

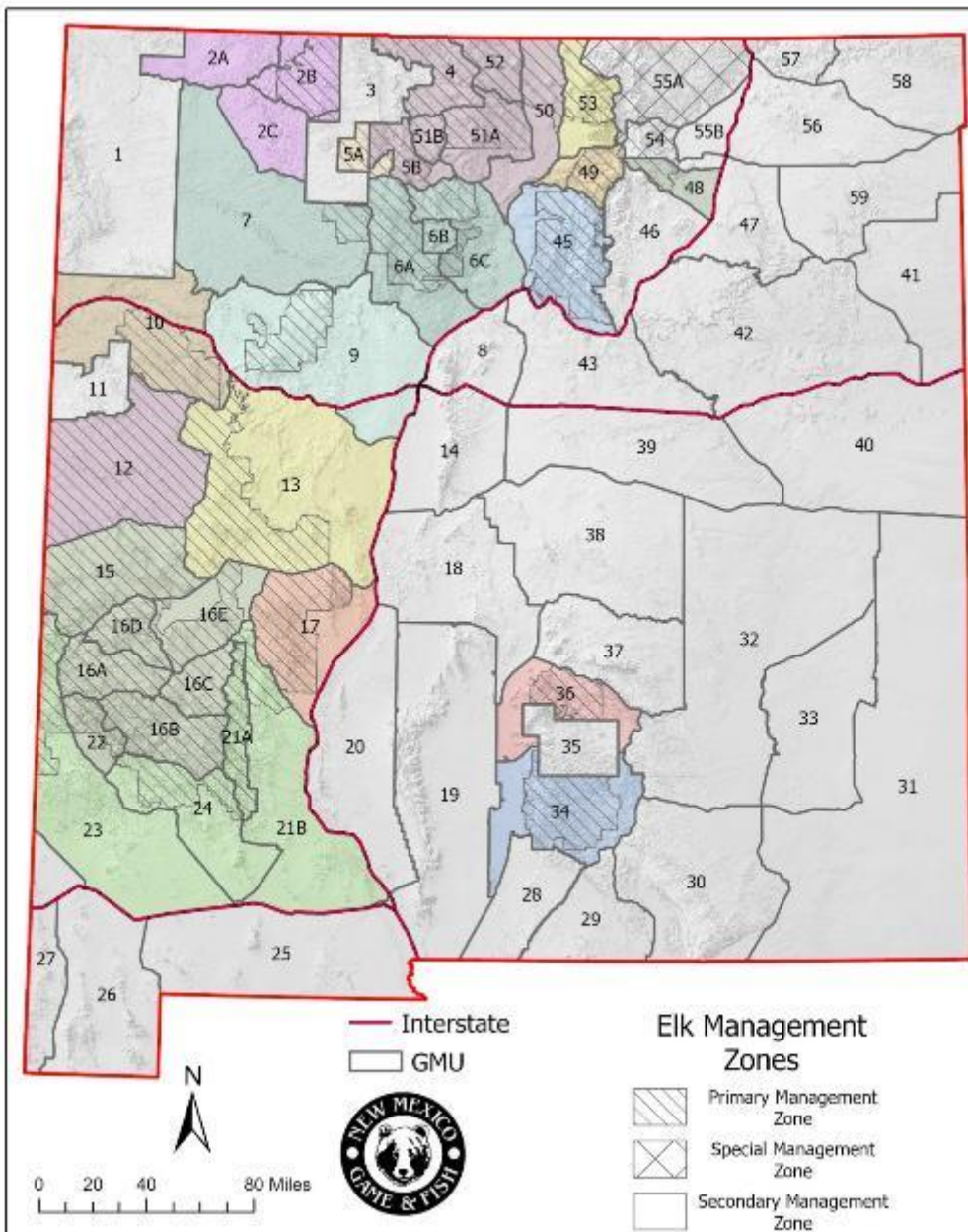


ELK - 19.31.14

NMAC



NM Elk Herd Management Zones



Primary Management Zone (PMZ)

- 32 GMUs – Mostly public land, licenses allocated by NMDOW management objectives: OOM, QHM

Secondary Management Zone (SMZ)

- Almost entirely private land
- Mostly marginal habitat or agricultural.
- Management objectives not set by rule

Special Management Zone (SpMZ)

- 2 GMUs – Entirely private land
- Large private ranches
- License allocation negotiated with DOW

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE



Statewide Elk Harvest Summary

(2019 -23 Elk rule)

(2023 -27 Elk rule)

		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
License sold/converted		38,179	38,024	38,578	38,838	39,022
Hunters reporting		80%	79%	78%	81%	80%
Harvest Success		39%	39%	39%	40%	40%
Estimated Harvest	Cows	6,442	6,256	6,705	6,199	6,666
	Bulls	9,076	8,975	8,008	7,910	7,644
Satisfaction Rating		3.71	3.71	3.69	3.72	3.67



Elk Management Objectives

Quality Hunt Management (QHM)

- (a) Elk harvest in regional populations, herd units or GMUs within a region results in the trend of annual bull mortality rates to be below 35%.
- (b) Seasons should be designed to ensure timing and length of hunts are desirable.
- (c) At least 2/3 of all hunters are “satisfied” with the experience



Photo: Caitlin Ruhl

Optimal Opportunity Management (OOM)

- (a) Elk harvest in regional populations, herd units or GMUs within a region results in the trend of annual bull mortality rates to be below 45% and harvest near optimal sustainable yield.
- (b) Season structure should be designed to ensure timing and length of hunts provide significant amount of opportunity.
- (c) At least 1/3 of all hunters are “satisfied” with the experience.



