



Oregon

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ODFW responses to common themes and questions from the three public information sessions and Planning Commission Meeting on 4/13/2023

- 1. Why is this proposal focusing on land-use policies in mule deer winter range, when there are so many other factors that cause mortality in mule deer (roadkill, predation, disease, poaching, etc)?**
 - a. Along with our partners, ODFW is regularly addressing different causes to mule deer mortality, to the best of our ability. Examples include wildlife crossing structures on highways, anti-poaching initiatives, habitat improvement projects, research and monitoring, etc. This effort to update winter range habitat protections is just one tool in the toolbox that wildlife managers have to wholistically address mule deer population decline.
 - b. The reason that the WA-MD proposal is the primary focus of this current process is that it is a Deschutes County process, which is what is needed for a Goal 5 habitat update. The other efforts ODFW is engaged in are not County processes, and are occurring simultaneously, but not the focus of this process.
 - c. Habitat alteration, degradation, and disturbance lowers the fitness of wildlife, including mule deer. While degraded winter range habitat may not be an obvious cause for the death of an individual mule deer, it can leave it more susceptible to other causes of mortality such as predation or disease, as well as reducing reproductive success for the following year.

- 2. Why are private landowners having this burden placed on them, when so much of the county is public land?**
 - a. Private landowners and their rural properties provide huge a huge service to many species of wildlife, including wintering mule deer. ODFW acknowledges that, and often works with private landowners to address wildlife damage and improve function and habitat of their properties. Much of the most biologically significant winter range is private lands, due to the productive nature of those properties.
 - b. A lot of the important, intact mule deer winter range in Deschutes County is on private lands. These are the portions of habitat that would have further protections with the proposed WA-MD zone. The County wildlife overlay does not apply to Federal land.
 - c. Public land has its own set of management guidelines, protections, and seasonal restrictions, and ODFW is regularly engaged with our public land management partners to provide input for wildlife habitat considerations.

- 3. Will this updated mule deer winter range map stop the decline of mule deer populations?**
 - a. As ODFW has attempted to demonstrate during the public information sessions and Planning Commission hearing on 4/13/23, there are many factors that are contributing to the decline of mule deer populations locally in Deschutes County, and across their range. The WA-MD zone is not likely to single-handedly change the downward trajectory of local mule deer populations, but protecting the function of remaining mule

deer winter range is an important part of ensuring the future of healthy mule deer populations in Deschutes County.

- b. Everything is so interconnected in wildlife biology and management that it is difficult to isolate one factor from others. However, limiting the fragmentation of winter range and migration corridors is the best management practice for mule deer management.

4. Migratory deer vs. Resident deer vs. Town deer

- a. As shown in the ODFW presentations, GPS collar data has shown that a significant portion of the mule deer population that winters in Deschutes County, on public and private land, is migratory, and makes a seasonal migration twice a year between winter and summer ranges. This movement often takes them across county lines into neighboring counties.
- b. Some deer, especially those found in the summertime around rural irrigated agricultural properties, exhibit less migratory behavior and spend the entire year in a relatively small area, with their needs for food, water, and shelter being met.
- c. Town deer are deer that spend the bulk of their lives in urban or suburban areas, often congregating around properties where they are being artificially fed or persisting on landscaping plants. These deer often have high rates of injuries and death from cars, fences, dogs, etc. These deer are generally not surveyed for ODFW's inventories of herd composition or population estimates.

5. "The data from the Southcentral Mule Deer Study from 2005-2013 is outdated and is not applicable to justify this WA-MD proposal."

- a. The Southcentral Mule Deer study consists of high-quality data from 2005-2013 and subsequent peer-reviewed analysis. The technology of the GPS collars and analysis from that study is still applicable and was collected in Central Oregon. It is considered best available science.
- b. There was also a lot of other data used during this WA-MD process from the current mule deer GPS collaring effort ODFW has been undertaking from 2016-present. As well as survey data from past several years, as recent as February 2023.
- c. All of the data used to inform the recommendations is much more modern, statistically valid, and applicable than the original data used to inform the original WA Zone from 1992. A lot has changed, not only in Central Oregon, but with wildlife data collection, in that time.

For applicable literature, guidance documents, and peer-reviewed articles that were used to guide ODFW's recommendations during this WA-MD process, see other submissions to the County record ODFW has provided for this effort.