

DEER HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Deer Herd Unit # 8
(North Slope)
April 2012

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Summit, Daggett counties - Boundary begins at the junction of SR-150 and the Summit-Duchesne county line (summit of the Uinta Mountains); north along SR-150 to the Utah-Wyoming state line; east along this state line to the Utah-Wyoming-Colorado state line (Three Corners); south along the Utah-Colorado state line to the Green River; west along the Green River to Flaming Gorge Reservoir; west along the south shoreline of this reservoir to Cart Creek; south along Cart Creek to US-191; south along US-191 to the Uintah-Daggett County line (summit of the Uinta Mountains); west along the summit of the Uinta mountains to SR-150.

LAND OWNERSHIP

No change has occurred in the acreage for this unit since the last plan revision.

RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP – April 2012

	Yearlong range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Ownership						
Forest Service	0	0%	317491	56%	17277	9%
Bureau of Land Management	0	0%	19056	3%	42696	23%
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	843	21%	8083	1%	20598	12%
Native American Trust Lands	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Private	2716	70%	56583	10%	35768	19%
Department of Defense	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
USFS & BLM Wilderness Area	0	0%	160104	28%	0	0%
National Recreational Area	366	9%	5753	1%	66084	36%
Utah State Parks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	0	0%	984	1%	2162	1%
TOTAL	3925	100%	568054	100%	184585	100%

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

³⁵₁₇ Manage for a population of healthy animals capable of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities, including hunting and viewing.

³⁵₁₇ Expand and improve mule deer populations within the carrying capacity of available habitats and in consideration of other land uses.

- ³⁵₁₇ Conserve and improve mule deer habitat throughout the unit with emphasis on crucial ranges.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- ∪ **Long Term Target Winter Herd Size** – The long-term objective is 6,200 wintering deer (modeled number), which is the same in the last plan objective, and is based on an overall stable DCI rating.

- ∪ **Short Term Objective** – No short term objective is needed for this unit

- ∪ **Herd Composition** – Maintain a three-year average postseason buck:doe ratio in accordance with the statewide plan.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Monitoring

- ∪ **Population Size** - A computer model will be used to estimate the wintering population size, by utilizing harvest data, postseason and spring classifications and mortality estimates.

- ∪ **Buck Age Structure** - Monitor age class structure of the buck population through the use of checking stations, postseason classification, uniform harvest surveys and field bag checks.

- ∪ **Harvest** - The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through the statewide uniform harvest survey. Achieve the target population size by use of antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons. The winter population should result in an estimated annual buck harvest up to 700 (500 for West Daggett & Three Corners part, 200 for the Summit part) when normal conditions occur. Recognize that buck harvest will be above or below what is expected due to climatic and productivity variables. Buck harvest strategies will be developed through the RAC and Wildlife Board process to achieve management objectives for buck to doe ratios.

Limiting Factors (May prevent achieving management objectives)

- ∪ **Crop Depredation** - Take all steps necessary to minimize depredation as prescribed by state law and DWR policy.

- ∪ **Habitat** - Winter range forage conditions, public land range availability and landowner acceptance will determine herd size. Excessive habitat utilization will be addressed with hunting.

- ∪ **Predation** - Refer to DWR predator management policy.

- ∪ - If the population estimate is less than 90% of objective and fawn to doe ratio drops below 70 for 2 of the last 3 years or if the fawn survival rate drops below 50% for one year, then a Predator Management Plan targeting coyotes will be implemented on that subunit.

- If the population estimate is less than 90% of objective and the doe survival rate drops below 85% for 2 of the last 3 years or below 80% for one year, then a Predator Management Plan targeting cougar would be implemented on that subunit.

