



Mule Deer Update

Volume 4, Issue 1

January 2010

Inside this issue:

Volunteer projects 2

FY09 Technical Assistance Tops 2

Brush Management 2

Get involved 4

Interstate 15 Mule Deer fencing to begin 4

MDI Coordinator's Report

Jim "JJ" Teare
MDI Coordinator
Idaho Fish and Game

POCATELLO - Hello. My name is Jim "JJ" Teare. I have been the new Mule Deer Initiative coordinator since January 21, 2009. I replaced Toby Boudreau who transferred to the Southeast Region big game manager. I would like to start by introducing myself.

I was raised in Idaho in the rural town (at that time) of Kuna. I spent most of my time, while not working on farms, hunting and fishing. Like most of you, I grew up pursuing mule deer, enjoying not only the occasional harvest, but also the social aspects of attending mule deer hunting camps with friends and family. I attended and graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in Wildlife Management.

I began my career with Idaho Department of Fish and Game

as a bio-aide in the summer of 1989. Over the past 20 years I have worked mostly in the Clearwater Region, with a good portion of this time spent working and managing the Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area outside Lewiston. I have spent the past eight years as a regional habitat biologist, working with private landowners, Conservation Districts, U.S. Department of Agriculture, other federal and state agencies, and sportsmen groups to establish wildlife habitat improvement projects across the Clearwater Region.

Since becoming the MDI coordinator, I have had the opportunity to get into the field and tour many remote corners of Southeast Idaho. I am amazed at the abundant natural resources, quality mule deer habitat, and overall beauty this area of Idaho. Southeast Idaho has surely been kept quiet by the people who live in the region



Jim "JJ" Teare

and probably not well known by many sportsmen in Idaho. I am definitely happy to be living here and enjoying the areas natural resources.

As I have travelled the region, I have noted a mix of both high quality mule deer habitat and habitat that could use some

(Continued on 2, see coordinator)

Tex Creek Mule Deer and Elk Competition Project

IDAHO FALLS - Idaho Fish and Game teamed up with Idaho State University, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, and the Southeast Idaho Mule Deer Foundation to study the effects of elk on mule deer. The Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area was an ideal study area. Some portions of the winter

range support primarily mule deer while other portions support overlapping mule deer and elk populations.

Tex Creek has also had population changes over the last 20 years consistent with those seen across much of the western United States; declining mule deer numbers combined with increasing elk numbers.

Fish and Game personnel captured and radio-collared 110 mule deer and elk across the Tex Creek winter range in 2007 and 2008. Captured animals were weighed, measured and fitted with a global positioning system collars or standard VHF (very high frequency) radio-collars.

(Continued on 3, see Tex Creek)

For more information on MDI go to:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt/mdi/>

FY09 Technical Assistance Tops 12,000 Acres

In FY09, the Idaho Fish and Game's Farm Bill Coordination Program provided technical service and planning to 85 landowners in the Clearwater, Upper Snake and Southeast regions. As in past years Fish and Game's primary technical service provider workload occurred in the Conservation Reserve Program, including the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, SAFE, CCRP, and mid-contract management. Farm Bill coordinators also provide assistance in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wetland Reserve Program.

Brush Management

Idaho Fish and Game tested the waters in FY09 when Farm Bill coordinators worked on brush management plans for private landowners enrolled in the EQIP. Using Natural Resources Conservation Service guidelines and standards, including sage-grouse habitat characteristics, coordinators evaluated rangeland condition to determine if active vegetation management was appropriate to improve the vegetation quality. Plans were developed for 3,500 acres in Bingham and Cassia counties.

Continued from page 1, coordinator

work. MDI has an incredible base to expand from. It is not hard to see why southeast Idaho country produces some of the best mule deer in the West.

Over the past 10 months I have been inspired by the true passion that local sportsmen and women have about mule deer and mule deer hunting. I want to assure all of you that everyone I have met and worked with in southeast Idaho conservation agencies shares your passion about mule deer.

I will work hard to develop cooperative partnerships and projects between sportsmen and agencies. This will be the key to promoting and improving mule deer habitat and populations.

I have a tremendous amount of work in front of me and lots of things to learn, but I am excited about the future of MDI and where it is going.

MDI goals include: 1, improve mule deer habit; 2, improve mule deer populations; 3, improve mule deer hunting

and sportsmen satisfaction.

With the amount of good mule deer habitat that we already have; the potential to improve thousands of acres more; and with the passion and assistance of sportsmen and fellow agencies I am confident that we can make a difference over the next 10 years and beyond.

Please feel free to contact me anytime at the Southeast Region Fish and Game office 208.232.4703.

Volunteers/Projects

2009 Volunteer Projects:

Magic Valley Region

- 460 volunteers planted 42,000 shrub seedlings on important mule deer and elk winter range.
- 85 volunteers collected 110 pounds of bitterbrush and serviceberry seed for future habitat restoration projects.

Upper Snake Region

- 280 Volunteers planted 69,700 shrub seedlings on critical mule deer / elk winter range.
- 22 Volunteers collected 75 pounds of bitterbrush, serviceberry, and chokecherry seed for future habitat restoration projects

Southeast Region

- 204 volunteers planted 10,000 shrub seedling on mule deer winter range



Volunteers collecting bitterbrush seed in the Magic Valley.

