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In my March/April column, I spoke about the harsh conditions experienced this past winter across the West. Preliminary indications were that mule deer in several states were experiencing high rates of winter kill mortality. As winter turns to spring, state wildlife biologists have been able to assess how many mule deer we lost this past winter. Western Wyoming seems to have had the most severe conditions followed by Idaho and Northern Utah. Fawn loss has been over 90% in several deer herds. It appears that adult doe loss was not substantial in most areas except again for Western Wyoming.

We as hunters will feel the impact of these losses this fall when we are in the field. As I write this, several states have already reduced the number of tags available to hunters for this fall. If you have a tag this fall, you will see fewer yearling deer (fawns which didn’t make it through the winter) and in some cases will see bucks and does and does.

A winter like this past winter, reminds us how vulnerable mule deer are to severe winter conditions. The key to helping mule deer and black-tailed deer survive harsh winter conditions is adequate winter range. Mule deer not only need a large expanse of winter range they need high quality forage to make it through the long winter months. Arriving on the winter range in good to excellent condition is also a key factor in increased survival.

MDF is committed to doing all we can to work with state and federal agencies and private landowners to increase the quality and quantity of habitat both on summer range and winter range. We recently completed the second phase of a sagebrush planting project in Idaho. In April, MDF with a grant from the Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Game & Fish Department planted over 60,000 sagebrush plants on winter range which had been devastated by a wildfire. We will continue the project again this fall when we will be planting over 80,000 sagebrush plants.

The MDF Stewardship program focuses primarily on the National Forest removing encroaching conifer trees and helping restore native vegetation and increasing Aspen regeneration a key area for mule deer fawning. The Stewardship program has also been active in removing pinyon-juniper invading sagebrush habitat. In cooperation with BLM and Colorado Parks & Wildlife, we have eight projects in Northwestern Colorado concentrating on removing PJ from these critical sagebrush habitats. These are just a few examples of the many projects MDF is working on this year.

We are always looking for volunteers to help on projects. Many of MDF’s local projects can be completed by volunteers. Whether it is rebuilding guzzlers, removing fencing which is a barrier to wildlife movement, hand cutting Pinyon-Juniper trees or planting bitterbrush and sagebrush plants, MDF local chapters and volunteers are willing to step up and complete the project. Check out our website or your local chapters Facebook page for announcements of opportunities to volunteer on a project. You will not only be helping mule deer and black-tailed deer, you may also make some new friends. We encourage families to come out and spend some time together. You may even make memories that last a lifetime.

MDF CEO – Miles Moretti
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~ COLORADO BUCK

www.NORMA-USA.com
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Cover Image: www.samanstephzieker.com
Experienced hunters know that if you have a doe tag in your pocket you will only see bucks. Everyone likes seeing bucks, but unfortunately it works the other way too. More often than not, you see a lot of deer, but can’t put “horns” on any of them. I have been on a lot of hunts where I saw far more does than I thought I should have in relation to the number of bucks. As a wildlife biologist I conduct deer surveys each winter and the ratio of bucks to does is one of the important pieces of information we use to manage the permit levels and hunter satisfaction. There are years when I hunt in areas with a 1:4 buck to doe ratio and still see at least 10 does for every buck, and this happens too many times in too many different areas to be dismissed. The problem is, if I pull out my cell phone to complain to the local biologist in charge, my desk phone rings. So what could possibly explain this widespread phenomenon? In theory, there are several reasons we may see a disproportionate number of does while afield. The real explanation in your area is probably some combination of these factors.

What do biologists know anyway?
Are the bucks really there like the biologists say they are? Fisheries biologists have it easy compared to deer biologists. When anglers go to an area and don’t catch fish, the reason is “they aren’t biting” (bad luck). When hunters go deer hunting in an area and don’t see bucks, “they aren’t there” (mismanagement). Estimating deer density or the number of deer in a population is far from an exact science. Deer management is a process of using the best science and all the information available to prescribe a hunt structure that allows for an appropriate harvest of males and maintains the population within the carrying capacity of the habitat.

Many long-time hunters have spent a lot of time in the field and their observations and impressions are valuable and not to be discounted. Whenever their impression of the status of the deer herd is different from what the biologists think is going on, the stage is set for conflict, disagreement, and distrust. Biologists are sometimes accused of offering tags for “paper bucks” generated from computer population models. The accusation is the biologists don’t know what they are talking about and are just offering a lot of tags to make money. If this were true, it would become evident after a few short years because you cannot shoot non-existent “paper bucks” indefinitely and sooner or later the whole masquerade would collapse when the hunter success rate dropped to near zero. Any financial gain from selling far too many deer tags would be overwhelmingly negated by the effects of over-harvest, plummeting hunt success, and loss of agency credibility.

Sex Ratios Exposed
One of the most important things to consider is that there are naturally fewer bucks than does in a deer population. This is true even in many unhunted herds and especially so in easily accessible or heavily hunted areas. Fawns come into the population at pretty close to a 50:50 sex ratio, but males have a higher natural mortality rate because, well, boys will be boys. Males generally live in “riskier” habitat -- more rugged, brushy, and predator infested. Some-
times predators will kill more males than females because of where bucks like to hang out, or because they are single much of the year and thus easier to ambush. All hunters know that a buck surrounded by does looking around like surveillance cameras have a lower mortality rate! Keep in mind that even with a decent 1:4 buck to doe ratio, only 20% of the deer herd are bucks (1 buck out of 5 deer). Anti-hunters sometimes complain that hunters have altered the proportion of sex and age classes in a deer population. I don’t see anyone worrying about the Holstein sex ratio on a dairy farm. I’m not the least bit concerned that humans alter the sex ratio of deer populations. Most states and provinces have an open public process to set guidelines for a range or minimum sex ratio to manage for. Skewing the sex ratio a little is a byproduct of allowing hunters the opportunity to deer hunt and thus support the greatest model of wildlife conservation ever developed. Our system of wildlife conservation in the United States and Canada is the envy of the world and a source of inspiration to many, many countries struggling to save the last vestige of native wildlife and their habitats.

Also, keep in mind that other hunters may have removed bucks from that area you are hunting before your hunt. Mule deer buck:doe ratios are usually measured after the hunt and during rut. This means surveys for this important ratio occur when the bucks and does are together and active during the day, thereby maximizing the accuracy of the sex ratio estimate. Ratios obtained from surveys after the hunt each year means agencies are managing populations based on buck:doe ratios at their lowest point of the year. This should result in conservative, rather than overly-aggressive, management.

Males Sneak Around
If you watch a mixed group of deer, you find that adult bucks act differently. They are usually the last to break out into a field or opening to feed and the last to leave their bedsites for an evening feeding. They are not as likely to take off running at the first sign of danger and may lay low to let you walk right by. How many times have you heard a hunter tell the story about shooting a buck, only to have a bigger one jump up next to him? Wise old bucks know that it pays to be slower than the other deer in the group. Bucks have a certain behavior pattern that leading sociobiological scientists have termed: "sneaky." This more secretive nature of bucks and the behavioral differences between the sexes, means you will not see as many bucks as does when you are in the field.

Sexual Segregation: Is That Even Legal?
Another consideration to think about is how the different sexes use the available habitat. It is well-established that outside of the breeding season, bucks spend their time mostly separated from does. After the rut, the bucks sneak off to spend a lot of time in rougher, brushier terrain, while does use gentler topography and are more visible because of it. These single bucks or small bachelor groups in rugged country are harder to see than large doe groups in the open. Unless you are hunting during the rut, your observation of bucks is probably how the different sexes use the available habitat. It is well-established that outside of the breeding season, bucks spend their time mostly separated from does. After the rut, the bucks sneak off to spend a lot of time in rougher, brushier terrain, while does use gentler topography and are more visible because of it. These single bucks or small bachelor groups in rugged country are harder to see than large doe groups in the open. Unless you are hunting during the rut, your observation of bucks is probably the behavioral differences between the sexes, means you will not see as many bucks as does when you are in the field.

Don't Underestimate The Power of Bad Luck
If you hunt for only a few days and see around 20 deer, you may, just by chance, see mostly does regardless of what the true ratio is. The smaller the sample size of deer seen, the greater the chance of you observing a ratio that is nothing like the population as a whole. I have experienced this myself while hunting and have seen it in deer survey data. If you sample a population from a helicopter and observe and classify 400 animals you probably have a adequate estimate of the buck to doe ratio in the population. If you just calculate that ratio using the first 20-30 animals on a survey datasheet, your ratio is probably...
Mule deer does are found together in more open gentle habitat, making them naturally easier to see.

not going to accurately represent the composition of the population. That is why biologists make such a big deal out of surveying as many deer as possible to obtain a solid and representative ratio. If you see 50 deer on a hunt, you would have to be very lucky to have an accurate sex ratio.

“Invisible” Antlers
I have trouble openly discussing what I think is one of the most important reasons hunters don’t see as many bucks as they would like. The trouble comes from the fact that when I mention it to my closest friends, they scoff and leave the room – it’s a real show stopper. With more than 30 years of experience conducting deer surveys from the air and on the ground with the best equipment available, I am no longer amazed when I watch a doe for an hour and suddenly antlers appear on “her” head. They apparently shot right out of her skull when I looked away because I would have seen them if they were there initially. This has also happened to me in the past while killing does for population management (whoops!). They do sometimes grow spikes when they hit the ground. I’m not sure how this happens, but it surely needs more research.

No one wants to entertain the idea that one of the “does” they saw on their hunt might have been a buck. But, I have watched deer many, many times go from “definitely a doe” to a young buck before my very eyes. Mule deer didn’t get their name for having small ears, and those huge appendages can conceal a lot of antler material. Making it even more difficult, the white ear lining can look very much like a small antler and that can add an element of confusion when a hunter assumes that white they saw was just the ear lining.

On the last afternoon of my mule deer hunt a few years ago, I glassed up a group of mule deer more than a mile from the hill I was sitting on. It was too far to see antlers so I decided to stalk them in the hopes that at least one had some headgear. I closed the distance and found myself among them with only 10 minutes of daylight left. Much to my disappointment they were all does and fawns – confirmed one by one through meticulous inspection of the foreheads with 10-power Swarovski binoculars at 50-100 yards. At that point I realized my deer hunt was over so I had a different age composition. On the sixth count, one of the does spontaneously sprouted an odd configuration of 2 spike-like tines on each side! That must have really hurt. I was so thankful for the last-minute sex change, I decided to take him home with me.

Be Aware, Be Very Aware
There are many reasons you may see a lot more does than bucks when afield; the primary one being the fact that you have that buck-only tag in your pocket. Some have suggested keeping your tag in a sealed ziplock bag to avoid the chance that deer can smell what kind of tag you have. No one likes to spend a lot of time and effort in the field only to see mostly does and fawns. The number of bucks seen equates directly to the overall satisfaction of the hunt and the hunter’s perception of how well the local deer biologist is doing managing the resource.

I can’t ever tell fellow hunters why they didn’t see more bucks last year, but certainly the factors discussed here are at play to varying degrees everywhere mule deer live. I think being aware of these issues that complicate what you see in the field will help sort out the probable from the improbable explanations for what you are seeing in each individual case. This kind of information is not going to help your butcher or taxidermist pay his rent, but it might help explain where the boys are.

Jim Heffelfinger is a Certified Wildlife Biologist who has worked as a biologist for the federal government, state wildlife agencies, universities, and in the private sector in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Jim has authored or coauthored more than 200 magazine articles, dozens of scientific papers, and 19 book chapters in regional, national, and international publications. He is an adjunct faculty at the University of Arizona, Professional Member of the Boone & Crockett Club, and currently works as Wildlife Science Coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.
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NOTHING SHOOTS FLATTER, HITS HARDER, OR IS MORE ACCURATE
HABITAT CONVERSION BY WILDFIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES

OVERVIEW
Many large ungulates, including mule deer, tend to thrive after natural disturbances (e.g. wildfires) that reset plant communities to early stages of succession. However, the introduction of invasive species has changed the natural cycle for ecosystems with dire consequences for mule deer habitat. Increasingly, after wildfires today, native shrub and grass communities are being replaced by invasive plants such as cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum), red brome (Bromus rubens), medusahead (Taeniatherum caput-medusae), mesquite (Prosopis spp), and others. This phenomenon scientists term “habitat type conversion” or simply “type conversion”. The altered landscapes resulting from these large-scale habitat conversions may not provide the necessary nutritional requirements for healthy mule deer populations, and can lead to more frequent fires that further degrade habitat quality and displace wildlife.

ALTERED FIRE REGIMES AND INVASIVE SPECIES
Throughout many regions of the western U.S., wildfires have grown larger and are occurring more frequently in shrub-steppe habitats fueled, in part, by invasive species such as cheatgrass. Invasive species are non-native plants that grow fast and outcompete native species for soil moisture and nutrients. Further exacerbating the problem, many invasive species cure quickly and create “fine fuels” during the hot and dry fire season, which results in more frequent fires in future years. For example, natural fire return intervals in the Great Basin sagebrush communities have been reduced from historic cycles of 60–110 years to 3–5 years in annual grasslands. Native vegetation may take decades to recover naturally or may not recover at all without management intervention. Factors contributing to the spread of invasive weeds and annual grasses on public lands include: increased recreational use of motorized and non-motorized vehicles; grazing and movements by both domestic livestock and wild ungulates; and surface disturbing activities associated with mineral and energy development.

NUTRITION EFFECTS
Mule deer must have high quality forages to meet their nutritional requirements. Habitats that provide those requirements typically are early to mid-stage successional communities such as sagebrush (Artemesia spp.) shrublands and mountain shrublands or those that have a rich diversity of plant communities providing diets high in digestible protein and metabolizable energy (e.g., bitterbrush, Purshia tridentata). Mule deer require a diversity of plants for both forage and cover to conserve

An example of a native sagebrush stand (left) at high risk for take-over by cheatgrass and wildfire and a past burn site (right) with a monoculture of cheatgrass in late spring/early summer.
body fat levels for survival during harsh winters. When native habitats are converted to invasive weeds and annual grasses, vast monocultures of less palatable and less nutritious plant species dominate the landscape resulting in reduced carrying capacity.

RESTORATION EFFORTS
For many habitat types, disturbance such as fires, avalanches, floods, or moderate levels of herbivory are a necessary part of the natural processes that can move plant succession to early phases, thereby helping to create nutritious forage for mule deer. Research suggests some vegetation communities may be less resilient to habitat conversion, while others may be more resistant. However, a major concern with certain types of disturbance is that irreversible damage and reduced productivity occurs. In those circumstances, land managers might consider restoring ecological function by planting other cover types that provide some nutritional value, or cultivars of native species (e.g. sandberg bluegrass, Poa secunda) that are resistant to competition with annuals. Timing of reseeding efforts can also play a crucial role in the success of restoration efforts. Generally, reseeding should occur soon after fires and during periods of consistent moisture (e.g. in the Great Basin ecosystem between autumn and late spring). Livestock grazing should be avoided post-fire for 2-3 growing seasons to allow plant communities time to recover.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Wildfire and invasive species represent one of the greatest threats to mule deer populations in the western U.S. Land managers, wildlife managers, and the public must continue to proactively engage in activities to reduce the spread of invasive weeds if mule deer populations are to be sustained at or near current populations. Some management actions that can reduce the threat of habitat type conversions include the following:

- Using post-fire recovery strategies that include reseeding with desirable plant species to maintain soil stability, provide forage, and minimize the risk of type conversion
- Strategically applying chemical control and herbicides such as Imazapic, glyphosates, or rimsulfurons, or using other approaches (e.g., biological controls) as new technology develops
- Managing off-road use by recreational vehicles in high risk areas to minimize spread of seeds
- Promoting education programs designed to reduce spread of invasive weeds
- Creating “green-strips” in high risk area for wildfires and cheatgrass invasion
- Hand planting desirable shrub species such as bitterbrush and sagebrush seedlings
- Timing restoration efforts immediately after disturbance and during seasons with consistent moisture patterns using the best management practices
- Restricting livestock grazing for 2-3 growing seasons to protect recovering landscapes

More information on mule deer can be found at www.muledeerworkinggroup.com

A product of the Mule Deer Working Group - Sponsored by the Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. Produced with support from the Mule Deer Foundation (www.muledeer.org) - January 2017
I wasn’t raised on venison, but a doctor prescribed it when I was a teenager.