- ⌋ Highway Mortality - Work with UDOT, Summit and Daggett counties, Universities, local conservation groups, and landowners to minimize highway mortality by identifying locations of high deer-vehicle collisions and erecting sufficient wildlife crossing structures in those locations. Evaluate the effectiveness of the crossing structures over time and implement new technologies to improve future wildlife crossing structures.
- ⌋ Illegal Harvest - Support law enforcement efforts to educate the public concerning poaching and reduce illegal taking of deer.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- ⌋ Maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit on winter range to achieve population management objectives.
- ⌋ Work with private landowner and federal, state and local government agencies to maintain and protect critical and existing winter range from future losses.
- ⌋ Provide improved habitat security and escapement opportunities for deer.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- ⌋ Continue to monitor permanent range trend studies located throughout the herd unit.
- ⌋ Conduct cooperative seasonal range rides and surveys to evaluate forage condition and utilization.
- ⌋ Work with land management agencies, conservation organizations, private landowners, and local leaders through the regional Watershed Restoration Initiative working groups to identify and prioritize mule deer habitats that are in need of enhancement or restoration.
- ⌋ Utilize antlerless deer harvest to improve or protect forage conditions if and when vegetative declines are attributed to deer over utilization.
- ⌋ Initiate broad scale vegetative treatment projects to improve mule deer habitat with emphasis on drought or fire damaged sagebrush winter ranges, ranges that are being taken over by invasive annual grass species, and ranges being diminished by encroachment of conifers into sagebrush or aspen habitats.
- ⌋ Cooperate with and provide input to land management planning efforts dealing with actions affecting habitat security, quality and quantity.
- ⌋ Properly manage elk populations to minimize competition with mule deer on crucial ranges.
- ⌋ Work with state and federal land management agencies to properly manage livestock to enhance crucial mule deer ranges

- Minimize impacts and mitigate for losses of crucial habitat due to human impacts and energy development.
- Work with county, state, and federal agencies to limit the negative effects of roads by reclaiming unused roads, properly planning new roads, and installing fencing and highway passage structures where roads disrupt normal mule deer migration patterns.

PERMANENT RANGE TREND SUMMARIES

The following tables summarize the condition of deer winter range on Unit 8, as indicated by DWR range trend surveys:

8bc (West Daggett & Three Corners)

Year	Mean DCI Score for Unit	Classification	Unit-specific DCI Score Range: Low	Unit-specific DCI Score Range: Mid	Unit-specific DCI Score Range: High
1995	74	Good	65	76	76
2000	70	Good	57	74	81
2005	64	Good	54	60	85
2010	68	Good	52	63	87

8a (Summit)

Year	Mean DCI Score for Unit	Classification	Unit-specific DCI Score Range: Low	Unit-specific DCI Score Range: Mid	Unit-specific DCI Score Range: High
1995	90	Good	-	-	90
2000	93	Excellent	-	-	93
2005	88	Good	-	-	88
2010	93	Excellent	-	-	93

Unit 8bc. North Slope / Daggett and Three Corners subunits

Overall range trend within these subunits is good. Some areas within this subunit suffered a sagebrush die-off, primarily due to the extensive seven-year drought. This is reflected in the DCI rating for these sites.

There are ten permanent winter range trend study sites on this portion of the unit. In 2010, two sites had a higher Desired Components Index figure showing an improvement in habitat quality. Study sites in the low ecological potential had a slight decrease in their DCI rating, while the mid potential was up slightly. The overall DCI rating is "Good" at 68, which is up from 64 found in the year 2005.

Two additional range trend sites located in Brown's Park, south of the Green River, are technically in the South Slope Diamond Mountain subunit, but can be used to show range trend on the Three Corners Subunit. They show both show fair DCI ratings, and both

have low potential ecological potential.

Essential vegetation types monitored include Mountain big sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush and mountain brush (which includes bitterbrush, mountain mahogany, curleaf mahogany and service berry).

Unit 8a. North Slope / Summit subunit

The steep slopes on the study sites have high erosion potential. However, the understory, especially the bunch grasses, is dense and vigorous and provides adequate soil stabilization. Browse trends on the unit for the key browse species, mountain mahogany, are stable to slightly up. The sites in this area all show a stable to slightly increasing trend. The slight upward trend in the last 5 years is probably a result of increased precipitation. The overall DCI rating is excellent.