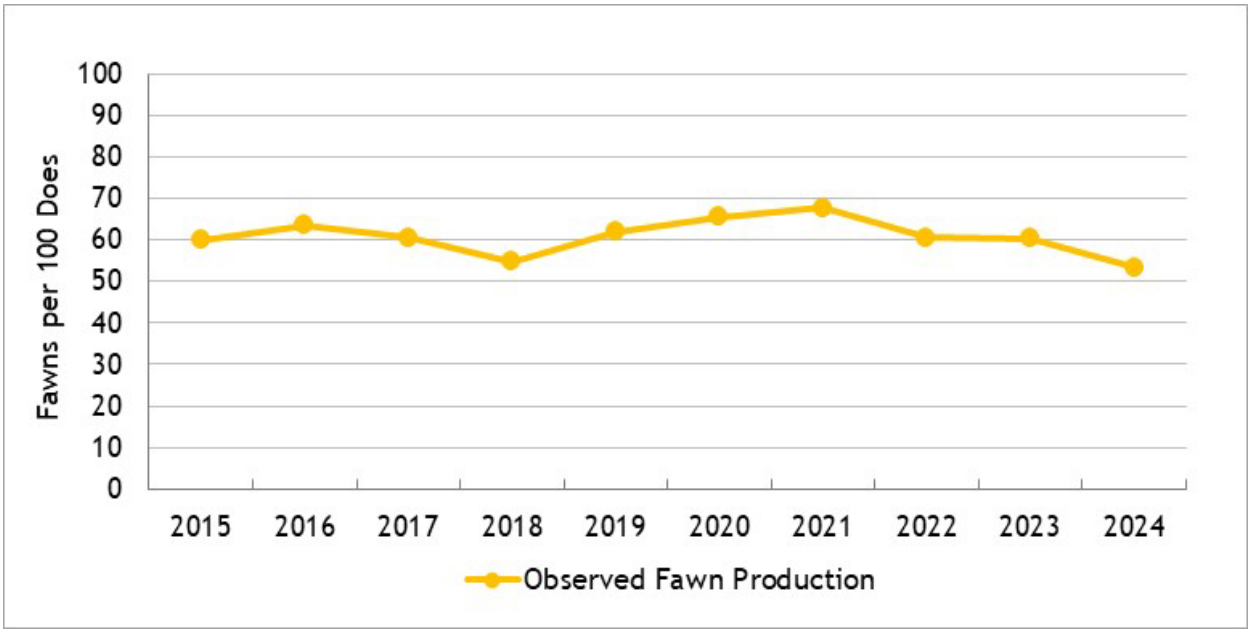


Figure D54-4. Deer DAU D-54 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

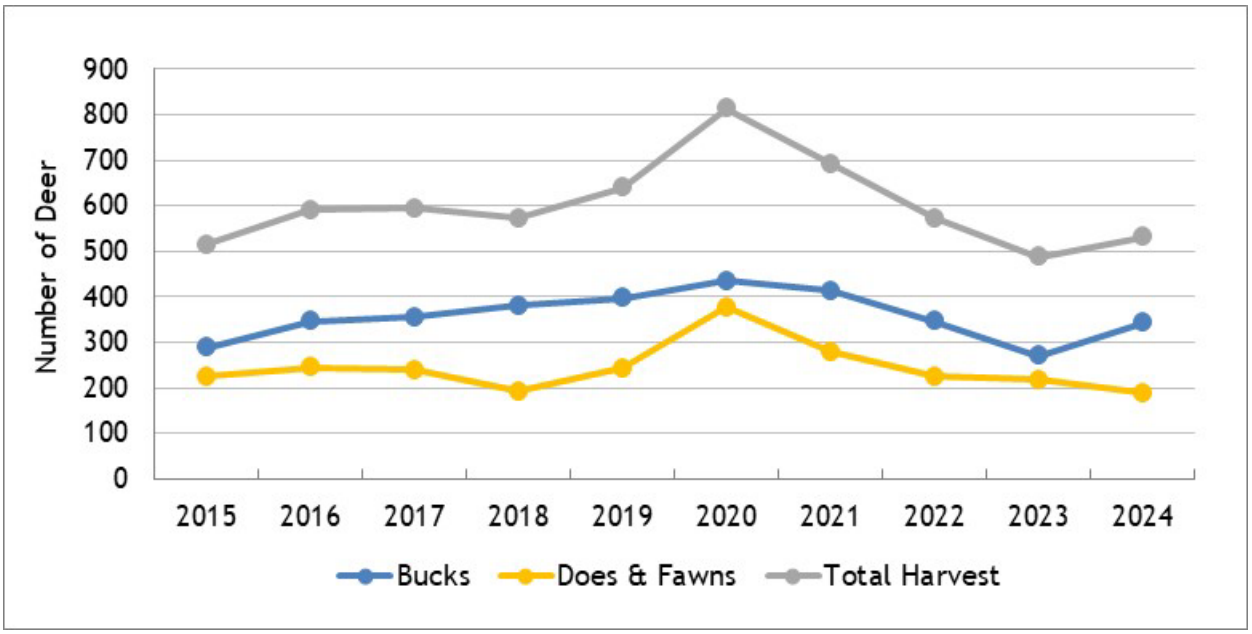


Figure D54-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-54, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The first Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) positive deer was found in GMU 93 in 1999. In 2019, mandatory testing for buck and doe rifle hunters was conducted in the South Tablelands for the first time. From the samples collected, CWD prevalence was 21.4% in mule deer bucks, 2.8% in mule deer does, 18.0% in whitetail bucks, and 6.1% in whitetail does. Four years later, in 2023, mandatory testing for rifle buck hunters revealed that CWD prevalence was 33.8% in mule deer bucks.

Management Alternatives

The D-54 deer herd has been managed under the current management plan objectives of 3,500—4,000 mule deer and 30—35 bucks:100 does, which were established in 2021. This Herd Management Plan (HMP) and the population and sex ratio objectives presented are a continuation of that plan. Therefore, no management alternatives were developed.

Management Objectives

Current Objective: 3,500—4,000.
Maintain the population at the current target objective of 4,000 mule deer. Doe licenses have been reduced to increase the population to the target objective.

Current Objective: 30—35 bucks:100 does.
Maintain the sex ratio at the current objective of 30—35 bucks:100 does. Buck licenses would remain relatively the same as the herd is within the objective range.

Strategies for addressing management issues and achieving objectives

To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer damage licenses and other game damage programs for landowners that are experiencing damage conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis. Additionally, we will continue to look for opportunities for hunter access on or through private property.

To address CWD in this herd, management strategies have been implemented to reduce the prevalence of CWD in the South Tablelands deer herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. The management actions taken included reducing the age structure of bucks in the mule deer herd. Additional management actions may be implemented in the future that may include further reductions in the age structure, reducing the deer density, or some combination of these management strategies.

The current mule deer population size (~3,460) is slightly below the objective range. The buck:doe ratio (34 bucks:100 does) is within the objective range. Doe licenses have been reduced to increase the population to the objective and the current buck license allocation should remain steady to manage the sex ratio within the objective. This population will continue to be managed to sustain a viable mule deer population while continuing to suppress white-tailed deer numbers in this DAU.

Stakeholder Outreach

Input for the current South Tablelands herd management objectives were solicited through a public survey prior to their approval by the Wildlife Commission in 2021. This current herd management plan was posted on the CPW website for 30-day public comment.

ARIKAREE DEER HERD MANAGEMENT PLAN
DATA ANALYSIS UNIT D-55

Marty Stratman, Wildlife Biologist, Brush

GMUs: 101, 102 Last HMP Approval Year: 2018
Post-hunt Population: Previous Objective: 2,300—2,700; 2023 Estimate: 2,160. **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 2,300—2,700 deer**
Post-hunt Sex Ratio (bucks:100 does): Previous Objective: 35—40; 2024 observed: 41 **Preferred Alternative: (Status quo) 35—40 bucks:100 does**

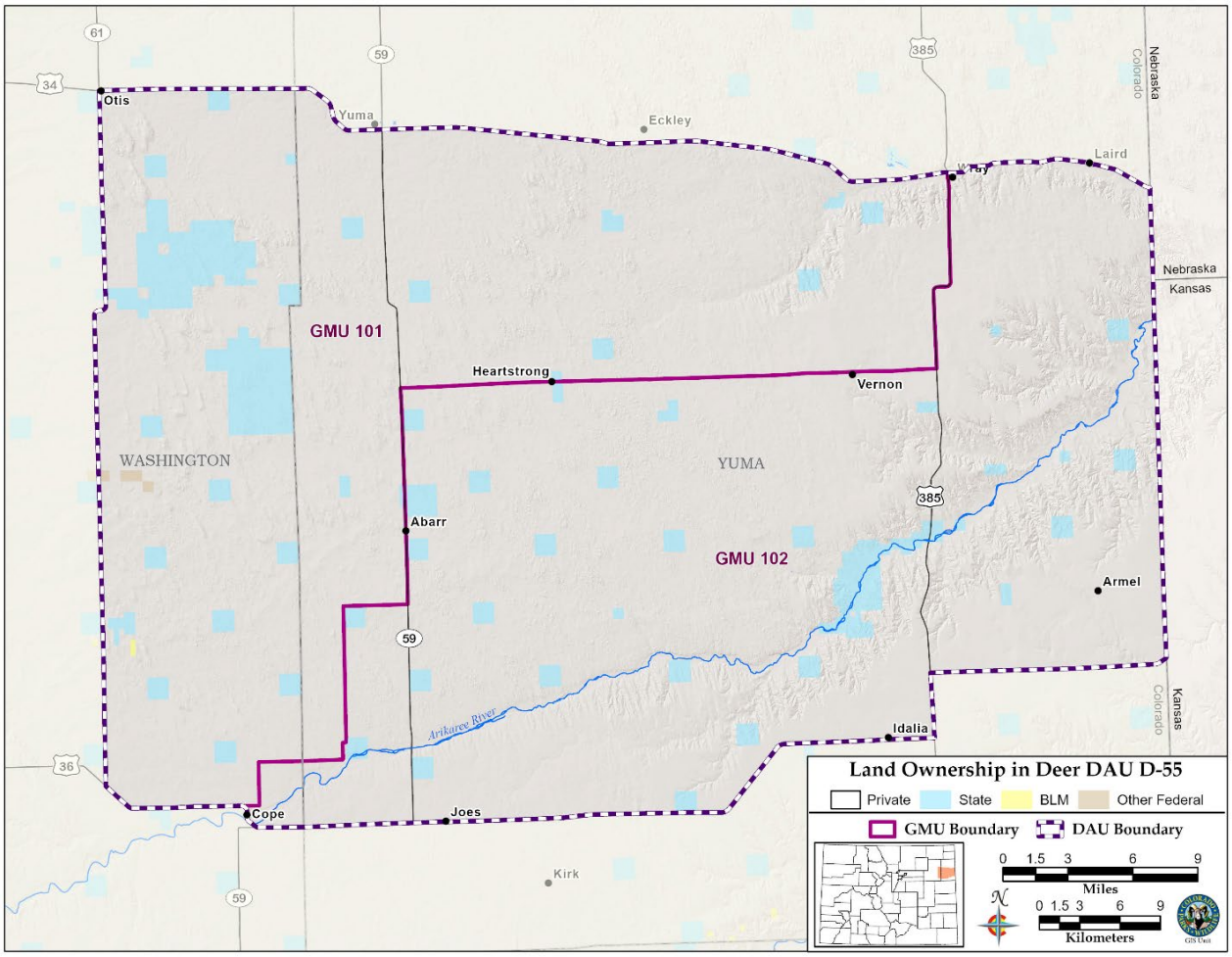


Figure D55-1. Location of Deer DAU D-55 and associated Game Management Units (GMUs) in northeast Colorado.

Background Information

The D-55 deer management area encompasses approximately 1,424 mi^2 in Washington and Yuma counties in northeastern Colorado and consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 101 and 102 (Figure D55-1). There are several habitat types within the Arikaree, including dry cropland, irrigated cropland, short-grass prairie, sandsage/mid-grass prairie, cottonwood-riparian bottoms, dry canyons, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. Over 50% of the Arikaree consists of sandsage/mid-grass prairie Sandhill's. The sandsage/mid-grass prairie is part of the Sandhill complex which runs through this area. The sandsage/mid-grass prairie has remained stable with little being broken out for farming or development. The quality of deer habitat has increased across large portions of the area due to CRP lands, managed grazing systems within the sandsage rangelands, and changing cropping practices that emphasize corn as an alternative to a wheat-fallow system.

Land ownership within D-55 is typical of eastern Colorado with the majority of the area being in private ownership. Public lands comprise about 1% of this management area and are owned or managed by the CPW. Land use within the Arikaree is almost completely based on agricultural production. Grazing by livestock is the primary influence on short-grass and sandsage/mid-grass prairie conditions. Center pivot irrigation occurs throughout the area with corn, wheat, and alfalfa being the primary irrigated crops.

Both mule deer and white-tailed deer can be found throughout the Arikaree. Mule deer are commonly found in all habitat types, although densities are highest in sandsage rangelands, irrigated croplands, and within large complexes of CRP lands. White-tailed deer can also be found in any habitat type and concentrations are highest along the Arikaree River and its tributaries and the North Fork of the Republican River. The climate in the Arikaree is characterized by hot, dry summers and relatively mild winters. Annual precipitation ranges from 13–16 inches with most occurring during intense summer thunderstorms. Snowfall can be variable in the area and recent winters have been moderate with seasonably colder temperatures.

Estimated deer numbers in D-55 have declined over the last decade from a high of approximately 3,230 deer in 2016 to a low of 2,160 in 2024 (Figure D55-2). This deer herd has experienced normal population fluctuations associated with weather conditions, hunting pressure, and population dynamics. The 5 and 10-year population estimate averages for this deer herd are 2,360 and 2,670 animals, respectively. Since 2015, the modeled post-hunt sex ratio has averaged 47 bucks:100 does ranging from 36 bucks:100 does in 2021 to 59 bucks:100 does in 2017 (Figure D55-3). Observed fawn production has varied from a low of 58 fawns:100 does in 2022 to a high of 79 fawns:100 does in 2017 and has averaged 68 fawns:100 does (Figure D55-4).

