

DRAFT PRONGHORN HERD MANAGEMENT PLANS
COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE
SOUTHEAST REGION



Pronghorn buck with Pikes Peak in the background. Photo by Wayne Lewis, CPW.

PREPARED FOR
COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE



BY
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The Colorado Parks & Wildlife Commission approved these plans on

Executive Summary

The pronghorn is unique amongst Colorado's large mammals. It is the lone surviving member of the family Antilocapridae, a once diverse group of species only found in North America (O'Gara and Yoakum 2004). All other members of the family went extinct by the end of the Pleistocene Era. Pronghorn are the fastest land mammal in North America, capable of sustaining speeds of over 50 mph. Males and some females grow a black "horn" sheath which is made of keratin and forms over a bony core. Pronghorn shed their sheaths annually, while the bony core remains throughout the animal's life. Pronghorn females, or does, have a gestation period of approximately nine months, almost always giving birth to twins, which together weigh around 20% of their mother's body weight. The nine-month gestation of a pronghorn doe, weighing about 90-100 lb, rivals that of cow elk, a 400-600 lb animal.

Pronghorn are a conservation success story. In the early 1800s, pronghorn were abundant and widely distributed throughout western North America, but were almost extirpated by 1900 due to unregulated exploitation for their hides and meat. However, starting in the early 1900s, successful conservation efforts, including transplants, regulation and enforcement of hunting laws, and the establishment of wildlife refuges, brought the species back from the brink of extinction. Pronghorn now occur in grasslands and shrublands throughout south-central Canada, the Great Basin, Intermountain West, and Great Plains in the United States, and parts of northwestern Mexico (O'Gara and Yoakum 2004; Yoakum et al. 2014).

In Colorado, pronghorn inhabit most of their historic range and are widely distributed throughout the eastern plains (Armstrong et al. 2010). They are also found in several mountain valleys and sagebrush rangelands in northwestern Colorado. In 2022, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) estimated the total statewide population to be 73,000 pronghorn, with over 42% (31,000 pronghorn) occurring in southeastern Colorado. In 2022, CPW offered 22,000 limited pronghorn licenses statewide, of which 15,158 licenses were for game management units (GMU) in the Southeast Region.

The pronghorn population in southeastern Colorado is currently robust. However, CPW faces several challenges for the future of pronghorn management in the region. Challenges include but are not limited to drought, management on private lands, energy and housing development, along with loss of connectivity across the landscape. This document contains the herd management plans (HMP) for the 11 pronghorn herds in Colorado's Southeast Region (Map 1) and will guide pronghorn management in the region from 2023-2033.

Table 1. Population and management status of 11 pronghorn herds occurring in SE Colorado. The first six plans in the table (blue shading) are being updated with new proposed population and sex ratio objectives. Objectives from the last five plans in the table completed since 2019 (grey shading) will be extended.

DAU	Pronghorn Herd	Current HMP Approval Year	Current Population Objective	Post-hunt Population Estimate*	Current Post-hunt Buck Ratio Objective	Post-hunt Buck Ratio Estimate*	Proposed Population Objective	Proposed Post-hunt Buck Ratio Objective
PH-6	Hugo	2012	2,250-2,750	1,800	20-30	24	2,100-2,900	20-30
PH-7	Thatcher	2012	7,800-8,800	8,200	30-40	31	9,300-12,700	30-40
PH-8	Yoder	2012	5,400-6,600	7,600	25-35	23	6,800-9,200	25-35
PH-19	Last Chance	2017	1,800-2,200	2,500	30-40	34	1,700-2,300	30-40
PH-20	Wet Mountain	2014	2,200-2,600	2,500	30-40	35	2,000-2,800	30-40
PH-31	Ft. Carson	None	N/A	200-400	N/A	N/A	100-500	25-75
PH-5	Haswell	2019	3,000-4,000	3,200	35-45	28	Extension	Extension
PH-12	Cheyenne	2020	1,500-2,000	1,500	35-45	27	Extension	Extension
PH-13	Tobe	2019	3,000-4,000	2,750	23-31	20	Extension	Extension
PH-18	Two Buttes	2020	300-1,500	1,000	40-100	N/A	Extension	Extension
PH-39	Collegiate	2020	150-200	225	20-25	19	Extension	Extension

*2022 Modeled Estimates for all DAUs except PH-18 & PH-31

