

LIMITED PERMIT MULE DEER BUCK HUNTING RESTRICTIONS IN EASTERN MT- HISTORICAL INFORMATION, ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC EXPECTATION OF HUNTING DISTRICT 652

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Hunting District 652 is a limited permit mule deer buck only area, found along the east side of Fort Peck Lake in FWP Administrative Region 6. The district was initially established in 1987 to meet public desire to produce “more and bigger mule deer bucks”. Population and harvest objectives were established within the Mule Deer Adaptive Harvest Management (2001) guidelines. Mule deer demographics in this district are monitored annually through post-season aerial survey methods. Hunting and harvest metrics are monitored through an annual survey of successful permit applicants via a mailed questionnaire, along with request for a front incisor for cementum age analysis. We reviewed these data to assess whether management objectives set for HD 652 are being met for buck:doe ratios, density of deer and age structure of harvested bucks. These data were compared to similar mule deer buck data from other general hunting season districts collected at the Havre Check Station. During most years since its inception, management objectives set forth for hunting district 652 are met. The general deer season structure is also producing similar metrics during those years. Wildlife managers considering adapting a limited permit mule deer hunting district should have a clear picture of the public's desired outcome for such a season structure, as they relate to measurable management objectives and the likelihood of meeting public expectation.