Over the last 10 years, deer harvest has ranged from a high of 498 deer in 2020 to a low of 249 in 2023 (Figure D55-5). The average annual harvest since 2015 is 369 deer. Buck harvest has ranged from a low of 159 bucks in 2024 to a high of 312 in 2020, averaging 220 animals. Doe harvest has ranged from a high of 216 animals in 2017 to a low of 83 in 2023.

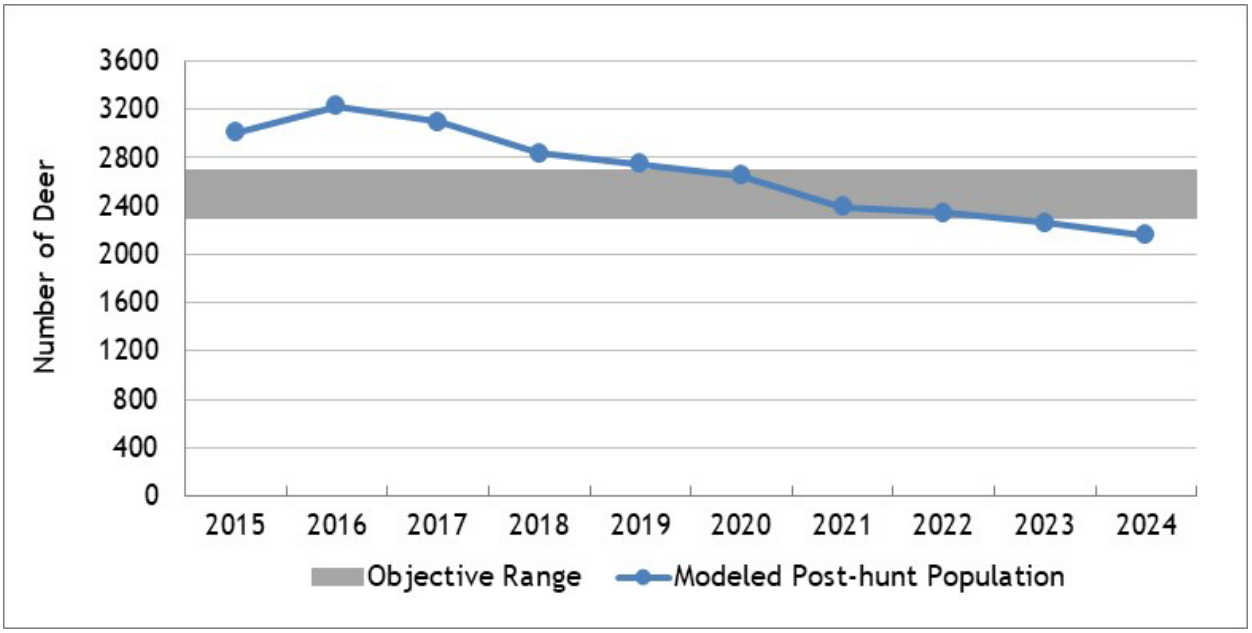


Figure D55-2. Deer DAU D-55 modeled post-hunt population and objective range, 2015-2024.

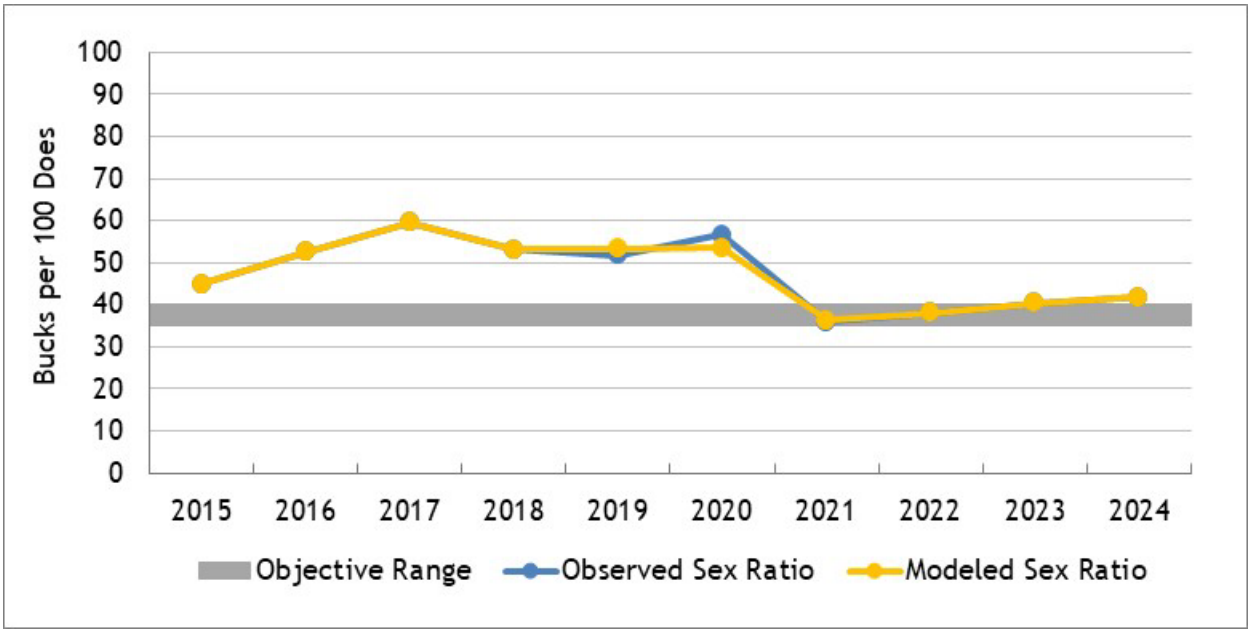


Figure D55-3. Deer DAU D-55 observed and modeled post-hunt sex ratios (bucks:100 does) and objective range, 2015-2024.

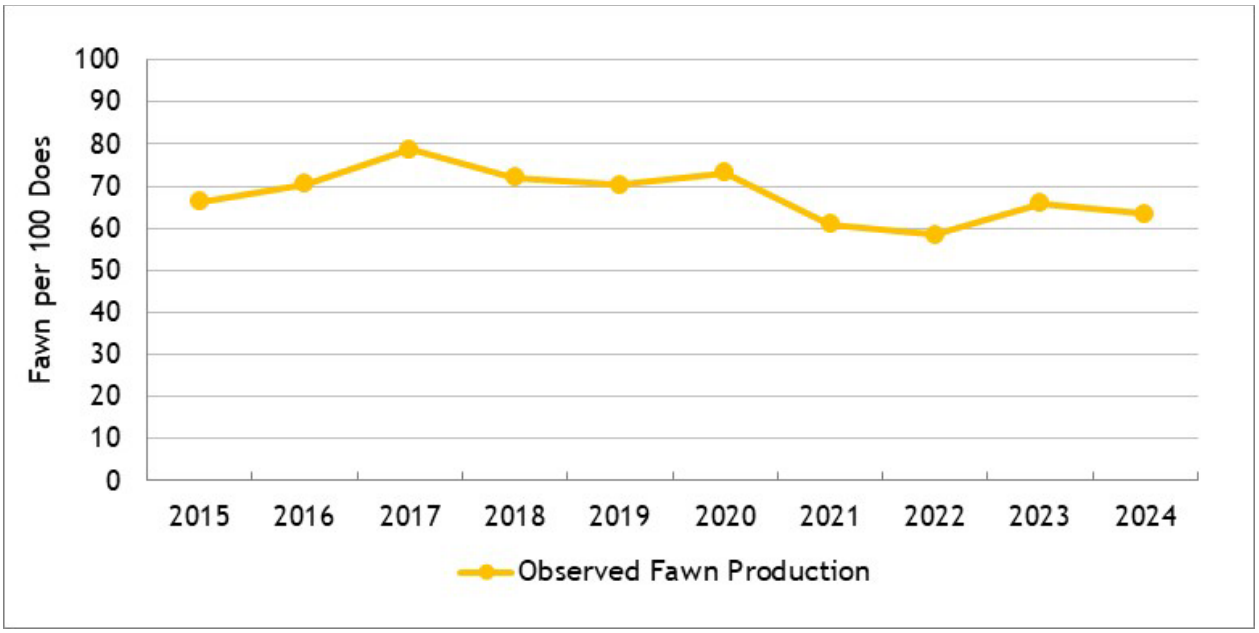


Figure D55-4. Deer DAU D-55 observed post-hunt fawn production (fawns:100 does), 2015-2024.

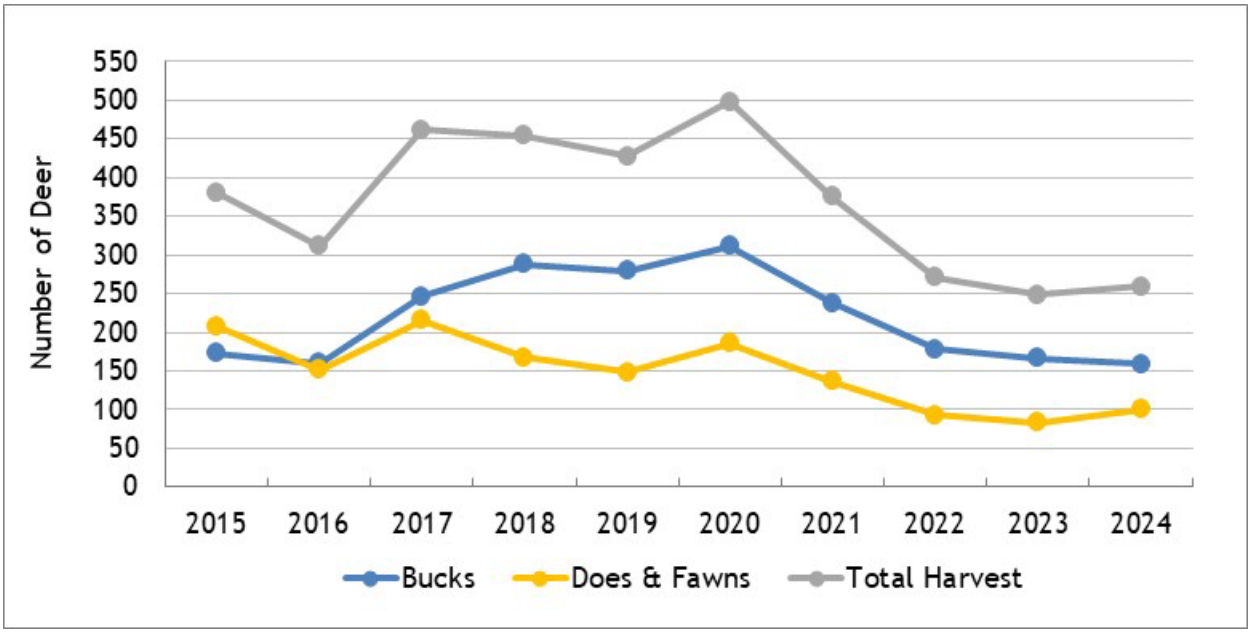


Figure D55-5. Deer harvest estimates in D-55, 2015-2024.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The first CWD positive deer were found in 2005 in GMU 102. In 2019, mandatory testing for rifle buck and doe hunters in the Arikaree deer herd showed that CWD prevalence was 33.8% in mule deer bucks, 10.2% in mule deer does, 19.0% in whitetail bucks, and 11.6% in whitetail does. Four years later, in 2023, mandatory testing for rifle buck hunters revealed that CWD prevalence was 44.4% in mule deer bucks and 28.2% in whitetail bucks.

Management Alternatives

The Arikaree deer herd has been managed under the current management plan objectives of 2,300—2,700 deer and 35—40 bucks:100 does, which were established in 2018. This Herd Management Plan (HMP) and the population and sex ratio objectives presented are a continuation of that plan. Therefore, no management alternatives were developed.

Management Objectives

Preferred Population Objective: 2,300—2,700.
We recommend maintaining the population at the target objective of 2,700 deer. Doe licenses have been reduced to increase the population to the target objective.

Preferred Sex Ratio Objective: 35—40 bucks:100 does.
We recommend maintaining the sex ratio at 35—40 bucks:100 does. Buck licenses would be adjusted to maintain the sex ratio at the objective range.

Strategies for addressing management issues and achieving objectives

To address any game damage, CPW will continue to offer damage licenses and other game damage programs for landowners that are experiencing damage conflicts that cannot be addressed through the general hunting seasons on an individual basis. Additionally, we will continue to look for opportunities for hunter access on or through private property.

To address CWD in this herd, management strategies have been implemented to reduce the prevalence of CWD in the Arikaree deer herd in accordance with the CWD Response Plan. The management actions included reducing the age structure of bucks in the Arikaree deer herd. Additional management actions may be implemented in the future that may include further reductions in the age structure, reducing the deer density, or some combination of these management strategies.

The current deer population size (~2,160) is below the current objective range. The sex ratio (40 bucks:100 does) is above the proposed objective range. Doe licenses have been reduced to increase the population to the target objective and current buck license allocations have been increased to reduce the sex ratio to the objective. This population will continue to be managed to sustain a viable deer population while continuing to seek out new hunter opportunities in this DAU.

Stakeholder Outreach

Input for the current Arikaree herd management objectives were solicited through a public survey prior to their approval by the Wildlife Commission in 2018. This herd management plan was posted on the CPW website for 30-day public comment.

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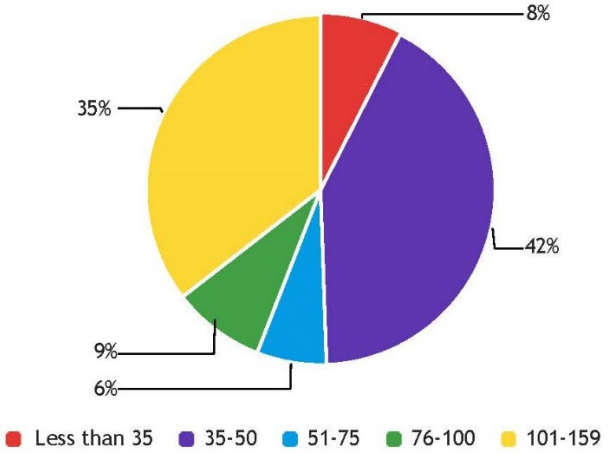
Miller, M. W., E. S. Williams, C. W. McCarty, T. R. Spraker, T. J. Kreeger, C. T. Larsen, and E. T. Thorne. 2000. Epizootiology of Chronic Wasting Disease in Free-ranging Cervids in Colorado and Wyoming. Journal of Wildlife Diseases 38: 676-690.

