

Deer Rule

19.31.13 NMAC

February 20, 2026
New Mexico State Game
Commission Meeting

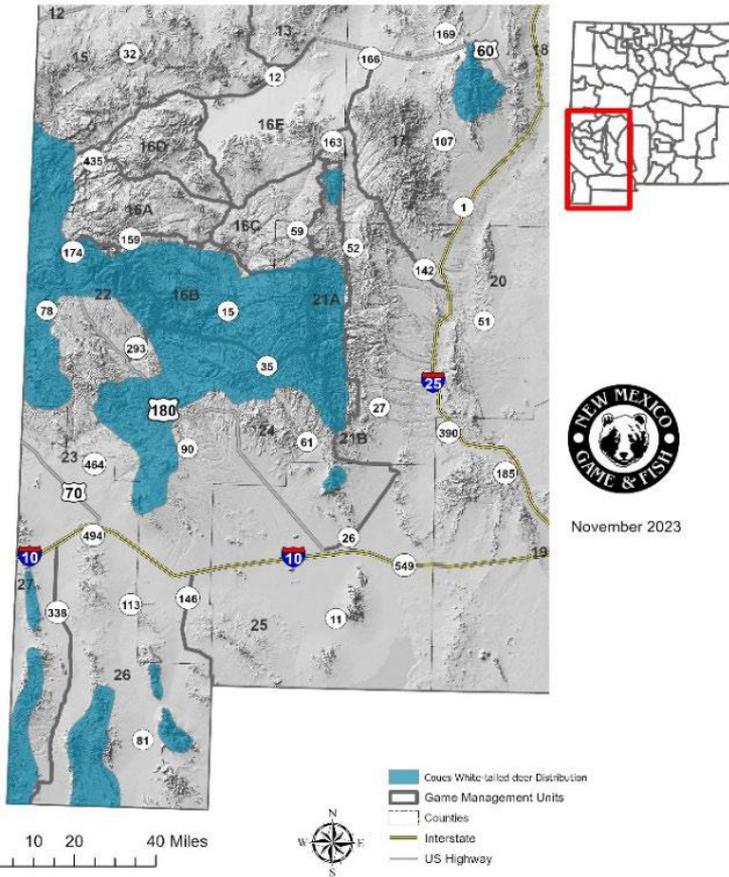


New Mexico Deer Population

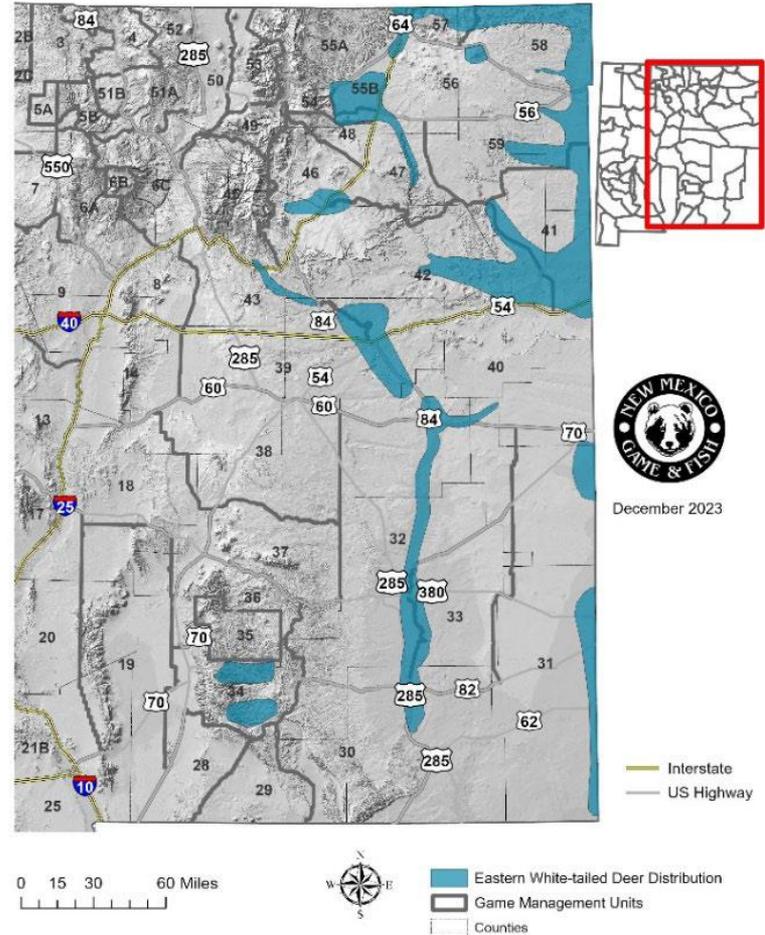
- Statewide population estimate: ~80,000-100,000
- Population growth driven by female and fawn survival
 - NM deer populations impacted by long-term drought
- Buck harvest not limiting to population growth
- 5-Year Statewide Average: 30 bucks:100 does:41 fawns (2020-2024 survey data)
 - >35 fawns:100 does over the long-term required for stable population
 - Buck ratio adequate for recreational opportunities



