

VIII. DEVELOPMENT OF FOCUS AREAS FOR COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO ENHANCE CONDITIONS FOR DEER

Identification of priority areas

Workshop participants were aware that resources of each agency are limited in their ability to accomplish positive activities to enhance early successional habitats and other habitats important to deer. Instead of attempting a statewide effort, focus areas based on the results of the assessment were identified for more intensive collaboration, but with the realization that deer throughout the state were important.

Northeastern California and Northeastern Sierra (DAUs 2 and 3) were the top priority areas to attempt to reverse the decline in deer populations through habitat-based efforts. The primary habitat targets are shrub-dominated winter ranges, riparian-wetland areas, and forested understory communities.

The number two priority area identified would include parts of the Southern and Eastern Sierra Nevada (DAUs 6 and 7), where mountain meadow and aspen summer ranges and west slope forest/chaparral ranges that have become closed timber or shrub stands with little forage available are the target communities.

A requirement for developing and implementing any positive actions for deer is a core group of personnel in a focus area with the interest and motivation to follow-through with an effort. There are staff from each agency in the area comprising DAUs 2 and 3 who participated in the workshop and believe an effort is desirable. For DAUs 6 and 7, there were BLM and DFG staff at the workshop, but no FS staff; hence a strong commitment from FS in that area is still tentative. As well as local support, commitment from the leadership of all three agencies is also needed as we move from identifying concerns, issues, or problems to implementing actions on-the-ground.

IX. PILOT DAU MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The next step in working toward achieving improved habitat conditions for deer on public lands will involve a regional effort, or what we have identified as a “Pilot DAU Management Strategy.” Specific management strategies (changes), or habitat improvement/manipulation efforts that can be implemented on public lands to address deer habitat issues must be crafted at the DAU level and involve stakeholders interested in habitat management on public lands. These strategies for northeastern California and the Sierra Nevada will be developed among, and by, regional participants. Some of the primary components of this strategy will include:

1. DAU Location Maps to illustrate scale and area of emphasis for pilot strategy.
2. Definition of the issues including those resulting from agency statutory authorities and management priorities.
3. Stakeholder involvement (e.g. counties, municipalities, county F&G comm., public groups, etc.).
4. Deer population trend and habitat assessment (expanded for that DAU using data gathered in that DAU).
5. Visual identification and display of key/essential habitats such as winter ranges.
6. Consolidation of available data and identification of data gaps. A prioritization for filling data gaps.
7. Definition of the role mule deer play in the broader issues of land management agencies.
8. Habitat objectives and recommended strategies for reaching the objectives.
9. An interagency, stakeholder monitoring effort to ensure objectives are being met and management actions are accomplishing the intended task.
10. Projects implemented to meet the objectives.

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Appendix 1. Participants at the Feather River Inn Workshop on Deer (April 29, 1997).

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Appendix 2. Additional Fish and Game Code sections applying specifically to deer herd management in California.

450. (in text of report)

451. As used in this chapter "general deer hunting season" means the annual season for the area in question as is set by the commission under its general regulatory powers, or set by statute, for the taking of male deer.

452. The department shall designate deer herd management units and designate the manager for the units. Such units may encompass a single deer herd or a group of deer herds having similar management and habitat requirements and characteristics. Boundaries of such units, unless appropriate, need not follow county boundary lines.

453. The department shall develop plans for such deer herd management units. The objectives of such plans shall be the restoration and maintenance of healthy deer herds in the wild state and to provide for high quality and diversified use of deer in California.

454. Such management plans shall contain the following program elements:

(a) Document existing information on deer herd management units and programs to obtain information that may be needed.

(b) Develop programs to maintain and increase the quality of deer habitat statewide. Such programs will emphasize cooperative action between the department and the appropriate land management entities, both public and private. Emphasis shall be directed towards identifying critical deer habitat areas and the maintenance and management of such areas.

(c) Develop programs to reduce natural mortalities where such reduction may be critical to meeting deer herd plan objectives.