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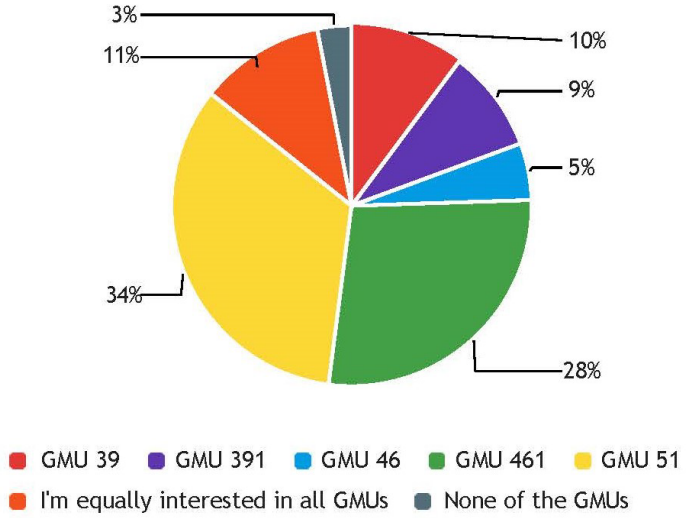
Appendix A. Small Landowner Surveys

D-17 Bailey Deer Herd

Q1 - Approximately how much land do you own in GMUs 39, 391, 46, 461, and 51? (*n* = 93)



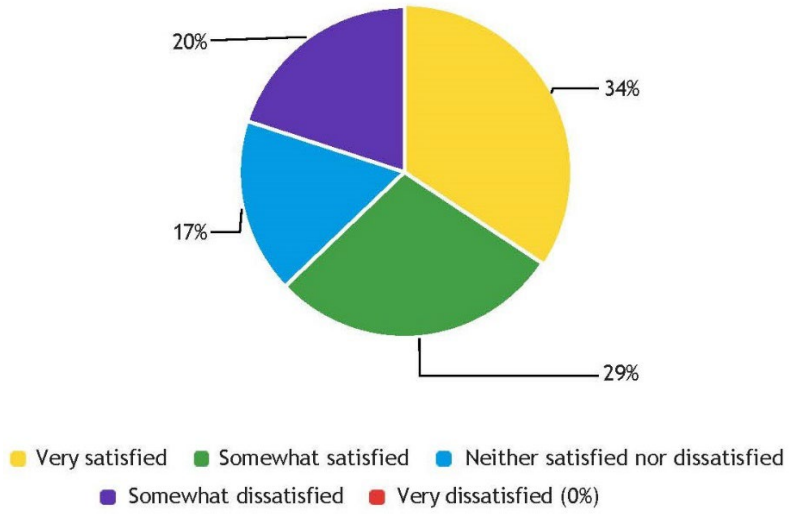
Q2 - Please indicate which GMU within the Bailey Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 98)



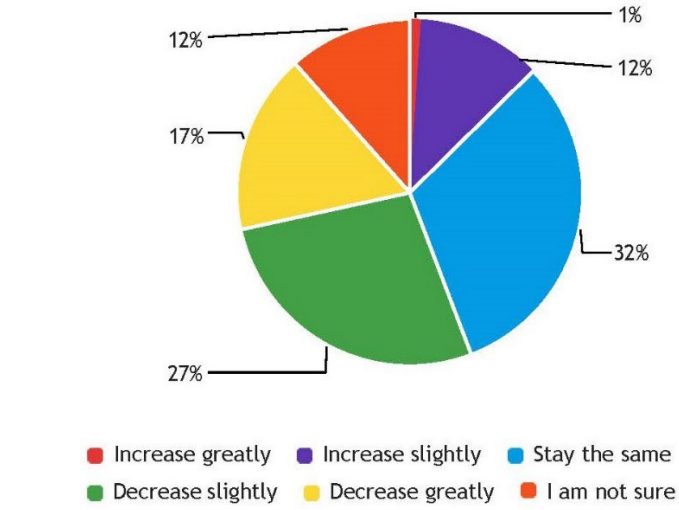
Q3 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 39, 391, 46, 461, or 51? (*n* = 99)



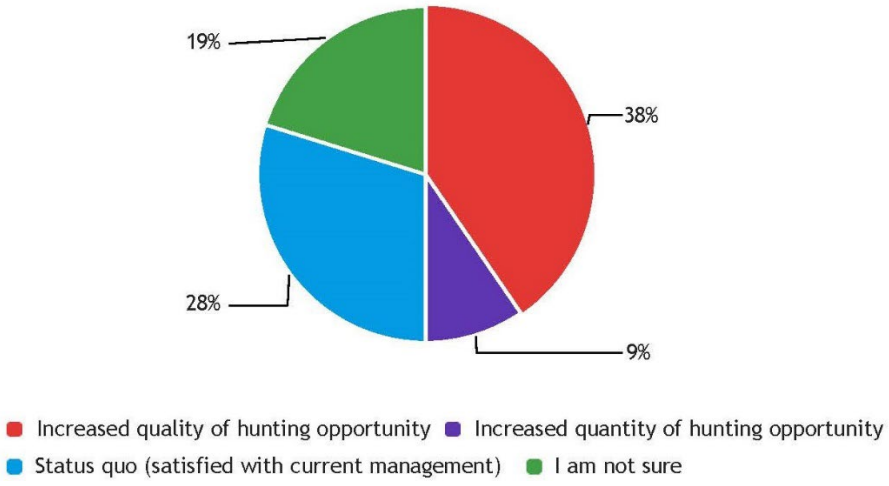
Q4 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 39, 391, 46, 461, or 51? (*n* = 35)



Q5 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the Bailey deer population over the next 10 years. (*n* = 95)

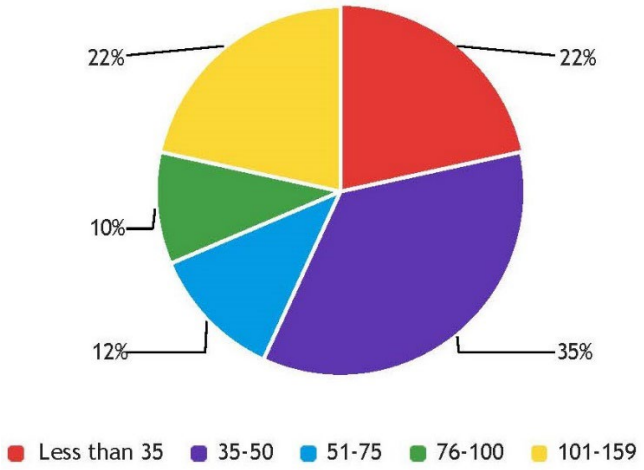


Q6 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the Bailey deer herd be managed for...? (*n* = 94)

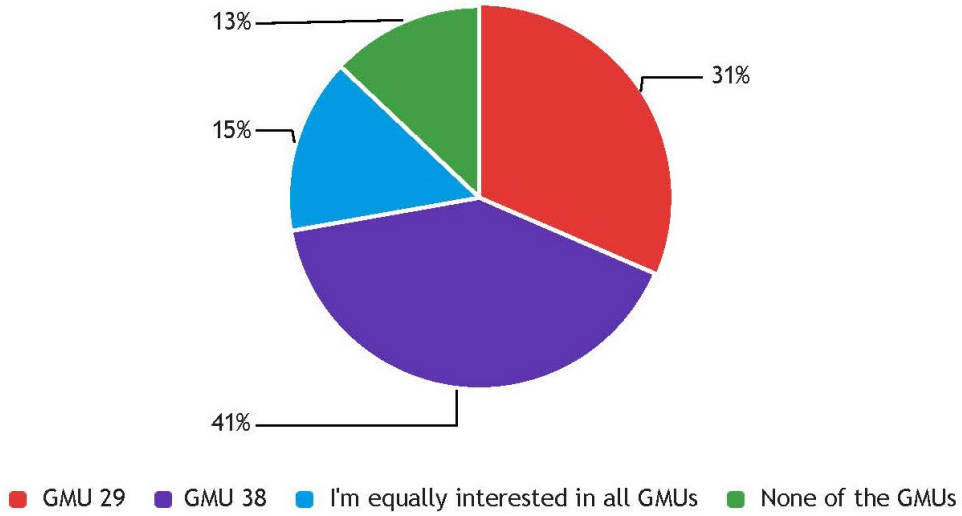


D-27 Boulder Creek Deer Herd

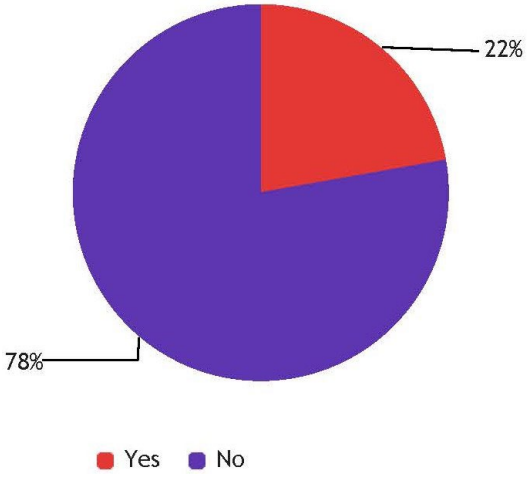
Q1 - Approximately how much land do you own in GMUs 29 and 38 ? (*n* = 51)



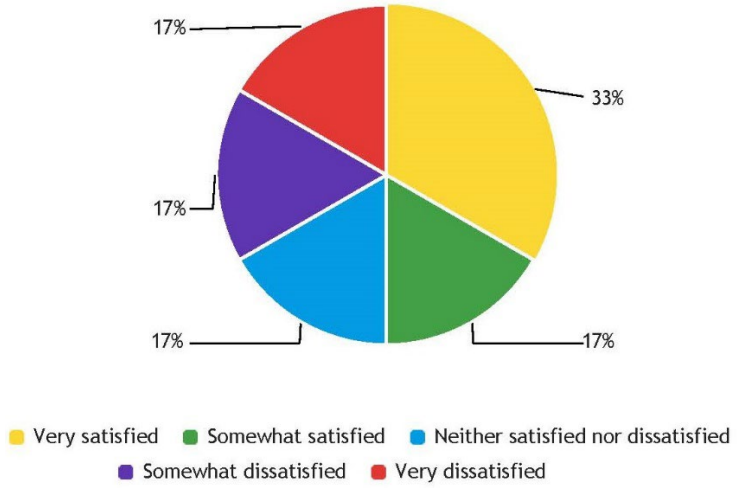
Q2 - Please indicate which GMU within the Boulder Creek Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 54)



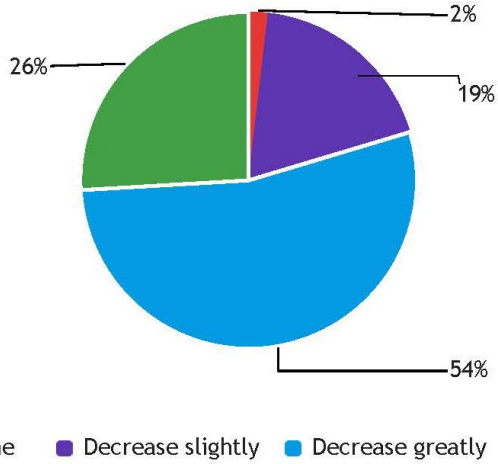
Q3 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 29, or 38? (*n* = 54)



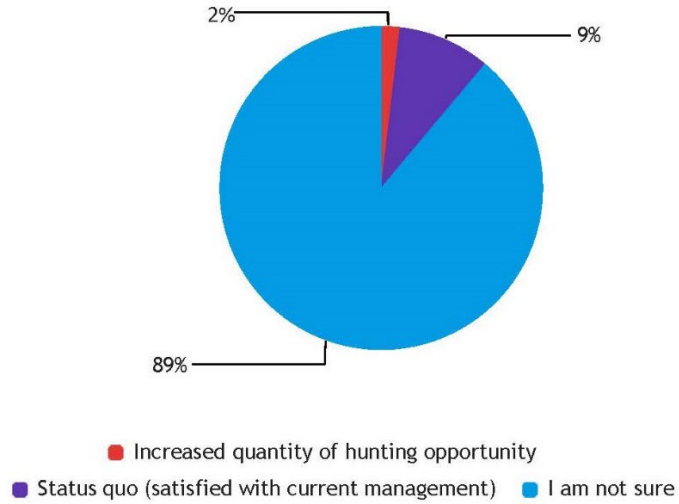
Q4 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 29 or 38? (*n* = 12)



Q5 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the Boulder Creek deer population over the next 10 years? (*n* = 54)

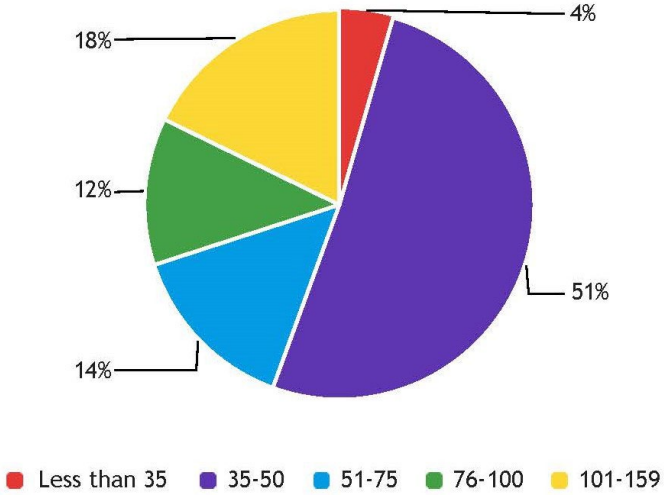


Q6 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the Boulder Creek deer herd be managed for…? (*n* = 54)