“Gary, you’ll do better if you eat wild game,” the doctor said.

Try taking that prescription to a pharmacy.

My first mule deer I took with an arrow. The second fell to a bolt-action 243. We had both in the freezer at the same time and I noticed a difference in taste between the one that ate mountain browse and the other that subsisted on sage, ceanothus and bitterbrush.

Deer meat turned out to be an acquired taste. If I was going to hunt it, I was going to eat it and like it. My wife wanted to like it because our grocery bill (perceived) was greatly reduced by a surplus of neatly wrapped, hormone-free, butcher-papered packages stenciled with fancy words like backstrap, tenderloin and flank steak.

Our daughters grew up on deer, elk and antelope. We learned the better we took care of meat in the field, the better it tasted at home. Our palates grew more refined. This hit me again a couple of years ago when I sampled a young buck I shot on private land in Central Oregon. This buck had eaten garbanzo beans for most of its life. It had to be the best mule deer meat I have ever tasted. It cut like beef, but went wild on the tongue. I found myself eating it without salt or marinade, just to savor the conversion of high desert minerals and Deschutes basin waters to legumes, to pure, lean, protein.

By contrast, we had a Washington mule deer in the freezer too. This buck was taken in drought condition on wheat fields on the edge of the Palouse. It was eating clover in a field of triticale when I made the stalk. With a diet of winter wheat, rye, some clover and not enough water, the buck’s meat was tame with hints of rye. Serve it next to a bitterbrush buck and there’d be no doubt which one was on the fork.

A few years ago, I met up with a young buck way out in the sagebrush. Expecting the sharp tang of sage and Purshia...
tridentata, instead, I tasted alfalfa—a ranch buck. When I looked at the map, I figured it out. That buck had been pushed off private ground when the guys in hunter orange showed up. Miles away on public land, up on the shoulder of the ridge, I’d spotted him.

That deer we cut to half-inch steaks. Sometimes it went down wrapped in bacon with notes of alfalfa and suggestions of sage. Other times it soaked in a marinade. Our favorite marinade is made of Bragg’s Amino Acids, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, beef broth, garlic and salt and pepper.

To celebrate a hunt, a hunter sometimes tips back a cold one, but there are so many choices in craft brews these days. How does a person choose the right beer to go with mule deer?

I think we start with where the deer was from, what it was eating. Let’s start in the heart of mule deer country.

**UTAH MULE DEER**

Garrett Wales is one of the founders of 10Barrel, based in Bend, Oregon. Last year, hunting in Utah, he spotted a wide buck with a big body, feeding in sagebrush just under the brow of a hill. There was a bit of snow on the ground and, when the buck stepped into an opening, Wales dropped it with a Nosler bullet.

In this part of Utah, the deer feed on forbs (weeds and wildflowers) during the growing season and turn to browse including bitterbrush and sarvisberry. Wales called this some of the sweetest mule deer meat he has tasted.

Easy pick. We like this one with 10 Barrel’s Sinistor with its subtle chocolate hints and easy balance.

**CENTRAL OREGON MOUNTAIN MULE DEER**

Mule deer in Central Oregon tend to winter out on the desert in the Fort Rock area and return to the high country in summer, ranging all the way up to the Pacific Crest Trail and even further west. When the new growth is coming up, they feed on balsamroot, prickly lettuce, twinflower, dandelions and clover. Later in the year they nibble on ceanothus, wild rose, willow, dogwood, huckleberry and Douglas fir.

A buck taken up on the shoulder of the Cascades, from the Upper Deschutes and Metolius units will have a milder flavor than a buck from the desert. Pair it with Crux Pilz for its sense of grains, grasses, herbs and hint of lemon.

**EASTERN OREGON HIGH DESERT BUCK**

Way out in Eastern Oregon, on the high benches of the Imnaha and on the breaks of the Snake River, the mule deer make their living on forbs and the new growth on twiggy browse. Then, when the summer sun cooks down the tender shoots and the weeds stop growing, the deer tend to focus on bitterbrush, sage, ceanothus, grasses and lichens. With no marinade, but accented with a little Montreal Steak Seasoning, the steak has a delicate flavor.

The pairing is SageFight with a hint of citrus, sage and juniper berries. Its dry and bitter finish is a good complement to a mule deer from Imna’s Land.

**WESTERN OREGON BLACKTAIL**

Last December I hunted in southwest Oregon with an 1840s-style muzzle-loader. On the fifth day, a buck scent-checked the odor of doe-in-heat scent I’d smeared on fence posts and bushes. At 39 yards, he stopped. At the shot, he plunged away and came to rest in the blackberries. In agricultural land, this buck had grown up eating apples, pears, blackberries every fall, while eating mushrooms, lichens, forbs, vine maples and grasses in the spring.

The upfront bitterness of the Wanderlust IPA with a citrus element contrasts with the gentle flavor of the homegrown blacktail venison—golden in color like the antlers of a lowland buck.

**KODIAK ISLAND SITKA BLACKTAIL**

A blacktail deer’s home range does not take in very much real estate, but on Kodiak Island, the Sitka blacktail can...
range from 4,000 feet above sea level in
the summer time to sea level when the
snows deepen in November and December. Rich in organic litter, the soil of the
island is infused with volcanic ash, most
recently from the 1912 eruption of Mt.
Novarupta.

A Sitka blacktail will move in and out of
the brush to feed on kelp at low tide into
April when the snow recedes. This flavor
of the ocean mixed with cottonwood,
Kenai birch, alder, willow, salmonberry
and elderberry combines to deliver the
tastiest meat of any blacktail or mule
der.

On a hunt on Kodiak, we like to say,
“Something brown is going down.” And
that’s what we’re thinking when we pour
a Wing-Nut Brown. This is a nice beer
to finish a meal of one of the best-tast-
ing venisons in the world.

**Pairing: Kodiak Island
Brewing Company
Wing-Nut Brown
Kodiakbrewery.com**

**EASTERN WASHINGTON
PALOUSE MULE DEER**

Out in the Palouse, it is feast or famine
for mule deer. In some areas the number
of trees in a deer’s home range can be
counted on the fingers of one hand. To
rub off the velvet they wear out fence
posts. For browse, the deer find bitter-
brush and rabbitbrush. Out on those
long, windswept plains, they subsist on
winter wheat, wheatgrass, bluegrass and
oats. Balsamroot, prickly lettuce, small
burnette and clover are the forbs they
rely on.

Ground with an 8 percent beef fat, the
meat has a milder flavor than that of
sagebrush mule deer. It calls for pairing
with a copper-colored ale
with fruit and citrus hints.

**Pairing: Born & Raised
by No-Li Brewhouse
Nolibrewhouse.com**

**IDAHO GOSPEL HUMP
WILDERNESS MULE DEER**

High in the Salmon River watershed, up
in the Gospel Hump Wilderness mule
der grow old without ever seeing a
human. This is some of the most remote
country in the Lower 48. The deer live
in alpine, sub-alpine and forest environ-
ments, migrating all the way down to
the riverbanks when the snow is deep
mid-winter. In the high country they
feed on forbs, mushrooms and grasses
early in the summer time then switch
to bitterbrush, snowbrush and willows.
When snow is deep and food is scarce,
they nibble at lichens and branches un-
reachable at other times of the year.

This too is a classic mule deer taste with
perhaps more flavor than the inexperi-
enced palate can appreciate.
Harsh to smooth. That’s how this pairing
finishes - a great complement to this
mountain mule deer. Piney scents and
mild herbal. In a can, this would be
a good one to pack in the
saddlebags.

**Pairing: Dagger Falls IPA
by Sockeye Brewing
Sockeyebrew.com**

**EASTERN MONTANA MULE DEER**

The Blackfeet called the Rocky Moun-
tains the “backbone of the world.” For
centuries they controlled that land east
of the Rockies where they lived on buf-
falo, elk and mule deer.

In the spring, the deer seek out prick-
lypear, white and purple prairieclover,
phlox, coreopsis, sunflower, Echinacea
and other forbs. In the summer deer can
find grouncover like bearberry, Oregon
grape. Shrubs like serviceberry, curlleaf
mountain mahogany, American plum,
chokecherry and snowberry offer good
eating in summer and fall. Wherever
deer eat this well, they acquire the
most complex and varying tastes in the
venison.

Wherever a hunter connects with a mule
deer in eastern Montana, from the hills
around Fort Peck Lake to the breaks of
the Little Bighorn, a classic pairing is
Custer’s Last Stout.

An oatmeal stout, it starts with a malt
sweetness, exudes coffee and chocolate
then disappears like the sound of a bugle
at dawn. Drink it after dinner with all
your friends around you and don’t leave
anything in the glass.

**Pairing: Custer’s Last
Stout by Montana Brewing
Company
Montanabrewingcompany.com**
EASTERN WYOMING MULE DEER
Out on the east side of Wyoming, hunters find mule deer in stands of junipers and aspens and in sagebrush draws. In spring they feed on succulent, nutritious forbs like fireweed, dandelion and clover, adding grasses and shrubs in late spring. Over the summer, as grasses dry out, they shift to a diet of twiggy shrubs like curlleaf mountain mahogany, antelope bitterbrush, sagebrush, rabbitbrush, willows, and buffaloberry. If they have the opportunity, they will feed on crops like alfalfa.

On the table, these deer provide the classic taste of the well-rounded mule deer diet with a sharpness to the tastebuds that people say takes an acquired taste. A true deer lover prizes this meat and the beer.

If you can find this deep dark red Belgian sour ale, sip it sparingly between mouthfuls of venison. The nose is raspberry with hints of vanilla and French oak from the barrel.

Pairing: Le Serpent Framboise (barrel aged) by Snake River Brewing
Snakeriverbrewing.com

D-ZONE CALIFORNIA MULE DEER
Archery deer seasons start early in California. A D-Zone tag might find the bowhunter up close to timberline, a mile from the nearest road or hiking trail. At this time of year, the water sources are the key to success. Here, the deer feed on broad-leaved herbaceous plants, shrubs like wedgeleaf ceanothus and manzanita, acorns, grasses and ground-covers.

When the tag is filled, there will be a long pack back to the truck and that's the time to start planning the barbecue.

Cook it S-L-O-W till the meat falls off the bone. Pull it apart and apply a liberal dose of a good barbecue sauce. There's only one reason to have coleslaw - put it right on top of the pulled BBQ venison and finish your meal with a citrusy, resinly, fruity Belgian like Mischief by The Bruery made (like your deer) in California.

Pairing: Mischief (Belgian) by The Bruery
Thebruery.com

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COASTAL BLACKTAIL
It's habitat ranges from the coastal plains near Santa Barbara north and east out to the western slope of the Cascades from the Cascade-Sierra Nevada Range and out into the Sierra Nevada foothills where it mixes with mule deer.

This is dry country, much of it still in the grip of a tremendous drought. The deer thrive in oak savannah, chaparral, blackberries and poison oak. Their diet is heavy in acorns, twiggy browse, weeds, grasses and mushrooms.

Try this deer - unmarinated - with an accent like Justy's Jelly Pineapple Jalapeno and a bitter then sweet double IPA like Lagunitas' Hop Stoopid.

Pairing: Hop Stoopid (Imperial IPA) by Lagunitas Brewing Company
Lagunitas.com

RUBY MOUNTAINS MULE DEER
The summit of Ruby Dome reaches to 11,387 feet and the mountains range south-southwest for about 80 miles. This is one of the West's classic mule deer hunts and it takes several years to draw a rifle tag in the Rubies. Scoured by glaciers, the minerals feed the antlers of the region's mule deer.

Brewed at the same latitude, ten hours drive to the west, an APA like the Steelhead Extra Pale Ale is our pairing. Figure this beer with mule deer tacos, cheddar cheese, shredded lettuce, O'Hana salsa and lime.

In the glass it pours with a golden haze and finishes with notes of citrus and pine that recall dry Ruby winds on long afternoon.

Pairing: Steelhead Extra Pale Ale by Mad River Brewing
Madriverbrewing.com

Gary Lewis is an award-winning outdoor writer and television host.
Contact Gary at garylewisoutdoors.com

Mark Knowles is a serial entrepreneur and a principal at The Growler Guys.
Visit their website at: thegrowlerguys.com
Contact Mark at mark@thegrowlerguys.com
119 SPECIAL

75 Years ago an American icon was shaped.

A nation at war called for more than just a blade and Hoyt Buck heeded the patriotic call. Using surplus files and recycled airplane canopies, he crafted history. Fueled by faith and determination, these knives ignited a family tradition.

Through the years the 119 Special has changed, but it still remains a trustworthy, reliable, tool.

Once just a vision,
now a legacy.
WE'RE GAME TO LOOK OVER THE NEXT HILL
IF YOU ARE.

The pinnacle of the high-end spotting scope landscape, Vortex Optics' new Razor HD Spotting Scopes set a new standard in high-end optical technologies, precision craftsmanship and ultra-sleek functionality. Premium HD lens elements deliver brilliant, razor-sharp, true-to-life views. Fully multi-coated with XR Plus coatings for maximum light transmission. A smooth-as-silk helical-style focus dials in your image. Hunters who need a premium spotter that performs at the highest level have found their match with the Razor HD series.
Volunteer Opportunities
Mark your calendar for a “Boots on the Ground” project in the Fort Rock big game management unit scheduled for the weekend of July 15th and 16th. Volunteer crews will be helping with the continued removal of lodgepole pine that is encroaching Bull Frog Meadow and will also be replacing aprons on two guzzlers. The planned lodgepole removal within the meadow includes six specific project areas totaling approximately forty acres. If any of our volunteers has Forest Service chainsaw certification, I would certainly appreciate your efforts on this project. Loppers and weed eaters with blades will cut the smaller saplings but anything over three inches requires a saw. We are in the process of writing a project that will include the use of a tracked skid steer equipped with a roto brush mower for the meadows. However, if the meadow dries out before fire season, no mechanical equipment can be used. If the mower is used, we need to keep a fifty-foot buffer zone on each side of the creek channel that would require hand treatment.