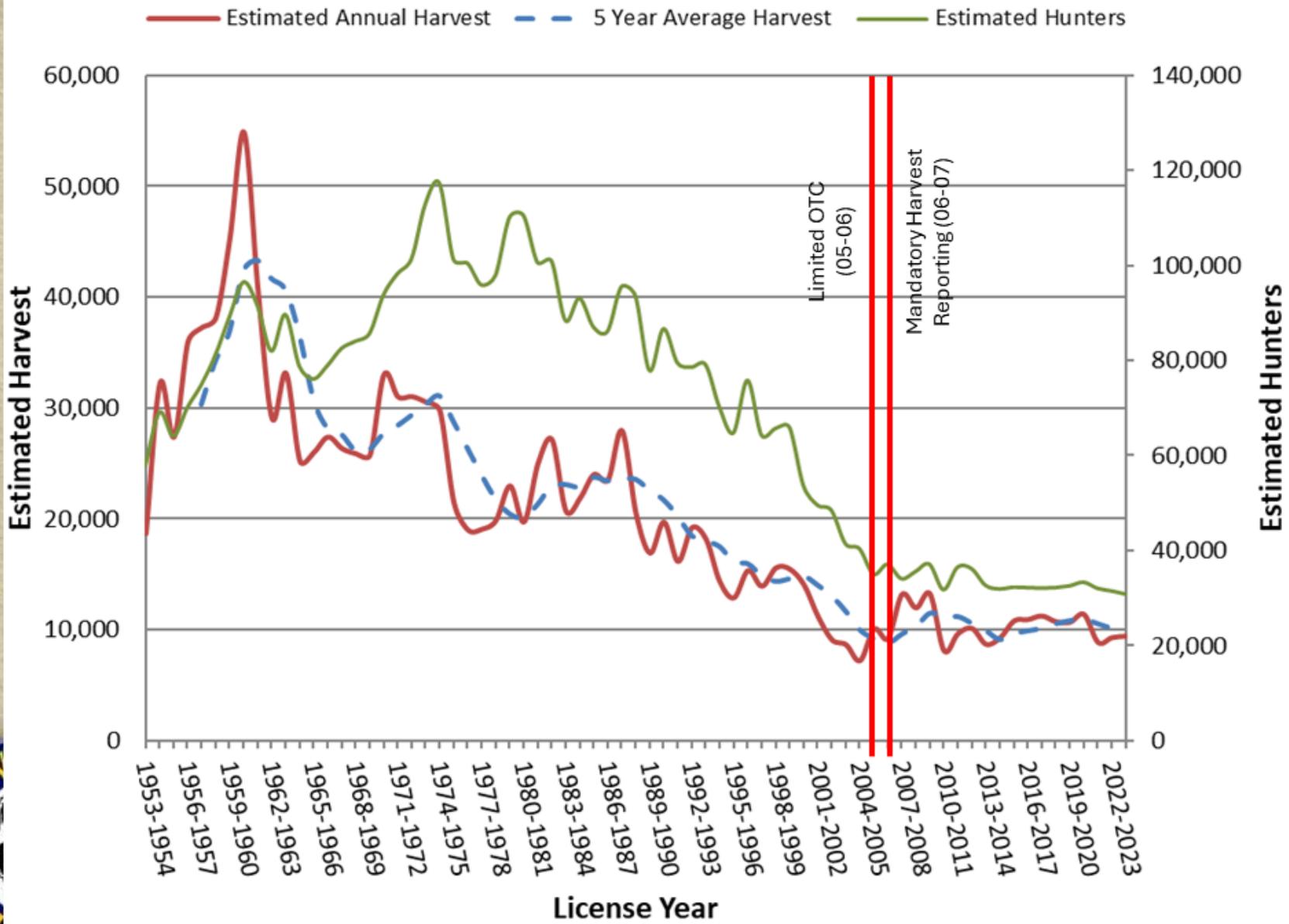
Coues White-tailed Deer Distribution



Eastern White-tailed Deer Distribution



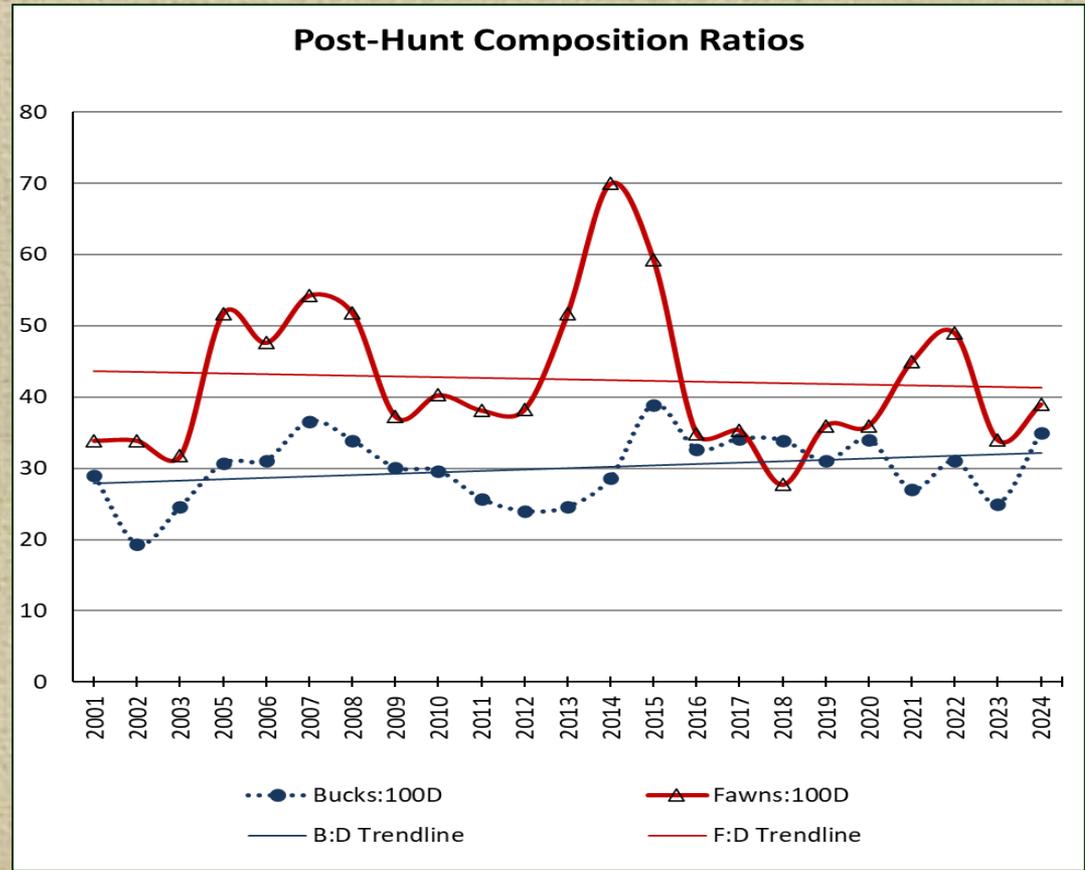
New Mexico Deer Harvest