- 134 volunteers assisted with fencing repairs on Fish Creek summit to prevent highway depredation

Tracking the history of the Mule Deer Initiative

Year	Shrubs	Forbs	Other	Total	# of Shrubs
2004	83	0		83	16,900
2005	489	240	1800	2529	97,950
2006	696	181	118	995	139,775
2007	727	923	300	1950	140,684
2008	1067	2633	200	3900	238,500
2009	980	2250	300	3530	196,000
Total				12987	731,859

Continued from page 1, Tex Creek



Mule deer and elk are radio-collared to monitor movement throughout the year.

The goal of the study was to determine whether elk negatively affect the diet quality, diet composition, body condition (fat reserves), and levels of stress in mule deer. The study also examined the spatial distributions of mule deer and elk and their use of resources associated with those distributions.

The results of the project could be characterized as the tale of two winters; one mild and one severe. During the winter of 2006-07 mule deer lost fat reserves slowly and survival of fawns was high because of mild winter conditions. Overlap of mule deer

and elk distributions were low and elk density did not affect the diet quality of mule deer. Mule deer did have higher stress levels when they were in close proximity to elk, though, these higher stress levels did not result in faster loss of fat reserves in adult deer.

In contrast, the severe winter of '07-'08 caused elk to use lower elevations and steeper slopes. This resulted in greater spatial overlap between mule deer and elk. Mule deer fawn survival was low and adult mule deer lost fat reserves quickly. Diet quality was lower in '07-'08 than during the milder '06-

'07 winter. The deeper snow caused mule deer to eat more sagebrush and juniper and less grass, forbs, and other shrubs. Elk density, however, had no effect on the diet quality or the overall diet composition of mule deer. In addition, elk did not affect the stress levels of mule deer during the severe winter as they had during the mild winter.

This study provided wildlife managers with insight to some important questions about mule deer and elk interactions on winter range.

Question: Did mule deer avoid elk or become stressed by elk and therefore, burn fat reserves quicker when elk were present?

Answer: No, elk did not cause mule deer to move more or burn fat reserves quicker.

Question: Did the presence of elk cause a decrease in the diet quality of mule deer?

Answer: No, the diet quality of mule deer was affected by winter severity and not by elk. The effect that elk had on mule deer was overshadowed by the effects of winter weather.

These results indicate that elk are more adaptive when dealing with severe winter conditions than mule deer. Mule deer were not negatively affected by elk during our study because the habitat enabled them to forage differently. A significant loss of that habitat could force mule deer and elk to eat similar forages while they had high spatial overlap, this would increase competitive interactions and likely be detrimental to both species.

Our study provided some insight about mule deer and elk interactions on winter range, but these two species behave differently and forage differently during other times of the year. More information is needed to determine if mule deer and elk negatively impact one another during other seasons.

Murphy Fire Monitoring

Idaho Fish and Game is monitoring wildlife responses to the Murphy Complex Fire and the subsequent rehabilitation efforts by the Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Department of Lands, and Fish and Game.

Fish and Game received two grants: a state wildlife grant and a sage-grouse grant from the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation, to assist in this effort.

We have captured and radio-collared 21 sage-grouse and are monitoring their movements, particularly in relation to the fire and rehabilitated areas. We anticipate capturing 11 more grouse this summer. The grants also provided funds to conduct helicopter surveys for leks within the burn and along the outside perimeter to look for new leks that may have formed as birds moved outside the burned habitat.

We are also studying species community differences between rehabilitated lands, burned lands with only natural recovery, and unburned areas within the burn or outside the perimeter of the burn.

Specifically, we are surveying for non-game breeding birds and small mammals. The information will help us understand effects of the fire, rehabilitation, and about potential recovery time for a sagebrush community.



For more information go
to fishandgame.idaho.gov

Get Involved

If you would like to help Idaho mule deer and other wildlife, become a volunteer by contacting the Regional Fish and Game office in your area.

- Headquarters 334-3700
- Panhandle 769-1414
- Clearwater 799-5010
- Southwest 465-8465
- Magic Valley 324-4359
- Southeast 232-4703
- Upper Snake 525-7290
- Salmon Region 756-2271

New Table Mountain Guzzler



Southwest Region Fish and Game employees install a new 1,800-gallon guzzler on Charles Woodworth's CRP land for mule deer. Another one was also installed higher on the hill for upland game birds.

Mule Deer Fencing project to begin this fall on Interstate 15

POCATELLO - MDI, the Idaho Transportation Department, and the Southeast Idaho Mule Deer Foundation have partnered to fund and install a deer fence along a 10-mile section of Interstate 15 between Pocatello and Inkom. Installation began in July 2009.

The fence should prevent several hundred deer from dying annually in vehicle collisions along this hazardous section of inter-state.

In addition, maintenance on 10 miles of existing deer fence along Highway 30 in the Fish Creek Summit area will begin this fall.



Mule deer road mortality has increased across the west with increased traffic, higher speeds and loss of habitat.