Another project in the works is a guzzler that needs a complete rebuild near the corner of Highway 97 and the Walker Mountain Road. However, we need to get archaeology clearance prior to our digging. With this year’s heavy snowfall, I’m sure there will be more apron repair needed and it is my understanding there are approximately 45 guzzlers within that unit. Some of these water sources (guzzlers and springs) only have a general location and will need to be located and marked with GPS points. Guzzlers are not the only problem as there are old abandoned water tanks/holes. One site checked by the Forest Service is an old wood tank partially full of nasty water; little critters were falling in and then birds going after the critters were not able to get out. The source of this water is a spring (Deer Scaffold Spring) a little east of Klamath Marsh. The tank is a short way from the spring and the piping may or may not need to be replaced from the spring to the tank if the system is to be restored. Forest Service wildlife biologist, Tia Adams, has expressed concern because she has gotten several reports of animals dying in this tank and when she visited it, the tank had several dead rodents in it.

Families Come Out to PLAY
The seventh annual PLAY (Promoting Lifelong Activities for Youth) Outdoors event in Klamath Falls Oregon was held
on January 21st and was successful once again, entertaining 1,405 youth and 1,398 adults.

PLAY Outdoors was created in 2010 by a coalition of local groups with interests in the outdoors. The organization’s purpose is to introduce youth to outdoor activities, with an attempt to sway them from electronic devices and other unhealthy lifestyle choices while promoting family oriented activities. While each group has its own goals and objectives we put them aside to focus on our youth. Our first event was held in January 2011 with over 820s youth and 890 adults passing through the door to visit the 30 plus events. The next three years brought 1,250 youth and 1,100 adult attendees, 2015 set a record for both youth and adults with 1,800 of each. The numbers for our 2016 event scaled back to 1,450 of both youth and adults.

I call this event “Team PLAY” because it takes a team to accomplish what we do. It belongs to no one group or organization; there are 36 participating groups with a total of around 240 volunteers or employees. All participating groups provide their own interactive activity or informational booth that signifies that group’s goals and objectives while promoting education, safety and responsibility. The rules are pretty simple – your activity must be safe and you cannot collect any money.

Thanks to our sponsors there is no cost to attendees or groups that participate. Volunteers represented the various local groups including the Mule Deer Foundation, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Hunters Association, US Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Klamath County Mounted Horse Posse, Ducks Unlimited, Unlimited Pheasants, Bureau of Land Management, Boy Scouts, 4-H, Home Depot and others. As you can see we have a wide variety of groups with different views.

Project Funding and Fundraising
In 2016, the Mule Deer Foundation contributed $10,000 to the Forest Service’s Warner Aspen Meadow Restoration Project. With MDF money, they were able to treat 61 acres within the project area. Work included hand falling conifer less than 12” in diameter at the base and all juniper less than 21” in diameter. The trees were cut and limbed with the smaller material hand piled. Along with cooperating partners, the Forest Service has restored 3,689 acres of aspen and meadows within the Warner project area between 2011 and 2016. In the year 2016 alone, a total of 1,500 acres within both the North and South project areas were restored using seven partner contributions totaling $420,000.

Banquet season is underway with three chapters already having their banquets at the time of this writing. Attendance has been up at all three of the banquets so far. Linn-Benton saw the largest increase with an increase from 195 to 280 attendees between 2016 and 2017, the North Oregon followed with 100 in 2016 up to 140 in 2017, and Klamath had 339 in 2016 and 359 in 2017. The Klamath Falls Ladies Night looks as though they will sell out their new venue May 20th with 300 sold seats exceeding last year’s 190 attendees. At the present, there is only one other banquet on my schedule, the North Nevada chapter in Reno on June 3rd.
Through Oregon's Access and Habitat (A&H) Program, MDF was granted two statewide deer tags to be auctioned. The first was auctioned at our Expo in Salt Lake City bringing $39,000 and the second was auctioned at Albany's Linn-Benton Black-Tail chapter banquet for $32,000. Of the bid amount, the auctioning chapter keeps 10% for habitat work in Oregon. The remaining 90% goes to the A&H program. During the 2015-2017 biennium, a total of twelve A&H projects were approved. These projects provided private land hunting access to 3.6 million acres and improved habitat on 1,800 acres. Since the program was established in 1993, dollars raised from the sale of these special tags have funded over 500 projects, opening 8.3 million acres of hunting access and improving 1.6 million acres of habitat.

ODFW Updates
As part of their program to recruit, retain, or reactivate the hunting community, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is hosting a “Take a Friend Hunting” contest. Adult hunters who mentor other new or lapsed adult hunters can enter to win prizes, including a 2018 statewide deer tag (pending Fish and Wildlife Commission approval), a Siberian Sidekick Cooler courtesy of MDF, a Leupold rifle scope valued at $690, an Eberlestock M5 Team Elk Pack valued at $329, and more. To be eligible for the contest, both the experienced hunter (mentor) and the new or lapsed hunter (mentee) must have a valid 2017 Oregon hunting license and be age 18 or older. New or returning hunters are those who have never purchased an Oregon hunting license, purchased for the first time in 2016, or have not purchased since 2012.

I encourage you to visit the contest page to view eligibility and contest rules at http://www.oregonhunter.info/take-a-friend.

Parts of northeast Oregon had a severe winter this year and experienced increased fawn mortality. As a result, ODFW is reducing pronghorn and mule deer controlled tags in the units affected in order to conserve wildlife populations. Hunters in these units should expect to see fewer yearling animals (spikes and 2-points) this fall. These age classes made up about 33% of Baker County's harvest last year. Baker County pronghorn and buck tags will be reduced by 50%, and two doe hunts on agricultural lands will be cancelled. Union County tags will be reduced 35%. Malheur County tags will be reduced by 40% in the Beulah Unit and 25% in the Owyhee Unit. Visit www.ODFW.com for the full list of hunts reduced and final tag numbers. Remember, controlled hunt applications are due by May 15 but hunters who applied for one of these hunts may change their choice by June 1, free of charge. Use the Controlled Hunt Application Change form found online.

Oregon Wolf Management
ODFW has released its 2016 Wolf Annual Report and a Draft Revised Wolf Management Plan which can be found online at www.dfw.state.or.us/wolves. There will be two commission meetings presenting the annual report information and the recommended revisions to Oregon's wolf plan. The original wolf plan was adopted in 2005 by the commission after a lengthy process with the public's input. The draft plan continues the agency's policy of not allowing general wolf hunting or trapping seasons in Oregon.

The Annual Report includes 2016 wolf management activities and results from the annual winter surveys. Severe winter weather made counting wolves much more challenging this year. ODFW annual wolf counts are based on hard evidence including tracks, sign, trail camera images, visual observations, etc. To date, ODFW counted 112 known wolves in Oregon in 2016, up two wolves from 2015. This population estimate is after seven confirmed mortalities in 2016 including three wolves that were radio-collared. Eleven packs (four or more wolves traveling together during winter months) were documented with eight of those having breeding pairs. A breeding pair is a pair of adult wolves, male and female, that produce at least two pups in the spring that survive until Dec. 31. The number of breeding pairs in 2016...
was eight compared to eleven in 2015 with eleven packs compared to twelve the year earlier. ODFW states that this is considered only the minimum known population.

ODFW found new areas of wolf activity in northeast and southwest that shows the Oregon wolf population continues to expand its territory. They are continuing their monitoring and collared an additional 14 wolves last year in seven different groups of wolves. The agency also appreciates information from hunters or others if they see wolf sign, tracks, trail camera images of wolves, or other indicators of wolf activity. They use this information to confirm the presence of wolves and add the information to their population estimates.

This is the third consecutive year of more than seven breeding pairs in eastern Oregon which moves the East Wolf Management Zone into Phase III of wolf management. Phase III continues to emphasize non-lethal deterrents to wolf depredation, but does allow the removal of wolves under certain situations. Wolves can be removed if it is determined that they are causing declines in deer and elk populations, or if there is continued livestock depredation. There were 24 confirmed livestock depredation events by wolves in 2016, which is an increase from 2015’s nine confirmed incidents. Wolf depredations must be confirmed by either ODFW or USDA’s Wildlife Services before considering lethal removal of the animals.

“Moving into Phase III is a significant milestone towards the recovery of gray wolves in Oregon,” says Russ Morgan, ODFW wolf biologist. “It shows how successful wolves can be in this state – in just nine years under existing management we have gone from no packs of wolves to multiple packs and an expanding distribution. These Phase III provisions do not replace good faith efforts at non-lethal solutions to wolf conflicts. Take of wolves can only be considered as a management response in very specific situations and there are no plans for controlled take at this time.”

Wrapping Up
Often, I am asked about MDF’s position on transferring public land to either states or the sale to private interests. At the present, MDF is developing their position statement which must be approved by the board of directors. My position (and I have not been told to stop using it) is a pretty simple one: public land, whether it be federal or state, should remain public.

“Help Wanted!” I am looking for committee persons in areas throughout the state interested in having a chapter in their area. Only with your help can we continue our habitat work. In 2016, MDF contributed $50,000 to eight projects adding to the total committed by project partners.
One of the greatest things about being an Oregon resident is having the option to hunt public land and draw tags in some of the most beautiful country. I had 4 deer points and put in for a unit in Eastern Oregon, where I had hunted previously with my brother. I ended up drawing my first Eastern Oregon tag for Mule deer, and needless to say I couldn’t be more excited, as I’ve never hunted for myself in that area!

Luckily, I have a lot of friends who have hunted for years in that unit, so I knew I could call my buddy Jon, who has hunted Eastern Oregon for over 30 years.

We had one week to pull off a public land hunt during the hardest time of the year to harvest a buck, Oct 5-12th. No rut, no velvet, no scouting, and I had no clue where the bucks were, also knowing that our best chances would be 30 min at first light and 30 minutes at last shooting light, which doesn’t make for the best camera lighting to capture it on film. All odds were against us going into this hunt, but that wasn’t going to stop me from going after my first Muley.

Eastern Oregon is a very hard hunt, they don’t call it “Hells Canyon” for no reason. I’ve done enough hunting to know to be prepared and to check the weather and conditions before hand, with the weather looking great for hunting, being
in the 60-70’s as a high and lows in the upper 30’s-40’s. I packed everything I thought I needed for the hunt...

I arrive in Boise Idaho, get some energy drinks and drive to Eastern Oregon, meet Jon and make a plan for the morning hunt. The plan was to get up and be gone no later then 4:30am. At this point, I’m tired from traveling, and driving and hit the sack.

–DAY 1–
I get up, grab everything I know I’m going to need for my hike and head out. We drive to a BLM road, park the truck and hike in 4 miles. Once we got to Johns secret spot we started hiking the ridges to try to find a Mule deer. We come around this bend to walk up on a bull elk and some cows, it was making my Elk fever rise and made me impatient for Elk season! We continue on and decide to get to the top of this ridge and glass into these canyons. We sat for a while, not seeing anything and decide to start hiking out as we had 6 miles to get back, but this time we were going down the mountain and around, instead of backtracking. One thing I realized was deciding to break in a new pair of boots on a long hike was not my brightest idea, as I could feel my toes and fractured foot (from a horse incident) aching in my boots as we hiked straight off this canyon. With 12 miles down, and no luck on day one, we head back to camp to get ready for the evening hunt, which again happened to be another slow day of hunting, and not seeing anything to shoot.

–DAY 2–
4am and this morning is a bit colder then I planned for, so I decided to layer up with as much as I could, and just shed them if I needed to. We head off in the buggy and head up the mountain, get to a spot and start hiking in. Low and behold it starts snowing! Wait, I did not come prepared for this, I have light weight camo and uninsulated boots. It’s freezing, and the fog is setting in to the top of the mountains. It’s getting harder to see anything and we finally decide to start hiking out. For whatever reason I decide to look back just one more time and in between the fog moving through the valley, I see two bodies. I can’t make out what they are but I knew they were deer. I quickly yell at John and he comes down to check it out, of course, the fog sets in again and we can’t find the deer I had spotted. After waiting for a bit the fog is still settled in and we decide to move out, it was miserably cold. I had no gloves, and my hands and feet were frozen. We start to hike out of the canyon and head back to get warmed up and go out for the evening. At this point, I’m so ready to go back to camp.... With no luck in the evening of not seeing anything, we call it and head out to eat some dinner and get ready for the morning.

–DAY 3–
We hike into another one of Johns spots and this country is so amazing and beautiful, we hike to the end of this ridge and sit for a while and glass. Not seeing anything, again! I don’t know how we haven’t seen anything in all these areas we’ve hiked, and as far as we’ve hiked. We’re about 4 miles in and we all of a sudden jump a few bucks, we are running down these bucks to try to get a shot...I set up on my knee, had a brief moment to pull the trigger, but didn’t. The buck was probably no more then a year or two old, and he was small. I didn’t come this far and work this hard to pack out a baby buck! I decide to pass and keep going. We hike around and work our way back to the truck, seeing nothing but cows and beautiful scenery. Another long day but at least we have a little hope for tomorrow, having seen a few bucks today.

Eastern Oregon Is A Very Hard Hunt! They Don’t Call It "Hell's Canyon" For No Reason!
-DAY 4-
This morning we decide to go back up to where I saw those two bucks in the snow, because the snow cleared out, hoping to maybe see some movement on the mountain. John and I split up and he went the long way up so he could see the other side of this draw, and I went straight up so I could get to the top and start glassing. I make it to the top and spot some elk down in the valley, I get my spotting scope out and there are two bulls fighting down in the bottom of this canyon, with about 20 cows spread out around them. I'm just getting teased non stop for elk season! I sit for a little longer, don't see anything so I move up the ridge more to get a different angle on the face of the mountain. Set up again, and see another herd running through like they had been jumped. I radioed over to John to see where he was and he was hiking the back side of that valley that pushed the elk my way.

With no luck again, I decide to wait for John to make it up to me so we can hike out and make a new plan. Within a few hours, Jon makes it back up to me and we hike out. He didn't see anything other than the elk. We weren't quite sure where the bucks were hiding, but it wasn't for lack of effort not seeing them!

We get back to camp, and head to eat dinner at a local restaurant, where a friend of my cameraman came in, and mentioned a place he goes for big bucks, but they are there because no one wants to go there. For whatever reason I felt compelled to go over there and try it. I asked Jon his thoughts and he wasn't too familiar with that mountain, as he hasn't hunted it in over 20 years! We decided to drive the truck all around the outskirt of that mountain to make a game plan for the morning. Looking at this mountain is no joke, it was definitely WHY they named Hell's Canyon, "Hell's Canyon!" With a good steak for dinner and a good nights rest, I need to load up everything I have for the morning, to make sure I'm prepared for this mountain we are about to take on!

-DAY 5-
I loaded up all my snacks, snake bite kit, and survival kit, spotting scope, tripod, and loaded it up into my pack and headed to the canyon. We hop in the UTV and head out, we have an 11 mile drive to the base of the mountain. We saw about 60 deer on the way in, but none of them had antlers! In 5 days we have not seen any nice shooter bucks, and with only 2 days left, I'm praying that today is the day! We get to the base of the hill and John decides to stay back, he didn't want to hike in there as we have already hiked over 46 miles in 4 days. So it looks as though he's staying back to watch the draw he's on, and Grady (my cameraman) and I are hiking in alone. Its been a few rough days with snow, rain, sore body, sore calves, cramps, and not much sleep but with only a few days left to find a buck and having zero luck even seeing a shooter... I was bound and determined! As we were hiking in, we jumped a nice buck across the draw about 600 yards away, he saw us and quickly disappeared. I was definitely desperate for a buck and very stressed we wouldn't get one down for the show. We continue hiking in and decide to hike up to the top of the mountain that we had been side-hilling. We get to the top, and within 10 seconds Grady started saying "big buck big buck" (which he had been saying for the past few days because he was trying to talk one into reality, but there was never one there) so I didn't believe him and thought he was crying wolf... Well, he wasn't! He told me to "get down, there was a buck bedded down directly below me!" I grab my binoculars and look at him, he's a really nice 4x4 with eye guards.