Photo: Orrin Duvuvuei

175 Public Comments Submitted

NMDOW Recommendation	Comments Approve	Comments Disapprove
Southeast Region		
Increase 'A' licenses in GMUs 34/36	5	7
Increase Youth 'A' licenses in GMU 34/36	6	
Northwest Region		
Increase in 'A' licenses	2	
Shift 'MB' hunt dates		1
Valle Vidal		
Decrease 'A' licenses	5	
Gila Region		
Decrease overall 'A' licenses	15	
Decrease YE licenses in Gila herd unit	10	
Shift MB rifle hunts later	5	
Secondary Management Zone		
Increase hunt opportunity in GMU 32	7	
Increase hunt opportunity in GMU 29/30	3	
Increase hunt opportunity in GMU 38	3	
General		
Introduce muzzleloader hunts to start PMZ post archery	8	1
Align PMZ and SMZ hunt dates	5	66 (54 form letter)
ELK-1-700 as a quality hunt	4	
Minimize species hunt overlap	2	
License purchase no less than 1 day prior to hunt	3	
No purchase of licenses once hunt has started	1	



Proposed Elk Rule Changes for 2027-2030

- I. Adjust hunt season dates to account for calendar shift.**
- II. Align most primary management zone hunts to have a muzzleloader hunt first, followed by any-legal-weapon hunts.**
 - I. New muzzleloader hunts in GMUs 4 (WMAs), 5B, 12, 16A, 16B/22, 16C, 16D, 21A, 49, 50, 51.**
- III. Align hunt season start dates in GMUs containing both PMZ and SMZ (hybrid).**
- IV. Adjust some hunts to minimize overlap of weapons used or species hunted.**



Proposed Elk Rule Changes for 2027-2030

- V. Adjust draw license numbers based on biological data and management goals.**
- VI. Designate statewide draw elk license (currently ELK-1-700) as a quality hunt.**
- V. Require the purchase of a license at least one day prior to 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.**
- VI. Possible adjustment of management zone boundaries.**
 - V. No changes proposed**
- VII. Re-assess public/private land split due to land ownership changes of the last 4 years.**
 - V. No changes in public/private composition**



Status Update and Recommendations

Northwest Region

▪ San Juan Herd (GMU 2): Stable

- OOM
- (36:100:31)
- Slight increase in A licenses
 - 50 total draw tags
- 2 New YE hunts (75 tags ea)

▪ Lindrith Herd(GMU 5A): Stable

- OOM
- (36:100:31)
- Maintain current licenses and monitor harvest.
- New Muzzleloader hunt (10 tags)

▪ Mt Taylor Herd(GMU 9): Stabilizing

- OOM
- (35:100:36)
- Calf recruitment improved, yet not consistent over drought periods.
- PMZ/SMZ
- No changes recommended

▪ Zuni Herd(GMU 10): Stable

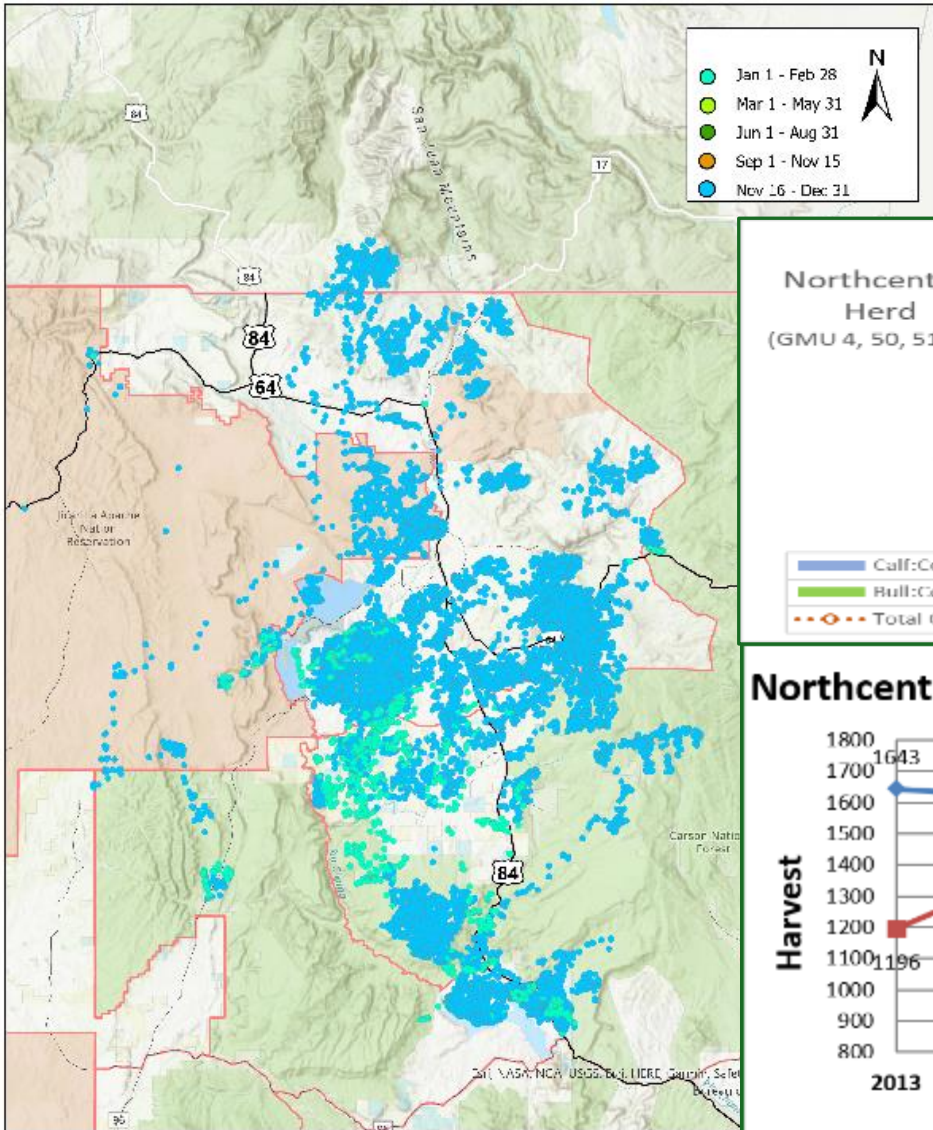
- OOM
- (36:100:31)
- Maintain current licenses and monitor harvest.
- PMZ/SMZ
- No changes recommended



