

# Formal Request to Change the Management of Mule Deer GMU 2B



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish  
Game Commission Meeting  
Roswell, NM

April 25, 2025



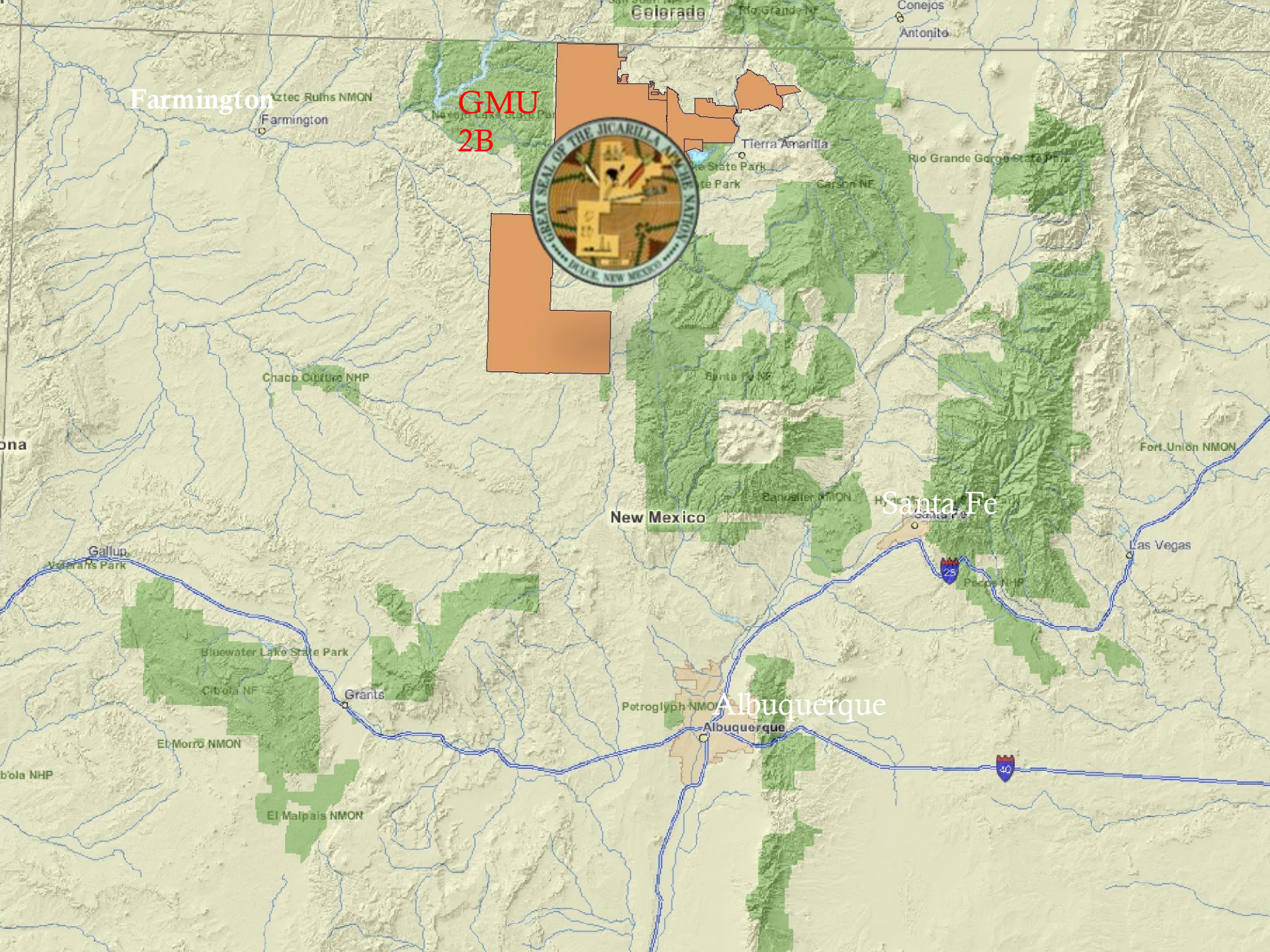
# Objectives

- ◆ **Share our Knowledge of Deer in Region**
- ◆ **Share our Concerns**
  - ◆ Urgent Biological Need and Public Support to Reform GMU2B Deer Management
- ◆ **Gain NMDGF Support for Change**
  - ◆ Create a roadmap to Change Deer Management in GMU2B from “Opportunity” to “Quality”