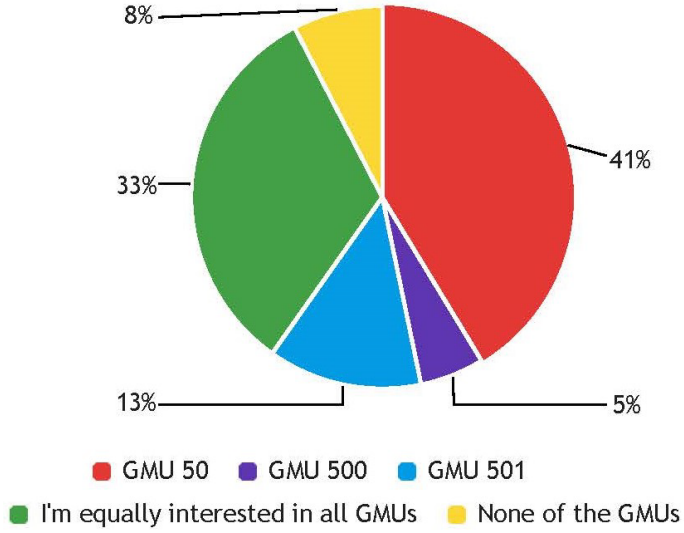


D-38 South Park Deer Herd

Q1 - Approximately how much land do you own in GMUs 50, 500, and 501? (*n* = 90)



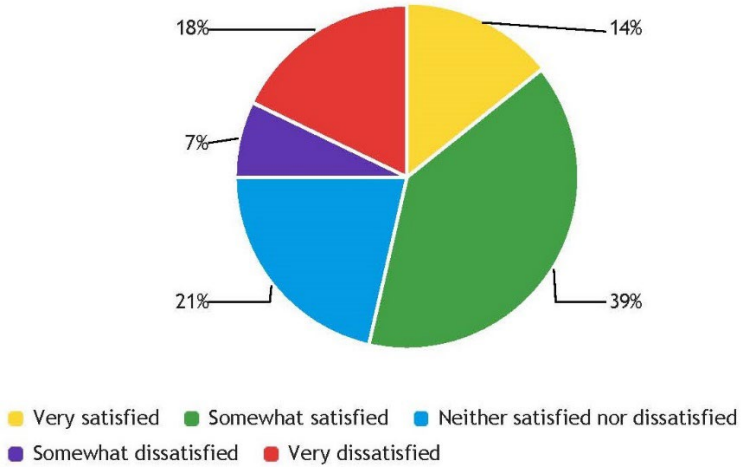
Q2 - Please indicate which GMU within the South Park Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 92)



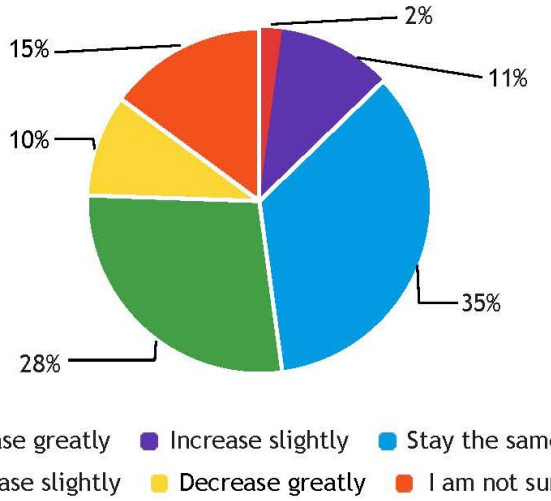
Q3 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 50, 500, or 501? (*n* = 95)



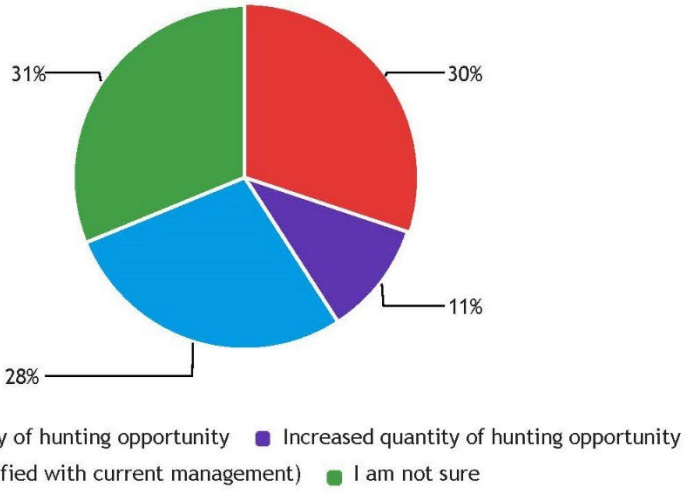
Q4 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 50, 500, or 501? (*n* = 28)



Q5 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the South Park deer population over the next 10 years? (*n* = 94)

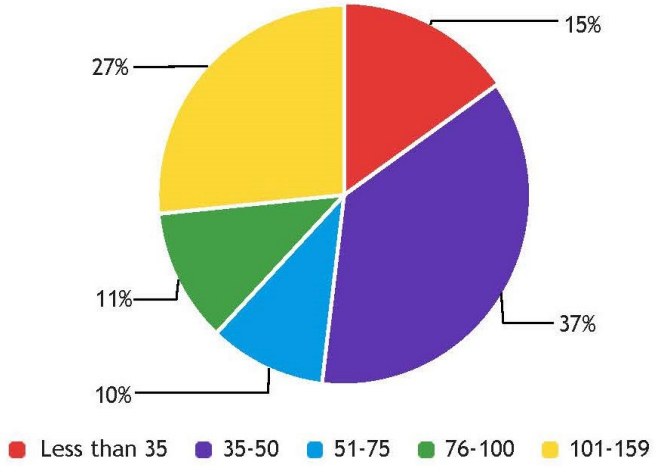


Q6 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the South Park deer herd be managed for…? (*n* = 93)

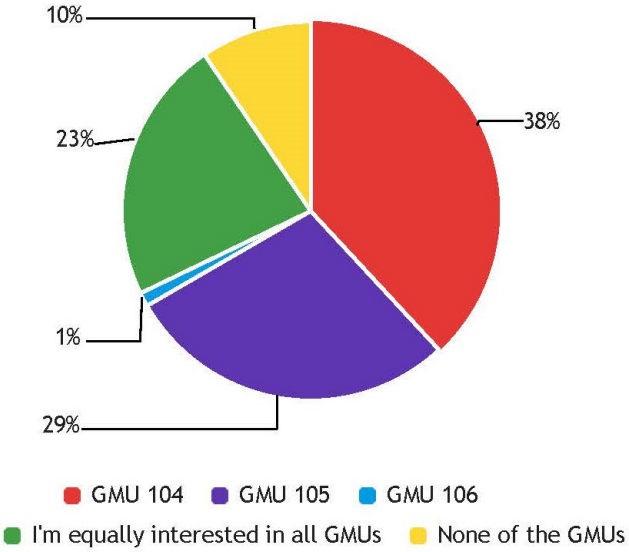


D-49 Bijou Creek Deer Herd

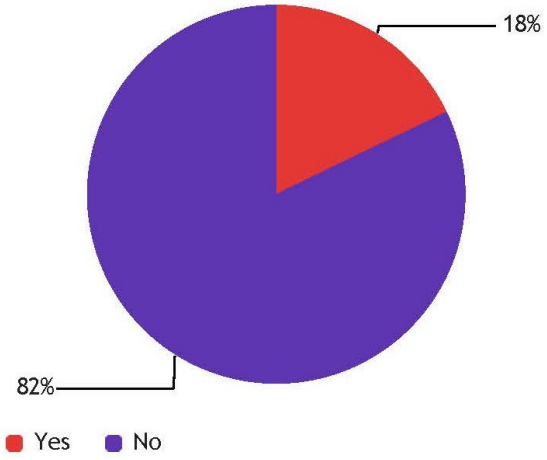
Q1 - Approximately how much land do you own in GMUs 104, 105, and 106? (*n* = 79)



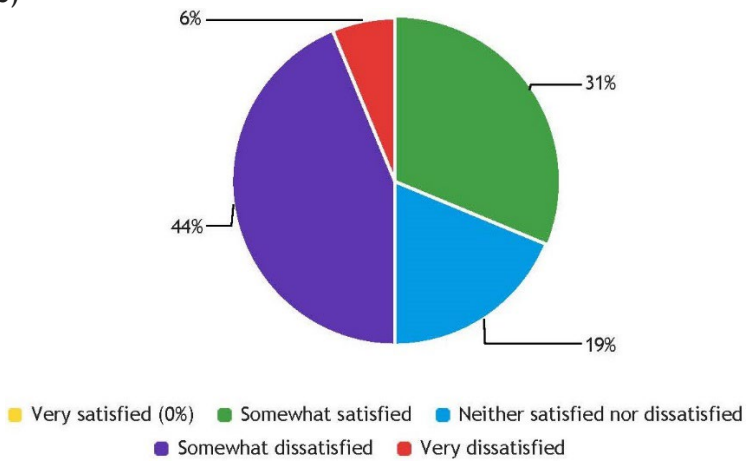
Q2 - Please indicate which GMU within the Bijou Creek Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 84)



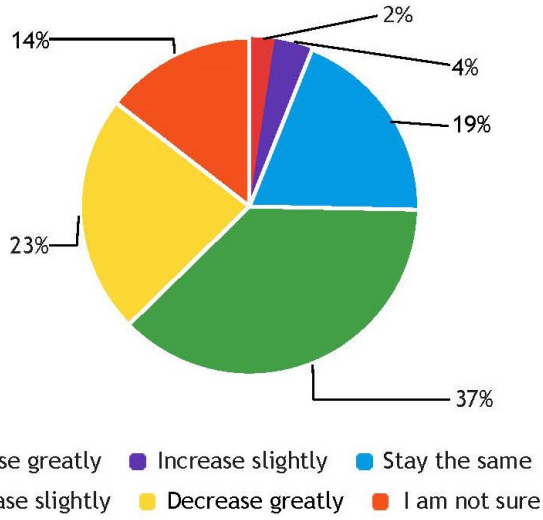
Q3 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 104, 105, or 106? (*n* = 84)



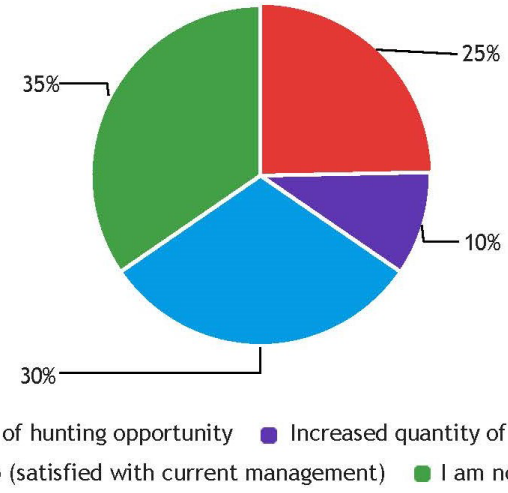
Q4 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 104, 105, or 106? (*n* = 16)



Q5 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the South Park deer population over the next 10 years? (*n* = 94)



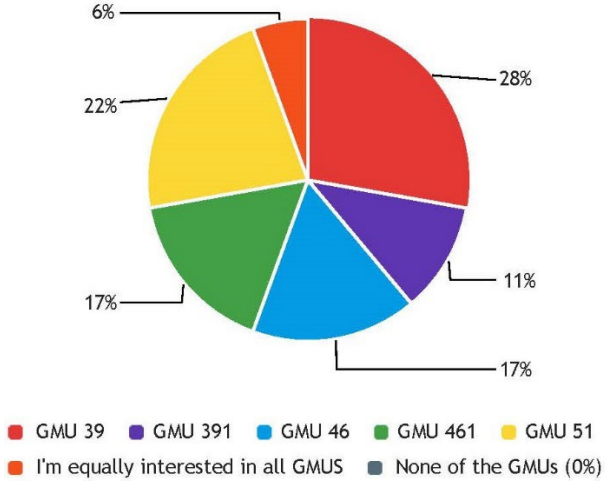
Q6 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the South Park deer herd be managed for…? (*n* = 93)



Appendix B. Landowner Preference Program Surveys

D-17 Bailey Deer Herd

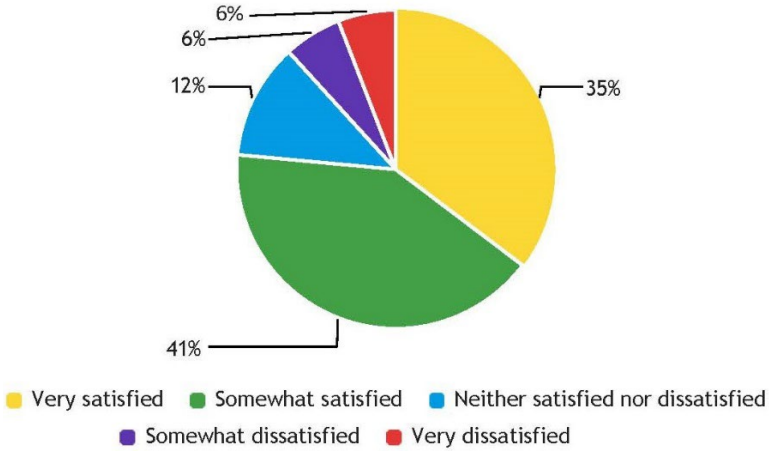
Q1 - Please indicate which Game Management Unit (GMU) within the Bailey Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 18)



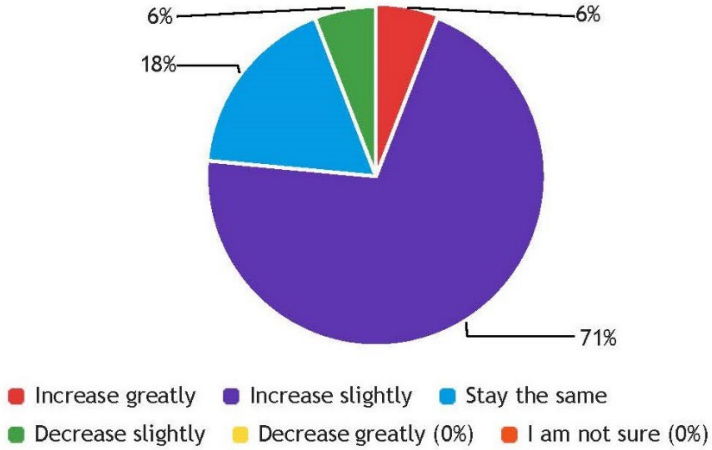
Q2 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 39, 391, 46, 461, or 51? (*n* = 18)