Statewide Composition Ratios

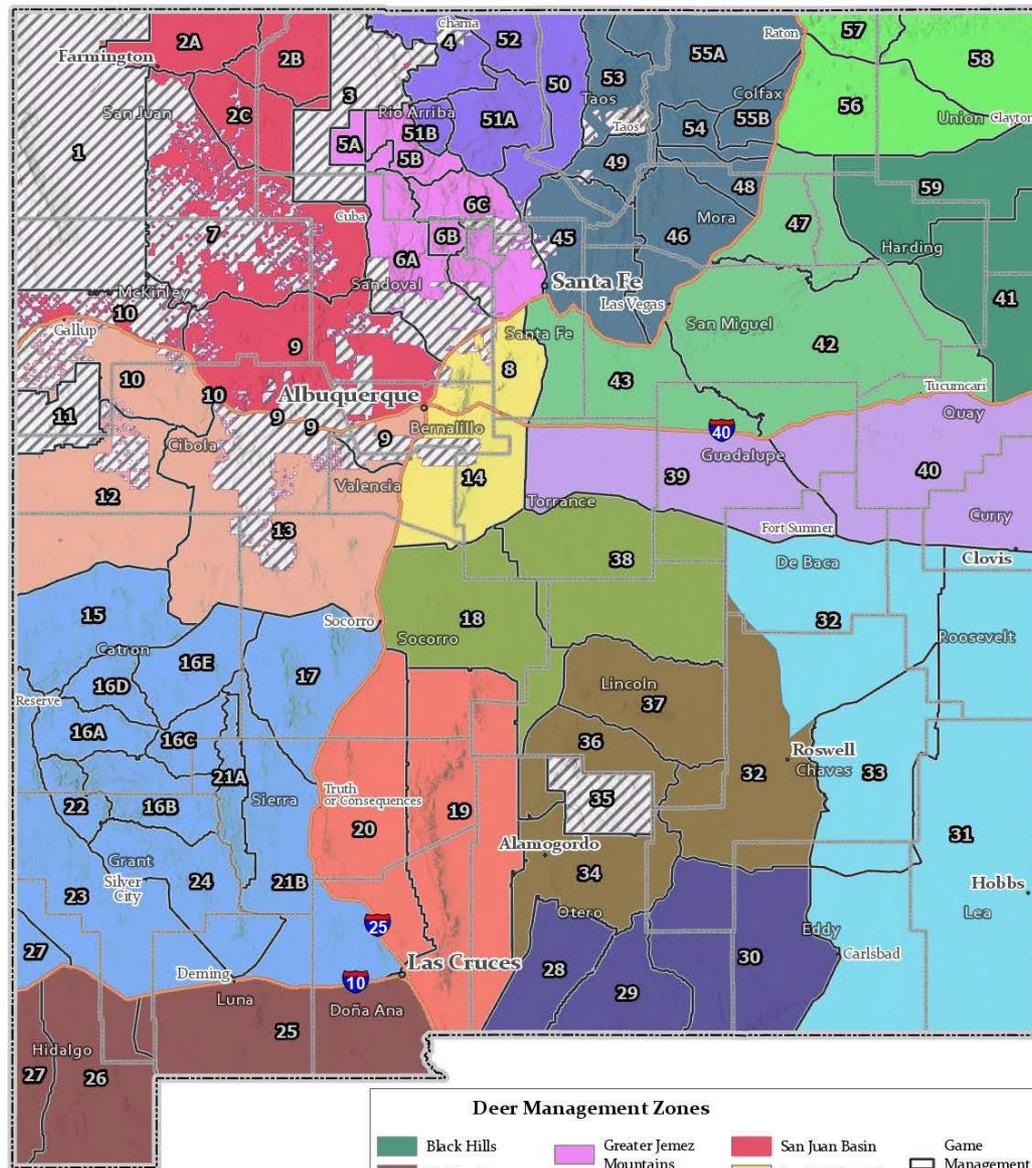
5-Year Statewide Average

- 30 bucks:100 does:41 fawns
 - 2020-2024 survey data



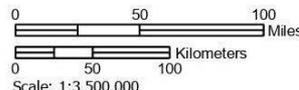