**TIME SENSITIVE!**







Farmington

GMU  
2B



New Mexico

Santa Fe

Albuquerque

Las Vegas

Grants

Bluewater Lake State Park

Cibola NF

El Morro NMON

El Malpais NMON

Petroglyph NMON

Albuquerque

Santa Fe

Pecos NHP

Fort Union NMON

Carson NF

Santa Fe NF

Bannister NMON

State Park

Tierra Amarilla

Rio Grande Gorge State Park

Rio Grande NF

Conejos

Antonito





# Exceptional Habitat = Healthy Wildlife





# Jicarilla Apache Nation Wildlife Management Fund



- ◆ **Born out of Necessity:** Native American Tribes are excluded from sharing over \$1 Billion in Federal Excise Taxes that fund State Agencies
  - ◆ Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act 1937 / Dingell-Johnson Funds
- ◆ 1983- Present; Sovereign Wildlife Management:
  - ◆ New Mexico v. Mescalero Apache Tribe, 462 U.S. 324 @ U.S. Supreme Court- June 13, 1983
- ◆ Science, Data and Facts Guides Conservation
  - ◆ **Spectacular Hunting Opportunities**
    - ◆ Priority Tribal Members
    - ◆ World-class hunts → Self-reliant model of funding







# JICARILLA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT HISTORY AND VALUES

- ◇ Est. 1957: Management Programs for All Fish and Wildlife Species
- ◇ 850,000-acres
  - ◇ Of which 131,283.5 acres purchased → permanently protected
- ◇ Our Commitment to Tribal Membership:
  - ◇ A Way of Life: Proud Hunting Heritage
  - ◇ Strong public support and expectation for Quality Hunts
- ◇ Vision and Support from Jicarilla Apache Leadership



**Mule Deer are Sacred:**  
Jicarilla Apache Quality of Life:  
Cultural Identity, Purpose, Meaning



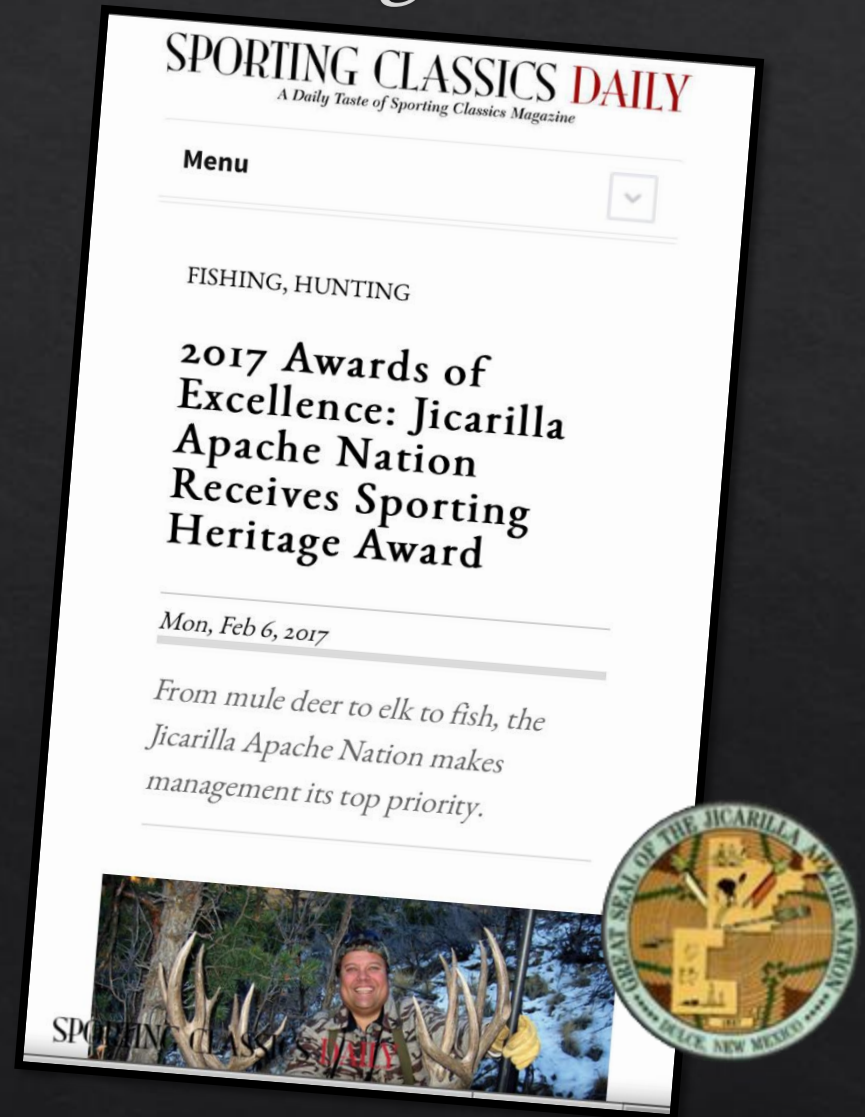
The science-based *conservation* that mule deer require, is also the *preservation* of culture and lifeways that have grown and evolved with deer since the beginning of time