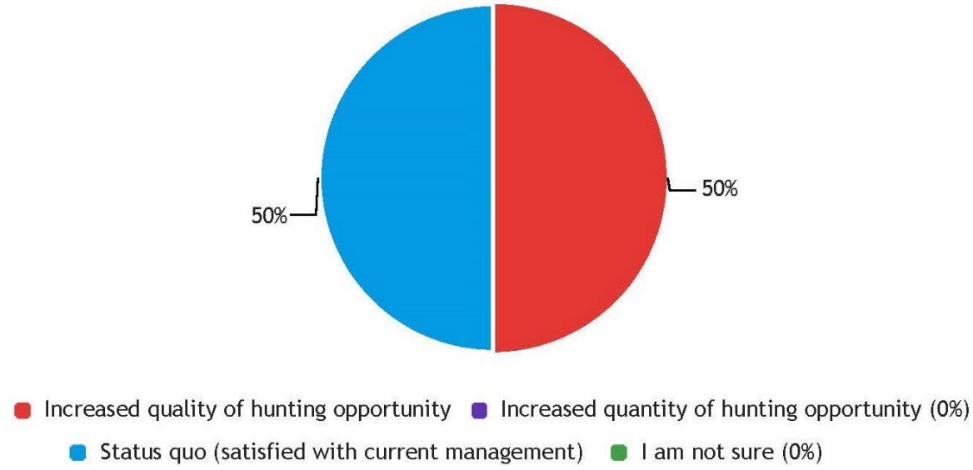
Q3 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 39, 391, 46, 461, or 51? (*n* = 17)



Q4 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the Bailey Deer Herd population size over the next 10 years? (*n* = 17)

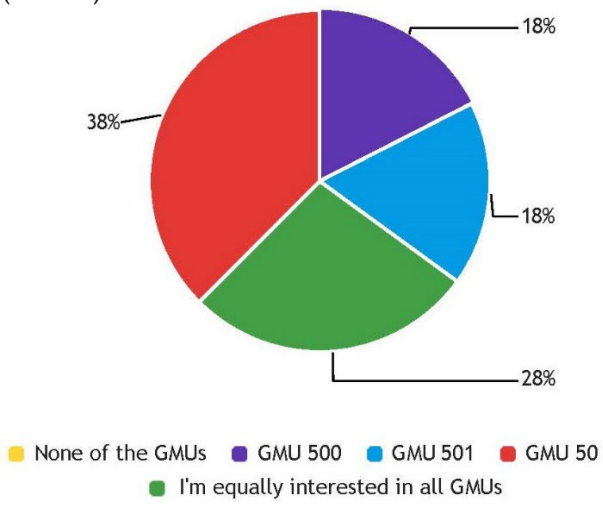


Q5 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the Bailey deer herd be managed for…? (*n* = 16)

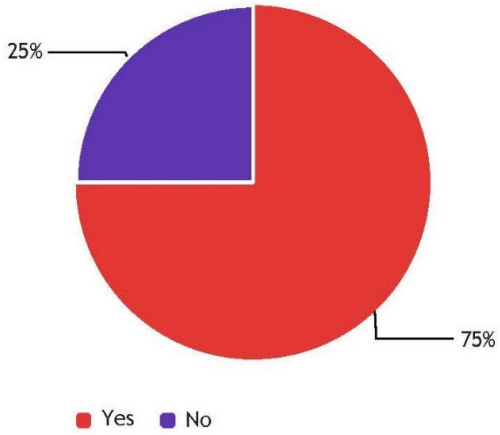


D-38 South Park Deer Herd

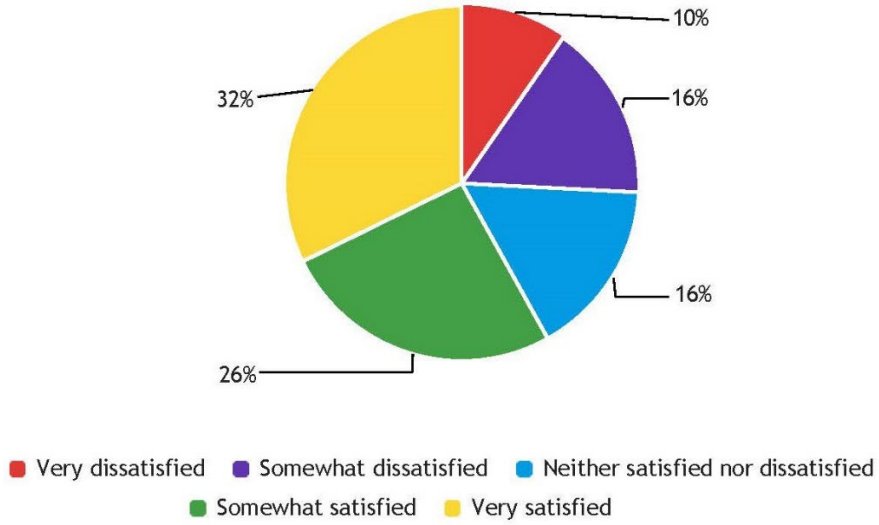
Q1 - Please indicate which GMU within the South Park Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 36)



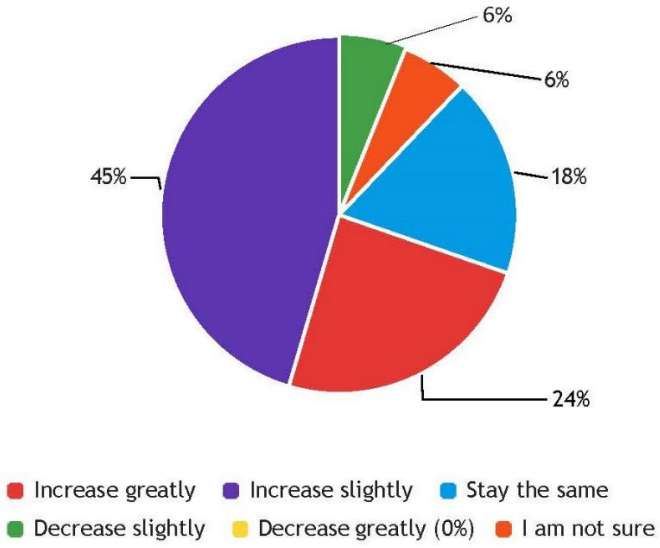
Q2 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 50, 500, or 501? (*n* = 36)



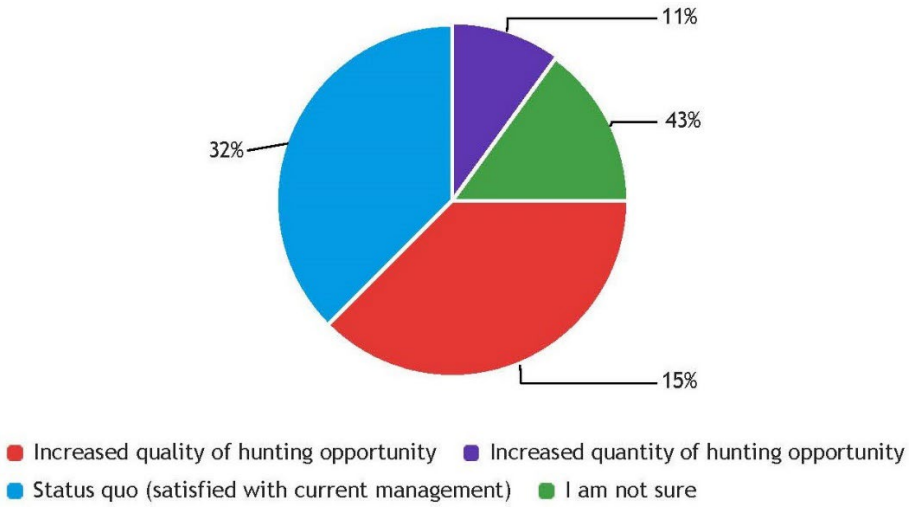
Q3 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 50, 500, or 501? (*n* = 31)



Q4 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the South Park Deer Herd population size over the next 10 years? (n=33)

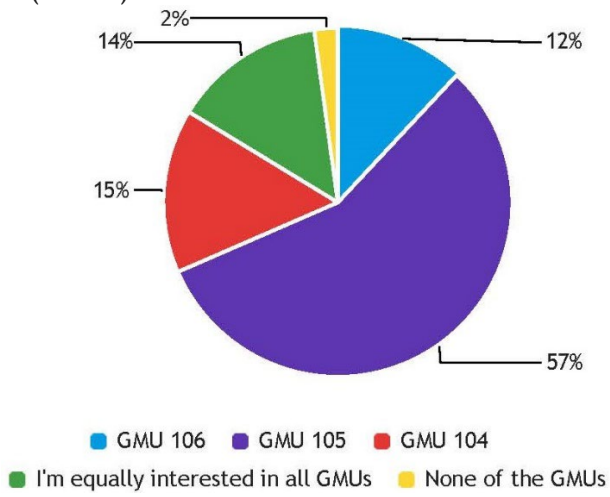


Q5 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the South Park deer herd be managed for…? (n=36)

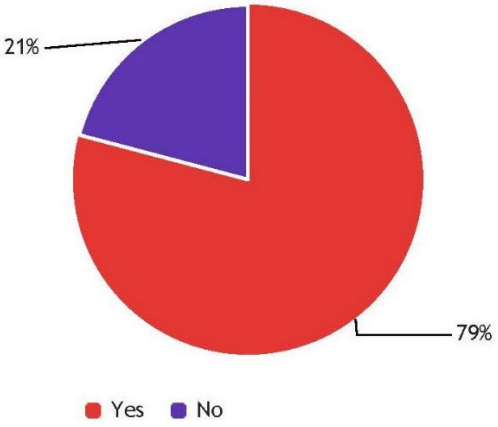


D-49 Bijou Creek Deer Herd

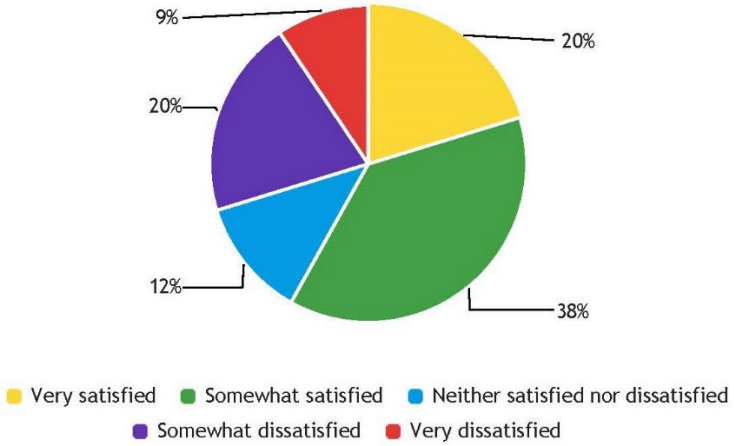
Q1 - Please indicate which GMU within the Bijou Creek Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 92)



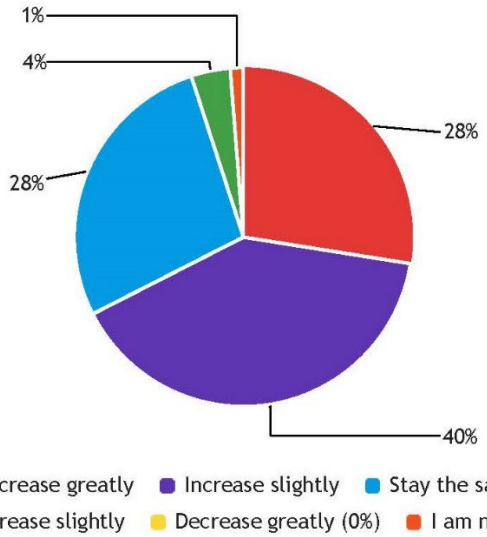
Q2 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 104, 105, or 106? (*n* = 91)



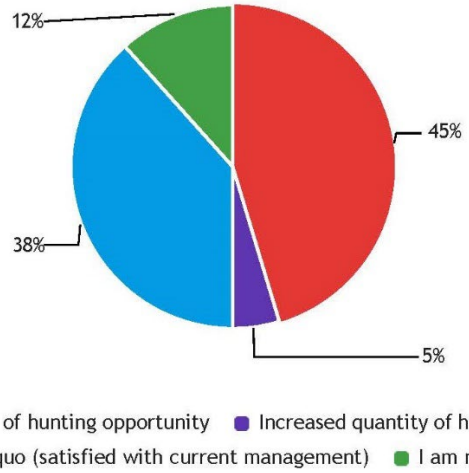
Q3 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 104, 105, or 106? (*n* = 74)



Q4 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the Bijou Creek deer population over the next 10 years? (*n* = 80)



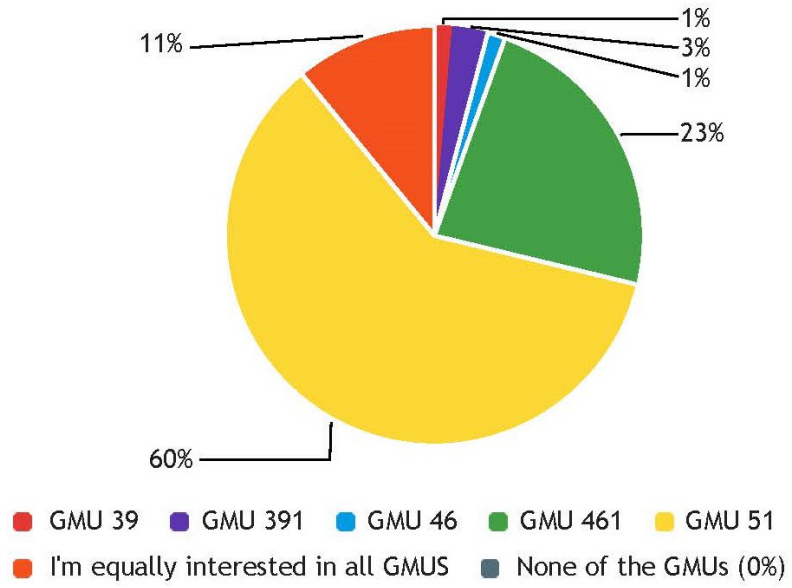
Q5 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the Bijou Creek deer herd be managed for…? (*n* = 86)



