



COLORADO WEST SLOPE MULE DEER STRATEGY

STATEWIDE SUMMIT REPORT AUGUST 2014

Submitted to Colorado Parks and Wildlife
by The Keystone Center

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the West, state wildlife agencies are seeing declines in mule deer populations. In recent years, mule deer populations in Colorado have decreased in several areas on the West Slope. In response to these declines, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) initiated the development of Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy with input from stakeholders and the general public across the state. The Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Statewide Summit meeting held in August 2014 brought together Colorado Parks and Wildlife, sportsmen, conservation groups, landowners, outfitters, biologists, wildlife managers, state and federal agencies, and other interested citizens and stakeholders to discuss the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy and guide agency efforts to work towards increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado.

This report summarizes the approach of the Statewide Summit and the public feedback received during the Summit, including discussion and polling feedback on the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy.

Key participant discussion themes that emerged from the Statewide Summit include:

Support for the direction of the draft Strategy coupled with questions and concerns about implementation. The majority of participants expressed that they believed the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy was moving CPW in the right direction to work towards increasing mule deer populations. Participants raised concerns about how the strategic priorities would be prioritized, implemented, and, more specifically, how this Strategy would be different from what is currently happening. While there was support for the comprehensive approach of the draft Strategy in addressing a variety of opportunities and management issues in a holistic and landscape approach, there was general concern that the size and scope of the draft Strategy would impede CPW's ability to implement the entire Strategy. Based on this, there were suggestions to focus on specific priorities over specific time periods, rather than trying to do everything at once.

Importance of science and evaluation in informing and assessing the Strategy. Participants' comments and questions often addressed the importance of applying current and future scientific knowledge within the Strategy. Participants also suggested that (1) evaluation be incorporated as part of the Strategy, and (2) the effectiveness of the Strategy, once implemented, be assessed and communicated to the public.

Concerns related to funding barriers. Participants recognized that funding was a concern and a barrier to successfully implementing the Strategy. Participants suggested that there could be an opportunity to share fees across groups such as hikers, bikers and other wildlife users, as well as an opportunity for stakeholders to advocate for the importance of funding the Strategy.

Importance of the role of the public and stakeholders in implementing the Strategy. Participants commented that it is important that they and other interested wildlife stakeholders articulate to community leaders, politicians and other community members the importance of implementing and

funding the Strategy. Participants expressed eagerness to engage with CPW in order to better understand what they, as citizens/stakeholders, could do to continue the conversation about how best to restore mule deer and successfully implement the Strategy. Participants also frequently suggested that coordination with other agencies, organizations, private landowners, and other stakeholders could increase the potential to overcome the real and perceived barriers and weaknesses of the Strategy (mainly related to predator management and land development).

Need for additional public education and coordinated messaging. Participants emphasized the value of more education to the public as well as coordinated messages from CPW and its partners. Participants' comments throughout the meeting suggested that public education through precise and coordinated agency messaging was important to overcome threats and barriers of successfully implementing the Strategy. Participants also suggested that there is opportunity for the agency to reach out and engage more of the public. Participants agreed that the public engagement process has been a key strength of the Strategy and suggested that the agency should build on that success by working to educate and inform the broader public which may not understand its role in wildlife management. There were specific suggestions that CPW add public education and outreach as a new priority within the Strategy.



BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE COLORADO WEST SLOPE MULE DEER STRATEGY STATEWIDE SUMMIT

Across the West, state wildlife agencies are seeing declines in mule deer populations. In recent years, mule deer populations in Colorado have decreased in several areas on the West Slope. Some of the most notable declines have been seen in the White River National Forest, where populations are down almost 50 percent from their peak about 25 years ago.

Throughout the Spring of 2014, seven public meetings were conducted across the state to garner input on experiences, recommendations and concerns related to declining mule deer populations on Colorado's West Slope. Input from the seven meetings was considered by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff in conjunction with internal research and management experience and incorporated into the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy.

The Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Statewide Summit meeting held in August 2014 brought together Colorado Parks and Wildlife, sportsmen, conservation groups, landowners, outfitters, biologists, wildlife managers, other state and federal agencies, and other interested citizens and stakeholders to discuss the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy. CPW will now consider the outcomes from the summit to inform a final draft Strategy to be presented to the Parks and Wildlife Commission later in 2014. Once the Commission approves it, this Strategy will guide agency efforts to work towards increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado.

METHODOLOGY

Colorado Parks and Wildlife, in coordination with The Keystone Center (Keystone),¹ held an open public summit on August 9, 2014 in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The meeting enabled the public to discuss and provide input to Colorado Parks and Wildlife on the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy in support of agency work to increase mule deer populations in Western Colorado.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Keystone coordinated outreach efforts to identify key community contacts, organizations, and interested individuals and to recruit their participation through email notification. A press release and meeting announcements were placed in newspapers across the state and electronically through CPW's website and Keystone's website. Local and statewide radio featured stories on the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy and promoted the event. The summit was open to the public and registration was requested but not required to attend.

Upon arrival, attendees were greeted by members of the CPW and Keystone staff and were asked to sign in or register and take a seat at one of the round discussion tables. Participants received meeting

¹The Keystone Center (Keystone, www.keystone.org) is a Colorado-based non-profit organization founded in 1975 to drive actionable, shared solutions to contentious environment, energy, education and public health issues. Keystone bid on this work through an open bid process and was hired by CPW to hold seven public meetings and one statewide summit between April and August 2014.

materials including an agenda, the executive summary from the “Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Public Engagement Report, June 2014” that summarized input from the meetings held in Spring 2014, a copy of the CPW “Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy-Draft, August 2014,” and a handout, “The Story of Colorado’s Mule Deer,” describing the trends in Colorado mule deer population over time.

Fifty-eight (58) members of the public attended the meeting. Participants included sportsmen, outfitters, wildlife conservation organizations, energy companies, state and federal agencies, and other interested stakeholders and citizens. Participation in the Statewide Summit included individuals that had participated in one of the seven meetings during the first round of public engagement in April and May 2014 (31% had attended one of the seven public engagement meetings prior to the Statewide Summit) as well as individuals that did not participate in any of the seven regional meetings.

The Keystone Center facilitated the meeting, which lasted four hours. The agenda consisted of presentations by CPW summarizing input from the meetings held across the State in April and May as well as a summary of the draft Strategy, a short video describing the trends in Colorado mule deer populations over time, plenary question and answer sessions, small group discussions, and a polling session. The meeting agenda is found in Appendix A.

Specifically, the meeting included the following sessions:

1. The meeting started with a general session consisting of a brief video on trends in mule deer populations followed by a CPW presentation of an overview of the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Process and Goals and input received from the seven Spring meetings. A comment and question/answer period followed. CPW then presented the Draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy, and this was also followed by a comment and question/answer session.
2. Subsequent to the plenary presentations and question and answer sessions, participants sat at round tables for small group discussions that were facilitated by CPW staff. Each table discussed a set of five questions during an hour-long working lunch. The five questions were: (1) What do you like or support about the draft Strategy? What are its strengths? (2) What are your specific concerns about the draft Strategy? What would you change about the draft Strategy and why? Are there gaps in the draft Strategy? What are its weaknesses? (3) What opportunities do you see for improving or refining the Strategy? (4) What threats or barriers do you see related to the success of the Strategy? And, (5) What other discussion topics emerged during the breakout? All comments from the small group discussions can be found in Appendices B-F.
3. Following break out discussions, participants reconvened for a general session. One participant from each table provided a brief report out to the entire group highlighting key themes discussed at their table during the breakout session. Participants then completed a polling activity, during which they answered six questions related to the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy. The polling activity enabled participants to see anonymous feedback of all attendees in real time. It was followed by a comment and question/answer session. Polling results can be found in Appendix H. Please note that not all meeting participants chose to participate in the polling activity.