# JGFD: A Premier Native American Wildlife Management Program

- ◆ **Tribal Wildlife Program of the Decade** from the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (1994)
- ◆ **High Honors Recipient** from the Harvard University's Honoring Contributions in the Governance of American Indian Nations program (1999)
- ◆ **Sporting Heritage Award of Excellence** from Sporting Classics Daily (2017)
- ◆ **Tribal Excellence in Conservation Award** from the USFWS (2023)





# Migration Science

## Risk vs. Reward in Life Strategies:

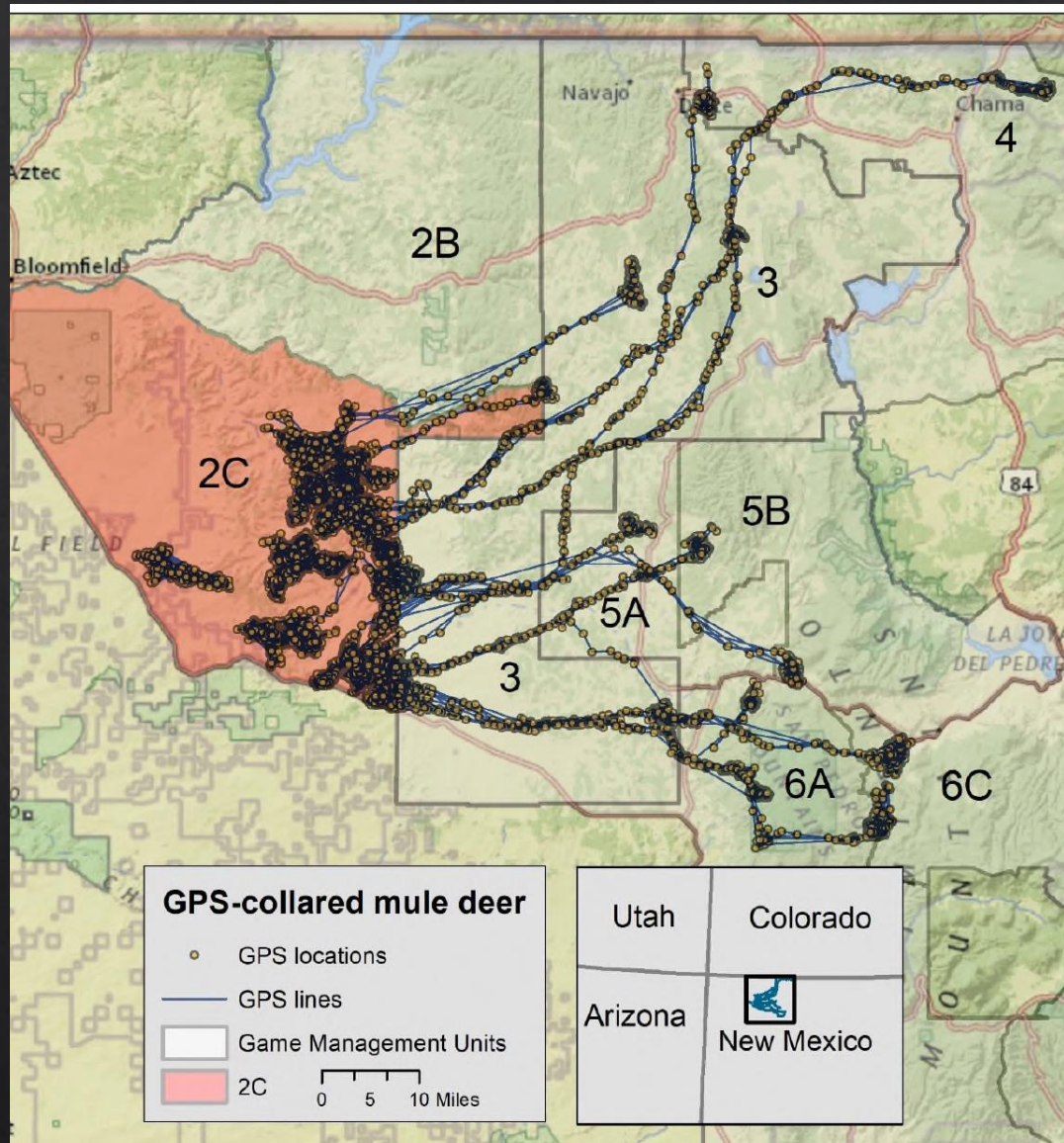
- ◊ Resident
- ◊ Localized Nomadism
- ◊ Facultative Migrant
- ◊ Migrant