I ranged him at 160 yards with my rangefinder, so I laid down and started belly crawling down the hill to get a good angle for a shot but I couldn't get situated because the weeds were in my way.
All of a sudden he gets up and starts walking around. Then another buck pops up, a super wide 3x3, (way past his ears). After deciding which buck I wanted to shoot, the 4 point lays back down again. The other buck saw me struggling to get in position and started walking off and I was so focused on the one walking off that I didn’t pay attention to what the other buck was doing, which was not a smart move on my part. As I’m panicking thinking the bucks walked over the ridge and I can’t see them anymore, Grady says “Kristy, he’s standing on the rock broadside!” Holy cow! I didn’t even see him still standing there! I hurry and get set up again and take the shot! I knew that I had to drop him in his track, or else he could run and fall to the bottom of this canyon, and I was afraid I would never see him again, but my trusty Browning 30-06 dropped him in his tracks! I quickly put another one in him to make sure he wasn’t going anywhere, but of course with my luck, he decides he’s going to be Rambo and thrash a little bit and just enough to fall off the rock cliff he was on! He rolled down this canyon another 200 yards and I was praying for him to stop. He finally stops in a bush 400 yards down the draw. This was going to be a really hard pack out, but I was anxious to go see this buck.

I texted out to John to let him know I got a buck down, and he started hiking in. Grady and I started heading down the canyon, this terrain is no joke, its slick dirt, with not much to grab ahold of if you fall. As I approached my buck, I saw that his horns were banged up but all was still in tact. If that bush wouldn’t of stopped his fall, I wouldn’t of probably seen this buck in one piece again, I’m so glad I got lucky for him to stop right where he did.

Jon gets down to where we are, and we get him gutted and ready to go. Divided him into 3 packs and I took the head and started hiking out of this canyon... 400 yards straight up hill, crawling on hands, and knees. It was the most intense climb I’ve ever done. Every step I was praying that everyone made it out safely.

We hiked to the top, everyone in one piece and get back to the UTV and head back to camp. Needless to say, this was an amazing trip with my friends Jon and Grady. I couldn’t of done it without them!

This was my first DIY buck and I couldn’t be happier!!! I had hunted, and harvested a great eastern Oregon 4x4 Mule deer for the first time!

I’m so blessed to have harvested this deer in some of the hardest country, being the hardest hunt of my life, this was an absolute amazing experience. I can’t wait until next year.

DON’T TRASH THE TRADITION

Whether it’s your child’s first camping trip, an annual family vacation, or your favorite hunt camp, the magic of these special moments disappears with each carelessly discarded wrapper, can or trash-filled fire ring. Pick up litter and leave public and private lands better than you found them. And remember, Respected Access is Open Access.

tread lightly!®

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State fish and wildlife agencies have long been the primary stewards of America’s fish and wildlife resources. Employing professionals trained in specialties such as biology, ecology, and law enforcement, and utilizing the best-available science, these agencies are the entities best-equipped to carry out conservation efforts at the state level.

State agencies enjoy an excellent reciprocal relationship with sportsmen and women, as the work they do is funded overwhelmingly by select user groups through the purchase of hunting and angling licenses and tags, as well as federal excise taxes generated through the sale of firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing tackle, motorboat fuel, and other hunting and angling-related items.

Known as the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), this unique “user-pays, public-benefits” system leverages the contributions of hunters, anglers, boaters, recreational shooters and trappers to create the foundation of a funding structure that conserves fish and wildlife, provides clean water and healthy landscapes, and maintains access to these resources for the public at-large, not just hunters and anglers.

It is for these reasons that a strong contingent of sportsmen’s groups, together with state agencies, have supported the passage of a measure before the U.S. Congress that would recognize Alaska’s jurisdiction to manage the fish and wildlife resources within its borders. House Joint Resolution (HJR) 69, sponsored by Congressman Don Young (AK), would overturn a rule adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 2016 that almost universally banned the use of predator management techniques such as wolves, coyotes, and grizzly bears on National Wildlife Refuge lands in Alaska. The final FWS rule contradicts the Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s constitutional mandate to manage the state’s wildlife resources for sustained yield, which is affirmed in the Alaska Statehood Act, the Alaska National Interests Land Conservation Act, and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. Additionally, the FWS rule sets a dangerous precedent for further erosion of the ability of state agencies across the country to manage fish and wildlife within their respective borders.

HJR 69 passed with strong bipartisan support in the House of Representatives on February 16 and now awaits action in the Senate. In addition to bipartisan approval by the House, 27 sportsmen’s conservation organizations from the American Wildlife Conservation Partners wrote to Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy in support of HJR 69. The National Assembly of Sportsmen’s Caucuses (NASC) Executive Council, representing 48 state legislative sportsmen’s caucuses and over 2,000 state legislators, also submitted a letter in support of this Resolution.

In order to highlight the critical importance of the American System of Conservation Funding - and in turn, the need to continue to protect state management authority – the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation recently developed ASCF fact sheets for each of the 50 states. These fact sheets provide historical license and excise tax revenue data for every state, in addition to some of the unique projects and programs that ASCF dollars have funded over the years.

For more information on the American System of Conservation Funding and its role in support of state fish and wildlife conservation, visit CSF’s ASCF webpage at http://sportsmenslink.org/policies/state/ascf.
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*DISCOUNTED ROOMS AVAILABLE*
Spring is coming to a close and the warm days of summer are upon us and with them come the promise of long, fun-filled days of outdoor exploration. As kids begin to dream of these lazy summer days, parents are often left wondering how to keep them entertained, busy and out of the house. Long gone are the days when kids spent the majority of their time outside and getting them to come home for dinner was the challenge.

Today, with video games and mobile devices that offer the world at one’s fingertips, it’s increasingly more difficult for the outdoors to compete with technology. Here are a few tips to help get kids interested and engaged in the outdoors this summer.

Start small. When planning an outdoor adventure, we often “go big or go home” and with differing skill levels this can be a challenge. Sometimes going on a hike with little ones can seem more like work than fun.

Don’t get discouraged. With families of all ages, it’s important to start small, set goals and strive to achieve desired outcomes. This will build your confidence and as your confidence grows, so will your challenges, in turn setting your family down a path of seasoned outdoor exploration.

Be prepared. At the beginning of any new experience, kids are enthusiastic, have boundless energy and are ready to tackle any new challenge, but as the day wears on they begin to complain, get tired and hungry or even worse, injured. Plan ahead. Make sure you have snacks and water, first aid kits, stop frequently for breaks and be flexible. Have strategic bribes, like their favorite treat, to encourage them to reach an adventure goal. Celebrate the successes you have and know when to end the journey on a high note. This ensures that everyone will be ready and willing when future adventures come about.

Enjoy the Journey. Resist the urge to manage every moment of your outdoor adventure and leave time for kids to explore on their own. Let them get dirty and their curiosity run wild. Touch the slimy worm, splash in the cold creek, and climb the tree. Bee stings and knee scrapes will happen, and that’s ok. The adventure is about the journey and not the destination. Self-exploration will help build their confidence and foster their curiosity and appreciation for nature and wild spaces.

Set a good example. Phones can be important tools in the outdoors, but shouldn’t replace it. Put down your electronics and let your curiosity lead the way. Be open to learning new things and encourage kids to ask questions you may not know the answer to. Learn together and don’t be afraid to show your excitement about the smallest of wonders. Excitement is contagious, so let your inner child run free.

Create memories. From hiking mountain peaks to fishing small community ponds, time together in the outdoors creates life-long memories that families forever cherish. Sleep under the stars, create wildlife journals, picnic in the park and go on wildlife safaris. Some of the most memorable moments of my childhood were spent fishing for catfish and crappie on a boat with my daddy and exploring the woods behind my home. Whether big or small, outdoor experiences are often the most memorable.

Time spent in nature builds confidence, promotes creativity and imagination, and teaches responsibility. You don’t have to live in rural areas to find your connection to the natural world. Nature is all around us, even in urban settings. Have a backyard campout, stargaze from your patio, make a bird feeder and identify the birds who visit. Where the pavement ends, the adventure begins. This summer, make a plan to reconnect to nature, explore and let your outdoor adventures begin.
Mule Deer Foundation
MEMBER SUCCESS

DECKER LANDIS @MB_REDHATS
GENERAL SEASON RIFLE HUNT

DANNY RICH TAKES A "DEER OF A LIFETIME" ON THE DESERET LAND AND LIVESTOCK UNIT

KYLEE THORNOCK IS ALL SMILES WITH HER FIRST DEER. WORD IS SHE’S HOOKED

JERRY HATHEWAY, FROM THE MISSOULA MT CHAPTER TAKES A GREAT BUCK IN ALDER, MONTANA

NATHAN THORNOCK DEER WITH HIS 3RD BUCK. AND GEARING UP FOR HIS 4TH- GOOD LUCK!

JERRY HATHEWAY, FROM THE MISSOULA MT CHAPTER TAKES A GREAT BUCK IN ALDER, MONTANA

GIVEAWAY
Email us your success photos for a chance to win!
art@muledeer.org

Mule Deer Foundation
81yr old "Life Member" Walter Hughes opening morning trophy in N.W. Colorado

Alisha Phipps 4x4 Desert Muley. This is her 3rd mule deer. Congratulations Alisha!

David C. Teer Alpine TX, Late Season Mule Deer

James Blackham and Justin Blackham Utah General Season Mule Deer Hunt

Congratulations Shelby Baker on your first mule deer. What a great way to start!
Be Sure To Attend Your Local Mule Deer Foundation Chapter Banquet For Tickets

MULE DEER FOUNDATION - ULTIMATE GIVEAWAY

State and local drawing laws will apply • Total Tickets - 100,000. MDF has the right to substitute any products of the winning packages pending any issues with fulfillment.

Drawing will occur August 1, 2017 At the Mule Deer Foundation National Headquarters. Winner will be notified immediately either by phone or email. Need not be present to win.

Tickets can be purchased at the Western Hunting Conservation Expo. Salt Lake City, Utah Feb 16th-19th 2017 • The Mule Deer Foundation Chapter Banquets or online at www.muledeer.org.

PRIZE 1- 2016 POLARIS RANGER SPONSORED BY ZBROZ

OUTFITTED WITH
Hoyt Carbon Spyder 30
Hoyt Ultra Rest
Hoyt Pro Series Sight
Hoyt Pro Series Quiver
Hoyt Custom Color Kit
Hoyt Deluxe Bow Case
Set of Cam Modules

Razor HD 20-60x85
Rolling Bones Extended Range

PRIZE 2- TROPHY MULE DEER HUNT

5 DAY FULLY GUIDED - UTAH MULE DEER HUNT

M.E.D.アウトフィッター
SJK CARBINE 2500 BACK PACK
SJK CARBINE 2500 BACK PACK

PRIZE 3 - THE ULTIMATE HUNTER

GUN • BOW • GLASS • CAMO

OUTFITTED WITH
Hoyt Carbon Spyder 30
Hoyt Ultra Rest
Hoyt Pro Series Sight
Hoyt Pro Series Quiver
Hoyt Custom Color Kit
Hoyt Deluxe Bow Case
Set of Cam Modules

Razor HD 20-60x85
Rolling Bones Extended Range

www.muledeer.org
Tickets on Sale Now!
# 2017 MDF Banquet Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
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<tr>
<td>05/05/17</td>
<td>San Antonio, TX</td>
<td>Jody Gomez</td>
<td>210-608-5049</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/06/17</td>
<td>San Jose, CA</td>
<td>Dwight Ortmann</td>
<td>650-207-9027</td>
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<td>05/06/17</td>
<td>Elko, NV</td>
<td>Randy Morrison</td>
<td>707-829-5904</td>
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<td>Tooele, UT</td>
<td>Greg Zumwalt</td>
<td>801-517-6613</td>
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<td>Safford, AZ</td>
<td>Jade Goodman</td>
<td>928-965-9428</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/06/17</td>
<td>Silver City, NM</td>
<td>Michelle Carrillo</td>
<td>575-313-2793</td>
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<td>05/12/17</td>
<td>Tacoma, WA</td>
<td>Stephanie Cordes</td>
<td>253-232-3133</td>
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<td>05/13/17</td>
<td>Omak, WA</td>
<td>Chris Branch</td>
<td>509-322-0735</td>
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<td>Newcastle WY</td>
<td>Tammy Elliott</td>
<td>307-746-9951</td>
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<td>Meridian, ID</td>
<td>Gene Young</td>
<td>208-602-1204</td>
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<td>05/18/17</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>Brian Fienhold</td>
<td>713-412-3067</td>
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<td>05/20/17</td>
<td>Redding, CA</td>
<td>Trissha Juvenal</td>
<td>530-351-2541</td>
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<td>05/20/17</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
<td>Walt Isenhour</td>
<td>512-633-7519</td>
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<td>Price, UT</td>
<td>Clark Ungerman</td>
<td>435-650-1352</td>
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<td>Showlow, AZ</td>
<td>Terry Herndon</td>
<td>623-686-5579</td>
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<td>Prescott, AZ</td>
<td>Kevin Hal</td>
<td>928-713-6877</td>
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<td>Reno, NV</td>
<td>Dan Snow</td>
<td>775-351-4293</td>
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<td>Colby, KS</td>
<td>Clayton Griffith</td>
<td>785-626-4351</td>
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<td>Payson, AZ</td>
<td>Brent Stevenson</td>
<td>708-846-3962</td>
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<td>Maricopa, AZ</td>
<td>Robert Gomez</td>
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<td>Gunnison, CO</td>
<td>Kirstie Pike</td>
<td>970-641-3355</td>
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<td>Colorado Springs, CO</td>
<td>Weldon Flaharty</td>
<td>719-527-1572</td>
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<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td>Speedy Baca</td>
<td>505-228-7453</td>
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<td>Ennis, MT</td>
<td>Kelsey Hubner</td>
<td>406-925-0356</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/29/17</td>
<td>Silver City, NM</td>
<td>Michelle Carrillo</td>
<td>575-313-2793</td>
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## Events

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<td>“Ladies Casino Night”</td>
<td>Kim Long</td>
<td>209-747-5407</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/20/17</td>
<td>Klamath Falls, OR</td>
<td>“Ladies Night”</td>
<td>Heather Hand</td>
<td>541-281-3737</td>
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**MDF Guidestar Exchange Goldstar**

The Mule Deer Foundation is recognized with a GoldStar rating, the highest rating, on GuideStar.com.

A Gold Star rating is awarded to those nonprofits who adhere to the highest standards of transparency and management.

For more information on banquets and events: www.muledeer.org
"He's leaving! I'm going to take the shot," my buddy excitedly blurted as the mule deer started trotting away. I have to admit, the buck looked good, but mule deer bucks always look better going away than coming towards you. I also have to admit that my buddy was losing his cool fast in a fog of buck fever.

"It's your call, but I got a good look at him before he turned away and he's not the buck you told me you came here to shoot," I warned.