This meeting summary has been developed independently by The Keystone Center and is a compilation of comments, questions, and polling results from the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Statewide Summit. The meeting summary is organized into the following sections: (1) a summary of meeting discussions, including a) opening session/presentation comments, questions, and answers, (2) a summary of themes and comments from plenary and small group discussions, (3) a summary of the polling results, and (4) an overview of the next steps.²

SUMMARY OF BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

Opening session question, answers and comments

During the opening session, Chad Bishop, Assistant Director of Wildlife and Natural Resources, CPW, and Ron Velarde, Northwest Regional Manager, CPW, gave presentations on the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Process and Goals and on the Draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy. After each presentation, participants were given the chance to ask questions of CPW staff or vocalize comments and/or concerns about the process or Strategy.

During this session, participants wanted to better understand how information from the public engagement meetings and the draft Strategy correlated as well as how information from other sources such as knowledge, science and research from CPW, other states, and other sources would be incorporated. CPW responded that all information from the seven public meetings was reviewed with special focus on cross-cutting themes. CPW also reviewed input from its employees and, with this combination of information and input, devised a set of priorities that reflected the highest level of interest from both the public and CPW employees that would guide agency actions. CPW noted that science is incorporated into the draft Strategy and will be incorporated moving forward; the final Strategy will be approved by the CPW Commission and therefore all strategic priorities must be scientifically defensible.

With regards to coordination with other state and federal agencies, neighboring states and universities, CPW stressed that it has and will continue to work with and coordinate mule deer strategies with other agencies as well as states throughout the region, which are also experiencing mule deer population declines. Furthermore, CPW coordinates with multiple universities and helps oversee about 10 to 12 graduate student programs annually to address research needs on deer and carnivores throughout the state.

Participants also wanted to better understand whether CPW is looking to set priorities that apply to individual areas or the landscape as a whole. CPW addressed these questions stating that it is looking at doing habitat management as a whole rather than haphazardly throughout the state. CPW also

² Comments that were submitted to Keystone via email or through the toll-free number were not included in this report; these comments were forwarded to CPW for review and consideration. However, some comments received outside of the meeting did align with what was said during the Statewide Summit.

addressed working with other land management groups in order to rehabilitate beetle kill areas as well as increasing biodiversity in deer habitat areas. All questions/answers and comments from the general sessions of the Summit can be found in Appendix I.

Breakout group discussion, comments and questions

During the meeting, participants broke into smaller groups to discuss five predetermined questions regarding the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy. The following summarizes the input and comments received from each group during the meeting's breakout session. Comments recorded by CPW staff facilitating the small group discussions can be found in Appendices B-F.

What do you like or support about the draft Strategy? What are its strengths?

The majority of comments applauded CPW's efforts to engage the public and solicit their input through a series of statewide, public meetings. Other comments complimented the draft Strategy's overall focus and organization to address a multitude of issues. The Strategy's incorporation of habitat in each strategic priority area and focus on landscape-scale approaches were also supported by many of the attendees. Finally, participants noted the transparency and educational opportunities that the Strategy can provide to the public as well as other agencies and organizations.

What are your specific concerns about the draft Strategy? What would you change about the draft Strategy and why? Are there gaps in the draft Strategy? What are its weaknesses?

The majority of comments were concerned with the size and scope of the draft Strategy; the apprehension was mostly around CPW's ability to implement the entire Strategy and many comments suggested focusing on a few of the strategic priorities and/or regions. Funding for the Strategy was identified as a top concern by many groups – the concerns included the amount, sources, and allocation of funds. Another concern throughout the discussion was CPW's ability to create buy-in and support from landowners and other land use agencies. Some suggested the Strategy should focus more on development impacts. A few groups suggested there was a gap in communication to general public and that more public education and outreach was needed to make the larger population aware of mule deer issues. Finally, a few of the comments questioned how this Strategy would be different from strategies implemented in the past; did CPW learn from past attempts and what has changed this time around?

What opportunities do you see for improving or refining the Strategy?

The most common opportunity identified was for increased public and stakeholder outreach, engagement and education. Many groups suggested participation should be solicited from a variety of stakeholders – for example, recreational, industrial, civic, private landowners, and land use agencies – and that increased outreach and communication with these groups could result in easier management and better agreements. A number of groups suggested a need for increased public education on the plight of the mule deer through a variety of venues; one group recommended replacing the “hug-a-hunter” ad campaign with mule deer ads. It was also specifically suggested that public education and outreach be added as a new priority area within the Strategy.

Opportunities to diversify funding sources was another common theme; suggestions for funding sources included finding federal dollars, taking a percentage of severance tax dollars, tags and other special licenses, expanding resource user fees to hikers, bikers, all-terrain vehicles, etc., and a special sales tax on their equipment. Half of the breakout groups suggested there may be more opportunities related to hunting; suggestions included working with private landowners to open lands for hunting, improving winter access to ranges, expanding licenses and/ or seasons for predators, and collecting more mandatory information from hunters before they are allowed to purchase a new tag. A few comments suggested expanding incentives to garner buy-in from private landowners while one group felt livestock producers and ranchers should stop getting paid for predator kills. Finally, two breakout session groups recommended incorporating a review process into the Strategy to evaluate progress and make adjustments where needed.

What threats or barriers do you see related to the success of the Strategy?

Funding was identified by nine of eleven groups as the Strategy's main barrier to success – specifically diversifying funding sources, maintaining continuous appropriations, federal budget cuts, and competition for funding resources. Many groups also felt outside organizations or influences that CPW has no jurisdiction over could hinder the success of the Strategy; their concerns included cooperation of other agencies, support from the Commission, private landowners and land use agreements, the urban interface effect on predator management, and competing recreational demands. Public perceptions, apathy, and lack of public education regarding the plight of the mule deer were also noted as perceived threats. Finally, a few breakout groups believed politics in general and changing leadership could threaten the success of the Strategy.

What other discussion topics emerged during the breakout?

Many groups suggested adding fees and/or stamps for other resource users including hikers, mountain bikers, birders, all-terrain vehicles, etc. to help fund the Strategy. Many groups continually suggested that public education and outreach is needed to increase resource users' understanding of mule deer issues and how conservation efforts are funded. Some of the comments suggested that if natural resource users better understood the mule deer issue, they may be more willing to help pay for these efforts. Other discussion topics included questions as to whether there was an overarching group or effort to unify the various users in these educational efforts.

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT POLLING ON THE DRAFT STRATEGY

Following the small group discussions, participants completed a polling activity to express their opinions to six questions. Participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of CPW's proposed management strategies, the feasibility of successfully implementing the draft Strategy, the likelihood that the draft Strategy will increase mule deer populations in Western Colorado, whether the draft Strategy is moving CPW in the right direction to help improve Colorado mule deer populations, level of comfort with the overall draft Strategy, and whether the draft Strategy focuses on the right priorities for increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado. While all participants were asked to participate in the polling activity and were provided the opportunity to do so, some left the meeting early and/or chose not to poll.

Summary of Polling Results

The majority of participants that took part in the polling activity (92%) stated that they have a better understanding of the management strategies that CPW is proposing to work towards increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado. The majority of participants (72%) also rated their comfort level with the draft Strategy as 'medium' – I have some concerns but am moderately comfortable. Sixty-two (62%) of those who polled felt that the Strategy addressed some of the right priorities but is missing other high priorities and/or includes some things that are not high priorities for increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado. Finally, 89% of those who participated in the polling activity felt that the draft Strategy is moving CPW in the right direction to help improve the Colorado mule deer populations in Western Colorado. The majority believed that there was a medium likelihood that it was socially, economically, and politically feasible for CPW to successfully implement the Strategy. Results for each of the six polling questions are shown below.