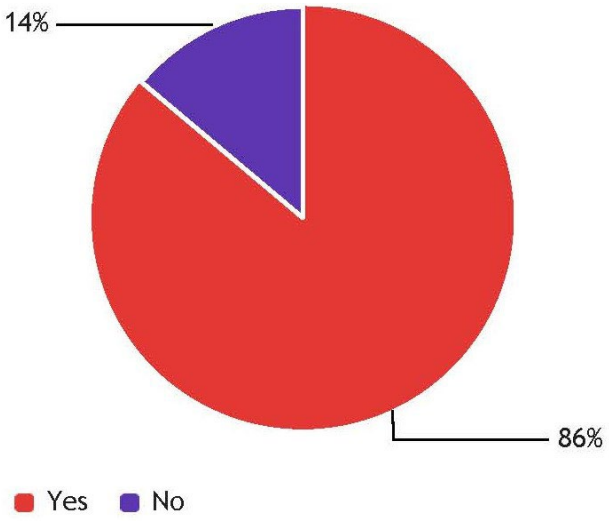
Appendix C. Public Meeting Input

D-17 Bailey Deer Herd

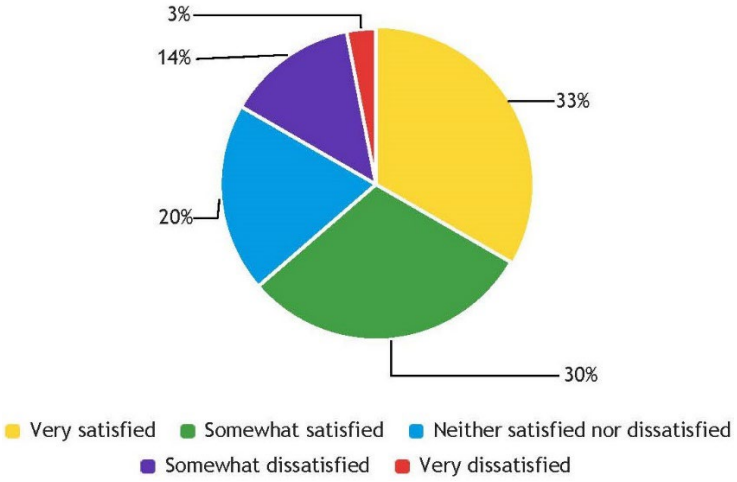
Q1 - Please indicate which GMU within the Bailey Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 73)



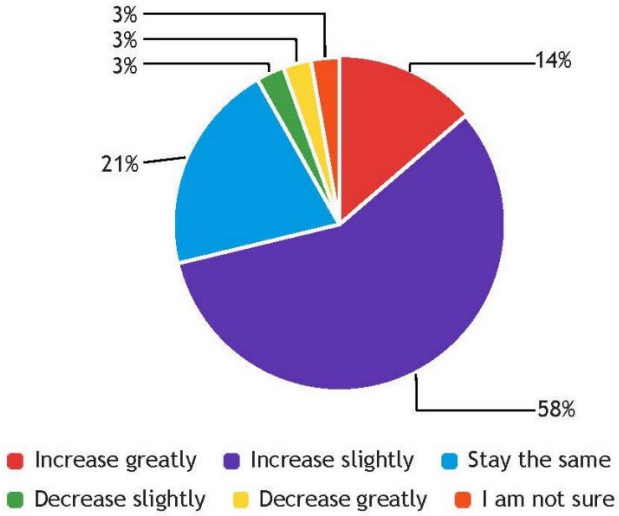
Q2 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 39, 391, 46, 461, or 51? (*n* = 72)



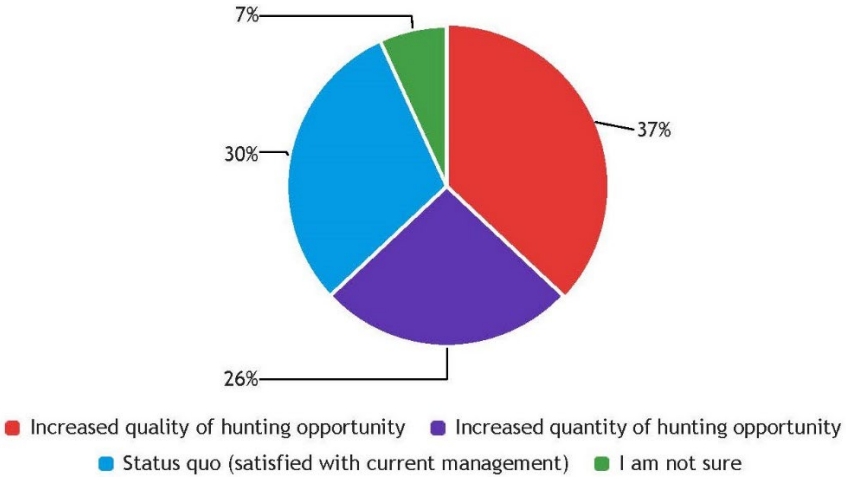
Q3 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 39, 391, 46, 461, or 51? (*n* = 66)



Q4 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the Bailey Deer Herd population size over the next 10 years? (*n* = 73)

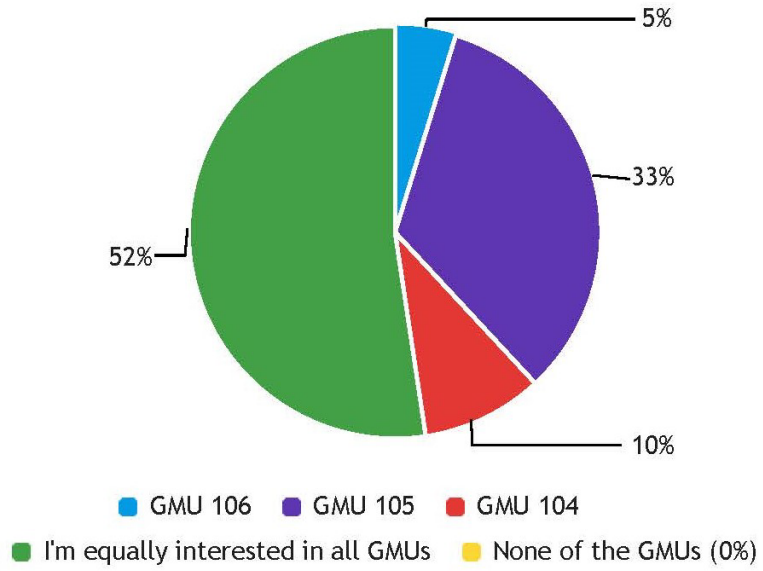


Q5 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the Bailey deer herd be managed for…? (*n* = 73)

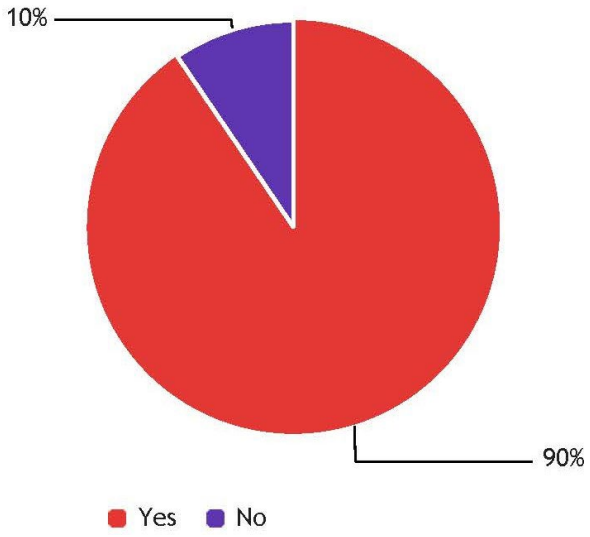


D-49 Bijou Creek Deer Herd

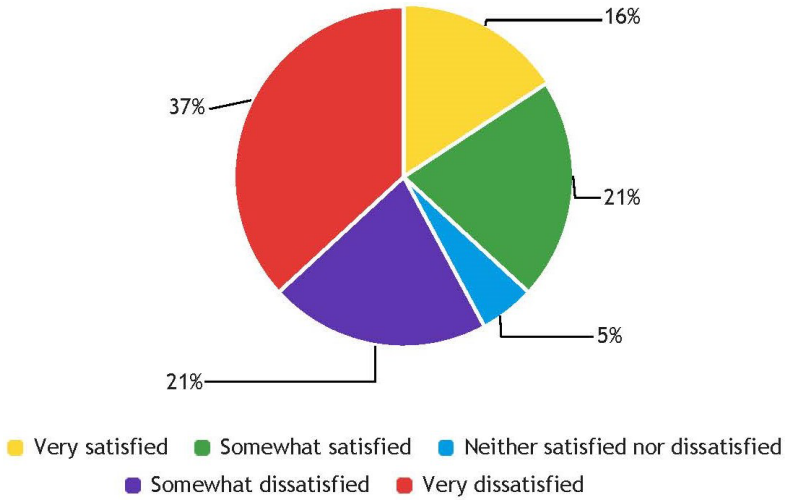
Q1 - Please indicate which GMU within the Bijou Creek Deer Herd Management Plan you are most interested in. (*n* = 21)



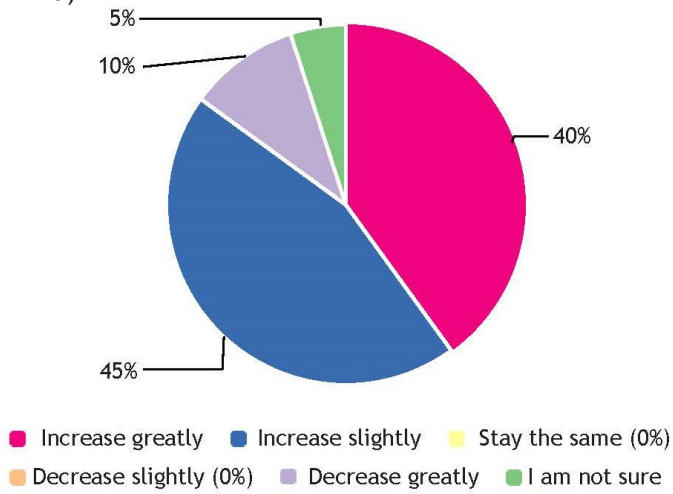
Q2 - Have you ever hunted deer in GMUs 104, 105, or 106? (*n* = 21)



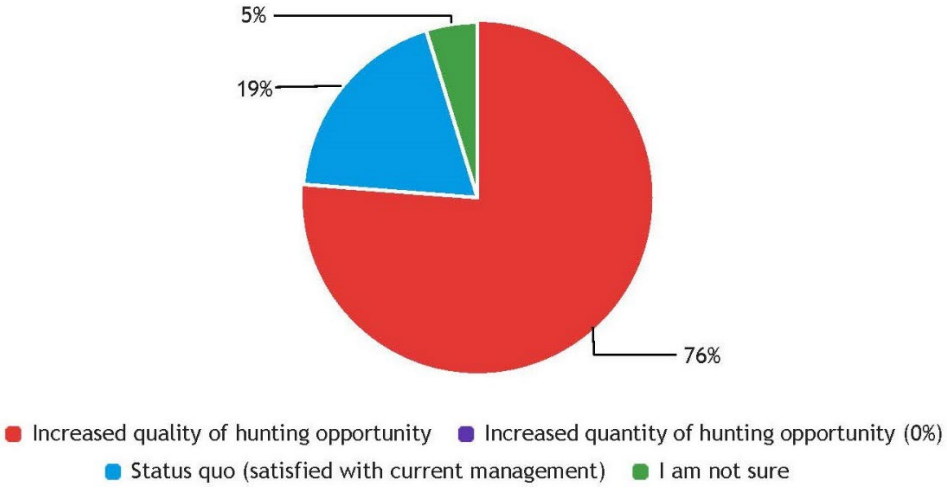
Q3 - Overall, how satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience in GMUs 104, 105, or 106? (*n* = 19)



Q4 - What changes, if any, would you like to see in the Bijou Creek deer population over the next 10 years? (*n* = 20)



Q5 - For the purpose of deer hunting, should the Bijou Creek deer herd be managed for…? (n = 21)



STATE OF COLORADO

[redacted]

DAU 17 HMP Meeting from 1/17

1 message

[redacted] Fri, Jan 19, 2024 at 9:29 AM

I was an online attendee for the DAU 17 HMP meeting on Tuesday, this week. I live in unit 461, right on the border of Conifer and Morrison, and own 30 acres, on which I have been fortunate enough to take 3 bucks in 3 years via type B PLO tags. I am bowhunter, and 2 of the 3 went over 170, so pretty happy with that. Overall, my experience is that deer numbers are extremely healthy, buck to doe ratios are good, and buck maturity levels are excellent. We have a ton of does, and usually a pretty healthy bachelor group of between 8-10 bucks, that hang around through the summer. In the fall bigger deer seem to find their way to our property, for the rut, so we are always surprised to see what shows up. So for me, I am pretty happy with how things are. We also have a ton of bears, elk, and this year, several moose hanging around - including a cow and calf.

With respect to the meeting, I have to say you guys at CPW have the patience of Job. There was nothing easy about that - many of the questions - or more so - complaints - had little to do with the relevance of the next HMP for DAU 17. I realize the current environment is pretty tough. So kudos to you guys, for managing that as professionally as you did! That said, I asked a question towards the end, but the answer was a little hard to hear. So I wanted to reach out and follow up. Based on the data presented, it seems the deer heard in DAU 17 has been incredibly stable for over a decade. If I go back to the HMP from May 4, 2006, it appears that stability goes back even further, into the 90's, with heard estimates falling around 7500-8000 animals, so a slight reduction, but overall no major spikes up or down. I know the target population was adjusted back then as well, down from the prior objective to 10,500 animals, to its current target of 7500-8300. Buck to doe ratios have fallen, but that would appear to be a good thing, given that to combat CWD, targeting bucks is a key tool, as they are 2 times as likely to be carriers. So the falling buck to doe ratio would seem to correlate closely to the reduction in CWD cases by the stated 50%. The next proposed HMP would reduce target herd populations again, I assume due to urban development in the area. However, given the stability of the herd for so long at the new target numbers, and assuming predation, disease, winter kill, human conflict, hunting, and all other deer mortality sources being equal, it would seem the system is in balance. I understand the carrying capacity has been reduced, and the data supports this, so the reduced target makes sense. Again, it would seem the system is at equilibrium. However, what I did not understand was the intent to reduce tag availability in the new plan, along with the reduced target herd population, again, based on the theory that the ecosystem is in balance with current tag numbers, and harvest numbers. This was especially driven home when the statement was made that tag numbers is a number one tool used to manage deer herd population. Do you see something on the horizon (for example, further development, increased predation, etc) you believe would further reduce carrying capacity, and therefore hunter take should be reduced to maintain the new HMP target numbers? What is the reasoning behind reducing tag numbers, if the objective IS NOT to increase herd numbers?