The buck bounded over a ridge and out of sight. I took a scolding from my friend as we continued in the direction of the escapee, but it didn't take long to confirm my decision. An hour later the same buck was in a more open location and offered me plenty of time to focus him in my spotting scope. I turned the optics over to my buddy for him to decide. A few minutes later he agreed. The buck wasn't the shooter he thought and thanked me for warning him of a looming mistake and a sure case of ground shrinkage.

It takes years of observing mule deer bucks and experience in hands-on scoring to become an expert in field-judging bucks to within a few inches. You don't need to be that good unless your goal is to shoot a Boone and Crockett trophy every year. And if that is your goal you likely have deep pockets, access to Governor's tags and connections with outstanding outfitters who can support your field-judging.

For the rest of us, getting within 10 inches or less is a worthy, field-judging goal. Why the 10-inch mark? It's a solid goal to reach when the heat is on. Some bucks give you ample time to evaluate, but in many encounters you have a fleeting glimpse and if you can get within 10 inches in 10 seconds you've passed the field-judging exam.

FIELD-JUDGING BASICS

Field-judging is the ability to score a deer in the wild in a matter of seconds and determine if it is a shooter. To be good at it you your first need to understand the most commonly used scoring system for big game animals which is the Boone and Crockett Club system. For reference, the Pope and Young Club
is the archery record organization. It uses the same scoring system as B&C, but has different minimums to be included in their archery-only records. Another factor to note is that mule deer are broken into three categories defined by geographic boundaries. The three species are scored the same, but with different minimum measurements. They include mule deer, Columbia and Sitka blacktails.

B&C uses a specific series of measurements that when added together give you a gross score for mule deer bucks and other game species. Potential trophies are recorded in two divisions: typical and non-typical. B&C has a typical minimum entry for mule deer of 190 and 230 for non-typical. P&Y has a minimum mule deer entry of 145 for typical and 170 for non-typical racks.

To reach these scores measurements are taken from four major areas including the inside spread of the main beams, main beam length, point length and no more than four mass, or circumference measurements. These mass measurements differ from those taken from a whitetail. The first is taken from the smallest place between the burr and the first point. The second measurement is the smallest place between the first and second points. The third circumference is the smallest place between the main beam and the third point. The final circumference is taken at the smallest place between the second and fourth points.

Point measurement also differs than those of a whitetail score. Point measurements include the brow point or G1, the G2, which is typically the longest point, the G3 which extends off of the G2 and the G4 which extends from the main beam. Additional points are entered as abnormal points and categorized separately depending on whether a rack is deemed typical or non-typical in design.

These measurements are then tallied together and deductions are given for any difference in symmetry for the typical category. Unless you have access to areas harboring large numbers of trophy bucks, most hunters ignore the deducted or net score, and use gross score for field-judging purposes. “Nets are for fishing” is a common retort in hunting camps to embrace the usage of a gross score.

**FIELD-JUDGING SPECIFICS**

Two measurements you can easily see are the inside spread of the main beams and the length of the main beam, both of which can be compared to the buck’s head to assist in measurement. When a buck turns its head take note of the rack dimensions as they compare to the ears and nose.

First, determine inside spread. The distance between a mature buck’s ears will measure approximately 20 to 22 inches when fully alert and pointed forward. If the rack extends one, two or three inches...
The distance between a mature buck's ears will measure approximately 20 to 22 inches when fully alert and pointed forward. If the rack extends one, two or three inches beyond the ears, add the additional inches to the 20-inch minimum to estimate measurement for an inside spread.

Since most points extend in a nearly straight line mentally imagine a foot-long school ruler and place it against the points for an estimate. Remember that point length is measured from the top of the main beam or the edge where the point extends.

The simplest way to estimate circumference is to quickly look at the eyeball of a buck. It measures approximately four inches in circumference. Now mentally float that eyeball up to the main beam. Also measure as many antlers as you can for field practice.

After getting a look at the inside spread and length of the main beam, scan the rack again to confirm that the buck sports long points and at least a 5x5 frame that includes the brow points. I’ve heard of several different ways to judge point length, but since most points extend in a nearly straight line I mentally imagine a foot-long school ruler and place it against the points for an estimate. Remember that point length is measured from the top of the main beam or the edge where the point extends. Brow points should be two to three inches, the G1 should be 15 inches or more, the G3 and G4 should be 10 inches or more. Those are measurements for buck scoring close to 180. Increase them if you are looking for a true B&C candidate.

Lastly, estimate the circumference or mass measurements.

These will challenge you the most because they are circular, not straight, in nature. The simplest way to estimate circumference is to quickly look at the eyeball of a buck. It measures approximately four inches in circumference. Now mentally float that eyeball up to the main beam. If it is slightly larger add an inch and if it looks substantially larger add two inches. For a buck to score high it should have circumference measurements of at least four inches or larger at the four recording positions. Bucks with circumferences of five or six inches are keepers, or as Canadians say “gaggers.”

FIELD-JUDGING PRACTICE

Are you ready to field-judge a buck now? Hold your horses because you need to practice first before racking a round in your rifle. I practice through several methods and I usually hit the 10-inch window when I have my game face on during a true trophy hunt. First, I have scored several of the racks that hang in my office and trophy room. I stare at those racks day in and day out burning those dimensions into my mind. When I see a buck in the wild I immediately mentally place one of my bucks up against a possible tag candidate and compare dimensions. Usually I come close.

I also do the same with some of my better shed antler discoveries. I know their single-side score and what class of buck they would come from like a 170 or 180 class. Again, mentally placing one of my shed antlers up against a spotting-scope buck lets me compare and do the math.

A second practice methodology I use includes visits to sporting goods stores and deer expos. These are perfect settings to acquire speedy skills at field-judging. Huge sporting goods outlets, like Cabela’s, have large taxidermy displays and many of those include score plaques. Deer expos, such as the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo, often include big buck displays, again with posted scores.

Stand far enough away so you can’t see the printed scores and then compete with your friends to see who estimates the score closest.
The loser has to buy lunch or pack out the heaviest load on your next back-country buck.

SETTING THE BAR

Before you use your field-judging skills on a hunt you need to decide the definition of a trophy for you and the unit you plan to hunt. Regions of mule deer country vary widely for trophy potential. You can’t just set your goal for a 180 typical buck and then hunt a general unit where the oldest buck might be 3 1/2 years old. You need to first research what you can expect for a possible trophy encounter.

First, study B&C and P&Y records for your targeted area to acquire a realistic trophy goal. Everyone doesn’t officially submit a trophy for inclusion, but there ample record-book listings to give you a glimpse into a particular area to see if there is a trend for big bucks. If you want to see the top-end possibilities you need to research B&C. If you are interested in an archery hunt or an area for a good buck, scan P&Y listings.

Next, pay special attention to dates. Some regions of the country may have been top trophy producers two or three decades ago, but today they couldn’t produce a trophy fork-horned buck. Plus, with private wildlife management escalating across the country, new trophy areas are springing up in places never before thought of as big buck country. Even if a big buck spends most of his life on a private ranch there’s no guarantees it won’t roam during the rut or spend the early season above timberline on public ground.

In addition, be sure to check harvest dates. Delve into detailed dates on what period of the fall trophies may have been tagged by archers, muzzleloader hunters or late-season rifle hunters. By investigating the date of the kill may reveal a unique fall window for your best bet at a monster. Some areas may shine in the early season while others may be hotspots during the rut. Do your homework. It will make your field-judging preparation pay off.

The next day found my buddy and me peering into a cedar choked canyon. As sunshine began filtering through the boughs a glint caught our attention. Confirmation with my binoculars confirmed it indeed was a buck and a moment later is sashayed out of the cover to cut off a departing doe. I quickly started doing the math.

“He’s a good buck with deep forks,” I whispered to my buddy now firmly positioned on his shooting sticks. “I think he’ll go 170 for sure.”

“Yes, I think you’ll do much better than that in this area. Hold for 300 yards,” I said. The words were barely out of my mouth when his rifle rocked him back causing him to lose sight of the buck.

“Did I hit him?” he breathlessly asked.

The bullet flew true and dropped the buck in his tracks. There would be no tracking required on this hunt.

“You dropped him and I don’t think there is going to be any ground shrinkage on this guy. Congratulations.”

START A MDF CHAPTER - WE’LL HELP YOU!

If you want to be a part of hunting and conservation history by helping to launch a new MDF chapter near one of these cities, please contact the state’s regional director for more information. We’ll team you up with other members willing to pitch in, and we’ll help you find a role you want with the new chapter.

ARIZONA
Yuma
Pinal Co.
Sierra Vista

CALIFORNIA
Placer Co.
Fresno
Sacramento

COLORADO
Pueblo
Alamosa
Trinidad
Grand Jct.
Cortez
Durango

IDAHO
Kellogg
Ketchum
Mt. Home
Salmon

KANSAS
Wichita

MONTANA
Havre
Lewistown
Polson
Glasgow
Baker
Whitefish
Seeley Lake

NEVADA
Fallon
Carson City
Fernley
Winnemucca

NEW MEXICO
Santa Fe
Las Vegas NM

OKLAHOMA
Western OK

OREGON
Ontario
The Dalles
Grants Pass
John Day
Madras

WASHINGTON
Aberdeen
Bremerton
Colville
Seattle area
Vancouver
Walla Walla

N. DAKOTA
Watford City
Beulah
Bowman

TEXAS
Canadian
Dallas
San Angelo

May June 2017
Idaho’s Mule Deer Initiative

Due to the decline of Mule Deer in Idaho, especially in the South Region of Idaho, the Idaho Fish and Game department developed a plan to help remedy this situation. Back in 2004 the department hired additional personnel along with funding to help improve the Mule Deer habitat. Their hopes that improving the habitat and dedicating additional resources will have an impact on the Mule Deer number.

This plan coincides with the Mule Deer Foundation’s Mission, “To Ensure the Conservation of Mule Deer, Black-Tailed Deer and their Habitat.”

This initiative has three basic goals which are the following: Protect and Improve Habitat, Improve Mule Deer Numbers and Increase Hunter Satisfaction. To achieve these three goals the department has identified several key components. They determined that the highest priority was to increase fawn production. To increase the production, they would need to increase habitat abundance, quality and connectivity. The department also developed a plan in 2008 to help manage the deer hunting seasons which would better accommodate the different types of hunters in Idaho. This plan would help lead to increasing hunter satisfaction.

Since 2010, MDF has funded several projects thru the Chapter Rewards and National Funding that compliments the Fish and Game Mule Deer Initiative. These projects include Habitat Selection and Fawn Survival Study, Rainey Creek Vegetation Restoration, and South Idaho Habitat Restoration. MDF is currently helping with the funding of a three-year planting of Sage Brush and Bitterbrush plant. This planting is taking place in Hunt Units 43, 44, 45, 48, and 52. These units were devastated by the Blair Fire that burned over 38,000 acres. The total cost of this project will be over $500,000. Some of the members of the Magic Valley Chapter recently participated in the planting.
The planting project in the Blair Fire area helps with the Sage Steppe habitat which is identified as one of the four priority habitats identified by the MDI. The other three are Private Lands, Riparian and Quaking Aspen. The Sage steppe habitat is composed mainly of Sagebrush and Bitterbrush which are important vegetation of Mule Deer. These are extremely vital to Mule Deer in their winter range. These plants provide security, thermal cover and forage. Both Sagebrush and Bitterbrush are high in nutrients and are readily available above the snow cover for Mule Deer to browse on. Not only do Mule Deer benefit from the Sage Steppe habitat, but it is just as important to the Sage-grouse that calls the Sage steppe its home. The Greater Sage-grouse is undergoing a historic collaboration conservation effort. This species escaped the Endangered Species Act of 2015 due to the conservation efforts of several agencies. Like many of the MDF projects, many different species benefit from our projects.

Private lands are important to Mule Deer, especially those that were enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Now over 30 years old, this law was signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1985. It is administered by the Farm Service Agency. It allows yearly rental payment to farmer’s in exchange for removal of environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production. The CRP program’s long term goal is to reestablish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce the loss of wildlife habitat. This habitat restoration benefits not only Mule Deer, but also Sharp-tailed grouse. This program is critical as it helps improved habitat on a large/landscape scale. It has grown from a few hundred acres per year to thousands annually.

Some of the most diverse and rare habitats in Southern Idaho are the riparian areas. Mule deer use these areas for forage, water, shelter and fawning areas. By working with several different agencies, the MDI works to improve the riparian areas through better grazing management practices though fencing and offsite water developments. MDF has helped with the riparian area, especially during drought years by funding several different water guzzlers located in Southern Idaho.

Perhaps playing the largest role of the four habitats is the Quaking Aspen habitat. This summer range involves the Mule Deer’s life cycle from gestation through adulthood. It offers a critical role in nutrition which effects the juvenile survival, age of first reproduction, pregnancy, fawn birth weight and adult survival. The most demanding part of the nutritional cycle for does is during their lactation period. The summer nutrition is most important for does during this period. The growth in fawns from this nutrition is deemed more important than the winter nutrition. This summer nutrition is diverse as it provides forbs, grasses and shrubs that provide cover and forage. Due to the lack of efficient fire suppression the aspen habitat has declined with the growth of coniferous forests. The MDI again is working with several land management agencies to increase this vital habitat area that benefits Mule deer and other wildlife species.

The Mule Deer Initiative also identified Wildlife Collisions (WVCs) as a problem. Due to the increase of traffic volumes and miles of roads throughout Idaho, over 22,000 WVCs have occurred.
since 1902 when the IF&G started keeping data. Of the 22,000 animals that were killed, over 50% have been Mule Deer. In 2011 alone the number of Mule Deer WCVs amount to 10% of that year’s harvest. These WVCs that occurred in 2011 had an estimated cost of nearly 8 million dollars. To help determine the best course of action, the MDF through the Chapter Rewards, help fund a State Highway Study on Deer and Vehicle Collisions. MDF also provided funding for SH-21 underpass Fencing. Mule Deer are not the only species identified in WVCs. Since 1902 over 80 different animals have reported to be involved with collisions. Another alarming fact is that only 50% of the WVCs are being reported. This was determined from a study conducted in Utah. Data is still being collected and improved to help mitigate this problem and identify these hotspots of WVCs. To find out more about Idaho Mule Deer Initiative you can go to https://idfg.idaho.gov/mdi.

**Japanese Yew Deadly for Animals**

It was a tough winter for big game as deep snow pushed them to low elevations in search of food. That search was fatal to many animals after eating a toxic plant that is common for ornamental landscaping.

Japanese yew is an evergreen suitable for much of Idaho’s climate, which makes it attractive for landscaping. Unfortunately, it’s also deadly.

Because of numerous wildlife deaths this last winter, the Idaho Fish and Game officials are asking homeowners, landscapers, developers and nurseries to choose alternatives to Japanese yew, or other types of yew (Taxus), when they’re planting this spring, especially in places where yew might be consumed by wildlife. F&G officials also ask homeowners to inventory their existing landscaping plants and replace yew if it is on their property. By removing the shrubs that are established and planting an alternative evergreen, wildlife as well as domestic animals can be saved. Dogs can die simply by chewing on the pruned branches of the yew. Because the dried branches and dead shrubs are also toxic, they should be disposed of in a covered landfill. If homeowners are unsure about identification of shrubs on their property, they can take cuttings to garden centers, or to Master Gardeners at University of Idaho county extension offices.

