

Guiding Principles – Final

Preamble: The MDCAC recognizes that managing mule deer in Montana will entail tradeoffs, as all the guiding principles cannot likely be achieved simultaneously. Guiding principles (with attention to tradeoffs among them) include the following:

Engage Stakeholders in Plan Development & Enhance Communication

- Maximize the opportunity for public input of all stakeholders in plan development, including hunters, landowners, & non-hunting wildlife enthusiasts
- Maximize transparency of agency decisions and rationale
- Increase public education, as well as provide road maps and resources about plan development and implementation process(es) on FWP's website
- Increase targeted outreach to stakeholder groups and interested parties that opt in to receive information
- Coordinate development of MD plan with CWD plan
- Monitor and report progress toward achieving guiding principles at regular intervals over the life of plan

Maximize partnerships for MD management

- Leverage external partnerships to achieve goals identified in the plan

Commit funding for science and research

- Invest in ecological, biological, and social research to inform management
- Explore innovative funding opportunities
- Use best available science to inform management decisions
- Increase the precision and breadth of population and harvest data

Increase MD populations

- Increase use of new technologies to monitor populations and harvest
- Reduce time between population/harvest data collection and management action implementation
- Increase precision of management objectives and harvest prescriptions
- Manage antlerless harvest more conservatively in 'bad years'
- Manage with respect to carrying capacity
- Manage to increase carrying capacity, where feasible
- Provide regional and local flexibility within statewide management framework
- Address local limiting factors on population size and recruitment (e.g., habitat, predators, disease, inter-species competition)

Manage CWD in MT MD populations

- Minimize CWD prevalence
- Minimize CWD spread

- Increase public information about CWD
- Increase CWD screening and testing, especially in high concern areas
- Identify innovative solutions to manage CWD on private lands

Minimize negative anthropogenic impacts on MD

- From recreation
- From technologies that violate fair chase ethics
- From effects of development and habitat fragmentation or loss
- From mortality and barrier effects of vehicle conflicts on MD movement

Provide MD Hunter Opportunity

- Maintain over the counter general buck hunting for MT residents
- Maintain dedicated opportunities for youth hunters
- Prioritize resident hunter opportunity over nonresidents
- Maintain existing special management districts
- Consider innovative opportunities for special hunts

Improve the Quality of MD Hunting Experience

- Decrease crowding in areas where there is a perceived overcrowding issue (consider this at regional and local scales)
- Increase access to currently inaccessible lands
- Increase distribution of MD on public lands
- Synchronize opportunity for harvest on public lands when MD are on public lands
- Streamline CWD testing
- Increase proportion of older age class bucks in general HDs
- Reduce non-resident OTC hunting opportunity

Improve landowner relations

- By reducing game damage
- By improving hunter behavior
- By managing hunter pressure/numbers

Increase compliance with rules and regulations

- Decrease response time of enforcement
- Increase presence of enforcement

Maintain economic benefits of MD hunting

- To local communities
- To outfitters
- To landowners