## Migration is a LEARNED LIFE STRATEGY

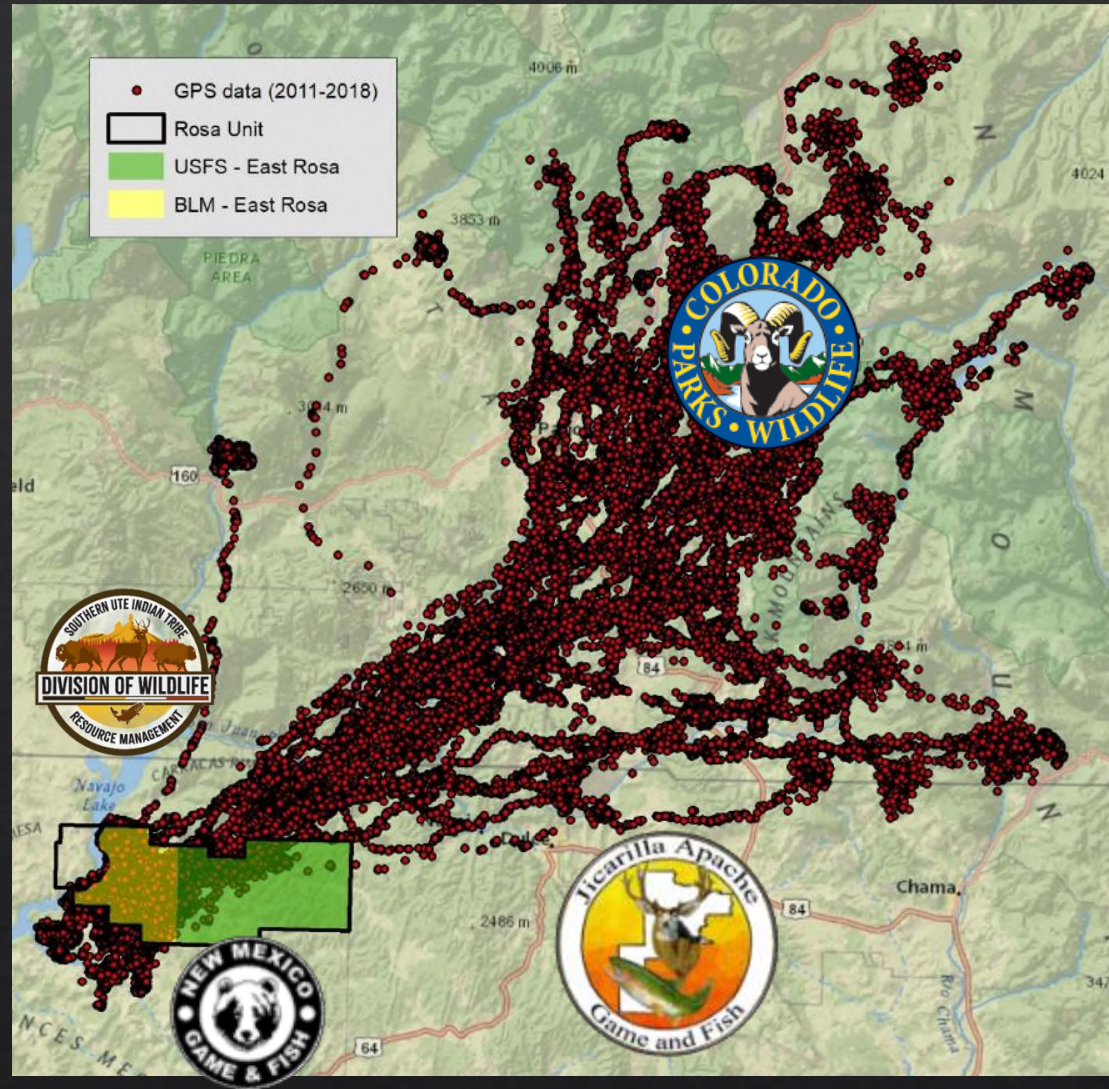
- ◊ Diversity = Resiliency
  - ◊ Population's Migration Portfolio → the more routes, timings, distances, pace, habitat types, stopover sites, start and end locations, the better
  - ◊ Migration Promotes Abundance (Seasonality of Ranges)