Assuming the next HMP plan does reduce tag numbers, how would that happen? Would that include the reduction of Type B PLO buck tags? Type C PLO doe tags? Or would the reduction primarily target public land? I know a lot of the private landowners that hunt appreciate the availability of those tags, and the fact that they are type B or C tags, so we can hunt locally in October and November, but also apply for A tags in other areas, for other seasons. I know a number of bowhunters who use those tags to fill the freezer. As a private landowner, and given the number of deer I see, and the number of hunters I know who utilize those tags, I would not be in favor of reducing those opportunities. And, since so much private ends up becoming sanctuary for the deer herd, reducing PLO tag numbers would likely result in a potential increase in the herd, and potentially CWD. This would seem to fly in the face of the stated HMP objectives.

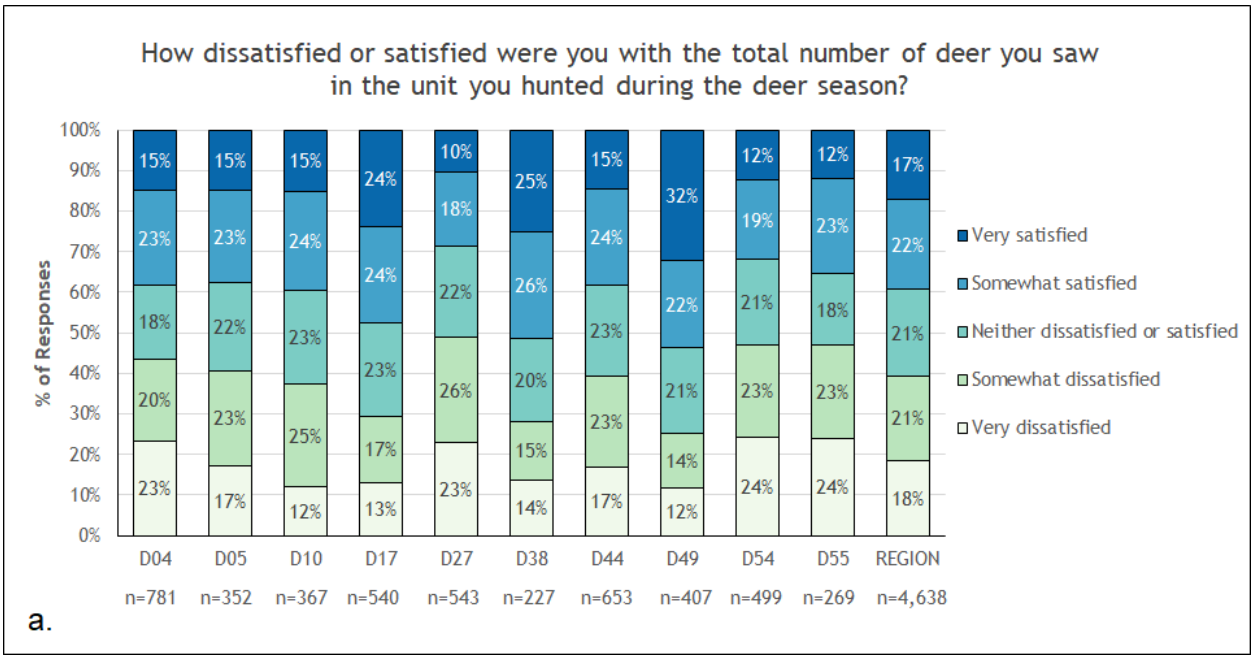
Last question - would you mind sending me a copy of the presentation? I would like to share with some of my local fellow bow hunters, so that as we get closer to the newly proposed HMP comment period, they are prepared.

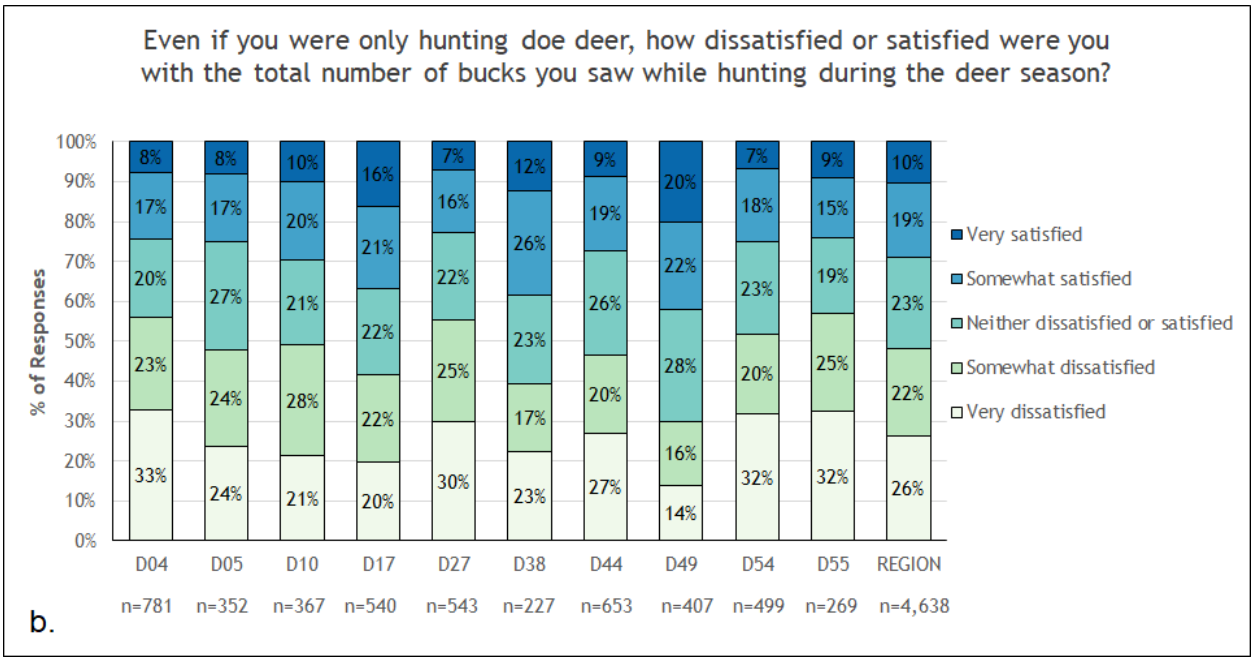
Thanks for your time, and appreciate all that you at CWP do for outdoorsmen and women! I look forward to your response! I left my number below, as I am happy to take a phone call as well.

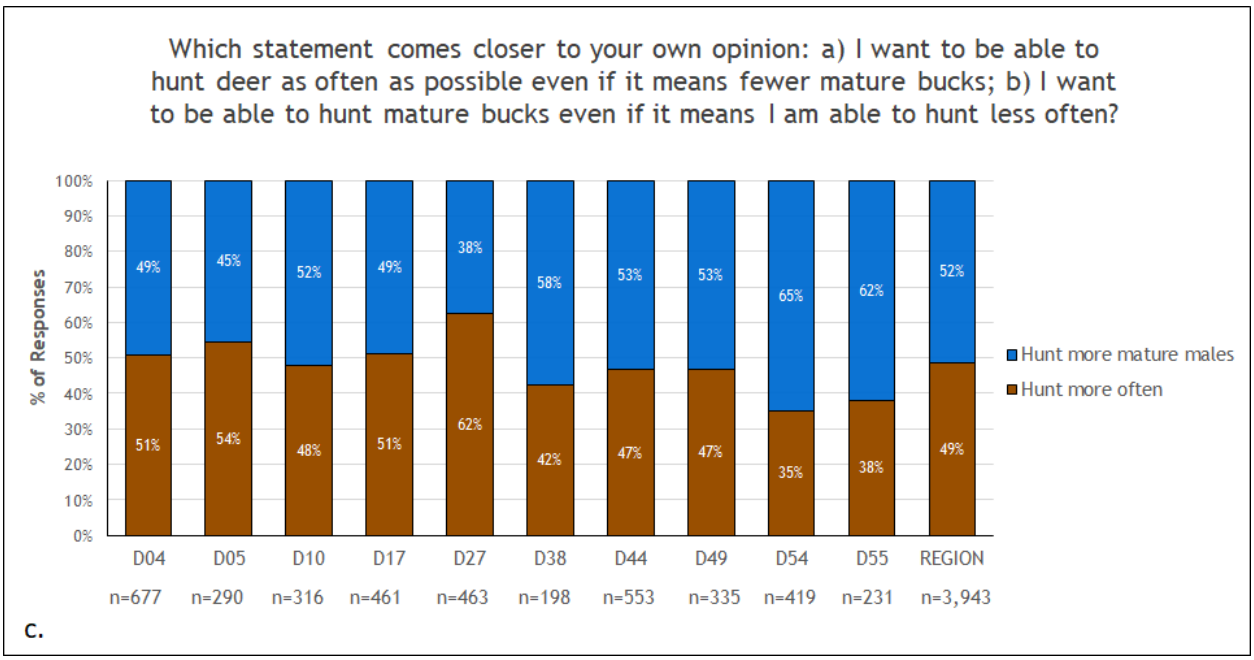
Sincerely,

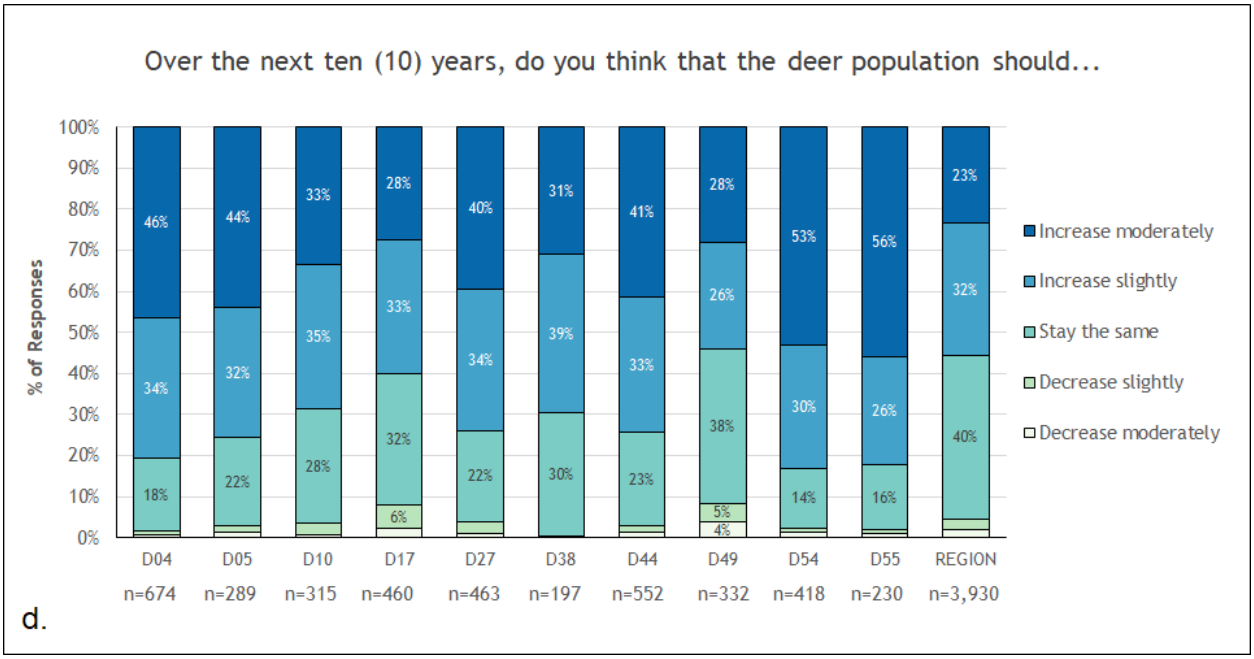
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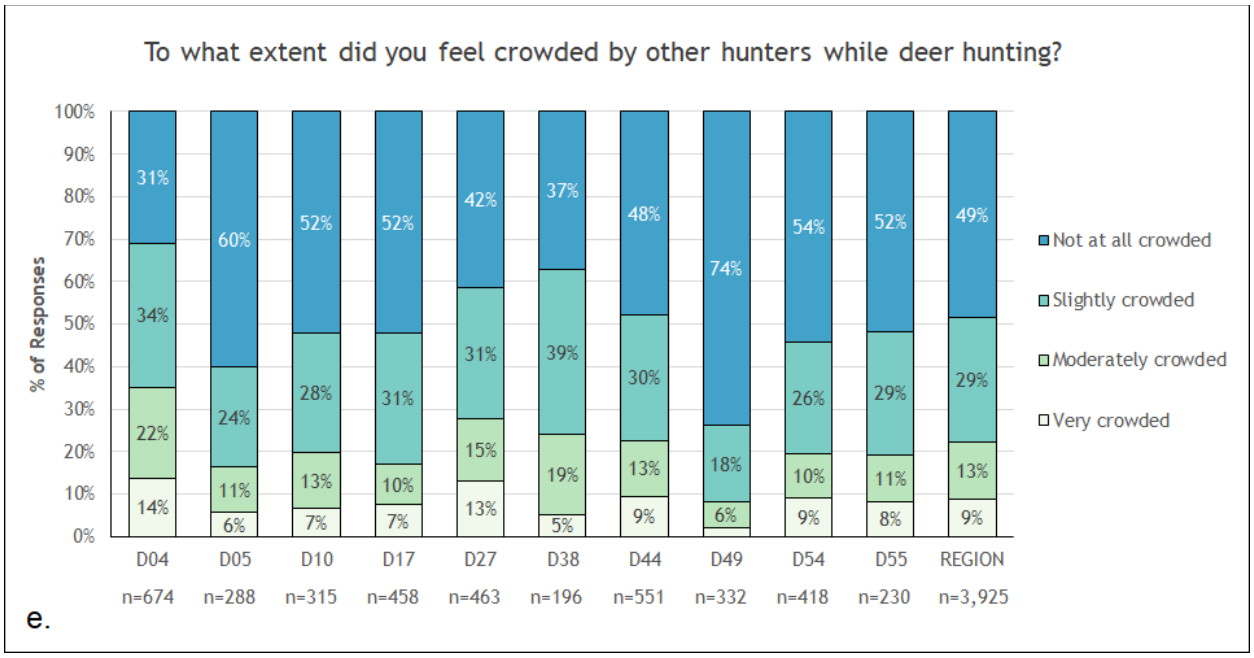
Appendix D. Hunter Harvest Opt-In Surveys