Figure 1: True or False? I have a better understanding of the management strategies that CPW is proposing to work towards increasing mule deer populations.

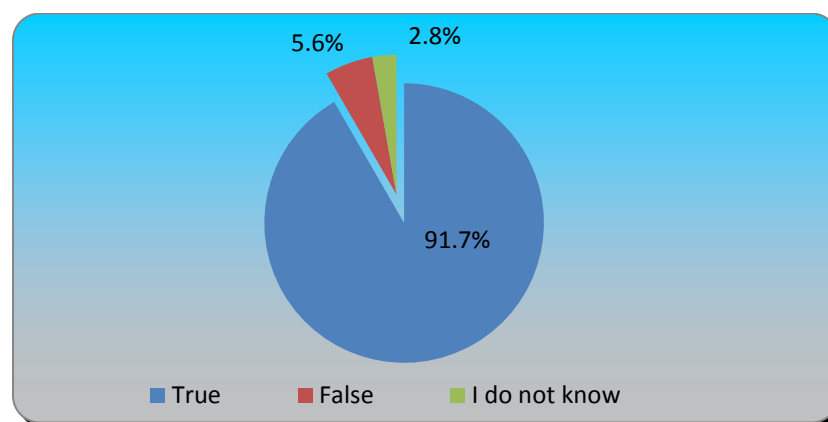


Figure 2: I believe that the overall social, economic, and political feasibility of successfully implementing this proposed Strategy is:

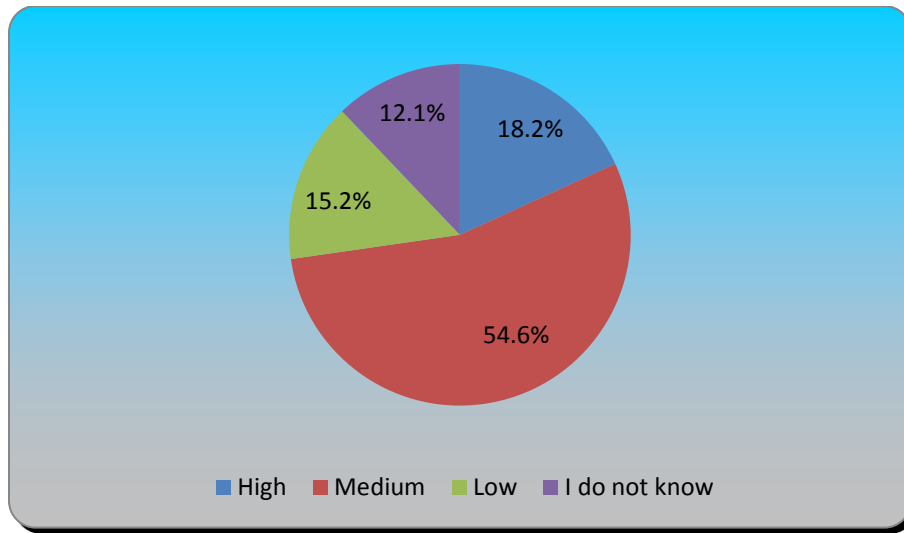


Figure 3: I believe the likelihood that the proposed Strategy will increase mule deer populations in Western Colorado is:

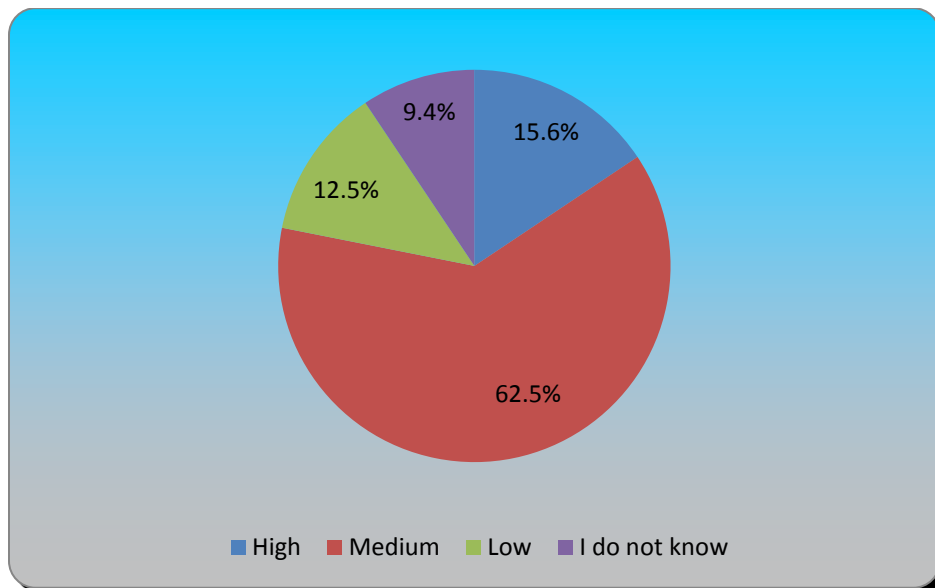


Figure 4: Polling Results: True or False? I believe that the draft Strategy is moving CPW in the right direction to help improve the Colorado mule deer populations?

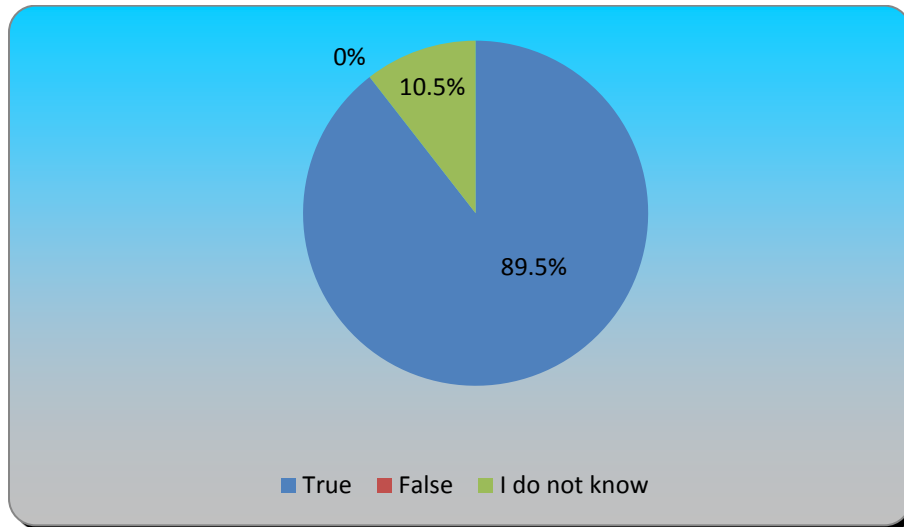


Figure 5: My level of comfort with the overall proposed Strategy is:

