



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: February 4, 2021

Agenda Item: 2021 Mule Deer Buck Permit Quota and Quota Range in HD 652

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: The department's Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM 2001) plan guides mule deer management in Montana, which includes 16 hunting districts managed as Mule Deer Special Management Districts, including HD 652. Hunting opportunity and buck harvest is limited in these hunting districts to a) reduce the harvest of antlered bucks; b) increase post season buck:doe ratios; and c) meet demand for a limited number of people to harvest an older-aged buck in areas with favorable access. To accomplish this objective, limited numbers of buck permits are issued in each district.

Hunting district 652 currently exceeds the defined objectives in AHM including:

1. Post-season buck:doe ratio at least 40:100. Current buck:doe ratio is 111 bucks:100 does
2. Minimum post-season population density of 3.0 observed per square mile. Current density is 3.8 deer per square mile.
3. Minimum 50 percent of bucks harvested >4.5 years old and minimum of 30 percent of bucks harvested >5.5 years old.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been recently detected in mule deer in neighboring HD 650, where deer hunting is managed under the general season (either-sex, either-species on a general deer license). To limit risk for CWD spread, provide more mule deer buck hunting opportunity in HD 652, and follow AHM guidance, the department proposes to:

- Increase the 652-50 quota range from 50-125, to a new range of a 50-400.
- Increase the 652-50 permit quota from 125 to 200.

Public Involvement Process and Results: No formal public comment has been taken on the proposal. Regional staff have heard from landowners and hunters about the increase in total deer and an increase in bucks in HD 652. During the 2020–2021 season setting process, the department discussed the need for a potential increase in buck harvest in HD 652 to slow the spread of CWD. While hunters are protective of this limited opportunity and do not want to see it eliminated, they are also aware of the threat that CWD poses, particularly in a mule deer herd that is managed for older-age class deer.

Alternatives and Analysis: The department recommends approval of the amended quota range and quota, where the mule deer population is robust and at risk of CWD transmission.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission vote to adopt as final the proposed amendment to the 2021 mule deer permit quota range and quota in HD 652 as presented by the department.