This past winter it was reported that at least 30 elk, 50 pronghorns, two moose, and numerous deer died this winter after eating yew, and they weren’t isolate cases. Deaths occurred across the state, including in Boise, Ammon, Payette, North Fork, Challis, Elk Bend, Malad and Preston.

**MULE DEER TAGS TO BE REDUCED**

With this winter as being one of the hardest in 30 years, the Idaho Fish and Game department at their March 17 meeting lowered the number of mule deer tags available to hunters. From the winter monitoring of the herds this past winter it has been determined that 50 percent of the mule deer fawns wearing radio collars have died. This is the lowest survival rate of mule deer fawns in 18 years. In Southern Idaho, the number of tags will be reduced by 2,045. There will be fewer antlerless and either-sex controlled hunts, which also means less tags available for youth hunts.

The winter monitoring did indicate that the doe survival rate was looking to be about 95 percent. Out of last years estimated 39,000 mule deer harvest, 20 percent were does. This winter will also affect the harvest of spike and two-point bucks, which made up 28% of the harvest in 2016. Larger bucks are not often collared, but the game department has indicated that the survival rate of larger bucks parallels that of does. So, they expect many adult Mule Deer to have survived the winter.
Where is the world is... COLORADO BUCK

For Show Times Visit www.heycoloradobuck.com

Where in the world is MDF Life Member Colorado Buck? He's sharing his passion for mule deer and black-tailed deer on his TV show called “Where in the World is Colorado Buck?” This generous TV host and MDF supporter donates air time on Sportsman Channel and Wild TV to promote the Mule Deer Foundation, share our story, advance the MDF mission and recruit new members and sponsors.

His travels take him to great mule deer and black-tailed deer habitat in western North America, where he sees first-hand MDF’s work and its members’ passion for this Icon of the West. At other times, you can find him hunting in remote locations like Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, RSA, Australia, Argentina, Russia, England, New Caledonia, Azerbaijan, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and MANY OTHERS!

MDF members can feel the excitement and rush of the hunt with this award-winning producer, host and outfitter as he chases his dreams while bringing you a unique hunting experience from around the globe.

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Conservation is Real and your involvement matters...

Today the Mule Deer Foundation and Realtree Outdoors join forces and challenge you to help us make a difference. Together we can stand for habitat conservation, ethical hunting, education and the future of our hunting heritage.

“MDF Members - Thank you for your continued support and dedication to deer conservation.”

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HARD SUMMER

Sitting around the campfire most hunting stories are either filled with uncontrollable excitement from the awesome buck a hunter had harvested, or frustration from the one that got away. However, The story about my 2015 opening day was neither... It was a story filled with acts of conservation and compassion and even some feelings of sadness.

It was July and I had made a couple scouting trips to the mountains of Idaho in search of some fresh velvet. I saw a lot of smaller bucks, but I did manage to find a couple nice mature bucks! With a month and a half left before hunting season, I was waiting with anticipation.

At this point, High temperature records were being set across the entire Pacific Northwest. The summer had brought a major drought, and the land was dryer than ever. With fire warning levels at extreme, a couple storm systems moved in and brought the Lightning needed to create huge wildfires. Fires were ignited everywhere. Washington was one of the first to get hit, followed by Idaho and Oregon. These fires weren't just in the mountains but were everywhere.

I found that more than 630,000+ acres burned in Oregon, 1,000,000+ acres burned in Washington, and 750,000+ acres burned in Idaho.

FIRST LIGHT

Knowing one of the fires had hit the area I had scouted. I was anxious to see what the fire actually destroyed. Upon arriving the day before opening day, my dad and I saw the fire had burned most of the area that We hunt. However, it didn't touch this little finger canyon where I spotted the biggest buck during my scouting trip. As the sun came up on opening day I happened to spot that big buck right away! After maneuvering through some other deer, dad and I were able to get in great position! Everything was coming together.

Then out of nowhere, the wind swirled just enough that a little fawn we had snuck by winded us and exploded running right into the bucks! The deer scattered in all different directions and we were left walking back to the truck with our tail between our legs.

By Zachary Kenner
**THE BURN**

Well that was really the only area I knew of that didn't get hit by the fire. So after a regroup at the truck dad and I decided to go check out the burn and see if any deer had looped back into it. As we walked through the ash and dust it felt like we were on the moon. All the grass and brush was burned away and only charcoal covered pine trees were left standing. At first glance, as I scanned across the landscape with my binoculars, it appeared there was nothing left. No deer were to be seen anywhere. As I glassed I kept thinking "Why would they be here? Its not like there is any food for them to eat anyway," I discussed with my father about what he thought we should do. We decided to just keep moving, checking hidden pockets for deer.

Eventually we did find deer. We spotted two bucks, one on a ridge-top and one in the bottom. But it appeared that they barely escaped the fire with their lives. The buck in the bottom of the canyon could hardly walk on his hind legs and looked extremely skinny like he hadn't eaten or drank in weeks.

The other buck was bedded down and would repeatedly raise his right front leg and wince in pain; it appeared his shoulder was broken. It didn't take long for dad and I to decide that we needed to put our tags on these bucks. I hope that people understand that even though I am a hunter, it truly saddens me to see these animals in such discomfort. I believe that as both a hunter and a true conservationist it was my responsibility to relieve the animals from their suffering.

**BUCK #1**

The wind was blowing another storm system in which created ideal stocking conditions. The wind was so loud that the deer would not hear us sneaking up on him. Dad decided he would take the buck on the ridge line and the stalk was on.

We circled around and got downwind from the buck and began to creep closer. 120 yards, 90 yards, 60 yards… At 60 yards there was a low spot in the dirt and ash that allowed my dad to remain hidden while he crawled even closer. With the wind blowing about 30mph he was going to have to get as close as possible before making the shot. The ditch, the wind, and the buck lowering his head to the ground wincing in pain, the buck never saw him as he snuck to with in 20 yards and came to full draw. His shot was perfect!
My dad made a great double lung shot and the buck ran about 35 yards and expired.

BUCK #2
After dressing out dad’s buck it was time to drop into the canyon and search for the second buck. To no surprise he didn’t go very far from where we last saw him. He was now bedded up in a ditch in the very bottom of the canyon where he probably would of died. I knocked my arrow and began to creep slowly towards the ditch. As I got close enough to see his vitals I drew my bow. Seeing the movement of my bow, the buck had a surge of adrenaline and jumped up and took off up the hill! I made a quick shot as he moved and hit him in the armpit. The shot missed vitals and I knew it. I quickly reloaded another arrow and made the next shot count… Whack! Hit him in the chest this time and it put him down quickly.

REFLECTION
When we walked up on both of these bucks we felt extremely bad for them and what they had been through. The fire had left them in really bad shape. The hair on their bodies was singed from head to toe. Their ears were cooked and felt rock hard, like a pigs ear you would buy for your dog at the pet store. Dads buck had taken a huge blow to the face and definitely had a broken front leg. He probably acquired both injuries by jumping off of a cliff trying to escape the fire. My deer had extremely swollen back legs and feet and was so thin you could count every rib. There was definitely a sense of sadness that dad and I felt for the bucks but also a sense of relief knowing they were no longer in pain.

I am proud to be a hunter and a conservationist... As many of you know that act of hunting is only part of being a hunter. I truly love the land we live in and the wildlife that we share it with. I’ve been apart of some great conservation programs such as the ducks unlimited, the mule deer foundation, elk foundation, and the wild sheep foundation. I’ve spent dollars at auctions, sponsored sheep to be put on the mountain as well as volunteered with Hands on projects. But the act of compassion my father and I showed that day, I will forever remember as the most gut-wrenching act of conservation I ever encountered. All I can hope is that as hunters we all would of done the same. I get very upset when an anti hunter says that we don’t care about the environment and the existence of wildlife. I know I can personally say that conserving Habitat and wildlife is all I care about!

This hunt is captured on film and will be featured on the Full Draw Film Tour this summer. The Film: True Conservation, produced by Hard Working Hunter is a one of a kind film and a must see for any sportsman. Be sure to go the the website http://fulldrawfilmtour.com to check for show dates and to get ticket information.
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Sometimes going to the Past, brings us to the Future

MEATLOAF - A True Comfort Food Classic

We are always looking for new exciting recipes to try...and sometimes we can find them by going backwards... to old school classics. Back east in the sixties meatloaf was a weekly tradition. My Mom would even pack up meatloaf sandwiches to take to Yankee Stadium to watch a doubleheader...Unfortunately there are no more of those - doubleheaders or being able to take meatloaf sandwiches into a ball park, but that’s another story.

Many of us have issues with ground wild game meats. The trouble is from the excessive amount of blood that is present after the grinding process. Unlike whole cuts of meat that need to be dry aged over long periods of time to remove the capillary blood. Ground wild game meat can achieve the removal of this blood rather quickly. Place the defrosted ground meat in a colander that is placed in a bowl and covered this with plastic wrap. Place this in the refrigerator overnight. The next day you will be amazed by the amount of motor oil thick blood sitting in the bottom of the bowl. It’s this excess liquid that gives your ground meat a gamey and mushy texture and causes your meatloaf and burgers to fall apart.

You will find your ground meat to be very mild in flavor and MUCH easier to incorporate into any recipe that calls for ground meat. This is a perfect example of addition by subtraction. You have just improved your entire catalogue of wild game recipes. You may want to add this one below to that list.

CHILI SPIKED VENISON MEATLOAF
with roasted sweet potatoes
Serves 8 – 10

4 lbs. Ground venison (or elk, moose, caribou, sheep. Etc) drained of excess blood (or you can do half venison and half ground pork)
6 eggs
1-½ cups dried breadcrumbs
½ cup ketchup
1 ½ cups onions, diced fine
½ cup celery, diced fine
1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
4 tbsp. Wildeats BURGER DUST (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste

CHILE GLAZE
½ cup ketchup
1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
3 tbsp ground chili powder or for a rich smoky flavor try
3 tbsp. Wildeats - Controlled Burn Chili Blend
3 tbsp. Virgin olive Oil

SWEET POTATOES
6 med. sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 ½ inch cubes
2 tbsp. olive oil or 2 tbsp., melted butter
salt and pepper to taste
Combine all the ingredients for the loaf as quickly as possible. Excess heat from your hands will affect the blending process. Form into a loaf shape. Place into a proper roasting pan, a loaf pan or a pyrex baking dish that has been sprayed with pan spray. This makes for an easy clean up.

Blend the ingredients for the Chile Glaze.

Baste the top of the loaf with the Chile Glaze.

Toss the peeled sweet potatoes with olive oil and season. Arrange them around the loaf, or in another roasting pan.

Place into a 365°F oven for Approx. 80-90 minutes. Or until 160°F internal temperature

Allow to rest for ten minutes before cutting...

This is a great comfort food and a great way of utilizing trim and other cuts like, neck, shank, shoulder etc. The combination of the full flavored meat with the mild spicy flavor of the glaze and the sweetness of the potatoes makes for a great meal.

You’ll want to be sure to make some extra so you can try and sneak a few sandwiches in to the next ballgame you go to.

www.facebook.com/WildEats
The West and the people who inhabit it are their own breed, and proud of the lifestyles they live. A big part of that life is taking care of the wilderness and wildlife that we all love so much as part of our existence. This is one area where we live a paradox: we love to be independent in our lives, take care of ourselves and our families, and make the best of what we have, but at the same time, we will come together to help our neighbors harvest a field, rebuild after a loss, or take care of their loved ones. We will also be first to step up and join forces to create more opportunity to help our wildlife and wild places. This "teaming up" can help all of our dollars and hours go further, benefitting everyone, especially the deer we love so much!

MDF has a good friend who attends many banquets, freely giving of his time and resources to help chapters reach more people, raise more funds, and spread the word about what we do. He is always happy to speak to the crowd, and one question he always poses is "Who here has a hunting friend who is not here tonight?" Of course, we all raise our hands, and at that time he politely says "Shame on you! Your responsibility is to get your friends here next year!" Of course, it is all said in good fun, but the point he makes is very clear; in order to grow, we need to take it upon ourselves to make the effort to get those friends of ours there to take part. Just think, if everyone at your local banquet invited one of their friends…how much would your banquet grow? The simple act of inviting others to join us in what we love could make a profound impact on what we can accomplish. And chances are, that hunting friend of yours would love to attend a banquet, get involved in some projects, or even join the chapter committee and help even more. But we fail to invite even our closest friends at times, whether we think they are too busy, not interested, or not the “committee type”. We should always give them the chance to come to an event, get their boots dirty on a project, or attend a committee meeting. You never know what someone may have to offer that could help your local chapter reach new heights!

Another area we are seeing more progress is in teaming up with other conservation groups, local social groups, or even agencies, be they local, state or federal. You probably have read many times about cooperative projects with BLM, USFS, DNR, NRCS, state fish and game agencies, land trusts, and many more. But what we need to hear more of is our co-op projects with other single-species conservation groups who share habitat and interests with MDF. One great example is MDF and Pheasants Forever. Much of our mule deer habitat also overlaps great habitat for pheasants, so joining up to do a project just makes sense. The same can be said for grouse, quail, sheep, elk, and more species. Combining forces, funds, and feet on the ground can help us all make more of a difference, and can help multiple species thrive over a large area. We also need to start looking at other conservation groups as our partners, and not our competitors.

We all give of our time because we have a passion for wildlife, hunting, or just enjoying the outdoors. And we all want to see these wild places thriving for our children, grand-children, and beyond to enjoy.

You have read here before the encouragement to be vocal for what you treasure. The power that can be achieved through numbers all working towards the same goals can be very influential. And whether we are speaking for hunters' rights, proper management decisions for our wildlife, or spending time together planting bitterbrush to help recover winter habitat for our favorite species, it is all better achieved through multiplying our numbers. So invite someone this year that you haven't before; they may find a new passion to share!
This will help more than any of us know just yet. The final results will come later when we can see fawns and calves running around healthy and happy. The tanks that the Mule Deer Foundation have worked on to hold water are now filled to the top! Where will they be in two months? If we can get just a little rain the next two months we will be in great shape on water—if not, well we will have to keep an eye on them! This takes me to another topic, Adopt a Water Catchment program through the Arizona Game and Fish. This program is just as it sounds—you adopt a catchment or catchments and you go and check on them every month. If you want to volunteer then all you have to do is get with the Wildlife Manager in your area and let him or her know you would like to be a volunteer and check on water catchments and water holes. You would not believe how much time it takes a WM to check all the waters in their units! It sometimes takes half of their week to get that done and even though they never complain (knowing it is part of their job) they do like it when someone dedicated helps with that task. In the summer I check the catchments I have here in 20B twice a month. The last thing you want to see is a catchment dry when it is 115 outside, and if you catch it in time the AZ Game and Fish department will truck water in so the wildlife won’t run out. Loss of water means travel time to the next tank and when these does are carrying fawns and the bucks are trying to grow antlers it is critical that they do not get any more stress than they can deal with.

With all of this rain we have in Arizona the desert has turned into something to behold! Right now the beauty is unreal but when all of those flowers and weeds dry up we will have a real fire threat! Please be vigilant while camping and make sure your fires are out completely! The fires will burn all of the goodness out of our moisture and we would be back to square one with our mule deer!