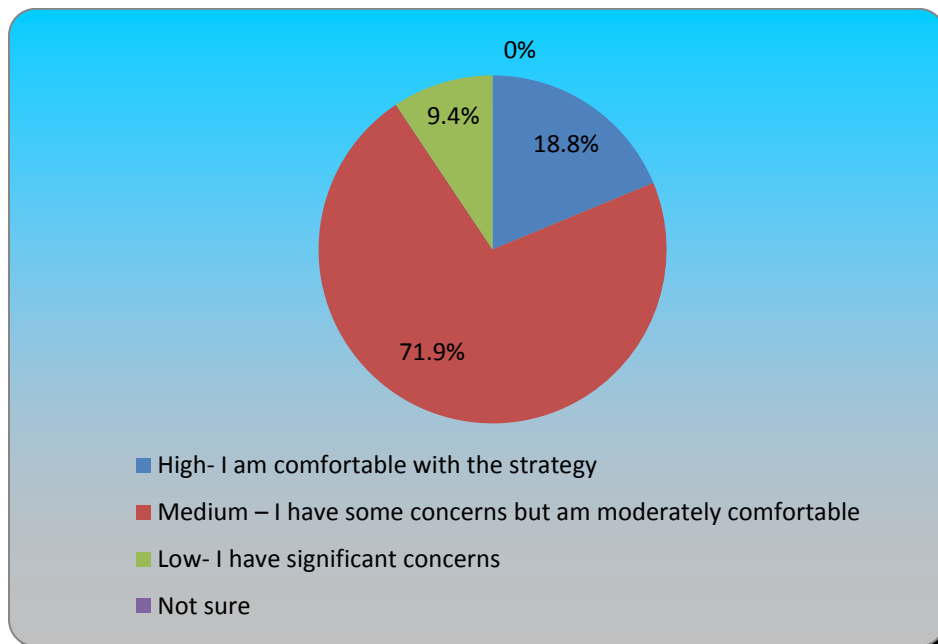
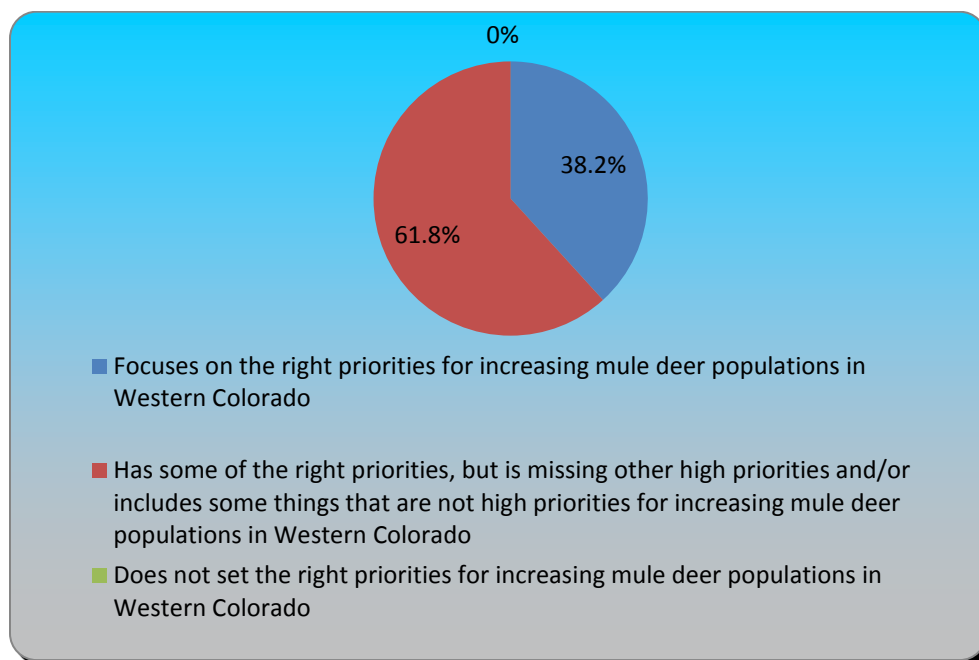


Figure 6: I believe that the proposed Strategy:



CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout plenary and breakout sessions, the following discussion themes frequently arose.

Support for the direction of the draft Strategy coupled with questions and concerns about implementation. The majority of participants expressed that they believed the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy was moving CPW in the right direction to work towards increasing mule deer populations. Participants raised concerns about how the strategic priorities would be prioritized, implemented, and, more specifically, how this Strategy would be different than what is currently happening. While there was support for the comprehensive approach of the draft Strategy in addressing a variety of opportunities and management issues in a holistic and landscape approach, there was general concern that the size and scope of the draft Strategy would impede CPW's ability to implement the entire Strategy. Based on this, there were suggestions to focus on specific priorities over specific time periods, rather than trying to do everything at once.

Importance of science and evaluation in informing and assessing the strategy. Participants' comments and questions often addressed the importance of applying current and future scientific knowledge within the Strategy. Participants also suggested that (1) evaluation be incorporated as part of the Strategy, and that (2) the effectiveness of the Strategy once implemented be assessed and communicated to the public.

Concerns related to funding barriers. Participants recognized that funding was a concern and a barrier to successfully implementing the Strategy. Participants suggested that there could be an opportunity to share fees across groups such as hikers, bikers and other wildlife users as well as an opportunity for stakeholders to advocate for the importance of funding the Strategy.

Importance of the role of the public and stakeholders in implementing the Strategy. Participants commented that it is important that they and other interested wildlife stakeholders articulate to community leaders, politicians and other community members the importance of implementing and funding the Strategy. Participants expressed eagerness to engage with CPW in order to better understand what they, as citizens/stakeholders, could do to continue the conversation about how best to restore mule deer and to successfully implement the Strategy. Participants also frequently suggested that coordination with other agencies, organizations, private landowners, and other stakeholders could increase the potential to overcome the real and perceived barriers and weaknesses of the Strategy (mainly related to predator management and land development).

Need for additional public education and coordinated messaging. Participants emphasized the value of more education to the public as well as coordinated messages from CPW and its partners. Participants' comments throughout the meeting suggested that public education through precise and coordinated agency messaging was important to overcome threats and barriers of successfully implementing the Strategy. Participants also suggested that there is opportunity for the agency to reach out and engage

more of the public. Participants agreed that the public engagement process has been a key strength of the Strategy and suggested that the agency should build on that success by working to educate and inform the broader public which may not understand its role in wildlife management. There were specific suggestions that CPW add public education and outreach as a new priority within the Strategy.

NEXT STEPS

CPW will use the information provided in this report to guide its efforts to finalize the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy. The Strategy will then be submitted to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to be approved, after which CPW will begin incorporating outcomes from the West Slope Mule Deer Strategy into management processes that affect mule deer populations in Colorado.

Appendix A: Agenda from Statewide Summit



Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Statewide Summit

Saturday, August 9, 2014

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

The Ramada Inn and Suites, 124 West 6th St., Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Statewide Summit meeting is to enable the public to discuss & provide input to Colorado Parks and Wildlife on the draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy to guide agency efforts to work towards increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado.

***All times are approximate**

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 10:00 a.m. | Welcome & Introductions
<i>Colorado Parks and Wildlife Staff & The Keystone Center Staff</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose & objectives of the Statewide Summit – <i>Chad Bishop and Ron Velarde, Colorado Parks and Wildlife</i>• Agenda review and key meeting protocols – <i>Julie Shapiro, The Keystone Center</i> |
| 10:20 a.m. | Overview of the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy Process and Goal <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “How did we get here & what did we hear from the public?” – <i>Chad Bishop and Ron Velarde, Colorado Parks and Wildlife</i>• Q& A to follow |
| 10:50 a.m. | Presentation of the Draft Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of key strategic elements and potential management actions – <i>Colorado Parks and Wildlife Staff</i>• Q&A to follow |
| 11:45 a.m. | Working Lunch: Small Group Discussions on the Draft Strategy |
| 12:45 p.m. | Report Out of Breakout Session Discussions – <i>by Table Facilitator and Participants</i> |
| 1:15 p.m. | Polling Session
<i>Q & A to Follow</i> |
| 1:50 pm | Next Steps – <i>Colorado Parks and Wildlife Staff</i> |
| 2:00 pm | Adjourn |

Appendix B: Breakout Session Comments (Question One: Draft Strategy Strengths)

