

San Juan Basin Mule Deer Herd Management Plan (D-30)

Executive Summary

GMUs: 75, 77, 78, 751 and 771

Land Ownership: 55% USFS, 30% private land, 12% Southern Ute Tribal Lands, and 2% BLM

Posthunt Population:

2018 Modeled Estimate: 23,500

Previous Objective: 27,000

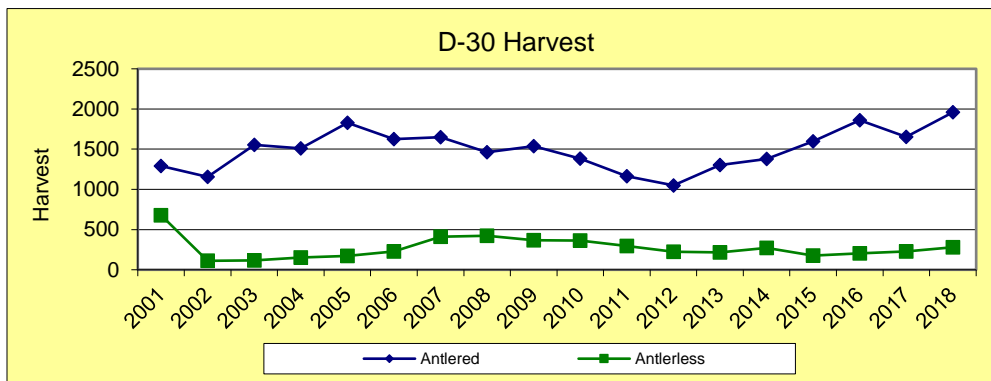
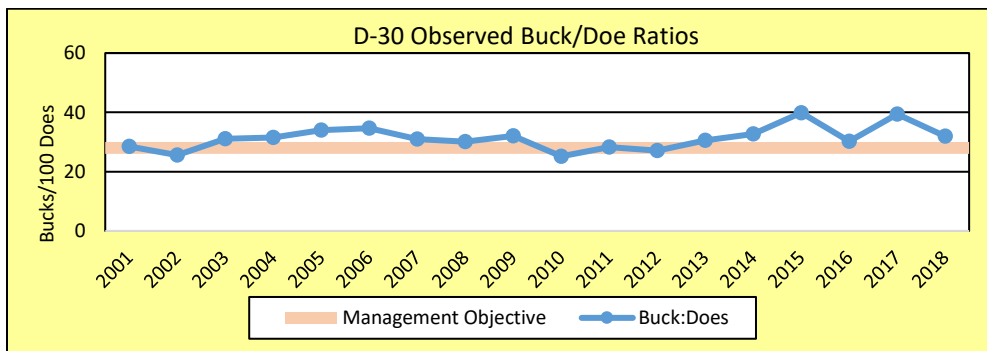
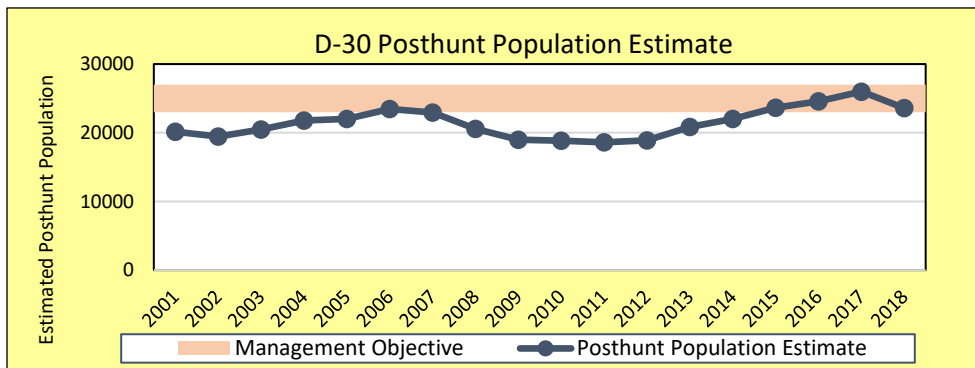
Proposed Objective: 23,000 – 27,000

Posthunt Sex Ratio:

2018 Observed: 32 bucks:100 does

Previous Objective: 26-30 bucks:100 does

Proposed Objective: 26-30 bucks:100 does



Background

The San Juan Mule Deer Herd is located in Southwest Colorado and includes GMUs 75, 77, 78, 751, and 771. The DAU is within portions of Archuleta, Hinsdale, La Plata, Mineral, and San Juan counties. The deer population has been gradually increasing over the past six years due to good fawn numbers and reached the population objective of 27,000 in 2017. Severe drought decreased numbers slightly in 2018. The buck ratio has been running above objective, but aggressive hunter harvest over the past two years has brought it down and is projected to continue to decrease it.

Significant issues

Loss of habitat, including critical winter range and the effectiveness of migration corridors, due to human population growth is a concern in the DAU. Exurban development is occurring in Archuleta and La Plata counties and homes are replacing open lands currently supporting wintering deer. Natural gas well development has also increased in deer habitat on private and public lands. Lastly, outdoor recreation continues to grow, placing more people into areas used by deer throughout the year. Increased recreational trails and recreation use has decreased the amount of effective habitat. Wildlife biologists and the public are concerned over cumulative and prolonged impacts disrupting migration between seasonal ranges and decreasing quality and quantity of deer habitat. Actions to enhance and protect important mule deer habitat will be necessary to meet the population objectives of this HMP.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) has not been detected in the DAU, but is found in adjacent areas to the north and west. It is expected that CWD is in the population and has not been detected, or it will be in the population by the time this HMP expires. CWD will influence the number and age structure of bucks within the population, the overall population dynamics, hunting opportunities, and management. Management practices are identified in this plan to decrease the spread of and impacts of CWD.

Management Objectives

There have not been significant concerns about the current management of the D-30 herd. Based on this, it is proposed to continue with the same objectives, course of management actions, and strategies for this DAU. Objectives would remain:

Posthunt Population: 23,000-27,000

Posthunt Sex Ratio: 26-30:100