■ San Antonio/Chama Herd (GMUs 4, 5B, 50, 51, 52): Stable

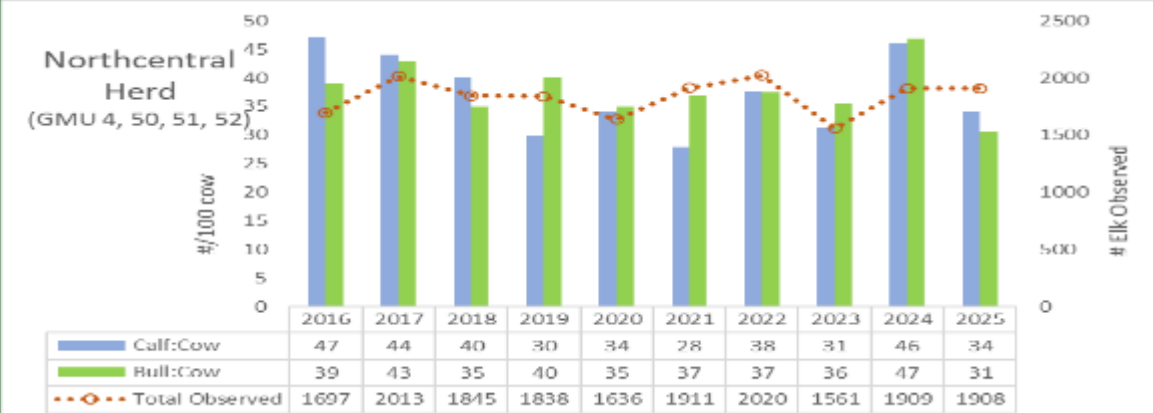
- Demographic ratios consistently high.
- Average C:c = 37 B:C = 42 (2016 – 2025)

Northcentral Elk Winter Use

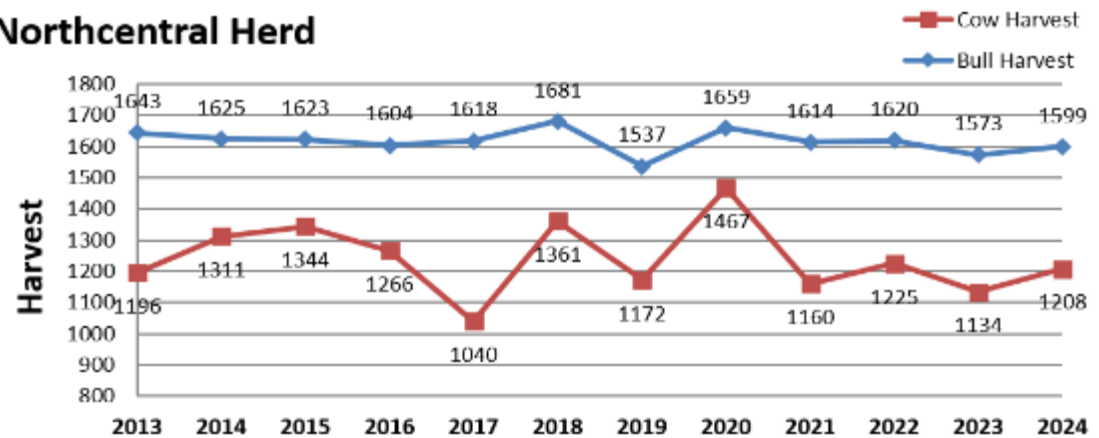


High winter concentrations in GMU 51

- Several Pop Mgmt hunts in GMU 51 since 2014, to address



Northcentral Herd



Status Update and Recommendations

Northcentral Region

■ **San Antonio/Chama Herd (GMUs 4, 5B, 50, 51, 52): Stable**

- (37:100:35)
- Consistently high recruitment across herd unit
- Pop. Growth between 2013-2019
- Pop. Stability (overlapping est.) 2019-2025

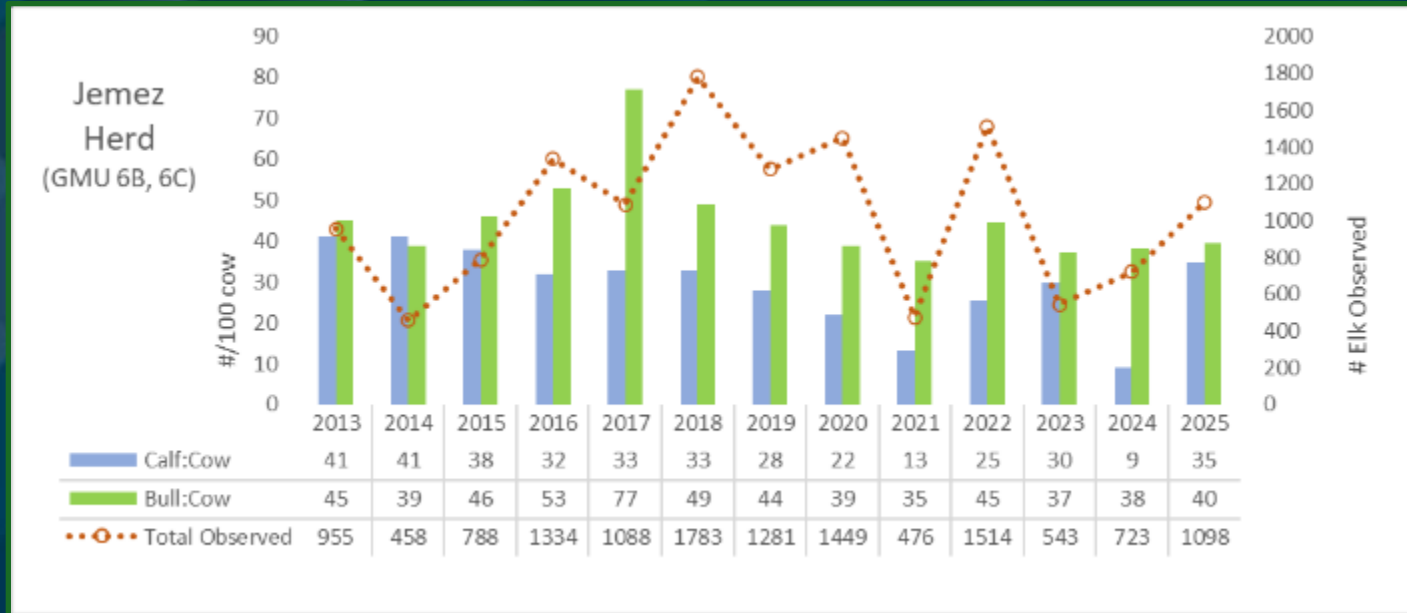
■ **Proposed Action**

- Slight increase in (A) licenses (GMU 51)
 - 18 public draw, 20 YE
- New Muzzleloader hunts in GMU 4 (WMAs), 5B, 50, 51.
 - Net license increases:
 - GMU 4 : 20 MB/A
 - GMU 5B : 19 MB
 - GMU 50 : 20 MB

