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July 14, 2008

Dear Tom,

On behalf of the membership of the BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF), I appreciate your June 5<sup>th</sup> letter regarding the Region 5 Mule Deer seasons. The BCWF is aware of the current development of a Southern Interior Mule Deer Management Harvest Strategy. The BCWF strongly believes there are solutions to the Region 5 Mule Deer seasons which do not necessarily mean restricting hunter opportunity.

There are several solutions that should be considered when trying to increase the buck:doe ratio in Region 5. Firstly, buck:doe ratios could be mediated simply by allowing a general open season for antlerless mule deer. Secondly, other regions should consider creating additional opportunity for mule deer harvest in other regions (3, 4, 7B, & 8) and to lengthen any buck seasons and 4pt seasons. There is also additional opportunity that could be created to harvest more white-tailed deer across the Province which will help lower mule deer harvest.

The Federation hopes that maximum sustainable yield and optimum sustainable yield discussed by Ian Hatter at the BCWF Annual General Meeting will be the focus of the Mule Deer strategy. From our involvement with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, we have been briefed on the consequences of allowing populations to become too large and the impacts of disease transmission when populations are concentrated. Presently, Alberta and Saskatchewan are clear examples of this.

For the overwhelming majority of hunters mule deer provide an opportunity to hunt annually and provide food for their family. Mule deer is a species that is at the core of hunter Recruitment and Retention. It helps bring new hunters to the hunting community and gives our aging hunters an opportunity to harvest and provide meat for their family. The membership of the BCWF strongly supports hunter Recruitment and Retention. Mule Deer are not a species which should be managed for trophy potential. The agricultural community has also been severely impacted by mule deer in several parts of the Province and the BCWF supports maintaining a balanced mule deer population.

It is our sincere hope that antlerless mule deer harvest and opportunity will be addressed in this management strategy. This type of opportunity is common in other jurisdictions but is regularly denied in a General Open Season because it is felt by some that these seasons attract unethical hunters in regions or M.U.'s of the province. The Federation

feels that the Conservation Officer Service is the correct venue for dealing with any enforcement issues.

Finally, the BCWF does not support a hunt for trophy only mule deer. The BCWF supports a balanced approach which maximizes opportunity while maintaining a healthy population. By creating additional opportunity in areas where populations and sex ratios are good and offering more antlerless opportunity, the buck harvest in Region 5 will likely become more balanced and sustainable. By micro-managing the Province will only serve to further bottleneck hunting pressure in specific areas of the province.

Yours in Conservation

Mel Arnold, President BC Wildlife Federation

Cc BCWF Wildlife Allocation Committee

Cc Ian Hatter Wildlife Manager, F & W Branch

Cc Al Martin, Executive Director Fish, Wildlife and Ecosystems

Cc BCWF Board of Directors

Cc BCWF Membership