# “A National Treasure”: The San Juan Interstate Deer Herd



Rosa Study: One Example of the San Juan Interstate Deer Herd reliant on GMU2B winter range (Sawyer, H. 2018)



# San Juan Interstate Wildlife Working Group (est. 1988)

- ◆ Intended to promote the open communication and coordinated management of migrating big-game
  - ◆ Members: CPW, JGFD, NMDGF, SUIT
  - ◆ Partners: BLM, USFS, State Land, Private
- ◆ 2009 MOU between Colorado (Gov. Ritter) and NM (Gov. Richardson)
  - ◆ Directed NMDGF and CPW to “work together” in managing migratory wildlife BUT Excluded SUIT and JAN as signatories



- ◆ Good Faith Annual Meeting- Present day





# An Assessment of Migration GMU 2B

- ◆ 90-95% Migratory
- ◆ Important Winter Range
  - ◆ Overwinter Survival Requires: Habitat Enhancement, Oil and Gas Mitigation, Access Management, Law Enforcement, Protection and Harvest Restraint
- ◆ Migrant Deer must travel through 3 jurisdictions to reach GMU 2B: *Oct 21-Nov 6 Fall Migration Periods* (Sawyer, H. 2018, Tator, K. 2018)
- ◆ GMU 2B Harvest relies on bucks that are born, grown and protected on surrounding lands



# What Happened?



- ◆ 2019-2022 NMDGF Commission Authorized Late Season Hunt for “Youth on Thanksgiving Break”
  - ◆ Timing and Excessive Quota: 150 tags issued /year during rut with a damaging 95% success! = 590 mature bucks
- ◆ 2023-2026: Opportunity-Based Harvest Continues





# Issues and Concerns

- ◇ 2B Hunts hurt neighboring constituents; The Jicarilla Apache people
- ◇ Late or Rut Hunts exploit JGFD deer conservation efforts
- ◇ Impacts Compounded by Record-breaking Drought
- ◇ Detrimental effects to:
  - ◇ Regional Health, Abundance and Age Class of Bucks
  - ◇ Jicarilla Apache Culture and Traditions
  - ◇ Regional Hunting Opportunity and Economy
  - ◇ Jicarilla Model for Self-reliance and Sovereignty
  - ◇ Constituents; Individuals, Businesses, Tribes
- ◇ Unilateral and Damaging Decisions are a Clear Violation of:
  - ◇ State Law: State Tribal Collaboration Act (2009)
  - ◇ District Court Order (1990)



# Jicarilla Apache Tribe v. State of New Mexico, 742 F. Supp. 1487 (D.N.M. 1990)

US District Court for the District of New Mexico -March 6, 1990

## Judgment in favor of JAN Stipulated:

“...the Nation and State to work together, and to coordinate annual allocation of mule deer and elk permits in Units 2, 4, 5 and the Jicarilla Apache Reservation (No. CIV 88 1136 M)”





# SAME DEER HERD: Conflicting Management

## ◆ Jicarilla Apache Nation

◆ 850,000 acres

◆ **Licenses: 50**

◆ 48 Tribal Member

◆ 2 November licenses auctioned

◆ Funding: Self-reliant

◆ Monitoring: Intensive

◆ Population, Harvest, Habitats, Disease

◆ Research: In-House

◆ Harvest: Quality

◆ Habitat Work: Intensive

◆ Regulations set: Annually, Science-driven as resource allows

◆ Pro-active



## ◆ New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish GMU 2B

◆ 477,666 acres

◆ **Licenses: 1,750**

◆ 775 November licenses

◆ Funding: Federal and State Excise Taxes, Permit Sales, etc.

◆ Monitoring: Minimal

◆ Research: ?