Status Update and Recommendations

Jemez Region

- **Jemez Herd (GMU 6A-C, 7):** Stable w/low recruitment
 - 6A/B QHM; 6C & 7 OOM
 - (40:100:23)
 - Low recruitment observed since 2019 (ave = 23 C:c *without 2024)
 - No proposed changes



*Average number of calves per cow



Status Update and Recommendations Southwestern Region

▪ Fence Lake Herd (GMU 12): Stable

- (37:100:49)*
- Consistently high recruitment across herd unit, but heavy drought over past several years.
- New Muzzleloader hunt (35 MB)

▪ Datil Herd (GMU 13): Stable

- (36:100:40)*
- Consistently high recruitment across herd unit, but heavy drought over past several years.
- PMZ/SMZ
- No changes recommended: No new hunt

▪ San Mateo/Magdalena Herd (GMU 17): Stable

- (37:100:34)*
- PMZ/SMZ
- No changes recommended: No new hunt

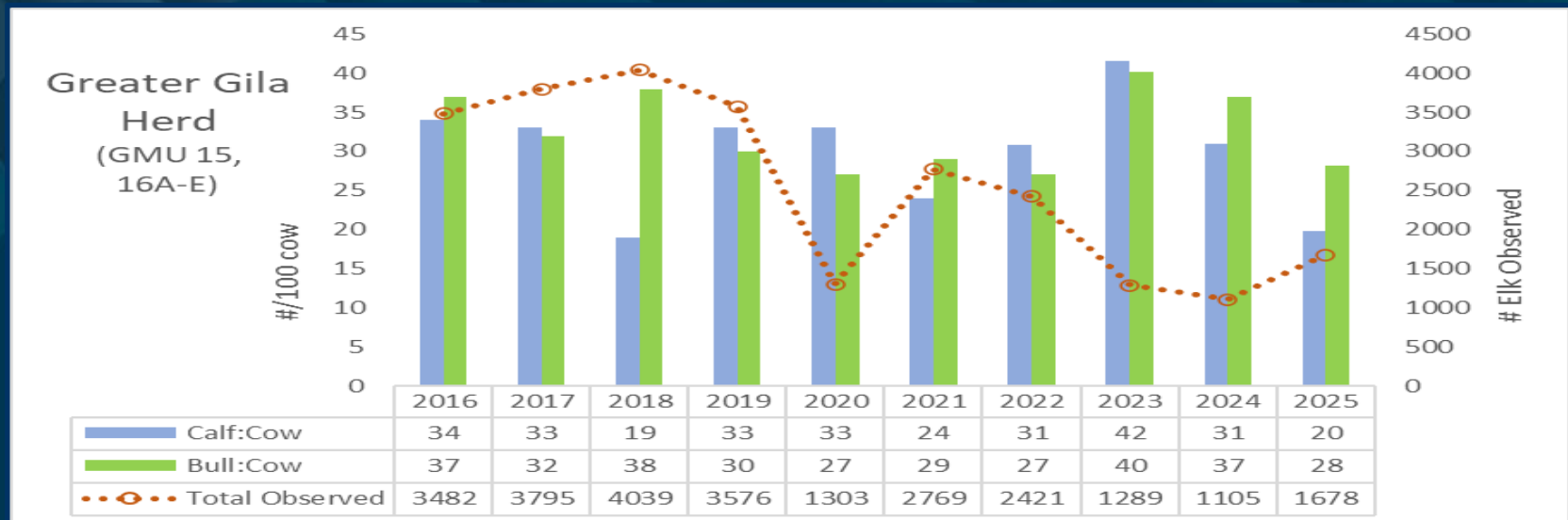
* Average number of deer
2001-2009



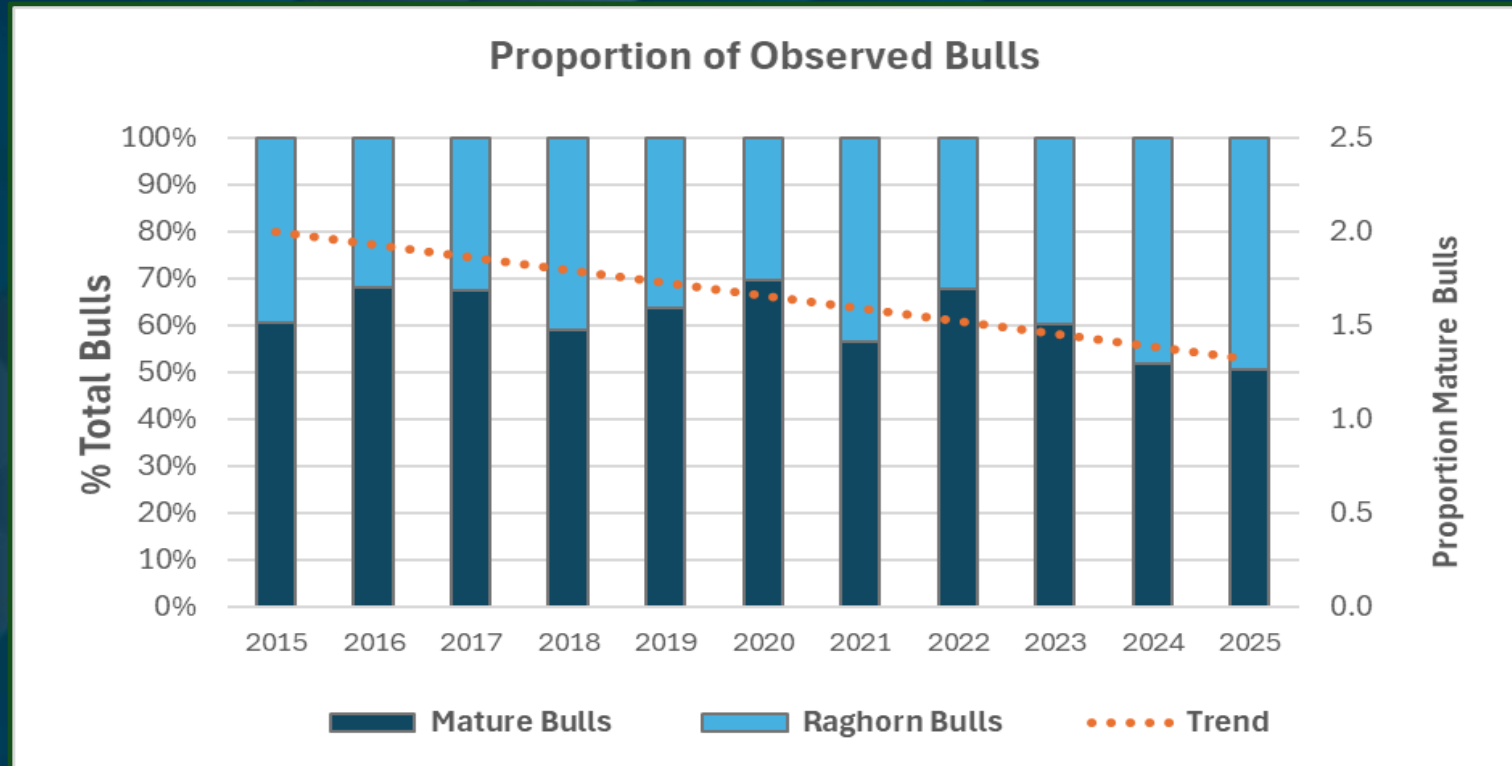
■ Greater Gila Herd (GMUs 15, 16A-E): Decreasing

- Suboptimal calf recruitment due to predation/drought
- High harvest pressure and severe drought conditions – increased mortality in adult females
- High harvest pressure during late rut impacting bull quality / numbers

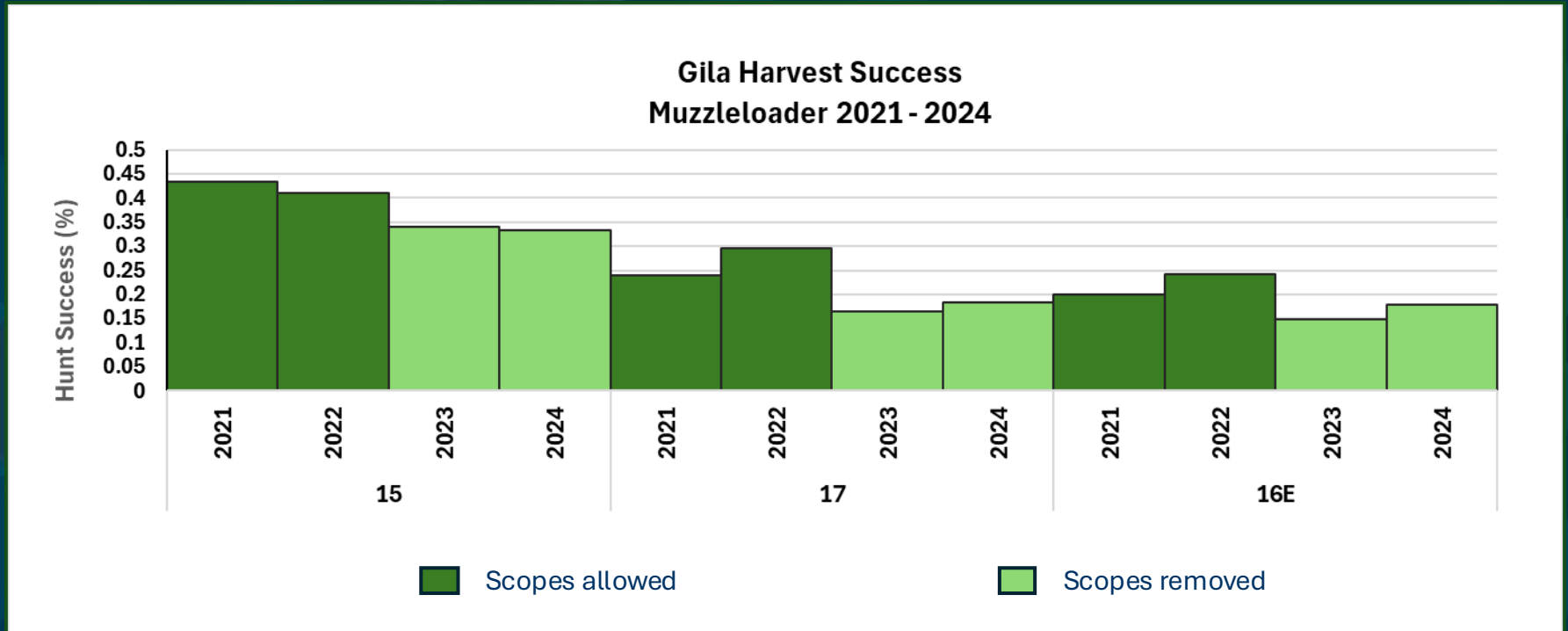
RULE CYCLE	BULL:COW:CALF
YEAR	(5yr Ave)
2013	40:100:45
2016	37:100:36
2019	34:100:33
2022	33:100:27
2025	30:100:28