1.) What do you like or support about the draft Strategy? What are its strengths?	
Common Themes	
Public Engagement & Input	
Scope/ Scale	
Habitat and Landscape-scale	
Comments	
Table 1	Effort to engage public statewide on the front end of process
	Good selection and representation of priorities
	Good summary of mule deer history - provided printed materials
Table 2	Including recreation as a concern
	Public involvement (input)
	All encompassing - looking at issues we can impact
	Monitoring is ongoing
	Habitat is common to all of [the strategies]
	Predation is not a top issue
Table 3	Identifies a multitude of issues
	Public process
	Good to have multiple meetings across the state
	Need to maintain relationship with sportsmen over time - continued communication on this and other issues.
	More education efforts to sportsmen
	Opportunity exists here to show a combined success with this effort
	Politics harder to get a voice as sportsmen but need to keep up efforts
	Adds more to education - specific to deer
	Look at private landowners land management [things] in successful deer [limits] in the state
	Concentrate habitat improvement projects in areas of best opportunity in any given area
Table 4	Organized and spelled out in an organized matter. Need a plan and this is a plan.
	Provides transparency
	Gets the public involved
	High level
	Reduce the number of priorities to two [focuses] the priority like with sage grouse.
Table 5	Strategy 1 - Improving habitat quality for other species
	Corroboration of CPW strategies with public on ideas strategies
	Public input and corroboration with CPW - think this is a good process
Table 6	Public involvement process -input included
	Landscape - scale focus
	Corroboration with CPW internal and public

Table 7	Strategy is multi-faceted and looks at a suite of issues (problems)
	Not focused on any one issue
	Flexibility in emphasis on regional issues
	Initial interest and participation by other agencies (US Forest Service)
	Appreciate the vision - honing in on true issues - great start - focused, well organized
	Use of/ reaching out for public support and using their ideas
Table 8	All of them but not realistic to get all done
	Prioritize strategies
Table 9	More discussion on habitat and [rehabilitation]
	The public process: the degree of specifics (steps) recommendations and priorities
	Good start but must implement the plan when completed
Table 10	Doable, realistic
	Allowing public to be involved. Public is outside too so good to work with them.
	Applaud landscape scale efforts. Necessary and recommended.
	Youth opportunity - support for our strategy.
	Involvement of other organizations, both government and NGO conservation orgs
	Support for highway crossings and working towards catching up with other states on number of highway crossing structures
Table 11	Strong support of a landscape level approach for habitat and mule deer management
	Support for predator management. Increase hunting opportunity where possible.
	Support for strategy #4; preserve migration corridors but manage movements in high traffic areas.

Appendix C: Breakout Session Comments (Question Two: Draft Strategy Concerns)

2.) What are your specific concerns about the draft Strategy? What would you change about the draft Strategy and why? Are there gaps in the draft Strategy? What are its weaknesses?	
Common Themes	
Scope/ Prioritization/ Implementation Concerns	
Funding/ Cost	
Public Education/ Messaging	
Land Use/ Landowners	
Proposed strategy vs. old strategies	
Comments	
Table 1	Strategic Priority #2 - Consideration/incentive of a quota for female lions and possible bounties on coyotes as was recently done in Utah.
	Strategic Priority #7 - Keep in forefront the opportunities for youth/ 1st time hunters for doe tags.
	Financial impacts of implementing any of the strategies
	More flexibility in CPW management options at local levels
	Consider a PR program to make a larger percentage of public aware of the mule deer issues
	Quantify the extent of CPW efforts (past & present) on each of the 7 strategic priorities.
Table 2	How and where will priorities be decided. Which [all] will CPW focus on?
	Where is the need for the greatest agency cooperation to make difference on the ground?
	Must include more on development not just energy - CPW must get agreements with other agencies, developers. Give CPW more ability to address development impacts.
Table 3	Money
	Identify more problems than can be handled. Prioritization will be necessary.
	How to allocate scarce resources
	Need to tie several priorities together depending on need in an area.
	Some priorities may be challenged by land use negotiations.
	Other land use agencies will need to help.
	Land use agencies need to make deer a priority
Table 4	Very easy to make plan harder to implement and follow through on
	Review twice yearly to see if the strategy is working and report back to the public
Table 5	Strategic Priority #2 - limitation in predator control around municipalities
	Landscape needs to be defined.
	How does this strategy compare to past strategies? What's different from past strategies?
	Strategic Priority #5 - specificity of strategy; research support or clarification of human recreation on mule (i.e. quit hunting mule deer)
	Strategic Priority #6 - mandatory checks for harvest to get more accurate
	Involvement of private landowners

Table 6	What is new, what's different - what was learned and changed from past approaches?
	How much of internal meetings captured public input...
	Better specificity on scale (landscape) and other
Table 7	Because it is multi-faceted, worry about potential for lack of focus, so won't be able to move needle. Need focus on a few priority issues/ regions.
	Not enough concerns placed on other recreational activities or their impacts on wildlife. Other resource users are impacting wildlife, but not paying for management.
	Concerned about what are next steps - can we take this effort into a productive win-win.
Table 8	Not realistic to get all strategies done
	Not enough funding
Table 9	Good start but concerned about implementing the draft.
	Better partnership with federal land agencies is needed during the draft process. What steps will CPW take to ensure land agencies are up to date on the plan?
	Move Strategic priorities #4 (highway impacts) and #5 (human recreation) up in priority and #2 (predators) down.
	Addressing sheep and cattle grazing in relationship to the plan
Table 10	If you reduce or eliminate predators what will happen? What are we doing to consider unintended consequences of predator management? What will rabbit or rodent population response be?
	What are impacts to other animals from habitat treatment such as Pinion Juniper removal? PJ obligate species - nesting birds, etc.
	Predator control must be monitored and evaluate success.
	Concern about apathy from public both hunters and non-hunters. How do we engage the silent majority in mule deer management strategy?
	Are we contacting public who have not attended the meetings - they have different perspectives and perceptions. We need to do this.
	Can we really do all 7? Recommend prioritizing and do a few well instead of all poorly.
	Gap: we need to add a strategic priority of increasing education and information to the public of all these issues and what we know.

Appendix D: Breakout Session Comments (Question Three: Draft Strategy Opportunities for Improvement)

3.) What opportunities do you see for improving or refining the Strategy?	
Common Themes	
Outreach / Engagement	
Public Education	
Funding	
Hunting	
Incentives	
Review Process	
Comments	
Table 1	Developing a unified shared message for the public - media and "Fact Sheet" bullet point. i.e. the "30 second elevator speech"
	Recruit/ encourage more involvement and participation from all groups - recreational, industrial, civic
Table 2	Hikers, bikers all must pay for license or add a P/R and D/J tax to equipment. Look at sales tax to fund this.
	Put percentage of severance tax (or other tax) in WL trust fund. Increase severance tax to be in line with other states. Get 5% back from severance tax.
	Public funding
	Look at bartering system
	Work more with private landowners to open lands for hunting to reduce leftover PLO tag.
	Mitigation areas must be set aside - protected from future impacts until adequate restoration is completed. Mitigation - 1st step should include avoidance. Must flow into season structures and tag numbers.
	Improve education of general public on who is paying for wildlife.
	Take percent of severance tax from oil & gas industry and place in state run trust account that will provide never ending revenue stream. Interest only (where principal not spent) to be allocated to wildlife management. Similar to WY wildlife and natural resource trust.
Table 3	Sportsmen/others need to talk to legislators regarding federal funding options
	Look at habitat improvement and predator control on private property.
	Look at more beneficial seed mixes on private lands - problems with restrictions on federal properties.
	Working more closely with private landowners necessary on overall [management]. Perhaps more predator control incentives to landowners.
	Better outreach to federal and private landowners to discuss issues
	Look at licensing structure for predators. For instance, extending bear season to put more pressure on bears.
	Use [plan] to education on mule deer. May make the management easier as people are educated. Replace Hug-a-Hunter ads with mule deer ads.
	Get ahead of the curve on anti-[sportsmen] with regard to predators (anti-hunters that is)
	Number of voices to be heard is a barrier
	Federal controlled highways and [killing] animals need federal highway dollars to help resolve the issue of road kill and migration barriers
	Tags/ other special licenses need to be looked at to generate more funding