◆ Harvest: Opportunity Based

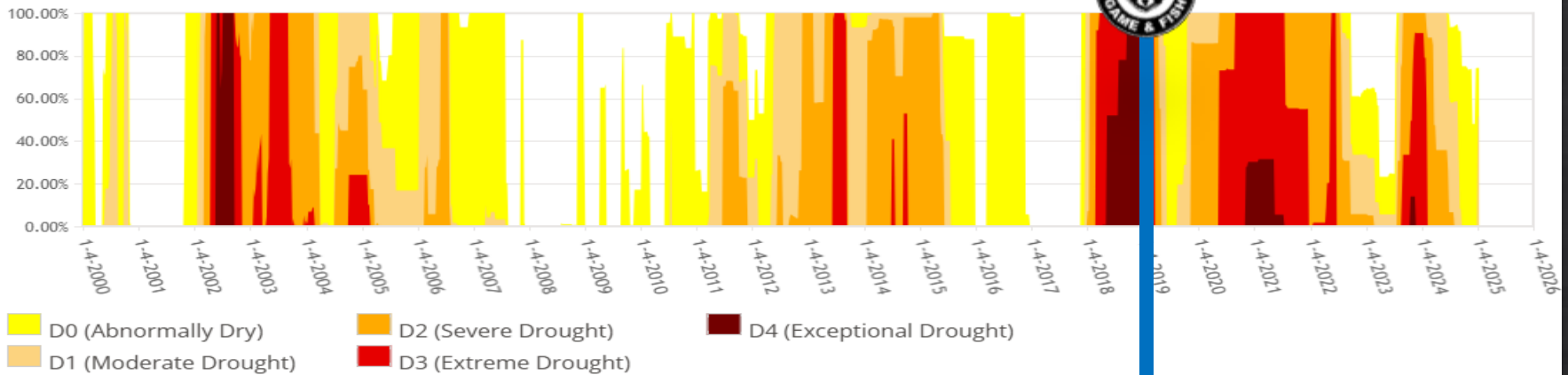
◆ Habitat work: BLM, USFS

◆ Regulations set: 4 years into future, social precedence

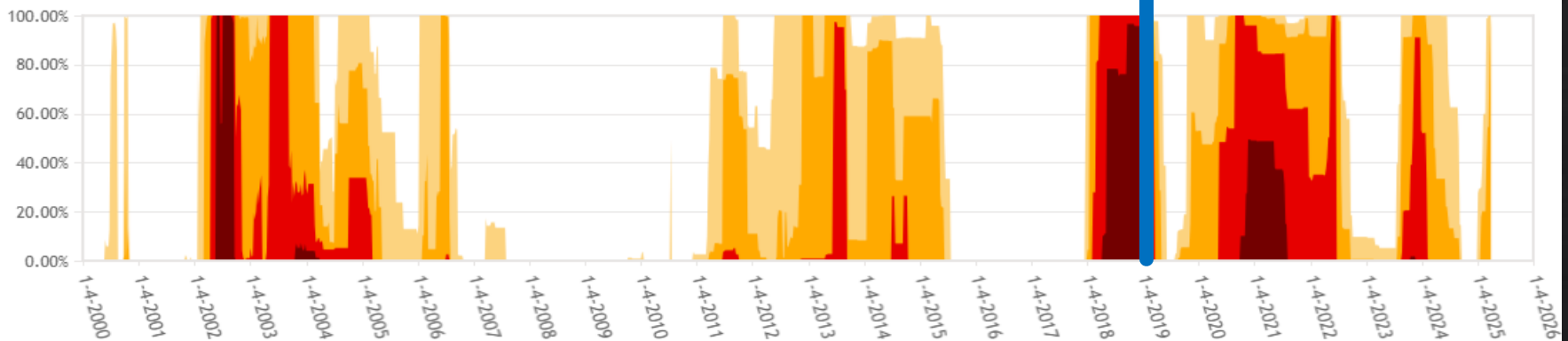


# US Drought Monitor 2000-Present

Jicarilla Apache Nation Percent Area in U.S. Drought Monitor

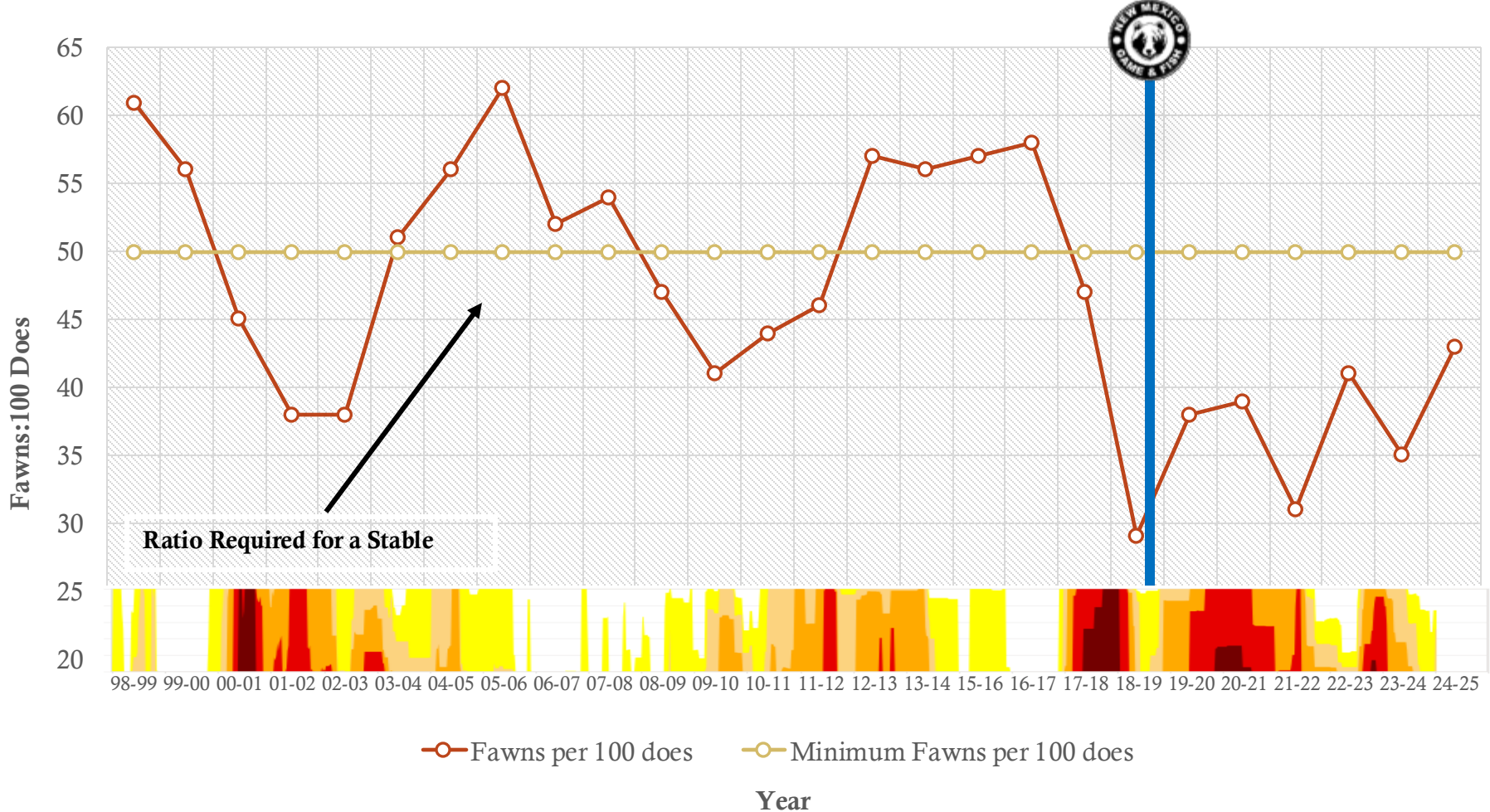