▪ Greater Gila Herd (GMUs 15, 16A-E): Mature Bull Numbers



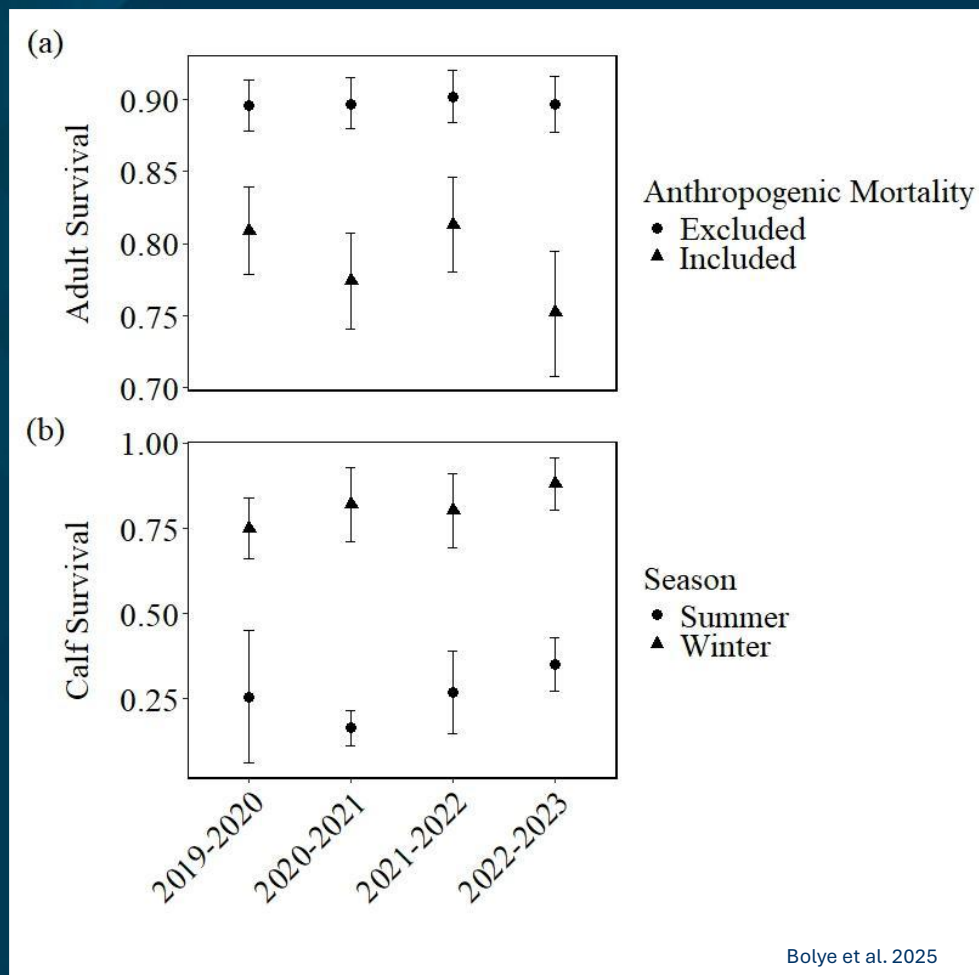
■ GMU 15, 17, 16E: Muzzleloader harvest success



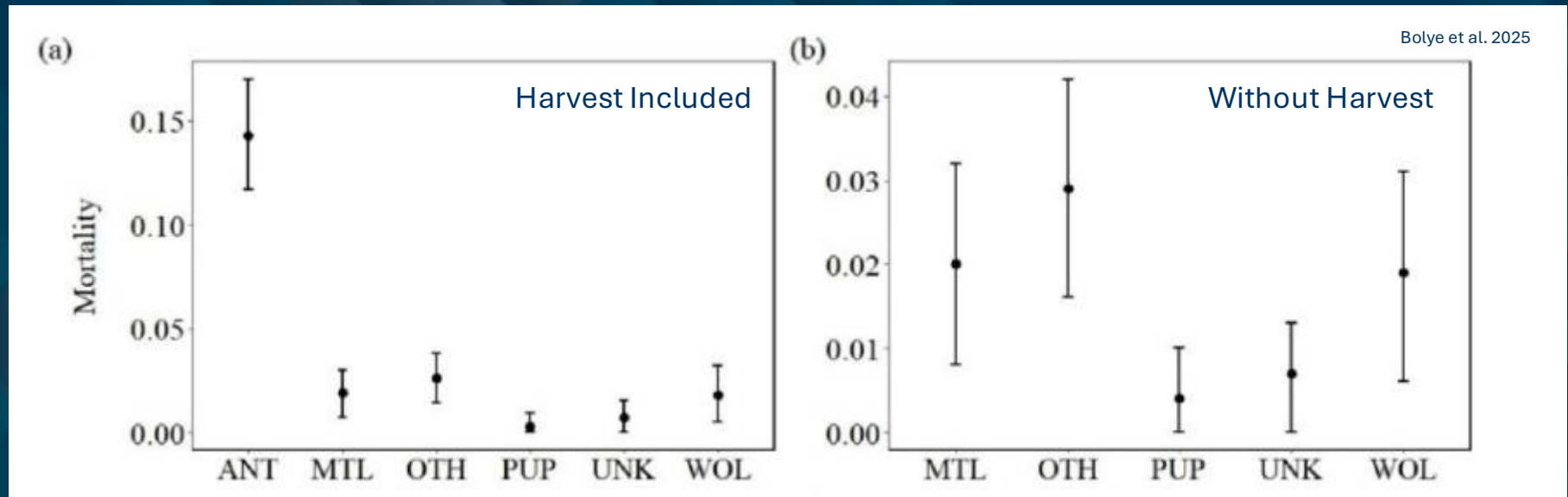
Greater Gila Herd (GMUs 15, 16A-E):