Table 4	Review and evaluate strategy to see if it is working; make adjustments where needed.
Table 5	More hunter info, mandatory reporting
	Strengthening policy issues between agencies - NGOs play important role in influencing policy regarding permitting agencies.
	Specific goals related to strategy - regionally related/ specific goals
	Communication between CPW and public regarding information available from CPW.
Table 6	More hunter information (e.g. mandatory reporting before allowed to purchase new tag)
	Strengthen policies for coordination between CPW and permitting agencies; reasonable regulations, processes/policies
	Specific goals/objectives for each strategy by region - or some scale
	Strengthen the link of research to strategy <u>AND</u> educate public on science relative to their input
	How to incentivize landowners - more specifics
	Review Process
Table 7	Opportunity to break down on smaller geographic scale - focus on a few issues within each and work with appropriate partners for each.
	Public education efforts to make people aware of deer and how to improve.
	There is a need for greater public outreach on agreements and research. No information is being translated to the public. Need to <u>share</u> information.
	Improving communications - potential for more agreements with land management agencies.
Table 8	Stop paying livestock producers/ranchers for predator kills.
	Habitat stamp - would people over 64 be willing to buy?
	More input from public
Table 9	Increased emphasis on opportunities to improve deer habitat - i.e. burn area
Table 10	Add a strategic priority on educating public. Public attention and more support are necessary to achieve our goal priorities. 1.) School program, 2.) Hunter education, 3.) Increase funding sources for education, 4.) Wilderness survival class with wildlife management nexus. e.g. more "hug-a-hunter" type of stuff for mule deer management
Table 11	Improve access to some winter ranges for lion hunting
	Emphasize/ increase collaboration with external agencies to maximize landscape effectiveness. Landscape Conservation Collaborative (LCC) is a group we should continue and increase collaboration with.

Appendix E: Breakout Session Comments (Question Four: Draft Strategy Threats or Barriers to Success)

4.) What threats or barriers do you see related to the success of the Strategy?	
Common Themes	
Funding	
Outside Organizations/ Influencers	
Public Perceptions	
Public Education	
Politics	
Comments	
Table 1	Funding
	Public apathy - "What deer problem? They're in my yard."
Table 2	Funding is key (especially if license numbers are cut)
	Hunting lifestyle/ public perception
	Politics
	Cooperation between CPW and other agencies
Table 3	Funding of all types. Identify multiple sources. Getting federal agencies to do more.
	*See other answers for some other items
	Federal agency budget cuts - need more dollars specific to mule deer from federal agencies.
	Keep funding going for multiple years particularly in regards to habitat
	Development of [incentive] programs for sportsmen – predators
Table 4	Funding
	Personnel
	Changing leadership
	Politics
Table 5	Incentivize landowner buy-in
	Limited access due to private property subdivisions
Table 6	Barriers: urban interface limiting ability to manage predators, for example
	CHANGE is difficult
	Voluntary measures vs. some reasonable regulations/ administrative policies
	Funding
	Public perception
Table 7	Funding
	Competing demands (I-70 corridor towns bringing <u>more people</u> , recreational demands)
	Need for <u>focus</u>
	How to pay for work - gaining acceptance and financial support from other resource users.
	Concern from top brass that there were not enough people (public) providing input to generate support from agency to move forward.
	<u>Time</u> is a barrier
	Need for education of other resource users (public education)

Table 8	Habitat projects depend on funding and under jurisdiction of land management agencies
	Grazing levels on public lands overgrazed by livestock in some areas, not in others
	Need to prioritize the strategies to direct money and effort. #3 habitat, oil and gas development effects, ski areas
	Not enough money in the department, cannot compete with public money
	Barrier - money - you don't have enough and the forces for development are too powerful.
Table 9	Inability for CPW to control land use decisions
Table 10	Funding. New mechanism and sources needed.
	Do we have support from commission and leadership to do what needs to be done
	Interagency coordination, just saying it doesn't mean it will happen
Table 11	Concern for funding. How do we pay for all of this?
	Strong promotional campaign and education to generate support and possible financial assistance.

Appendix F: Breakout Session Comments (Question Five: Additional Comments on Draft Strategy)

5.) What other discussion topics emerged during the breakout?	
Comments	
Table 3	*Combined in questions 1-4. Please see above.
Table 4	Bike trails, horses; -stress calving/ farming areas. Use fees.
Table 7	How do we get land managers that are already over worked to address issues that may become outcomes from this strategy?
	Is there an over-arching group to unify various user types in educational efforts?
Table 8	Stop paying money to ranchers for loss of sheep/ animals.
	Why doesn't Forest Service pay for loss of animals?
	Liaison position established by park wildlife to Forest Service and BLM
Table 9	Oil & gas reclamation - standards and timing
	Concerns on relative importance on wildlife in CPW post-merger
Table 10	Questions and concerns about if we are still going to use our MD research for management purposes and to guide future management and research.
	Add [facilitate] user fee / stamp for other users, birders, hikers, mountain bikes. So they pay for use.
Table 11	Support for enhanced education on mule deer and issues
	Incentivize citizen participation in mule deer conservation and mitigation (e.g. help pay for wildlife friendly fences, pay for seed, etc.)
	Advocate for non-hunters and fishermen to help pay for habitat and wildlife management (i.e. mountain bikers, hikers, etc.)
	CPW needs to put more information out on where deer herds are doing well and why (i.e. Middle Park, Gunnison); compare and contrast those areas to places where herds aren't doing so well.

Appendix G: Polling Questions and Results

True or False: I have a better understanding of the management strategies that CPW is proposing to work towards increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado		
Answer	Responses	Percent
True	33	92%
False	2	6%
I do not know	1	3%
Total	36	100%
I believe that the overall social, economic, and political feasibility of successfully implementing this strategy is:		
Answer	Responses	Percent
High	6	18%
Medium	18	55%
Low	5	15%
I do not know	4	12%
Total	33	100%
I believe the likelihood that the strategy will increase mule deer populations in Western Colorado is:		
Answer	Responses	Percent
High	5	16%
Medium	20	63%
Low	4	13%
I do not know	3	9%
Total	32	100%
True or False? I believe that the draft strategy is moving CPW in the right direction to help improve the Colorado mule deer populations		
Answer	Responses	Percent
True	34	89%
False	0	0%
I do not know	4	11%
Total	38	100%
My level of comfort with the overall Strategy is:		
Answer	Responses	Percent
High - I am comfortable with the strategy	6	19%

Medium - I have some concerns but am moderately comfortable	23	72%
Low - I have significant concerns	3	9%
Not sure	0	0%
Total	32	100%
I believe that the Strategy:		
Answer	Responses	Percent
Focuses on the right priorities for increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado	13	38%
Has some of the right priorities, but is missing other high priorities and/or includes some things that are not high priorities for increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado	21	62%
Does not set the right priorities for increasing mule deer populations in Western Colorado	0	0%
Total	34	100%