New Mexico Deer Management Zones



Deer Management Zones

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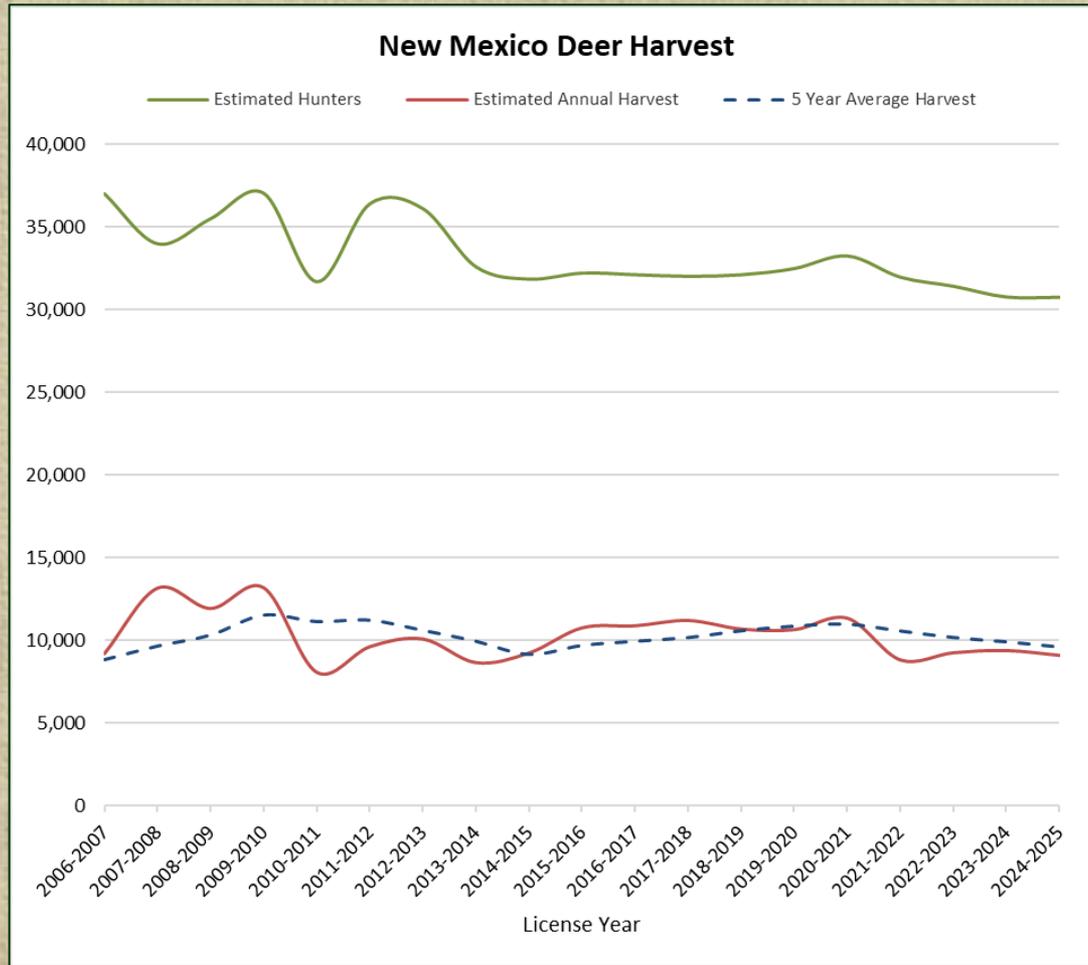
2024-2025 Deer License and Harvest