NMSU Research Findings

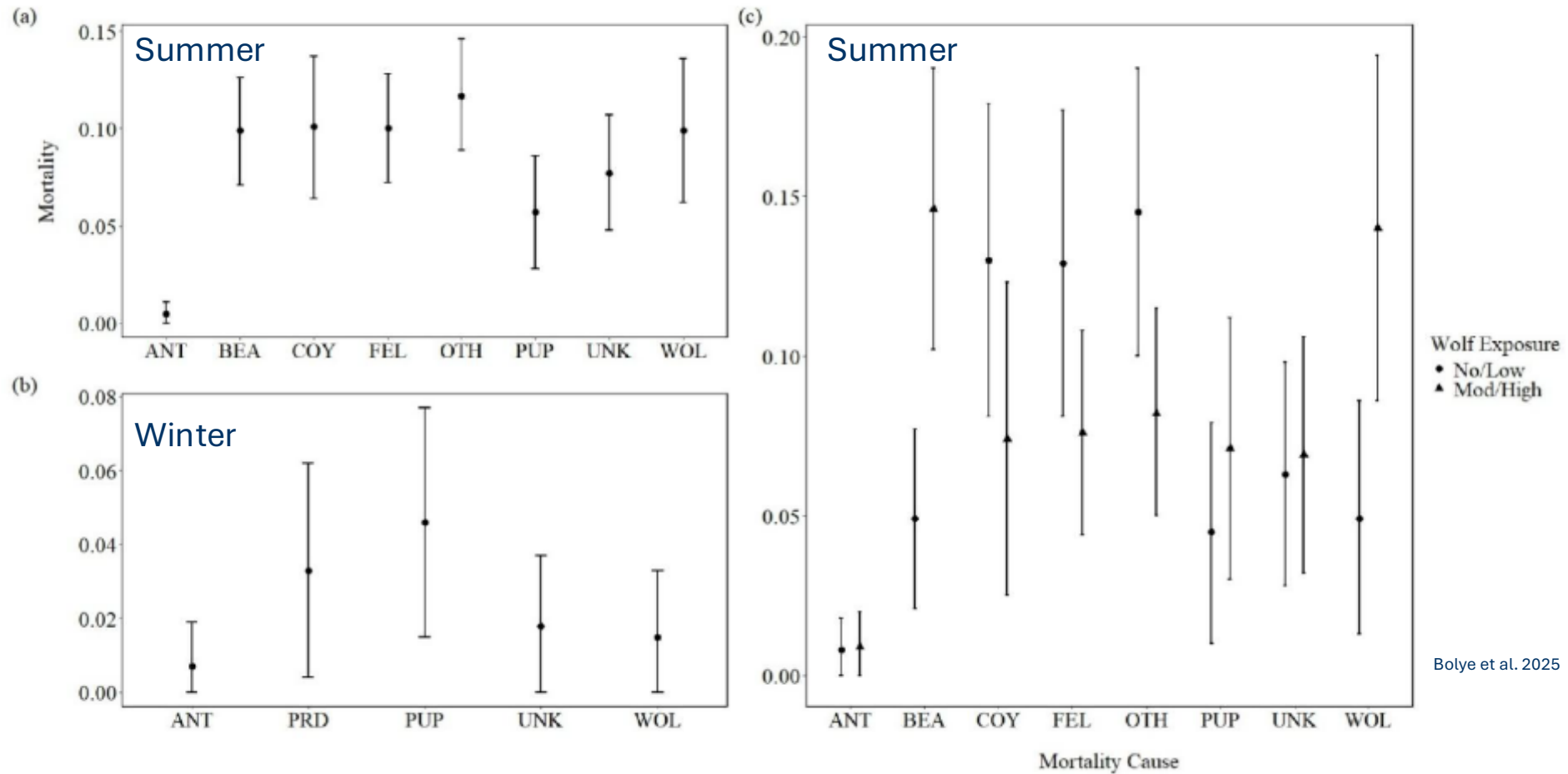
- Several research projects between 2019 – 2024
- Utilized nearly 900 GPS collars on adult females and ~500 collars on calves
- Investigating elk mortality / survival, habitat use, and behavior
- Major Findings: Adult Female
 - Annual survival was found to be lower (~76%) than previously estimated (~81%)
 - #1 cause of mortality was hunter harvest
 - Other contributors to mortality were predation / exposure to predators, age, and drought severity (specifically within the most recent 1-3 months, and prior year)



- Greater Gila Herd (GMUs 15, 16A-E): NM Adult female mortality probability
 - NMSU Research findings



Greater Gila Herd (GMUs 15, 16A-E): NM Calf Mortality Probability



- **Greater Gila Herd (GMUs 15, 16A-E): Recommendations**
 - Decrease in licenses to buffer population from additive mortality
 - Decrease 'A' licenses by 27-30% across GMU 15, 16A, 16C, 16D, 16E
 - Net decrease of 278 A licenses
 - Eliminate YE hunts to decrease late season cow harvest
 - Aligning PMZ public hunts to all begin with muzzleloader hunts, followed by rifle hunts.
 - New muzzleloader hunts in GMU 16A, 16B/22, 16C, 16D
 - Net increase of 125 MB licenses
 - Hybrid unit (GMU 16E) – Shift hunt dates across management zones to have same start date
 - Shift October hunt dates later to reduce harvest pressure during rut
 - Hunts shift later with introduction of muzzleloader hunts

Photo: Travis Zaffarano



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Status Update and Recommendations Southwest Region

■ Lesser Gila Herd (GMU 21A/B, 23, 24): Stable

- OOM
- (28:100:25*)
- Maintain current licenses and monitor harvest.
- Consider increasing survey efforts for herd
- PMZ/SMZ

*limited survey data (<350 elk observed on average)

- New muzzleloader hunt in GMU 21A (15 MB)



Status Update and Recommendations

Southeast Region

■ Sacramento Herd (GMU 34): Stable*

- OOM
- (53:100:35)
- PMZ/SMZ
- Increase in 'A' licenses
 - 60 public draw
 - 100 YE

■ Ruidoso Herd (GMU 36): Stable*

- OOM
- (60:100:35)
- PMZ/SMZ
- Increase in 'A' licenses
 - 60 YE

- Collaborative study between NMDOW and Mescalero Division of Natural Resource Management and Protection.
 - Deploy 60 GPS collars on adult females
 - Determine seasonal ranges / movement corridors
 - Investigate movements during hunt seasons
 - Help determine survival rates and inform management of GMU 34 / 36



Status Update and Recommendations Northeast Region

Pecos Herd (GMU 45): Stable (36:100:31)*

PMZ / SMZ

No changes recommended

Whites Peak Herd (GMU 48): Stable (36:100:31)*

PMZ / SMZ

No changes recommended

Penasco Herd (GMU 49): Stable (35:100:32)*

PMZ / SMZ

New muzzleloader hunt (20 MB)