(d) Develop programs to decrease the illegal taking of deer through modern law enforcement methods supported by public and private cooperative efforts.

(e) Develop diversified recreational use programs, including both hunting and nonhunting uses, consistent with the basic individual deer herd management unit capabilities.

455. Deer herd management unit plans shall be reviewed annually and shall be the basis for department recommendations to the commission pursuant to this chapter.

456. (a) The department shall biennially report to the Legislature and to the Fish and Game Commission on the progress that is being made toward the restoration and maintenance of California's deer herds. The first report shall be submitted on or before October 1, 1989. The report shall include program activities regarding deer habitat, particularly addressing problems dealing with identification and preservation of critical deer habitat areas; the amount of revenue derived from the sale of deer tags during the two previous fiscal years; a list of expenditures during the two previous fiscal years and proposed expenditures during the current fiscal year; and a report of general benefits accrued to the deer resources as a result of the program.

Appendix 3. Tabular data of 11 DAUs in California.

Square miles of deer range by DAU and by ownership:

DAU	BLM	MILITARY	NPS	OTHER PUBLIC	PRIVATE	USFS	
1	558	3	181	495	7927	7296	
2	2075	6	72	213	3353	4097	
3	94	3	0	28	1069	2042	
4	59	0	165	108	3068	1663	
5	334	97	1156	91	4711	4125	
6	2058	75	954	524	306	3544	
7	384	15	1343	108	3422	3532	
8	442	28	119	217	5159	288	
9	701	546	55	483	11028	2783	
10	623	199	0	788	3487	2672	
11	3819	686	1617	345	1055	0	
TOTAL	11147	1658	5662	3400	44585	32042	98494 square miles

Percentage ownership of each DAU by major landowners/agencies.

DAU	Sq. miles		DAU	Sq. miles	
	BLM	Percentage		OTHER PUBLIC	Percentage
1	558	5.0%	1	495	14.6%
2	2075	18.6%	2	213	6.3%
3	94	0.8%	3	28	0.8%
4	59	0.5%	4	108	3.2%
5	334	3.0%	5	91	2.7%
6	2058	18.5%	6	524	15.4%
7	384	3.4%	7	108	3.2%
8	442	4.0%	8	217	6.4%
9	701	6.3%	9	483	14.2%
10	623	5.6%	10	788	23.2%
11	3819	34.3%	11	345	10.1%
TOTAL	11147	100.0%	TOTAL	3400	100.0%

DAU	Sq. miles		DAU	Sq. miles	
	MILITARY	Percentage		PRIVATE	Percentage
1	3	0.2%	1	7927	17.8%
2	6	0.4%	2	3353	7.5%
3	3	0.2%	3	1069	2.4%
4	0	0.0%	4	3068	6.9%
5	97	5.9%	5	4711	10.6%
6	75	4.5%	6	306	0.7%
7	15	0.9%	7	3422	7.7%
8	28	1.7%	8	5159	11.6%
9	546	32.9%	9	11028	24.7%
10	199	12.0%	10	3487	7.8%
11	686	41.4%	11	1055	2.4%
TOTAL	1658	100.0%	TOTAL	44585	100.0%

DAU	Sq. miles		DAU	Sq. miles	
	NPS	Percentage		USFS	Percentage
1	181	3.2%	1	7296	22.8%
2	72	1.3%	2	4097	12.8%
3	0	0.0%	3	2042	6.4%
4	165	2.9%	4	1663	5.2%
5	1156	20.4%	5	4125	12.9%
6	954	16.8%	6	3544	11.1%
7	1343	23.7%	7	3532	11.0%
8	119	2.1%	8	288	0.9%
9	55	1.0%	9	2783	8.7%
10	0	0.0%	10	2672	8.3%
11	1617	28.6%	11	0	0.0%
TOTAL	5662	100.0%	TOTAL	32042	100.0%

Sq. mi of deer range 98,494