

## BLM STUDY REVIEW of HELLS CANYON COMPLEX STUDIES

### Brownlee Mule Deer Winter Ecology Study

3.2- 32

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This study inventoried mule deer populations by units, elevations and distribution by weather conditions. Migration routes were established by use of radio telemetry and last winter habitat selections were studied and winter mortalities documented.

#### 2. CONCLUSION

1) Few conclusions have been drawn. 2) Response inventory methods for determining mule deer populations, habitat use, animal mortalities and animal movements are good. 3) Cause of mortality, especially after swimming the reservoirs was "assumed to be predators". 4) No documentation of mortalities on the reservoirs was made. I presume reservoir ice did not exist during study years.

#### 3. STUDY ADEQUACY

The study doesn't address 1) loss of low elevation habitats due to flooding, 2) deer mortalities due to deer attempting to cross the river when the river is frozen over, 3) habitat selections or preferred habitats under the various weather occurrences, 4) mortality by habitat used; a. area with shrub or tree cover may have less mortalities due to weather and predation; b. forage with higher nutritional value could produce more vigorous and stronger animals to withstand weather and predation. 5) Importance of human disturbance.

#### 4. BLM CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

##### CONCLUSIONS

As the report is incomplete it doesn't allow conclusions to be drawn. It does have a good data base that when complete will allow decisions to be made concerning mule deer populations, *current* habitat use, and deer mortalities by age classifications. The deer mortalities by predation after deer crossed the reservoir can be attributed to the energy used during swimming and body heat lost in the cold water.

##### RECOMMENDATIONS

A complete analysis needs to be made concerning the elements studied and that may demonstrate that all BLM concerns have been addressed. The fact that deer choose to winter close to reservoir levels may indicate that deer would move lower if the reservoir didn't exist. The development of good riparian would be important for wintering deer especially during severe winters.