Appendix H: Opening and Closing Session Comments, Questions and Answers

Opening Session Questions, Answers, and Comments	
Question 1: Mentioned that there was a lack of flexibility in the management process. What is this lack of flexibility, and what is its impact?	
Answer 1: This was the public's perception, likely because CPW is a government agency. Public believes CPW lacks the flexibility to respond promptly or implement strategies quickly.	
Question 2: What happens if what the public thinks conflicts with science?	
Answer 2: This is why we have this process. Will synthesize info. Ultimately the commission will make determinations. Draft Strategy will be informed by best available science.	
Question 3: Only one bullet point addressed development. Did the public only bring up development a little bit?	
Answer 3: One of the big factors in coordinating with other agencies. CPW manages wildlife rather than land (primarily). Important to keep in mind policies of other agencies (BLM, Forest Service). CPW provides input concerning what impacts decisions will have on wildlife like deer and elk. Other agencies' decisions might not exactly align with CPW recommendations/science/preferences.	
Question 4: Thinks Forest Service and politicians should be here. Also thinks CPW should be sole manager of all wildlife in Colorado. Also thinks a liaison between Forest Service and CPW would be valuable. Referred to losing spring bear season, and the subsequent explosion of bear population. Bears are bad for fawns.	
Answer 4: Trapping amendment was constitutional. Bear legislation was a statute. Statutory measures easier to change than constitutional measures.	
Question 5: What is the path/algorithm between public report and draft strategy?	
Answer 5: Digested all input received. Tried to look at cross-cutting themes. Come up with a set of priorities that reflected the highest levels of interest from the public and CPW employees. Took what we heard and brought it together into what is a well-informed, high level vision for where we go from here.	
Question 6: Does CPW have the ability to work with its equivalent in Utah or Wyoming? Important for deer to have connected passageways. Terrain and passageways of Southwest Wyoming and NW Colorado might provide valuable information on migration changes and migration pressures. Can CPW work with equivalent in nearby states?	
Answer 6: Yes, we work with them. Meet with them quarterly. Wyoming and Utah have mule deer strategies. Also have data from across state lines. CPW employees attend/will attend Tri-State mule deer summits.	
Question 7: Were polling data presented in first presentation what CPW thought or what public thought?	
Answer 7: Polling data from public meetings was what public thought (e.g. 31% of public thought CPW couldn't manage the weather)	

Question 8: Research has shown that acid rain and atmospheric degradation and high ozone levels have sequestered the availability of trace minerals such as selenium. We have seen lots of degradation due to acid precipitation. There are other groundbreaking studies (e.g., boluses in deer increasing reproductive rates) that CPW should be paying attention to. This needs to be a collaborative effort with everyone -- agencies, universities, public, etc.
Answer 8: CPW is trying to improve in all areas. Also, CPW has been more focused in some areas than others. Not every bullet point in the strategic plan has received equal attention. CPW does work closely with a number of universities. Usually 10-12 graduate programs going on in the state in coordination with CPW. More questions to address than resources (time or money) allow.
Question 9: Sportsmen can help with loss of habitat and decline in habitat quality. Counties and municipalities can do a lot better working with CPW on maintaining habitat quality. Need to develop policies to develop coordination between counties, etc., and CPW. If there was a push to reinstate a spring bear season, does CPW have data to support such a measure? Or data about migration push points?
Answer 9: There is a body of existing data. Lots of studies over time to inform decisions. CPW is in a good spot to make well-informed decisions based on past experience and bodies of research. CPW is doing more and more research that is tied in with management actions. Lots of research dovetails with implementation of management strategies.
Question 10: How does sage brush and sage grouse habitat conservation coincide with CPW's activities?
Answer 10: Very closely. Those organizations have a lot of money, and CPW tries to consult and coordinate with those organizations.
Question 11: In relation to herd objectives, CPW has been adjusting population objectives downward since the decline began. CPW is managing for a smaller population now. Concern is that we've lost the baseline on impacts of things like development. When land management agencies make decisions based on herd objectives, this influences their decisions. We also need to consider permanent impacts on the land vs. temporary. Should not lower population objectives.
Answer 11: Trying to work with Forest Service in order to enhance public land. Lowered objective because there was no way to meet old objective with the habitat that they currently have. Objective could be increased if amount of habitat to work with increases. When CPW works with, for example, energy companies, there is discussion about enhancing the habitat presently and in the future.
Question 12: Is CPW looking to set priorities that apply to individual units (DAUs) or the landscape as a whole?
Answer 12: We are going to do habitat improvement on a landscape scale, and we are going to make it a priority. CPW is also securing lots of conservation easements. This is occurring on a landscape level, too, rather than haphazardly throughout the state.
Question 13: 1. Habitat preservation vs. mitigation of impacts? Heavy emphasis on mitigation. What about preservation? 2. Incentives for hunters? 3. Beetle kill harvesting, is there opportunity to take that land and enhance it for mule deer? 4. Species of good and bad plants for deer and elk?
Answer 13: CPW has been pretty fortunate to have "habitat stamp" and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). So CPW has been able to do some habitat protection (preservation). CPW staff members are also realists; CPW is not land management agency. It is a wildlife agency. CPW works with BLM and Forest Service to minimize impacts to wildlife. Can't preserve all wildlife, so must focus efforts where

they can be successful. Over 100,000 acres in Northwest Colorado that are protected in perpetuity. 2. CPW tried to do this, but needs to make a bigger effort. 3. Once something happens to those trees, then we can develop habitat for deer. Need to work with land management agency to develop habitat for deer. 4. Trying to eliminate noxious weeds and increase biodiversity. This is why a seed warehouse is important; there is a problem that you can reseed areas with noxious weeds. Getting desirable seed back on land is huge in combating noxious weed. Generally in mode where trying to get native species back in the ground, but also some non-native, non-invasive forage for the deer.

Closing Session Questions, Answers & Comments

Question 14: The information that has come out of this summit and the input from sportsmen, is this going to be incorporated into the five-year plan?

Answer 14: Most of this should have a direct tie to big game season structure. Earlier we talked about youth opportunity, and we did take those comments and fed them back into big game season structure process. Predators are not included in big game season structure. CPW next step is going back to commission in September, give it an update, develop final strategy, and give to Commission by end of calendar year. Then as an agency we set up implementation teams and begin to take that next step. Some things are ready to be implemented; others need further follow-up with the public. Bear and lion licenses will increase as part of the five year season structure.

Question 15: Is it possible that in some game management units tag reductions are the solution?

Answer 15: Once we have our data, we can adjust from year to year. Not part of big game season structure, but is still adjusted annually.

Question 16: Are you confident that this info about mule deer will end up in CPW's forthcoming strategic plan?

Answer 16: Confident and hopeful that this info will be in the plan and will be a high priority.

Question 17: What can the public help with?

Answer 17: CPW with public can articulate the importance of mule deer to the state of Colorado -- this is something we can all do. CPW needs to step up its efforts to reach out to the public strategically and figure out how to implement these policies. Public can also help politically. CPW would like to see public step out from an Environmental Impact Statement standpoint. Public can make a big difference.

Question 18: What metrics are you going to use to communicate to the public that you are achieving your strategic plan?

Answer 18: That will depend on the implementation process, and will depend on the actual substance of the strategic plan. One of the overall metrics should be an increased mule deer population.

Question 19: Is CPW short on money? Is there a policy on donations?

Answer 19: Funds are limited. CPW can accept donations.

Question 20: It seems like CPW is already trying to do all the priorities listed, so how is the draft strategy a deviation from the status quo?

Answer 20: There isn't predator control right now. There isn't habitat improvement on a statewide basis. So there are some priorities that aren't being attempted right now. There are also degrees -- some

efforts will be scaled up. This is also an emphasis on particular aspects that doesn't exist right now.

Comment 21: Figure out how to communicate the importance of collective impacts, target populations, and progress toward these populations. Communicate more with public in general. The hole in every conservation plan is funding. Public needs simple messages -- focus priorities.

