

Concern for deer, elk populations

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The Warm Springs Fish and Wildlife Committee held a public meeting in June regarding deer and elk populations on the reservation.

They shared information on the latest deer and elk population estimates.

The most recent deer estimate, conducted in December 2013, found approximately 1,303 deer on the reservation.

Buck ratios are healthy at 23 bucks per 100 does; however, fawn ratios are low at 43 fawns per 100 does.

Studies have shown that when fawn-to-doe ratios drop below 50-60 fawns per 100 does, mule deer populations cannot sustain themselves and decline.

Fawn recruitment on the reservation has been below the sustainable threshold for at least the last 20 years, and the deer population has been declining since 1998, according to Wildlife Department data.

Detailed studies could determine the exact causes of low fawn ratios, but these studies would be expensive.

Habitat conditions

The quality and quantity of available forage and thermal/hiding cover can have a large influence on recruitment and population growth rates.

Deer and elk production and recruitment are highly dependent on female body condition.

Poor body condition could prevent the doe/cow from going into estrus; cause the doe/cow to abort; decrease

milk supply, causing juvenile malnutrition; or cause the juvenile to enter winter in poor body condition, lowering the chance of survival.

Highly nutritious forage is especially important during late summer months, as this is the period when fat is accumulated in preparation for winter.

Unfortunately there is not just one easy fix to improve wildlife populations.

There are multiple factors that have cumulative effects, negatively impacting the deer and elk populations on the reservation.

The horse population is high, and horses directly compete with deer and elk for forage resources.

The land can only support a given number of animals. In order for one species' population to increase, often another must decrease.

One horse eats six times more than one deer. In other words one horse replaces six deer.

Rangeland damage

Wildfires have changed the landscape over the last few decades.

Historically, fire had a positive impact on the habitat. Now when wildfires burn the rangelands, native vegetation cannot recover due to the presence of invasive weeds, topped with heavy grazing.

Most of the deer and elk winter range has burned, reducing the amount of shrubs and increasing the presence of non-native vegetation.

Now, much of the vegetation that comes back after a fire on the range is composed of annual grasses that have no nutritional value to wild-

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life.

Reduction of grazing pressure may allow fire to be used as a tool to restore native vegetation on rangelands in the future.

Roads

Human disturbance during critical times of the year has a negative effect on wildlife.

Disturbances from extended hunting during the winter months, particularly December, negatively impact populations that are declining.

Land use management, such as timber harvest, also has an impact on deer and elk populations by removing critical summer range habitat, causing disturbances throughout the year and opening roads.

Roads have a substantial effect on deer and elk. Although roads provide a convenience, they come at a cost. Roads are a direct loss of habitat. They also cause habitat fragmentation, reducing the usability of habitat within a quarter mile on either side of the road.

The noise and visual disturbances from roads cause changes in the activity of wildlife that increase predation, reduce wildlife access to

resources, and increase energy expenditures necessary for survival.

Roads also increase access for poaching.

Poaching

Harvesting deer and elk out of season, harvest above bag limits, and harvest of does, all play large roles in reducing deer and elk populations on the reservation.

The wildlife department has been conducting a mule deer telemetry study on the reservation since 2011.

Information such as habitat use, migratory routes and mortality is collected specific to Warm Springs Reservation deer.

According to this study, 32 percent of reservation deer mortalities are due to illegal harvest.

Of the 32 percent illegally harvested, 78 percent are does. Removing does from the population has a large effect on population growth.

When a doe is removed from the population, so are all the generations of offspring that the doe could have produced for future generations of tribal members.

Tribal members who attended the June public meeting were troubled by the information. One member commented, "If people cannot follow tribal code they should be punished."

Another member felt that "by not saying anything (about poachers) you are just as guilty as they are."

The number of enrolled tribal members has increased 25 percent over the past 10 years. The wildlife department is concerned that there will not be enough deer and

elk on the reservation to support the human population growth.

The Fish and Wildlife Committee is trying to reduce the hunting pressure on the reservation by increasing hunting opportunities on ceded land.

There would need to be dramatic changes to the landscape to see major improvements to deer and elk populations on the reservation. The Natural Resources Branch is trying to make improvements, but has a limited number of staff and resources to deal with these issues.

Help and support from the tribal community is needed. Public support for road removals and reducing horses would help increase the success of these projects.

The branch and committee are also encouraging people to take advantage of off-reservation hunting opportunities, and to discourage poaching.

To report poaching, contact the Natural Resources Branch at 541-553-2001.

Deer and elk are about more than just putting food on the table. These animals are part of the foundation of culture and tradition. Without deer and elk part of that culture and tradition would be lost.

Culture camp next week

Camp Naimuma culture camp is coming up next week. This is a great opportunity for kids to learn language, learn skills on how to make traditional items, and spend time camping at Peter's Pasture.

The boys camp is July 13-17, and girls camp is July 20-24. Calling Greg or Deanie at the Culture and Heritage for information, 553-3290.

Road work by new school

Warm Springs Construction is working on East Tenino road from Chucker Road to Elliot Heights.

The work is to add turn lanes into the new school and build a pedestrian pathway from the school to the community center. That part of the road will now be closed Monday through Thursday from 6a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Please use alternate routes.

The Warm Springs IHS Clinic has suspended their Thursday late clinic through August 28, due to short staffing.

Museum fund-raiser next month

The Museum at Warm Springs will host the Fourteenth Annual Huckleberry Harvest in August.

The Harvest this year will be at the museum. Funds will help the museum to carry out

its crucial work.

If you have any questions, please call Deb Stacona at 541-553-3331. Or email: dstacona@museumatwarm springs.org

Free estate planning

Tribal members this summer have free help in drafting wills, powers of attorney, and other estate planning documents.

To make an appointment, call Lexi Lundgren at 541-553-3148. Her office at Warm Springs is in the Community Action Team trailer on campus, at 1136 Paiute Ave. Office hours are from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday through Wednesday.

She can take up to July 18.

Head Start holding health Round Up in July

Warm Springs Head Start is holding their Round Up on Tuesday, July 15, and on July 29 at the IHS Clinic.

Please call Head Start to schedule an appointment. Call 553-3242 and as for Danni or the Family Services Staff.

The Round up includes

a physical, plus hearing, dental and vision check ups .

All new and returning children need to receive these screenings and physical. This is an opportunity for families to get everything done at once, but you must have an appointment.

Look for the Grand Re-Opening Soon!



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