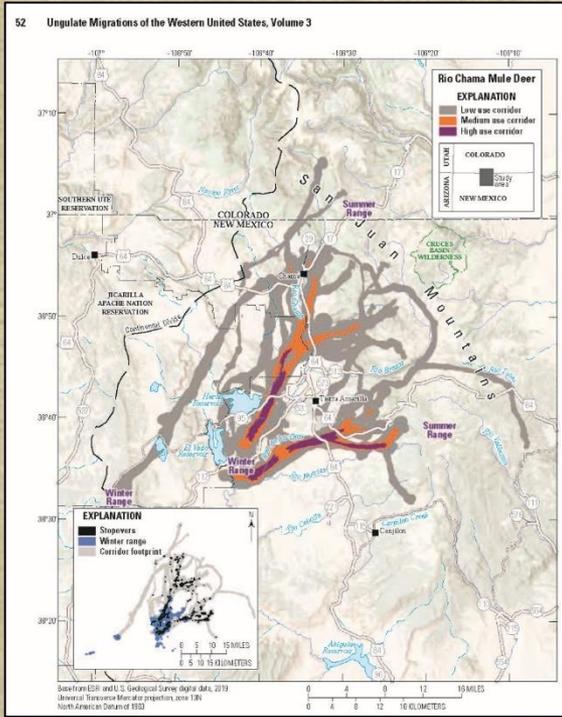
- 36,207 licenses sold
 - 99% are for bucks
- 88% of hunters reported
- 30% successful in harvesting
- Estimated statewide harvest
 - Bucks = 9,104; Does = 134
- Satisfaction rating = 3.2