Ute-Midnight-San Cristobal Herd (GMU 53)

Stable (34:100:24)*

PMZ / SMZ

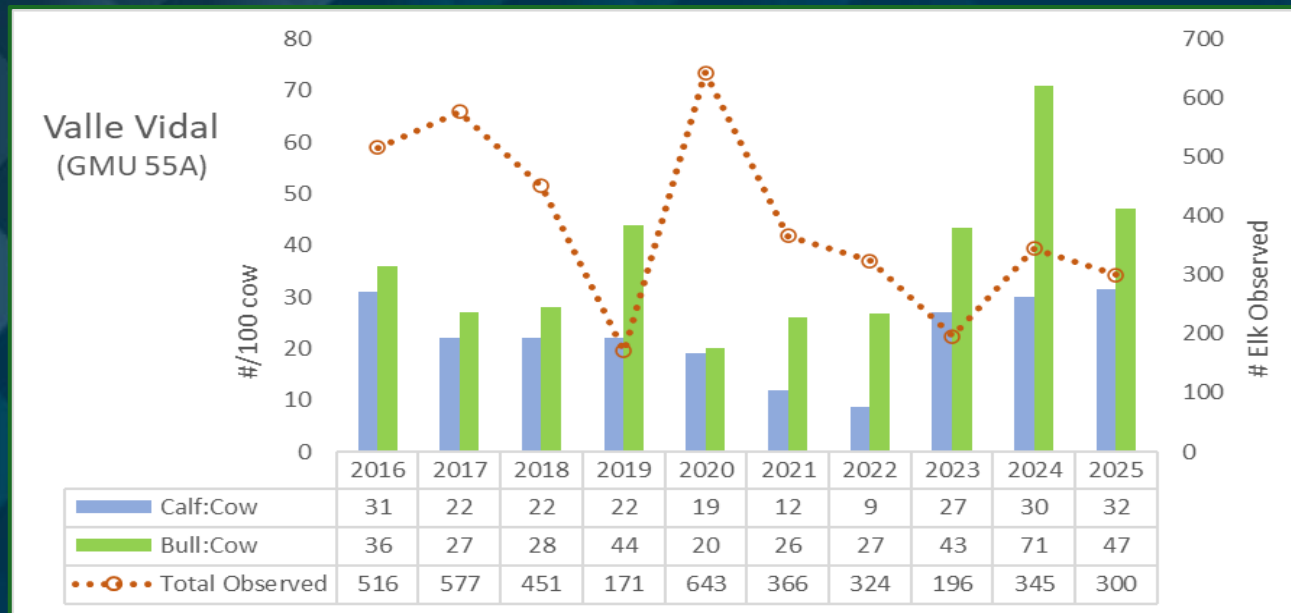
No changes recommended

* Average number of elk observed
<250/year



Status Update and Recommendations Northeast Region

- **Valle Vidal Herd (GMU 55A):** Slightly decreasing (39:100:19)
 - QHM / Once in a lifetime hunts
 - Concerning calf recruitment observed since 2019 by NMDOW and VPR
 - Only 2 years C:c > 30 since 2017



Recommendations:

Reduce public draw license (15 A)

Reassess private land authorizations to reduce available 'A'



Secondary Management Zones

Mostly private lands in SMZ; however, public draw hunts occur in areas with steady/growing populations and accessible public lands.

GMU 29/30

Create new 'A' rifle hunt (20 licenses)

Provide hunt opportunity in expanding elk herds increasing pressure on local resources in arid region.

GMU 32

Create two new 'ES' rifle hunts of 15 licenses each

Provide hunt opportunity in expanding elk herd

GMU 38

Increase 'ES' rifle hunts from 10 to 20 hunters for both draw hunts.

Provide hunt opportunity in established elk herd



Youth Encouragement Hunts

Designed as a recruitment tool for the hunting sport, Youth Encouragement hunts throughout the state are also employed as population management tools by increasing adult female harvest in robust populations.

GMU 2

Create 2 new YE hunts

Late November Rifle +75 'A'

Late December Rifle +75 'A'

GMU 51

Increase YE Licenses

Late November Rifle +10 (115 total)

GMU 34

Increase YE licenses

Late December Rifle +100 (225 total)

GMU 36

Increase YE licenses

Late November Rifle +30 (110 total)

Late December Rifle +30 (110 total)



Youth Encouragement Hunts Increase Changes Proposed

GMU	Hunt Period	Current Licenses	Proposed Licenses	Net Change
2	Late Nov Rifle	0	75	+75
2	Late Dec Rifle	0	75	+75
34	Late Dec Rifle	125	225	+100
36	Late Nov Rifle	80	110	+30
36	Late Dec Rifle	80	110	+30
51	Late Nov Rifle	105	115	+10
51	Late Dec Rifle	105	115	+10
Total		495	826	+331



Youth Encouragement Hunts

Overall Changes Proposed

GMU	Hunt Period	Current Licenses	Proposed Licenses	Net Change
2	Late Nov Rifle	0	75	+75
2	Late Dec Rifle	0	75	+75
34	Late Dec Rifle	125	225	+100
36	Late Nov Rifle	80	110	+30
36	Late Dec Rifle	80	110	+30
51	Late Nov Rifle	105	115	+10
51	Late Dec Rifle	105	115	+10
15	Late Nov Rifle	75	0	-75
15	Late Dec Rifle	75	0	-75
16A	Late Nov Rifle	75	0	-75
16A	Late Dec Rifle	75	0	-75
16C	Late Nov Rifle	75	0	-75
16C	Late Dec Rifle	75	0	-75
16D	Late Nov Rifle	75	0	-75
16D	Late Dec Rifle	75	0	-75
16E	Late Nov Rifle	75	0	-75
16E	Late Dec Rifle	75	0	-75
Total		1245	825	-420
ALL YE HUNTS	TOTAL	1960	1540	-420 (21%)





Photo: Travis Zaffarano

Submit comments on proposed changes:

DGF-Elk-Rule@dgf.nm.gov

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