Rio Arriba County (NM) Percent Area in U.S. Drought Monitor Categories





# Jicarilla Game and Fish: Trends in Fawn Recruitment



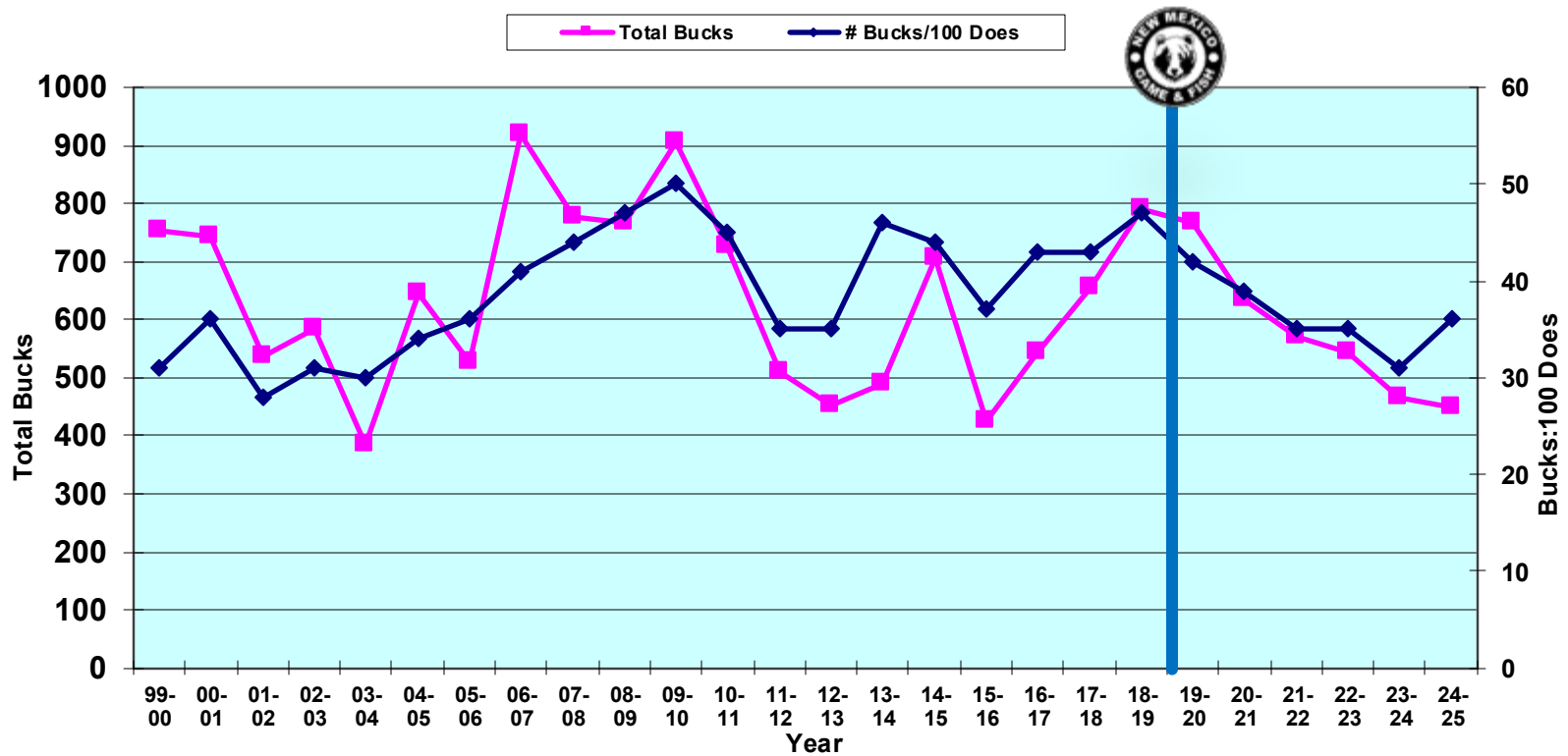
In 2018....“Delayed impacts in buck abundance and age and sex structure, and harvest potential (in 4-5 years ~2023, 2024, 2025)”

