



August 31, 2023

Dear Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff and Commission,

As a Colorado nonprofit corporation whose mission is protecting and enhancing the health and sustainability of wildlife and public lands in the Gunnison Basin, Gunnison Wildlife Association (GWA) thanks you for the opportunity to provide comments on Deer Herd Management Plan (HMP) revisions, including for data analysis units (DAUs) in the Gunnison Basin.

First off, we believe the current approach to deer management in the Gunnison Basin DAUs has led to a generally high level of hunter satisfaction and herd stability based largely on effective management within the context of current population objectives and buck-doe ratios. For that, CPW staff should be commended.

Going forward, however, we support converting the three existing local DAUs — comprising game management units (GMUs) 54, 55, 551, 66 and 67 — to a single DAU for the entire Gunnison Basin. We see a few notable benefits from such a change. For one, mule deer within the Gunnison Basin have long been considered for rhetorical (and, in some cases, management) purposes as a single herd, distinct and separate from deer in other geographical units within Colorado's Southwest Region. We believe more formally managing Gunnison Basin deer within a single DAU would not only help streamline CPW processes affecting these animals without impacting management, but also would provide a more clear indication of herd size and likeness within funding and decision-making processes involving other state or federal agencies, or even non-governmental organizations. We find this to be particularly beneficial amid Colorado's ever-increasing population and growing pressures placed on wildlife and natural resources through additional traffic, tourism and recreational development — particularly as new policies are considered and funding sources become available to protect wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

Within a revised HMP for Gunnison Basin GMUs, we support increasing the total population objective to between 19,000 and 21,000 animals. As 2022 Big Game Deer Hunter Attitude Surveys indicated, the majority of respondents expressed a desire for either a slight or moderate increase in the population of deer in local units over the next 10 years. This desire

within the surveys bears true regardless of the local DAU. As a local nonprofit representing the voice of hunters in the Gunnison Basin, we support this desire.

Lastly, through the Deer HMP revision process, we would like to ensure the door remains open for discussion about, and consideration of, special or unique approaches to managing deer in the Gunnison Basin. Such an approach could entail, for example, varying buck-doe ratios which rotate among local GMUs on a regular basis. We would like to continue to explore this possibility with CPW staff.

We thank you for consideration of GWA's perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce T Mullin Jr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce T. Mullin, Jr.
President
Gunnison Wildlife Association Board of Directors