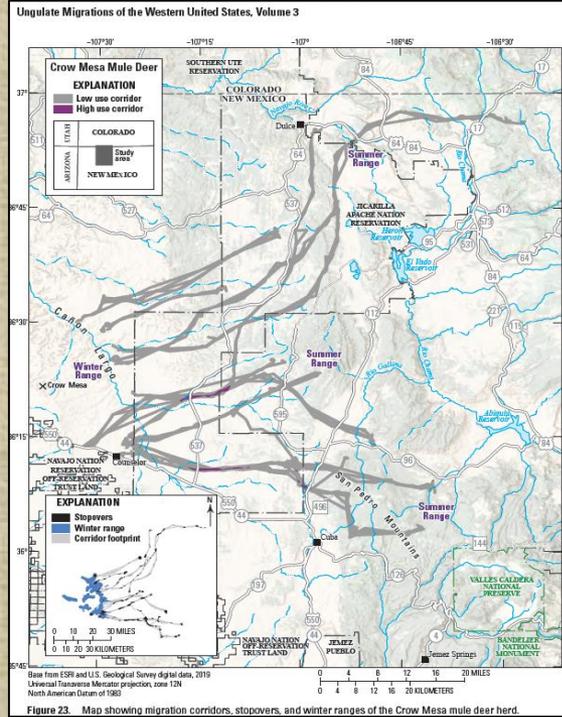
Statewide Deer License and Harvest



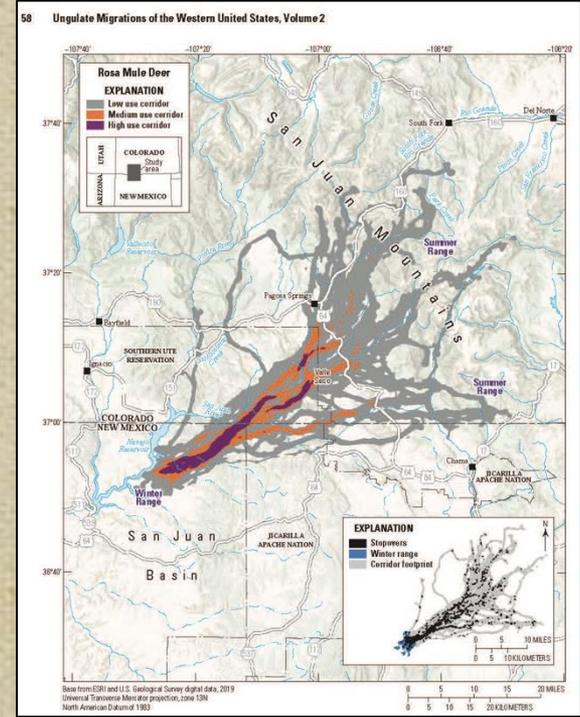
Deer Research – Migration Mapping



Rio Chama



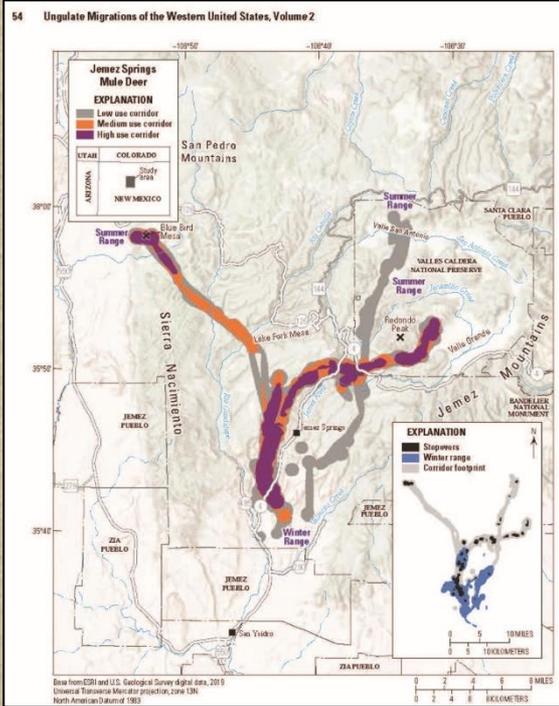
Crow Mesa



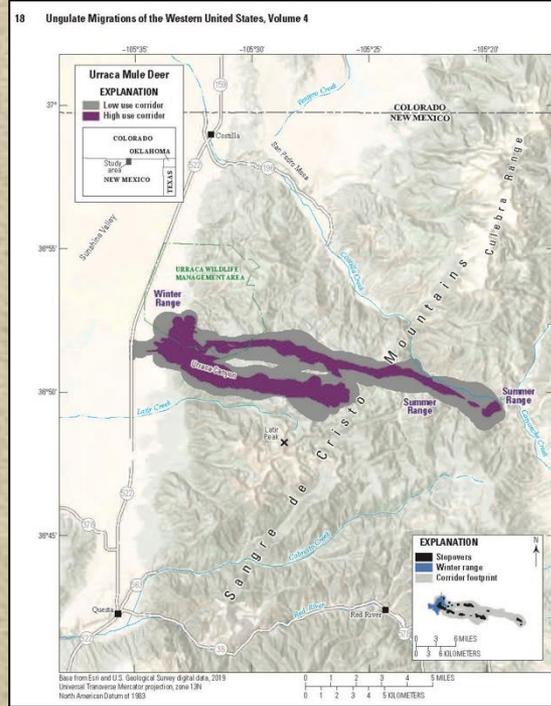
Rosa Mesa



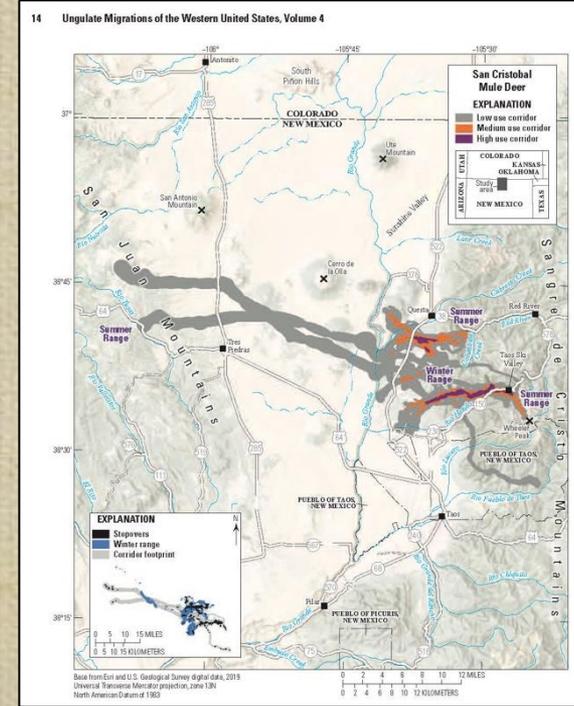
Deer Research – Migration Mapping



Jemez Springs



Urraca



San Cristobal



Ongoing Deer Research

- Mule deer movement in the Pecos Mountains and on Mount Taylor
 - Map seasonal movements and migration
 - Document habitat use
 - Estimate doe survival
- Buck survival and seasonal movements in the northwest
 - Estimate overall survival and percentage of buck harvest
 - Map buck movements
 - Compare buck movement and vital rates to does
 - Beginning captures March 2-5