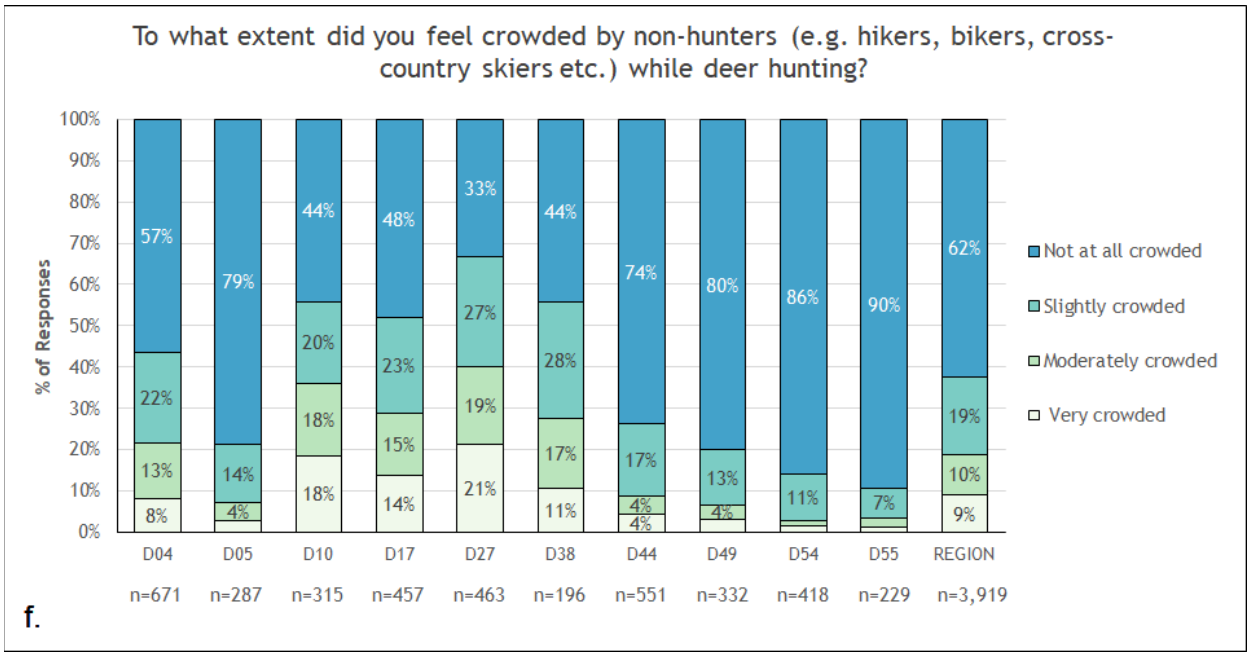



Which statement comes closer to your own opinion: a) I want to be able to hunt deer as often as possible even if it means fewer mature bucks; b) I want to be able to hunt mature bucks even if it means I am able to hunt less often?
% of Responses
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
D04 n=677: 49% 51%
D05 n=290: 45% 54%
D10 n=316: 52% 48%
D17 n=461: 49% 51%
D27 n=463: 38% 62%
D38 n=198: 58% 42%
D44 n=553: 53% 47%
D49 n=335: 53% 47%
D54 n=419: 65% 35%
D55 n=231: 62% 38%
REGION n=3,943: 52% 49%
Hunt more mature males
Hunt more often
c.

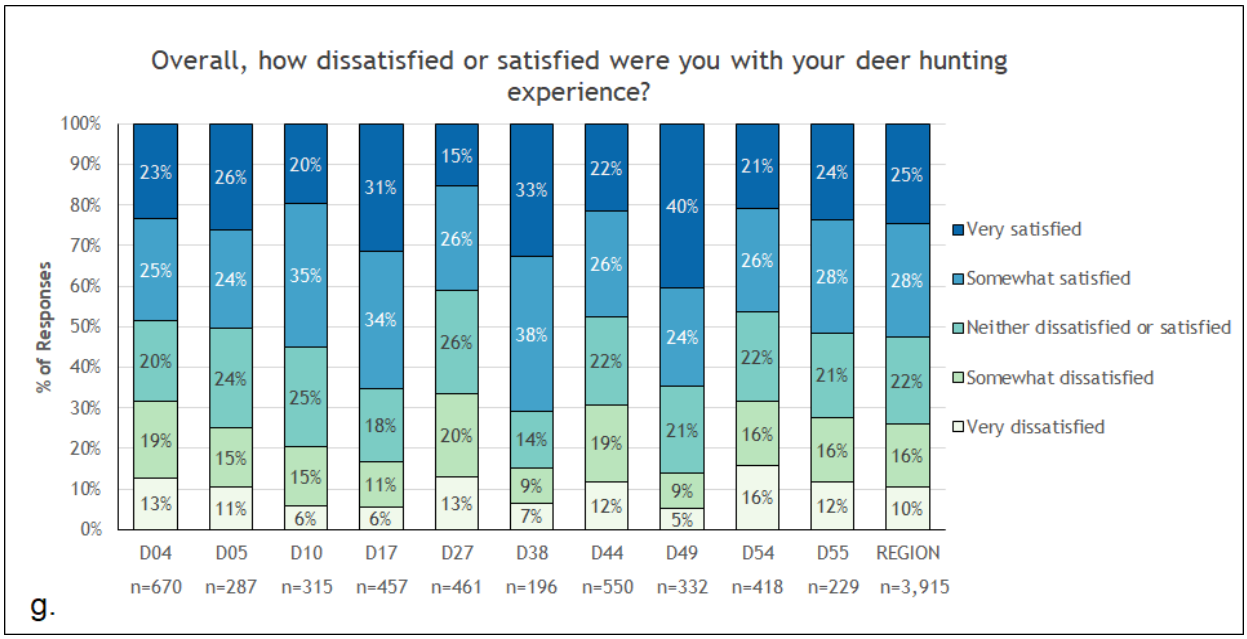

Over the next ten (10) years, do you think that the deer population should...
% of Responses
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
D04 n=674: 46% 34% 18% 1%
D05 n=289: 44% 32% 22% 2%
D10 n=315: 33% 35% 28% 3%
D17 n=460: 28% 33% 32% 6% 2%
D27 n=463: 40% 34% 22% 3%
D38 n=197: 31% 39% 30% 1%
D44 n=552: 41% 33% 23% 2%
D49 n=332: 28% 26% 38% 5% 4%
D54 n=418: 53% 30% 14% 2%
D55 n=230: 56% 26% 16% 1%
REGION n=3,930: 23% 32% 40% 4%
Increase moderately
Increase slightly
Stay the same
Decrease slightly
Decrease moderately
d.


To what extent did you feel crowded by other hunters while deer hunting?
% of Responses
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
31%
34%
22%
14%
60%
24%
11%
6%
52%
28%
13%
7%
52%
31%
10%
7%
42%
31%
15%
13%
37%
39%
19%
5%
48%
30%
13%
9%
74%
18%
6%
54%
26%
10%
9%
52%
29%
11%
8%
49%
29%
13%
9%
D04 n=674
D05 n=288
D10 n=315
D17 n=458
D27 n=463
D38 n=196
D44 n=551
D49 n=332
D54 n=418
D55 n=230
REGION n=3,925
Not at all crowded
Slightly crowded
Moderately crowded
Very crowded

e.


To what extent did you feel crowded by non-hunters (e.g. hikers, bikers, cross-country skiers etc.) while deer hunting?
% of Responses
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
57%
22%
13%
8%
79%
14%
4%
44%
20%
18%
18%
48%
23%
15%
14%
33%
27%
19%
21%
44%
28%
17%
11%
74%
17%
4%
4%
80%
13%
4%
86%
11%
90%
7%
62%
19%
10%
9%
D04 n=671
D05 n=287
D10 n=315
D17 n=457
D27 n=463
D38 n=196
D44 n=551
D49 n=332
D54 n=418
D55 n=229
REGION n=3,919
Not at all crowded
Slightly crowded
Moderately crowded
Very crowded

f.


Overall, how dissatisfied or satisfied were you with your deer hunting experience?
% of Responses
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
D04 n=670: 23% 25% 20% 19% 13%
D05 n=287: 26% 24% 24% 15% 11%
D10 n=315: 20% 35% 25% 15% 6%
D17 n=457: 31% 34% 18% 11% 6%
D27 n=461: 15% 26% 26% 20% 13%
D38 n=196: 33% 38% 14% 9% 7%
D44 n=550: 22% 26% 22% 19% 12%
D49 n=332: 40% 24% 21% 9% 5%
D54 n=418: 21% 26% 22% 16% 16%
D55 n=229: 24% 28% 21% 16% 12%
REGION n=3,915: 25% 28% 22% 16% 10%
Very satisfied
Somewhat satisfied
Neither dissatisfied or satisfied
Somewhat dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

g.

Appendix E. Letters of Support

NE Colorado Deer Herd Management Plans

Mon, Jul 21, 2025 at 2:13 PM

Ben and Mark—

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft deer herd management plan. Overall, I think the draft looks great and we just had a few minor comments to share with you.

We support your preferred alternative of maintaining the current estimated population for D-17, but we would like to offer feedback about the preferred alternative of increasing the sex ratio by 5 bucks per 100 does. Although CWD prevalence in the management area was under the 5% threshold in 2022, it was above the threshold three years prior. Because reducing the sex ratio reduces the prevalence of CWD in deer herds with ≤5% prevalence, it may be advantageous to maintain the current sex ratio to lessen the risk of increasing CWD prevalence.

We support your preferred alternative of maintaining the current population objective and sex ratio objective for D-27. We are aware of the hunting access challenges that may be impacting CWD prevalence in the management area, and we will continue to work with CPW to manage the herd.

We also support your preferred alternative of increasing the maximum population objective by 13% and increasing the sex ratio by 5 bucks per 100 does in D-38.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this review. Just let me know if you have questions about any of these comments and I will relay them to the appropriate person on our team.

Cheers,

Steve Murdock, CERP
Natural Resource Stewardship – Interim Manager
303-271-5998 **cell:** 815-355-5287, www.jeffco.us/open-space

JEFFERSON COUNTY COLORADO
Open Space

Fri, Aug 29, 2025 at 2:49 PM

Dear Ben,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft NE Deer Herd Management Plans—I hope it isn't too late to get these in. Overall, these plans use sound, scientific data to inform overall herd management objectives throughout the region. Specifically, we support the recommendation for D-27 of maintaining the current population objectives of 6,000-7,500 deer. We also recognize the challenges both the D-27 and D-10 herds face regarding CWD prevalence and the role county open space may be playing in higher than objective sex ratios. We look forward to working with CPW on this and other issues impacting the health of our local deer populations.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks again,

Jon DeCoste | *Wildlife Biologist*

Elk Management Coordinator

Boulder County Parks & Open Space

5201 St. Vrain Road

Longmont, CO 80503

Boulder County Elk Management

Pronouns: he/him/his

SOUTH PARK HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM COMMITTEE

June 27, 2025

Mark Fisher
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
6060 Broadway
Denver, Colorado 80216

RE: South Park Habitat Partnership Program Comments - DAU 38

Dear Mark:

One of the initial reasons for creating the Habitat Partnership Program was to provide local landowners and other interests an opportunity for input into big game management in their areas. The diverse makeup of local HPP committees (3 livestock growers, Forest Service, BLM, CPW, and sportsperson representatives) provides a good cross-section of local interests to review DAU proposals and respond accordingly for CPW consideration.

HPP has two purposes: to resolve conflicts with agricultural landowners regarding big game wildlife (deer, elk, pronghorn, moose) and to assist CPW in meeting game management objectives for those same species. From those perspectives, the South Park HPP committee has discussed your presentation, reviewed the draft alternatives, and offered these comments for consideration.

The South Park HPP committee agrees with the following comments regarding the proposals for the population range and sex ratio objectives for the above DAU plan.

The South Park HPP committee supports the draft alternative to increasing the number of animals within this DAU and within our committee area. The committee does not believe this increase would create more conflicts, and we also believe we have the resources necessary to address conflicts should they occur. Increasing the population objective will ultimately lead to more hunting licenses and sportsmen opportunities.

The South Park HPP committee also discussed the proposed sex ratio alternative. In general, we believe the sex ratio that provides for maximum hunting opportunity is appropriate for this area. This accommodates the sportsperson's desires and maintains local economic benefits.

As stated above, HPP is also directed by statute to assist the Division in meeting game management objectives. The South Park HPP committee has worked with both public land managers and private landowners to improve the quality and quantity of the habitat in DAU-38. Adequate habitat is critical to meeting game management objectives, and we remain committed to maintaining and improving habitat in this area.

Our committee is confident about CPW being able to achieve the proposed objectives due to:

- Public land recreation demands continue to increase for both motorized and non-motorized
- users, with similar effects.
- We have worked with numerous landowners who want to implement positive improvements for big game on their property.
- Federal land management agencies place a high priority on habitat improvement and have worked successfully with our committee on valuable projects in the past and have expressed a desire to continue this.
- The South Park HPP committee feels there is adequate habitat with adequate protections in place, such as seasonal closures and use restrictions, to achieve the desired objectives. While the committee has confidence in the plan's objectives over the next ten years, beyond that, they are concerned that residential growth and increased recreation demands could hinder future population objectives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

The South Park HPP Committee