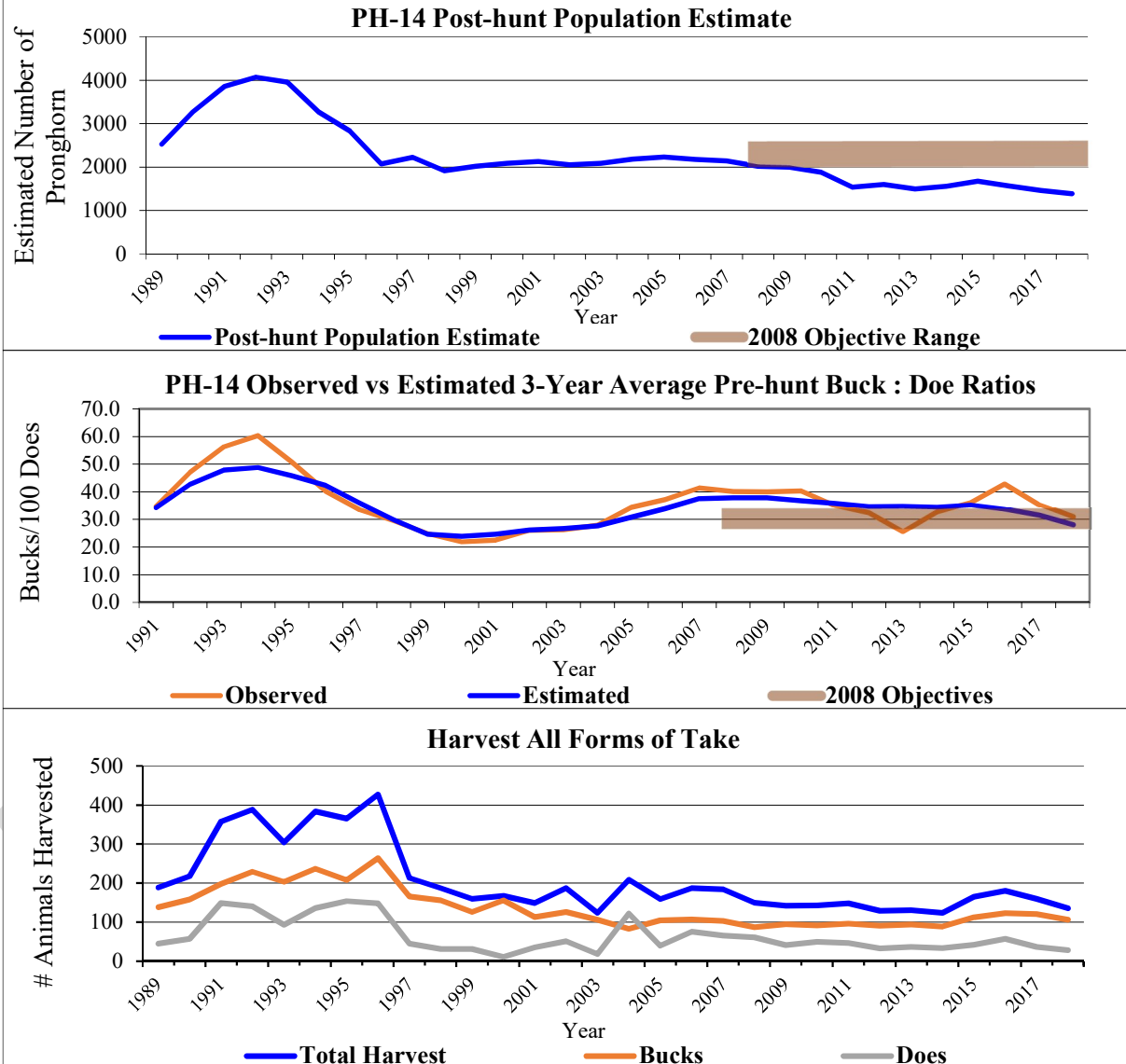


Northern San Luis Valley Pronghorn PH-14 HMP Extension Executive Summary

GMUs: 68, 79, 82, 681, 682, and 791.	Land Ownership: 12.5% BLM, 33.8% RGNF, 4.1% USFWS, 6.6% NPS, 0.1% BOR, 3.8% CO State and 36.3% Private.
Post-hunt Population (2018): 1,386 pronghorn.	Pre-hunt Sex Ratio (Bucks to 100 Does): 31 (Observed 3-yr. average).
2008-2018 (Previous Herd Plan Objectives):	2,000 to 2,500 pronghorn; 27-33 Bucks per 100 Does.
2019-2029 Preferred Herd Plan Objectives:	2,000 to 2,500 pronghorn; 27-33 Bucks per 100 Does.