This year the project crews have already been out and about! One project in the Prescott Forest near Cherry Road that is called Powell Springs Project has been a tough one but we almost have it done. This one is critical to the riparian area. It is a fence that encompasses the riparian area to keep the cattle out while letting the wildlife in. A wildlife friendly fence is being installed and we are leaving a water through on the outside to water cattle. This will protect this area for future generations of not only people but wildlife as well.

We have also installed spring boxes in places that the old ones have been destroyed or gotten so old they just didn’t work any longer. This is integral to wildlife and the MDF AZ project team has been doing a bunch of them the past two years.

These are just a few projects we do but there are many others and if you would like to help with these projects please call me at 623-696-5579 or email me at therndon@muledeer.org and we will send out the schedule for you to see. You would be surprised how much another set of hands and feet help a project get done.

Lastly, I would like to introduce Roger Gannon to you. Roger is now our new State Chairman and he has already hit the ground running. Roger is taking over for Jim Lawrence who is now one of the Board Of Directors for the Mule Deer Foundation.

2017 is already one quarter gone! And with all kinds of new things happening I am anxious and excited about where we will end up when 2018 comes knocking at our door!

Be a part of the solution! Get out and go to a fundraiser or a work project! They are both equally important to our mission!
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Chad Klinkenborg
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Habitat Montana: good for wildlife, good for landowners, and good for sportsmen. What's not to love? Montana’s 30-year old conservation program continues to protect important wildlife habitat, increase public land access for sportsmen, and safeguard Montana’s ranching legacy. Yet it continues to face threats from Montana’s lawmakers every legislative session. What gives?

The Habitat Montana program was established by the state legislature in 1987 with the purpose of protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat and providing support for conservation-minded landowners. The program is funded by annual revenues from the sale of mostly non-resident hunting licenses. Collected revenues are then utilized to leverage conservation dollars into the state from various public and private sources. This is a win-win because it allows the state to focus on larger, landscape-scale projects with maximum benefit to wildlife and no tax burden on the public. Since 1987, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) has utilized Habitat Montana to protect or enhance more than 400,000 acres of critical habitat across the state while opening more than 200,000 acres of previously inaccessible land for public enjoyment.

The biggest beneficiary of this program is most certainly Montana’s wildlife. Over the past several decades, Montana has seen massive land-use changes and since 1984, the amount of developed land has increased by more than 35%.

For obvious reasons, much of this development has taken place in mountain valleys and lower elevations – the result being the displacement of wildlife from traditional wintering grounds, a reduction in native wetlands, and the overall decline in quality riparian areas.

Through acquisition of private lands (from willing sellers) using Habitat Montana funds, Montana FWP has been used to create or add acres to its 69 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). These WMAs provide quality grasslands for wintering big game herds and riparian areas necessary for waterfowl survival. Of course, other species of wildlife benefit from such areas as well and many of Montana’s WMAs contain a diversity of wildlife species unrivaled anywhere in the lower 48 states. Some of these WMAs are small in size but large in impact. The 4,800-acre Dome Mountain WMA, for example, provides critical grassland forage for several thousand elk migrating out of Yellowstone National Park each winter. This refuge not only provides a sanctuary to the migrating elk but averts significant damage to neighboring private lands. Without consistent funding to secure and maintain areas like the Dome Mountain WMA, survival of these elk herds would be in jeopardy and serious conflicts with private landowners would occur.

Purchased conservation easements – voluntary legal agreements between landowners and the state – also benefit landowners through the Habitat Montana program. These easements restrict certain land uses (such as development) and encourage wildlife friendly agricultural practices. In return, landowners are paid a percentage of their property’s value giving them the capital they need to enhance or grow their operation. The land can still be sold or deeded to family but the easement remains attached to the land title in perpetuity. The program provides landowners a solution for improving their property while helping the wildlife that live there. Sportsmen also benefit as many of these easements allow public access. Habitat Montana currently has 238,000 acres under conservation easement in Montana.

In spite of the benefits to Montana’s wildlife, landowners, and sportsmen, Habitat Montana has been a targeted by lawmakers for several legislative sessions. Motivated by perceived threats to private property rights and a general anti-government sentiment, the 2015 State Legislature removed Montana FWP’s authority to spend accrued Habitat Montana dollars on important land acquisitions. Because these dollars are earmarked for conservation efforts, the agency has been forced to sit on the money and watch opportunities slip away without action. Further legislative attacks on Habitat Montana were prevalent in 2017 as well.

The Mule Deer Foundation, working with a coalition of hunting and angling organizations, worked during the 2017 session to restore the ability of the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to fully implement this program. Together, we secured passage of a capital improvements bill that will effectively restore Montana FWP’s authority to spend Habitat Montana dollars on important land acquisitions. The Mule Deer Foundation, along with other Montana conservation groups, will remain vigilant to keep the successful Habitat Montana going strong for another 30 years.

The 28,000 acre Robb-Ledford WMA is a prime example of Habitat Montana funds being put to good use. This sanctuary of intermountain and sagebrush grasslands is home to large herds of wintering mule deer, elk, and antelope.
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NEWS FROM THE FIELD  | North Dakota & South Dakota

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Marshall Johnson
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North Dakota

This year’s Volunteer Work Days have been set for the weekend of June 23rd on the Byron Richard Ranch north of Beach. MDF volunteers will be working to improve the southern portion of the ranch, specifically along the Beaver Creek riparian area. Volunteers will arrive on Friday evening with work beginning on Saturday and continuing through Sunday morning.

“Our goal is pull out a few more di-lapidated fences along the creek area and replace them with wildlife friendly fencing,” Richard said. “We are planning to create several small grazing areas to control the amount of time and where livestock can access the creek. This will help us rehabilitate the riparian area and bring it back to a natural state.”

Additionally, the volunteer team will gather up sharp and rusted metal debris that has accumulated over the years. Last year we had volunteers from chapters in Fargo, Bismarck, Dickinson, and Williston. We also had equipment use donated by Doosan and Bobcat, who have committed to providing equipment again this summer. On the agenda is to use some heavier equipment from Doosan to repair a stock dam as well as to develop and/or enhance some trails and roads for better access for sportsmen and women. If you have interest in volunteering, please contact Al Gunwall, State Chair, at (701) 290-4435 or email Al at algunwall@gmail.com.

North Dakota’s MULEY Day will be held on Saturday July 8th at the Fried Family Marksmanship Complex near Moffit, ND. Northern Badlands Chapter Chair Corbett Schollmeyer said, “MULEY day is back after a one year hiatus and we have put together stations that will provide opportunities for youth to shoot rifles, handguns, shotguns, and archery. We are in the process of developing additional stations geared around outdoor skills and conservation. In addition, we will be serving up a lunch to everyone that attends.”

This chapter developed the MULEY program that went national with MDF and now are leading the charge on a MULEY Event Trailer. “We have been traveling to several towns in the Bakken for the cookfests and city events with a pellet or archery gallery and we could do even more with this trailer,” noted Arnold Karsky, State Youth Coordinator.

“The North Dakota Petroleum Council saw what we are doing in the Bakken and donated $10,000 to MDF-ND to purchase and set up the MULEY Event Trailer. This will allow us to increase our presence in the Bakken as well as the rest of North Dakota.”

South Dakota

The Western Dakota Chapter hosted their first banquet since 2010 in Sturgis this past April. A unique location, Loud America Roadhouse & Grill, provided for a fun and energetic atmosphere. This banquet is the step MDF needed to get things rolling in South Dakota as the SD Game, Fish & Parks has identified several project opportunities in Western South Dakota.

During a recent conversation, Andy Lindbloom, Senior Big Game Biologist, stated, “We have some fairly substantial mule deer projects going on in South Dakota and we would be interested in working with MDF to help support them.” One such project MDF has already identified to assist with funding is a fawn study that will be started up this spring. The Western Dakota Chapter (Rapid City/Sturgis) will be donating their Chapter Rewards for the study assessing mule deer fawn recruitment and mortality in the western part of the state. Biologists hope to learn more about the positive fawn recruitment in northwestern South Dakota to provide management recommendations in the southwestern part of the state where fawn recruitment has not been as good. Capture and collaring will start in late May and will continue into mid-June.

This summer and fall, MDF will be looking to start up a few more chapters in South Dakota. If you are interested in helping MDF and/or would like to start a chapter in your community, contact Marshall Johnson at 406-850-8785 or email marshall@muledeer.org.
How often have we asked ourselves just how amazing the results of our efforts can be? I realize in the hustle and bustle of our daily grind, we might sometimes lose sight of that long range goal; however when the tallies are in I still get blown away by how much is accomplished. But then again I am fortunate to work with the best volunteers, staff, and (may I say) most important Wildlife Issue in my lifetime. Now the bean counters among us can quote chapter and verse as to numbers of dollars raised and spent to help Mule Deer and the animals that share their habitat, and these are important numbers. However what really sticks in my mind is when we are doing a habitat project, and two or more people come up with four or five more projects for us to do. Or, when in the middle of a banquet, a person comes up to me and wants to start a chapter in a town fifty miles away (and does!), This has happened twice in the last month! Amazing, not only those people wishing to help, and be part of something good.

While there is no downside to projects, I am sometimes concerned that we may not have enough chapter rewards to pay for everything asked of us. We have never had to say “No” as of yet. But I fear that day was near, when out of the blue, two chapters were formed in communities that could really help. And by the way the existing chapters are performing extremely well this year!

As to the new chapters first up, Alpine Texas, Robert Stockwell 432/294-4404, has some really great volunteers but is looking for a few more. If you are one of the fifty members we have in Alpine, give Robert a call! Secondly, but only because it happened that way, Frisco Texas, home to the Cowboys training center and Toyota N.A. one of the fastest growing cities in America. And now home to the youngest MDF chapter. John R. Rowe, 972/839-8019 and Danny Williams, are building a team of excellence, north of DFW. Give John a call if you can help.

The Mule Deer Foundation chapters in Texas announced that they are holding an essay contest for youth with 10 winning writers receiving mule deer doe hunts. Youth ages 9-17 are encouraged to submit a 500-word essay on “What Mule Deer Conservation Means to Me” by September 1, 2017.

“We are excited to offer this unique opportunity for young hunters to tell us why our efforts to conserve Texas’ mule deer is so very important – and even more excited that the best storytellers will be able to go on a doe hunt with us in the Trans-Pecos next fall,” commented Mule Deer Foundation regional director, Charlie Stockstill. “Not only does this contest build a stronger foundation for our Mindful Understanding Legal Ethical Youth (M.U.L.E.Y.) program but it will also strengthen these kids’ connection to our hunting legacy.”

The contest is now open and will be judged on the writer’s ability to answer the topic question in an articulate, clear, and organized manner. Entrants must have completed their hunter education certification, hold a valid Texas Youth Hunting License, and a parent must be a member of the Mule Deer Foundation. Five youth winners will be selected from the 9-12 age range and five from the 13-17 age range. Detailed instructions on the contest and how to apply are available on the MDF M.U.L.E.Y. Facebook site.

In closing, it matters not where you help. It matters that you help. The Mule Deer Foundation Chapters in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia, and Pennsylvania all are as diverse as you might expect. While some may, many of the members will never hunt a Mule Deer. But they will all gather to help an animal that needs it, and sleep warm in their beds at night, knowing they have tried to do the right thing.

And that my friends, is the truly amazing thing I get to witness every day. I thank each and every one of you that help make all this possible.
As the bulk of the banquet season here in California begins to wind down, I reflect on what has been the most exciting and fulfilling one in my 8 banquet seasons with MDF. The enthusiasm of the chapter volunteers, the increased attendance, and the willingness of those attendees to reach deep into their pockets to support our mission has been truly inspiring. Across the board, our banquets have been very well attended, organized and profitable. We do still have a few banquets left in 2017, and they are shaping up to be as good as or better than they have ever been. Our Central Coast Chapter located in San Jose will be holding their 27th (that’s not a typo) banquet on May 6th, and their program is packed full of incredible tags, trips, hunts and guns. Our Shasta/Lassen Chapter in Redding will be holding their 12th annual banquet at the Win River Casino on May 20th. Their program will feature a great auction and an all gun raffle.

As the banquet season slows a little, the project season goes into full swing. Several of our chapters are planning work days afield to improve valuable habitat in their local areas, and MDF is in full swing managing our own Stewardship Habitat Restoration project on the Stanislaus National Forest. We have also applied for grants from the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife’s Big Game Tag Account for two very important restoration projects that we hope to begin work on this coming fall.

Watch for updates and hopefully good news on these possible grants in future articles.

The Project Review Committee will be sending out our annual “Call Letter” in June, soliciting project proposals from both BLM and the USFS. We will again be reviewing all submitted proposals at our meeting this fall. Every year we receive some excellent project proposals from the agencies for our chapters to put their hard-earned chapter rewards to work on. This year will be no exception, since we already have a couple of viable proposals in hand to look at.

Do not forget that the Big Game Tag drawing is coming up in the first week of June. If you’re looking to apply for a premium deer tag, elk, antelope or sheep tag, this is your time to do it. I know I sound like a broken record, but don’t forget to buy your bear tag when applying for the rest of your tags. Our bear harvest is continuing to go down in California despite the increase in bear numbers each year. There is a harvest quota of 1700 bears each year. There is a harvest quota of 1700 bears each year, and once it is reached, bear season closes. With an estimated 30,000 bears in our state, the harvest quota is very conservative. Ever since the legislature outlawed the hunting of bears with hounds, the quota has not been met. In 2016, the actual number of bears taken was 1070, which was down from 2015 at 1200, and from 2014 at over 1400. Bears are one of the most effective predators of newborn fawns, and taking more bears would have a positive effect on fawn survival. Another less obvious, but certainly as important of a factor of an abundance of bears is that bears often steal deer from the mountain lions who kill them. This means that lions, who are the most effective predators of adult deer in the woods, are forced to kill more deer than they need to, just to get enough to eat. This behavior has been documented several times, and is increasing as bear numbers increase. We deer hunters have a management tool at our disposal to help offset the loss of deer due to bear predation, and we must take advantage of that. Taking the 630 bears that we not harvested in 2016 would have resulted in an increased number of deer in the woods this year. Bears are good to eat, fun to hunt, increase your time in the field and make a great trophy.

EASTERN NEVADA

The Great Basin Chapter in Elko, is holding their 23rd annual banquet on May 6th, which is shaping up to be another great event. The committee will be looking for a good habitat restoration project in Eastern Nevada to spend their Chapter Rewards on. If any member knows of an important project in need of funding, please contact me.
First, CONGRATULATIONS to the chapters that won recognition awards at our Western Hunting & Conservation Expo in February! The Pass the Buck, Mile High and Fremont County Monster Muleys chapters received awards at the Volunteer Recognition Event on February 19th for achievement at their 2016 banquets or for volunteer efforts with their local projects.

We're off to a great start in 2017! In February and March, we had very successful chapter banquets in Craig (Northwest Colorado), Denver (Mile High) and Woodland Park, Colorado. All had large attendances and a great time was had by all! The Woodland Park chapter once again received a generous $1,000 donation from the Colorado Bowhunters Association (CBA) where 100% will go toward a mule deer project in their area. Thanks again to CBA for this cooperative gesture!