→since 2018, we have seen reductions in consecutive years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 cohort (fawns)

# Jicarilla Apache Nation

## Buck Trends

Trends in Buck Ratios and Numbers







# Mule Deer Need Our Help!



- ◆ Reduce Harvest!
  - ◆ Quality Deer management has multiple Benefits to the Region's Deer Herd- regardless of jurisdiction
  - ◆ Rebuild Diversity and Resilience in our Herds
- ◆ Help us Strengthen and Protect the Connections between Mule Deer and our Constituents
- ◆ Support the Jicarilla model for conservation:
  - ◆ Restore Depleted Buck Age Class and Structure
  - ◆ Restore Depleted Buck Abundance
- ◆ Provide an Example: NMDGF serves New Mexico's most diverse communities and respects NM's first inhabitants



# Working Together for the Benefit of Shared Wildlife

- ◇ Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- ◇ Mescalero Apache Tribe
- ◇ Rep. Derrick Lente
- ◇ Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.
- ◇ Chama Peak Land Alliance
- ◇ NM Council of Outfitters and Guides
- ◇ Safari Club International- Four Corners Chapter
- ◇ Future Generations of Mule Deer Lovers
- ◇ Numerous Local Businesses
- ◇ Non-hunters
- ◇ Hunters / Conservationists
- ◇ Tribal Membership (NM Residents)







# Shorten the Time-Scale NM Mule Deer Management



**Concern:** Mule Deer Require Pro-active Management

Reconsider the 4-year NMDGF cycle to allow NMDGF staff to adapt and proactively manage uncertainty within a biologically appropriate timeframe





# Enhanced Communication



Adherence to:

- ◆ NM State Tribal Collaboration Act
- ◆ Court Order (1990)
- ◆ Existing Framework:

San Juan Interstate  
Wildlife Working Group







# Immediate Action: Mule Deer Need Change



The magnitude of the problem requires immediate action

## IMMEDIATE ACTION: 20% Reduction

Under authority of the NMDGF Director, we ask for a 20% reduction in GMU2B tags in 2026 season, all from November Rifle Seasons

### Option B: OPEN THE NMDGF DEER RULE 2023-2026:

Opportunity-based to Quality Deer Management to take effect in 2026, which under NMDGF rules mandates harvest restraint.



## ADOPTION of QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT by 2027



# Desirable Outcome from the New Mexico Game Commission



1. Direct Mr. Sloan and staff to sit with Jicarilla Game and Fish for a thorough review of issues and impacts as presented
2. Jointly develop a plan of action to address and resolve issues (short and long term)
3. Provide recommendations to the Commission to address and resolve the outstanding issues identified for **Commission action at June (Red River) meeting**



Iheed'n (Thank you)