Pronghorn herd PH-14 is in the northern section of the San Luis Valley. The DAU (geographical area) comprises Game Management Units (GMUs) 68, 79, 82, 681, 682, and 79. The pronghorn range (summer and winter) comprises approximately 1,517 square miles of this area. The DAU encompasses portions of Alamosa, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties. CPW rarely locates pronghorn in the Mineral County portion. Public land makes up approximately 64% of the entire DAU, and approximately 36% of the area is privately owned.

The post-hunt population estimate reached its peak during the early 1990s at almost 4,100 animals. Since 1992, the population has declined to its current (2018) estimated population of approximately 1,400 animals. A sharp decline occurred in the mid-1990s. CPW believes the reduction occurred because of poor fawn recruitment and high female harvest. Drought conditions over many years may have contributed to the decrease in fawn recruitment. The pre-hunt observed fawn-to-doe

ratios have fluctuated since the mid-1990s. Moisture availability during the spring and summer months may have caused the fluctuations in fawn survival. CPW expects the population to remain relatively stable and possibly increase with the present harvest potential.

The three-year-average observed sex ratio peaked in the mid-1990s at approximately 60 bucks per 100 does. The sex ratio then dropped through to the early 2000s before making a recovery towards the end of the decade. Since the late 2000s, there has been variability in the average observed sex ratios. Over the last ten years, it has averaged approximately 35 bucks per 100 does. CPW recognized this was above the established objective range. Hence, CPW cautiously increased buck licenses to reduce the sex ratio slightly. The most recent three-year-average observed sex ratio of approximately 31 bucks per 100 does fell comfortably within the objective range. The current sex ratio objectives provide adequate hunting opportunity and a desirable mature buck population.

The ability to obtain a license for this DAU can influence harvest success, which is typical in many pronghorn units. Buck licenses are available on a limited basis but are in high demand. Public land doe licenses are extremely limited and are only available for GMU 82 and a portion of eastern GMU 681 (East of CR 46AA and between Saguache Creek and Kerber Creek). Despite that, CPW may provide doe depredation licenses may on private land. Since 1989, buck harvest has averaged approximately 136 animals. After implementing the 2008 objectives, buck harvest has averaged approximately 101 animals. The average doe harvest since 1989 is 64 animals. However, most doe damage or dispersal requests have occurred in GMUs 68 and 79. Harvest from damage and dispersal licenses comprises approximately a third of the doe harvest in the DAU. Since 2008, the average doe harvest has decreased to 42 animals. The overall combined-season (all methods of harvest) average success rate, since 2008, has been approximately 64%. The highest harvest success rate since 2008 has occurred during the rifle season (73%), and the lowest has been during the archery season (19%).

The two most significant factors limiting this population are the amount of annual precipitation and availability of water resources, particularly on winter habitat. Relatively high reproduction rates have occurred in areas with natural water retention and succulent forage, such as along San Luis Creek and irrigated alfalfa fields. The more arid regions have seen reduced fawn recruitment, especially during drought conditions; significant droughts occurred in 1996, 2002, 2013, and 2018. The availability of winter range continues to diminish, with increased development on private land and competition with domestic livestock.

Most game-damage issues in this population have been on agricultural land between Del Norte and Center in GMU 79 and the Villa Grove area of GMU 82. Some landowners have been intolerant of the presence of pronghorn on their fields. The number of pronghorn involved in landowner conflict issues is a small proportion of the overall population. Issuing doe damage or dispersal licenses to the affected landowner usually resolves the problems. In GMU 79 and 82, CPW has used doe damage and dispersal licenses to reduce pronghorn conflicts on private land.

Preferred Objectives:

Post-hunt Population

The preferred management objective for PH-14 is a **population of 2,000 to 2,500 pronghorn**, aiming to increase the population. Buck hunting opportunities would remain the same. CPW will remove public land and private-land-only (PLO) doe licenses in GMUs 82 and 681. Once the herd population estimate falls within the objective range, or if significant private land issues occur, CPW may reinstate these licenses. CPW will maintain the availability of doe PLO licenses in GMU 79 and provide these to landowners if needed.

Three-year Average Pre-hunt Sex Ratio

The preferred three-year average pre-hunt sex ratio is to maintain the current objective at **27-33 bucks per 100 does**. This range supports what CPW has recently observed during summer inventory flights. The objective range allows for a satisfactory hunting experience and the desired hunting opportunities.

Strategies for Achieving the Preferred Objectives:

Post-hunt Population – To manage towards the preferred pronghorn population objective, buck licenses will remain the same. Eliminating all public land and private land (GMU 82 and 681) doe licenses should allow for population growth. However, control of private land depredation issues will remain in place. CPW will consider doe harvest opportunities once the population estimate is within the objective range, or there is a deterioration in habitat.

Pre-hunt Sex Ratio – Maintaining buck license numbers will allow buck-hunting opportunities to remain the same. Harvest from these licenses should sustain the desired adult buck population at acceptable levels and maintain stakeholder satisfaction.