Comment 22: Suggestion that there should be a 'license' fee for deer killed on highways, just as there is for hunting

**APPENDIX I: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy – Draft
August 9, 2014**

(begins on next page)

Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy - Draft

DRAFT August 9, 2014



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Introduction

Across the West, state wildlife agencies are observing declines in a number of mule deer populations. In recent years, mule deer populations in portions of western Colorado have declined significantly, causing concerns within Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and its many constituencies who depend upon or enjoy mule deer. Western Colorado supports some of the largest mule deer herds in Colorado and the West, such that these declines are of both statewide and regional significance. Colorado's statewide deer population estimate declined from roughly 600,000 deer in 2006 to approximately 390,000 in 2013. Deer populations fluctuate naturally in response to changing environmental conditions but the most recent decline in the State's largest deer herds is atypical and has reduced these herds well below population objectives established by CPW in concert with the public. Recognizing the need for action, CPW embarked on a comprehensive public engagement effort to gather input for developing a West Slope mule deer strategy to guide future management actions.

Goal

In concert with key publics and stakeholders, work to stabilize, sustain and increase mule deer populations in Western Colorado and, in turn, increase hunting and wildlife-related recreational opportunities.

Setting the Stage

CPW has a long history with studying and managing mule deer, dating back to the agency's origins. In recent decades, CPW has invested millions of dollars annually to manage, monitor and

study mule deer, with many of these efforts focused in western Colorado. To capture this history and set the stage for moving forward, CPW produced a 3-page publication titled *The Story of Colorado's Mule Deer* for wide distribution to the public in advance of gathering public input. This publication provides an easy-to-read synopsis of deer population changes from the mid-late 1800s to present and highlights some of CPW's key management efforts. CPW also held an internal summit in April 2013 involving 100 agency employees with mule deer management or research responsibilities. The purpose of this summit was to capture the insights of the professional staff charged with managing Colorado's deer. During this two-day summit, CPW employees identified a list of factors that potentially influence mule deer populations along with an assessment of potential management strategies to address those factors. Employees also identified their experiences relative to the challenges associated with implementing proposed management strategies.

Engaging the Public

In 2014, CPW contracted with The Keystone Center (Keystone, CO) to host a series of public meetings across Colorado to facilitate dialogue and obtain input from engaged citizens regarding the observed declines in western Colorado mule deer herds. Meetings were held in Craig, Durango, Eagle, Loveland, Grand Junction, Gunnison and Pueblo during April and May 2014. Each public meeting was three hours in length and comprised the same agenda. Participants were provided a copy of *Colorado's Mule Deer Story* and were provided a brief overview presentation covering the history of mule deer in Colorado and the various factors that may influence deer populations. The bulk of each meeting was focused on soliciting public input. Participants broke into small groups facilitated by CPW staff to discuss ten management





concerns that were identified and evaluated by CPW staff the preceding year during the CPW internal deer summit. The management concerns were: barriers to migration, competition with elk, disease, doe harvest and hunting demands, declining habitat quality, habitat loss, highway mortality, predation, recreational impacts and weather. Each small group rotated through all breakout stations, which were dedicated to one or more of these management concerns. For each management concern, participants shared their experiences and observations, their suggested strategies for addressing the experiences for each management strategy and possible barriers and concerns that CPW should be aware of in addressing the management concern. There was also an “other” station for participants’ comments and concerns that they felt did not fit into one of the pre-determined management concerns. Following the breakout session, participants re-convened as a full group to participate in a polling activity in which they answered three questions related to the management concerns. The polling activity enabled participants to see the anonymous feedback of all attendees in real time.

The Keystone Center captured all input from the seven public meetings and prepared a *Public Engagement Report* for CPW, which they presented to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission in July 2014. This report was used by CPW staff in combination with accumulated management and research experience to prepare a draft *Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy*. This draft strategy will be vetted at a final, statewide public meeting facilitated by The Keystone Center August 9, 2014, in Glenwood Springs. As with the local public meetings, the statewide meeting is open to all interested publics. Input received during the statewide public meeting will then be used to refine the draft strategy and produce the final strategy for consideration and adoption by the CPW Commission.

Strategic Priorities

CPW identified a list of seven strategic priorities based on input received from the public through evaluation of the ten management concerns. CPW was provided input on which management concerns were considered most limiting to deer population growth and which concerns could be most effectively addressed. The public also provided higher-level input and recommendations that spanned multiple management concerns. CPW synthesized these different types of input when identifying strategic priorities. For example, the public identified some management concerns as important issues that CPW had the capability to address, which translated directly into strategic priorities (e.g., declining habitat quality, predation). Other management concerns were recognized as very important but inherently difficult to manage (e.g., weather, habitat loss). To address the latter, strategic priorities were crafted which may be effective to mitigate or lessen the effects of these factors realizing it is unrealistic to manage the threats directly. As part of implementing the strategic priorities identified below, CPW will continue to involve public in addressing the needs of mule deer by sharing information and soliciting input when making policy decisions.

Strategic Priority #1: Landscape-scale habitat management to improve habitat quality

Components to implementation:

- Enhance coordination and partnerships with public and private land managers to improve landscape management for deer and to secure additional funding for habitat enhancement
- Create landscape management plans
- Pursue separate habitat treatments for deer and elk on the same landscapes to minimize overlap and lessen forage competition
- Continue to use mechanical treatments (e.g., hydro axe, roller-chop) and prescribed fire (when feasible) to manage habitat for deer
- Acquire and store seed for reestablishing desirable forage for deer as part of habitat management, restoration and reclamation
- Work with partners to improve weed management
- Monitor effectiveness of habitat management to inform future decisions
- Create a habitat treatment and monitoring database

Strategic Priority #2: Predator management where predation may be limiting deer survival

Components to implementation:

- Use existing data to identify areas where predation (black bear, mountain lion or coyote) may be limiting mule deer survival and population growth
- Develop a new statewide mountain lion management strategy, explicitly incorporating mule deer survival considerations
- Increase mountain lion and bear harvest in target areas where predation is documented or suspected as limiting deer population growth based on existing data
- Identify potential sites for focused coyote control efforts to increase deer fawn survival where coyote predation is suspected as a primary contributing factor to declining deer
- Evaluate effectiveness of management actions

Strategic Priority #3: Protect habitat and mitigate development impacts to lessen rates of habitat loss

Components to implementation:

- Maintain a robust habitat protection program for mule deer using Habitat Stamp, GOCO and other funding sources
- Coordinate with municipal and county governments in land use planning to strategize protection of critical habitat
- Collaborate with industry, federal and state agencies and private landowners to mitigate impacts of energy development

Strategic Priority #4: Reduce the impacts of highways on mule deer survival, movements and migration

Components to implementation:

- Enhance coordination with Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and NGOs at statewide and local levels to increase highway permeability for deer
- Identify and prioritize highway stretches in western Colorado that inhibit deer movement and/or cause significant mortality
- Where opportunities arise, collaborate with CDOT and other partners to install highway overpasses and underpasses in conjunction with appropriate fencing
- Evaluate effectiveness of highway crossings to refine future strategies

Strategic Priority #5: Reduce the impacts of human recreation on mule deer

Components to implementation:

- Coordinate with federal land management agencies and local jurisdictions to seasonally close or restrict human activities in critical habitats (e.g., motorized and non-motorized human activity in fawning habitat during early summer, antler shed hunting on critical winter ranges in mid-winter)

Strategic Priority #6: Regulate doe harvest and provide youth opportunity

Components to implementation:

- Manage doe harvest conservatively in units that are well below population objective
- Provide enhanced hunting opportunities for youth, particularly in herds that are at or above the population objective
- Evaluate deer stocking rate and herd performance relative to habitat capability



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Strategic Priority #7: Maintain a strong ungulate population and disease monitoring program and conduct applied research to improve management of deer populations

Components to implementation:

- Use established, defensible techniques to monitor, survey and estimate size of deer populations to inform harvest and other management decisions
- Conduct research on emerging management issues where uncertainty or lack of information is a direct hindrance to effective implementation of management strategies
- Use ongoing population monitoring of deer and elk to identify areas where elk may be negatively impacting deer



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