Data Collection to Inform License Allocations

- Post hunt surveys
 - Basis for generating management and harvest recommendations
 - Fawn:Doe and Buck:Doe ratios
 - Population trajectories
- Research projects
 - Survival rates and population trajectories
 - Movement and migration patterns and timing
- Trends in harvest success and hunter satisfaction



Hunt Types

Quality

- Designated by the Commission
- Designed to provide a combination of:
 - Harvest from a wider selection of bucks
 - A more pleasurable experience based upon timing and length of hunt season
 - Lower hunter density
 - Increased opportunity for success

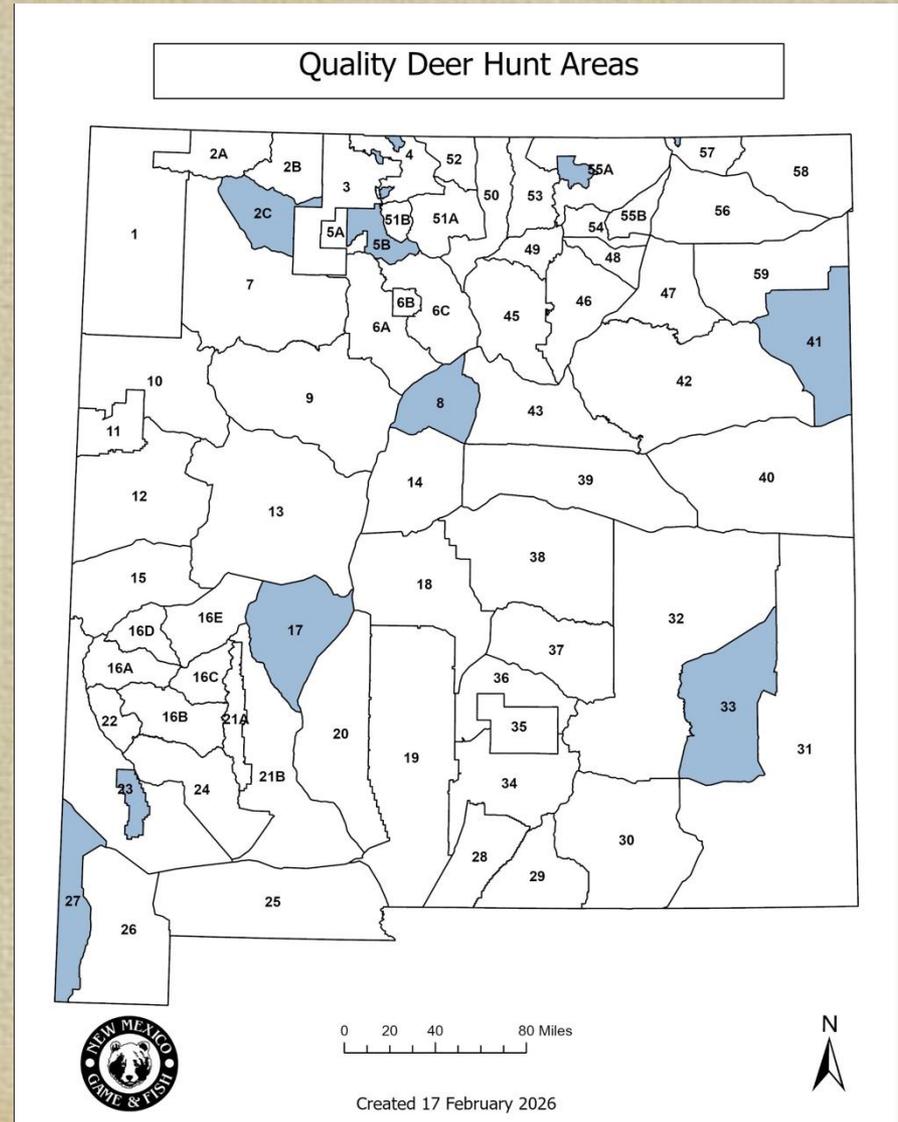
Opportunity (Standard Hunts)

- Designed to provide:
 - Applicants with a higher chance of drawing
 - Opportunity for more hunters
 - Chance of harvesting a deer
- Maximizes annual hunter opportunity without negatively impacting the population



Current Quality Hunts:

- Northwest
 - 2B (Third Rifle; Jan Bow), 2C, 5B, 8, Humphries/Rio Chama/Sargent WMAs
- Southwest
 - 17, Burro Mountains, 27
- Southeast
 - 33
- Northeast
 - 41, 55A (Valle Vidal), 57 (Sugarite Canyon State Park)



General Proposed Changes

- Adjust season dates where necessary.
 - Shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.
 - Evaluate season dates for hunt structure consistency across the state.
 - Evaluate season dates to ensure harvest is biologically sustainable.
- Adjust license numbers to meet management strategies and reflect changes in deer herd dynamics.
- Designate the premium statewide deer hunt as a Quality hunt.
- Consider eliminating the restricted muzzleloader deer hunts.
- Evaluate current antlerless hunts across the state.