Regarding upcoming activities and events, we recently chartered two new chapters in the region; the Gunnison chapter in Gunnison, Colorado and the Northwest Kansas chapter in Colby, Kansas. Inaugural banquets for both chapters are scheduled for June so check out the Banquet Schedule for more specifics if you think you might like to attend. The annual “M.U.L.E.Y. Kids Day” event held east of Colorado Springs and organized by our Pikes Peak chapter is shaping up to be another solid event! Over a dozen sponsors and partner organizations will be joining the chapter in hosting the event on June 17th. If anyone would like more information about this event, contact Mr. Mark Walp at 719-527-1572. This is a fun event that annually draws between 150 and 200 kids and their parents. The Pikes Peak chapter banquet follows on July 22nd.

With the upcoming field season, chapters are looking at spending their Chapter Rewards on important mule deer projects in their areas. The Mile High chapter is once again planning to expend funds on the Cherokee Park Wildlife Area for installation of wildlife friendly fencing, spring reconstruction and noxious weed spraying.

In northwestern Colorado, MDF has been very active with assisted funding for the Piceance Phase II Mule Deer Habitat Improvement project. This project, completed in December 2016, involved mowing and mulching thin vegetation predominately consisting of Pinyon-Juniper and other mixed brush species over 191 acres. MDF funded 60 acres through the CO BLM Statewide Stewardship Agreement and Colorado Parks and Wildlife funded 131 acres from the new Colorado Mule Deer Strategy (MDS) funding allocation. MDF contracted with a private contractor for this on-the-ground effort.

Two more Mule Deer Strategy (MDS) projects with CPW are planned in 2017 and will utilize MDF's Stewardship Agreement with the BLM. These two projects are the Cathedral Rim mastication on 300 acres in the Piceance Basin and Tatum Gulch/Escalante Canyon mastication on 167 acres on the east side of the Uncompahgre Plateau and west of Delta & Montrose. In addition to those two projects, there will be five other projects contracted through the BLM Stewardship Agreement that total over 2,000 acres and they will be located in the general area near Burns, Kremmling and Rifle. As details for these projects develop, MDF chapters will have the opportunity to contribute some of their Chapter Rewards funds for selected projects as was done last year by the Northwest Colorado chapter on the 450-acre Dry Ryan Pinyon-Juniper removal project near Meeker.

Finally, are you feeling lucky? For 2017, MDF was awarded one of the two, Statewide mule deer raffle licenses from the Colorado Parks & Wildlife which we will have annually for the next 5-year contract period. MDF was again awarded one of the auction licenses for the same 5-year period and it sold for $85,000 at the 2017 Western Hunting & Conservation Expo in Salt Lake City held in February. In June, some lucky person will win the raffle license for as little as a $25 investment, instead of paying $85,000 for the same license! Check out the insert in this magazine if you would like information on purchasing one or more chances for this awesome raffle opportunity! Proceeds from these auction and raffle licenses go back into mule deer projects in Colorado. The Auction/Raffle Project Advisory Committee meets every May in Silverthorne to review and recommend funding of projects from revenue received from these special auction and raffle licenses.
While trying to develop more chapters in Wyoming or bringing back old chapters I am always getting asked what does it take to be a Chapter Chair. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you what it means to be a Chapter Chair of one of the Mule Deer Foundations Chapters in Wyoming.

First thing you must above all be willing to have fun. Having fun is the largest requirement to chair a chapter in Wyoming. It’s only hard work if you are not enjoying yourself. Second, you must be a team player. I would never expect you or anyone else to do anything alone. If all else fails, I will be your committee member and help whenever and wherever is required. But finding like-minded people in your area is something that will help you be successful. Third, you must share a passion for Mule Deer. A chapter chair must be willing to promote and follow MDF’s mission statement and policies. Next, you must be a leader and willing to give up some of your time. While planning a fundraising event you will give more of yourself then the rest of the year. We usually start planning an event ten weeks in advance, meeting twice a month for the first two and then weekly until the event. Finally, you must be willing to except your fellow MDFer’s as family. That’s what it means to join the MDF family. You will always have a brother or sister that is willing to help you with anything. If you have an interest in becoming a chapter chair in your area please give me a call and let’s do lunch. Currently I am seeking a chapter chair in Laramie, Rock Springs, Lander, Kemmerer, Buffalo and Sheridan but I am open to starting a chapter wherever you are! At this time we currently have active chapters in Cheyenne, Newcastle, Gillette, Cody, Casper and Evanston, although Gillette, Casper and Evanston are seeking more committee members.

I started out with MDF as a chapter chair. I speak from experience that it was the most satisfying thing that I have ever done. I was very fortunate to have a strong committee and a dedicated one at that. When we first started the chapter there was only five of us and over the next eight years we have grown to almost fifteen. Some of my best memories are getting together with the group of guys that were just as passionate as my own family. Speaking of family, MDF didn’t just get me they got my husband and three kids. There is nothing better than watching your children work hard to raise money to help mule deer but they didn’t stop with the fundraising. My kids helped plant mountain mahogany and bitterbrush early in the morning on a cold spring day. Fix fence and help dig a platform for a guzzler on a hot summer day and help with counts in the fall. It’s a great feeling knowing that you are not only helping mule deer but you are teaching the young people of the world some importance of their actions in the outdoors. My husband was excellent in finding projects in the area to work on with the local game and fish department representatives.

That was his passion, seeing the results of raising the money and the end of the cycle by “putting money in the ground”.

As many of you know there are many ways that you can help. Just by supporting MDF and being a member you are helping, but if you are willing to give a little more of yourself consider chairing a chapter or help in finding someone that is. Attend a local banquet or participate in the MDF’s Ultimate Raffle. The winter here in Wyoming was a rough one especially in the western half. Deer numbers were already down and they have declined more due to harsh winter conditions. Let’s work together and help the mule deer.
What an amazing 2017 we have had thus far! We kicked off the year with some great committee members and supporters in Cedar City and St. George doing their annual fundraising banquets. Both chapters did fabulous and it is great to already have talks about projects and things down south. We then rolled into our National convention the Western Hunting Conservation Expo. Although this is a lot of work physically and mentally that we put into it there is no better feeling than seeing all the like-minded individuals that come out to support WHCE. I have always been so proud how the Utah Volunteers come in masses to help wherever they can, and we can use all the help we can get! The Mule Deer Foundation booth was heavily manned with a couple staff members but it is the volunteers there willing to talk mule deer and habitat that gets me so excited.

What never ceases to amaze me is the amount of people we get to stop by and say thank you for a project we have done or a project we have funded in their backyard. So when we get to sit down and talk it is the most rewarding experience a guy can have. What is so great about this is that most of these conversations are coming from MDF volunteers to the general public. The fact that our volunteers are so educated and passionate about our mission is a goal that has been obtained and surpassed. Thanks to all of you who hung out in the booth, sold memberships, handed out antler hats and engaged with the attendees and made a difference for mule deer!

My favorite event at Expo has always been the Volunteer Recognition breakfast and this year it didn't disappoint. We are a volunteer based program and it is great to give back to those volunteers. I was extremely proud to see Utah continue to gather awards! The following took home awards for high efficiency: Weber Davis, Salt Lake Valley and Bear River. These chapters really worked hard on getting donations and sponsors for their annual banquet. High efficiency means more money on the ground!

The Bob Terry Sweat Equity award is all about these chapters putting it back into the ground. Canyonlands Chapter volunteered 95 hours, West Desert punched in 135 hours, Richfield Monroe put in 160 hours. Sanpete County threw in 164 hours, Weber Davis notched in 233 hours. Salt Lake Valley and Bear River both volunteered 254 hours each. Utah County once again just blew it up with 1643 volunteer hours. This is what is all about folks. Thank you to all the great chapters that raised the money and volunteered their time on these projects.

Expo also had a nice surprise for Jake Olsen from the Salt Lake Valley Chapter. Jake like many others put in a lot of time into the Urban Deer Transplant and is our “Go to Guy” for all things urban deer. Our President and CEO awarded Jake with the prestigious Presidents Award for all of his hard work. Thanks Jake for all your dedication to the program and we look forward to starting it all up again next year!

Since Expo we have been busy every weekend with banquets and it has been such an amazing ride. Bear River, Sanpete County, Utah County, Weber Davis and Canyonlands have all recorded their banquets for the year and all have been outstanding. For upcoming banquets in your area you can go to our website www.muledeer.org or visit our Utah facebook page Mule Deer Foundation / Utah for more information.

The Urban Deer transplant is done for the year and we had a great year moving over 250 deer in 3 separate cities allowing these deer to flourish in the winter ranges and mountains and not dodge vehicles. This coming year plans are already in the works and it is only getting bigger. We can always use help on these so watch that facebook page for updates this coming fall / winter.

Lastly I am excited to see our first annual Ladies Only committee / banquet coming together. We will be at the Sheraton in Salt Lake City May 13th. It is going to be a great night for the ladies to get out dress up and have fun! We will be doing a casino night event with raffles, silent and live auctions and plenty of games. We then are going to turn around and do an educational weekend for women who are interested in getting more involved in the outdoors, shooting, hunting and camping. That will follow in the summer. You can go to their facebook page for more info. Mule Deer Foundation / Women of Utah.

Thank you to all of you that have continued to support us and I look forward to running into you soon!
The spring winds have blown into the Land of Enchantment and kept the momentum we have going right along. The projects and partnerships between MDF and federal, state, local and private entities is growing fast. Our chapters are focusing on habitat improvement projects such as water guzzler installations, water tank repairs, and trash clean up. Our Duke City Chapter is not only gearing up for their next banquet but has also adopted two water catchments on the Cibola National Forest and working with Forest Service as well as Bureau of Land Management partners on new projects in the future.

We recently funded a project in the Carlsbad area to reconstruct 2 wildlife drinkers in a migration corridor that is heavily used by not only mule deer but also elk, javalina, antelope and quail. Providing a healthy and improved habitat not only helps the mule deer population thrive but helps all wildlife in the area flourish. We also began working on the Black Range Water Development Project partnered with the Gila National Forest and two very talented and dedicated MDF contractors. I am very excited to be working with three new chapters this season including the Four Corners Chapter based out of Farmington, the Gila Chapter in Silver City and the Rio Grande Del Norte Chapter out of Taos. Each of these areas having a great group of volunteers eager to help conservation efforts that are desperately needed in their areas.

Warmer temperatures, green grass, fresh forbs and fawns! It’s that time of year when fawns begin hitting the ground and the new generation of bucks and does can be recruited into the population. Fawns are quiet and still the first few days after birth except for feeding, this allows them to avoid predators and build their strength to travel with the doe. During this sensitive time of maternal care between doe and fawn, people should be aware if you find a fawn bedded alone, leave it alone. The fawns are left alone from the doe for a reason and the doe is never far away. You can cause greater harm to the fawn and even stress to the doe by removing the fawn from its bedding site or providing it unnatural food items.

Not only are the days now a little longer and weather more enjoyable, but May and June makes for a great time of year to do a little predator control. Coyotes and bobcats are not only fun to call in but also a good species to manage to help the upcoming fawn crop stand a chance at survival. Be sure to have all necessary licenses and permission to hunt private land before going to make your stands.

The summer seasons also bring the threat and management of wildfires. Campers and Sportsmen should use extreme caution when in the forest.

New Mexico is still experiencing drought conditions and a fire of any size can cause a significant amount of damage to wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and hunting units. Fire can be a useful tool in managing ecosystems used by fire experts. Prescribed burns are a regular occurrence in New Mexico Forests and they provide a method of reducing excessive amounts of brush, shrubs, trees and forest debris that would otherwise take extreme amount of man hours and labor to adequately remove. These fires encourage the growth of new native vegetation that plant and animal species relay on as well as preventing severe, disastrous fires on public and private lands.

Each year more fires are caused by negligent use or care of fire than natural causes such as lightning. To prevent wildfires in our backyard here are some tips during summer recreation:

- Put all campfires out completely- use water or dirt to mix in embers and ashes to completely cool down campfire.
- Don't make a fire too big to handle- keep it small to avoid big problems.
- Don't leave your fire unattended- put it out completely before bed!
- Do not discard lit cigarettes- it only takes a small spark
- Use care with fireworks-most are not permitted in forests and campgrounds for high fire risk
- Be mindful of sparks from mechanical equipment-pick up chains on trailers and do not drive in dry tall grass.

If you have not heard the excitement on our website, social media or the last MDF magazine, New Mexico Lieutenant Governor’s Deer Tag Raffle tickets are on sale now! This is the tag every hunter dreams about having in their pocket come hunting season. It allows you to hunt any unit in the state, with any weapon, from September 1st 2017- January 31st 2018. Proceeds of this raffle support deer management projects and research in the state of New Mexico under the Department of Game and Fish. Tickets start at $20.00 and can be purchased on our website at muledeer.org till June 15th or by contacting myself by June 22nd. Drawing will be held June 23rd 2017 at 9:00 am the Department of Game and Fish office in Las Cruces, NM.

We are still on the hunt for talented, motivated and passionate Sportsmen and Women to help us grow the mission and purpose of MDF in New Mexico: to conserve mule deer and their habitats. If you are interested in making an impact in your local mule deer habitat please ask how I can help you make a difference! Ruidoso, Gallup, Los Alamos I’m looking at you!
## ARIZONA
- **Norma Precision Ammunition**
  - Contact: Ron Petty
  - 928-830-3338
  - 802 Westin Pass
  - Prescott, AZ 86301

- **Diamond Outfitters of Arizona**
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  - PO Box 3347
  - Prescott, AZ 86302
  - 928-830-3338
  - 802 Westin Pass
  - Prescott, AZ 86301
  - DiamondOutfitters@gmail.com
  - www.AZDiamondOutfitters.com

- **Nichols Guiding Service**
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  - 602-919-0962
  - 1566 E Paint Horse Pl
  - San Tan Valley, AZ 85140
  - nicholsguiding@gmail.com

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  - Gypsum, CO 81637
  - 970-343-4460
  - cliff@FTGuides.com
  - flattopswildernessguides.com

- **Silver Spur Outfitters, LLC**
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  - 67290 E. La Salle Road
  - Montrose, CO 81401
  - 970-379-4297 W
  - 970-249-4242 H
  - coloradobigracks@aol.com
  - www.huntsilverspuroutfitters.com

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- **Cayuse Outfitting**
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  - 1831 Glenwood Road
  - Kamiah, ID 83536
  - 208-790-4315
  - cayuseoutfitting@gmail.com
  - www.cayuseoutfitting.com

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- **Webbed Feet Down Outfitters**
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  - 3040 Hwy 24
  - Woodston, KS 67675
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  - mjadamss776@aol.com
  - www.bucksbullsbeards.com

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  - Anaconda, MT 59711
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  - www.montanataxidermy.com

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- **Live Oak Ranch Hunting LLC**
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  - PO Box 336
  - Christoval, TX 76935
  - 325-650-0778
  - westtxhunting@gmail.com
  - www.liveoakranchhunting.com

## FLORIDA
- **Gods Country Outfitters**
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  - 248 East End Road
  - San Mateo, FL 32187
  - 386-972-9473
  - godscountyoutfitters@gmail.com
  - www.godscountyoutfitters.net

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Mule Deer Foundation
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www.kearlranchoutfitters.com

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435-979-4071  
www.gonehuntingoutfitter.com

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danielbrichins@gmail.com  
www.thehuntingcompany.com

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www.ganariver.com

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www.bigknifeoutfitters.com

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blackstone@klondiker.com  
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fred.trueblood@verizon.net  
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