General Proposed Changes

- Require the purchase of a license at least a day prior to the start of the hunt. For hunts where published season dates are less than 6 days, hunters will no longer be able to buy a license once the hunt starts.
- Evaluate a potential “ranch registration” process for OTC private-land deer licenses, similar to the current registration process used for private land elk hunting in Secondary Management Zones.

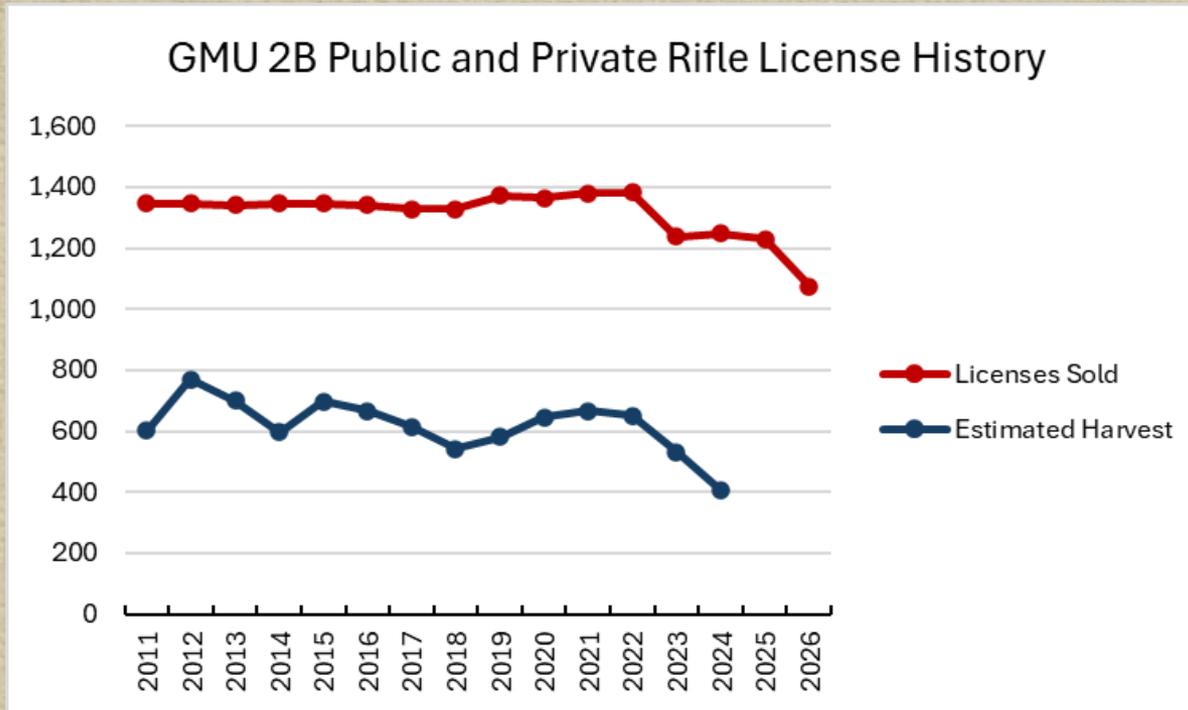


Proposed Adjustments: NW Area

- Adjust draw license numbers based on biological data, management goals, & public comment
- Reduce deer licenses in GMU 2B and potential moving GMU to Quality based on input received during current rule cycle.
- Create a public muzzleloader deer hunt on Wildlife Management Areas in GMU 4 to coincide with the private land hunt.



GMU 2B Public and Private Rifle License History



Proposed Adjustments: SW Area

- Adjust draw license numbers based on biological data, management goals, & public comment
- Create a December rifle hunt for Coues white-tailed deer in GMUs 16 and 22
- Structure the January hunt on White Sands Missile Range as a youth hunt.
- Evaluate current antlerless archery hunt in Silver City



Proposed Adjustments: SE Area

- Adjust draw license numbers based on biological data, management goals, & public comment
 - Potential reduction in draw license numbers
- Consider changing restricted muzzleloader deer hunts in GMU 33 to general muzzleloader
- Evaluate current antlerless hunts in GMUs 32 and 33



Proposed Adjustments: NE Area

- Adjust draw license numbers based on biological data, management goals, & public comment.
- Consider changing restricted muzzleloader deer hunts in GMU 52 to general muzzleloader



Questions?



Comment on Proposals:
DGF-Deer-Rule@state.nm.us