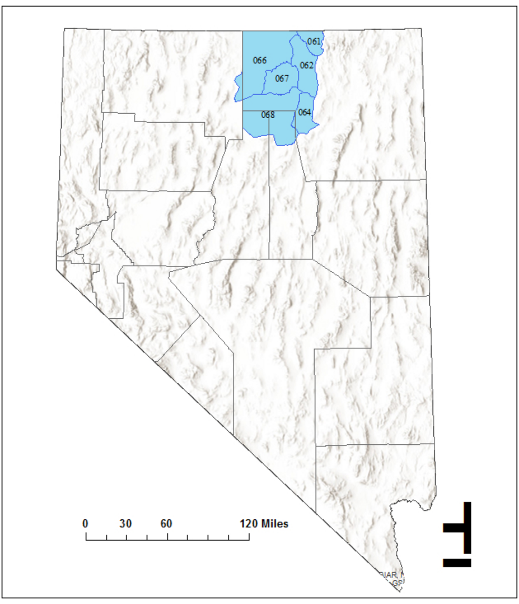
# SHORT HISTORY OF AREA 6 DEER HERD

RATIONALE FOR ANTLERLESS HARVESTS

Click to add notes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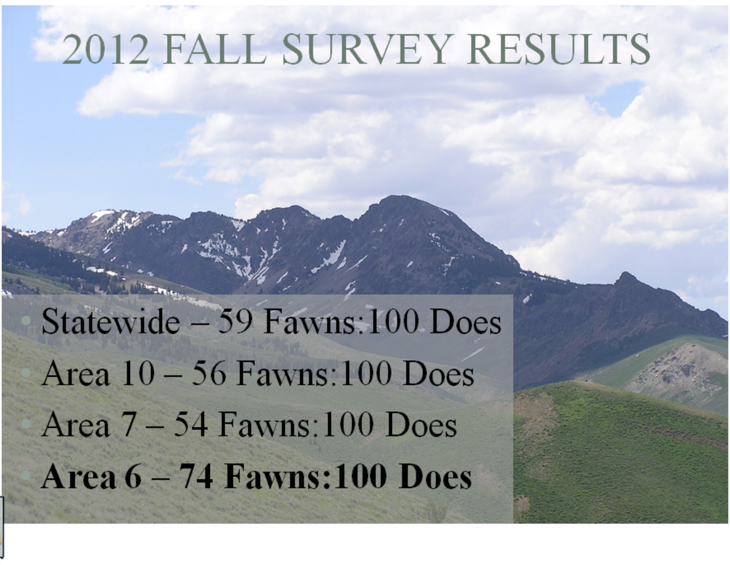
120 Miles

Area 6 is mostly in Western Elko county, but also includes the northern portions of Eureka and Lander counties as well as a small portion of Humboldt County.

## 2012 FALL SURVEY RESULTS



- Statewide – 59 Fawns:100 Does
- Area 10 – 56 Fawns:100 Does
- Area 7 – 54 Fawns:100 Does
- **Area 6 – 74 Fawns:100 Does**

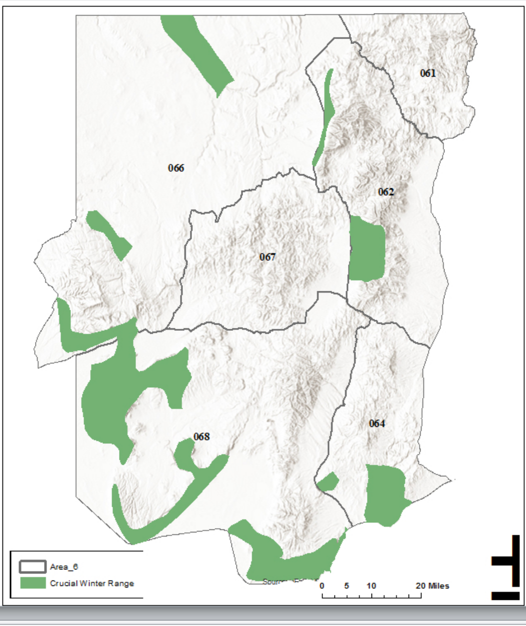
2012 was the last year 6, 7 & 10 were all flown in the fall for post season composition surveys. Historically Area 6 regularly out performs other large deer herds in the Eastern Region as well as statewide in terms of fawn production.

## Fall Fawn:Doe Ratio Comparison

## 5 Year (2011–2015) Average

- Area 6 - 71 Fawns:100 Does
- Statewide - 54 Fawns:100 Does

In terms of fawn production, this is our most productive herd in the state producing 17 fawns /100 does better than the statewide average. This is primarily due to the incredibly productive nature of the Area 6 summer habitat.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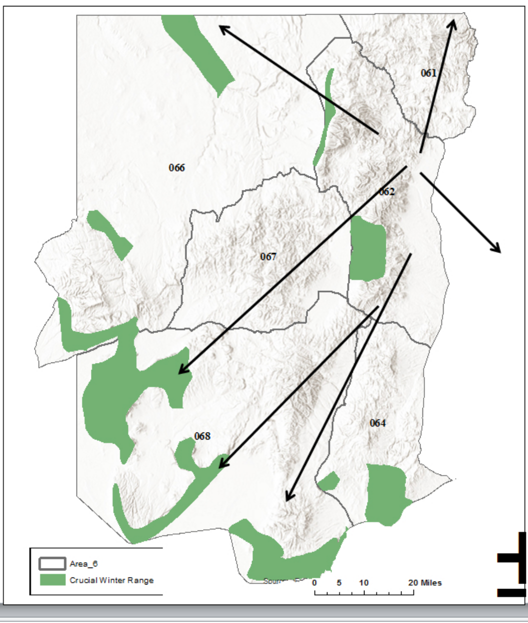
Area_6
Crucial Winter Range
0 5 10 20 Miles

Over 400,000 acres of identified crucial winter range historically used by the Area 6 deer herd.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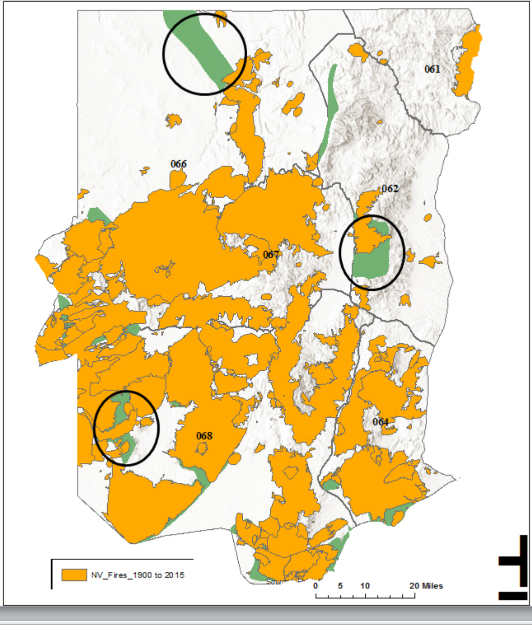
Area_6
Crucial Winter Range
0 5 10 20 Miles

Black arrows indicated movements from summer range to winter range.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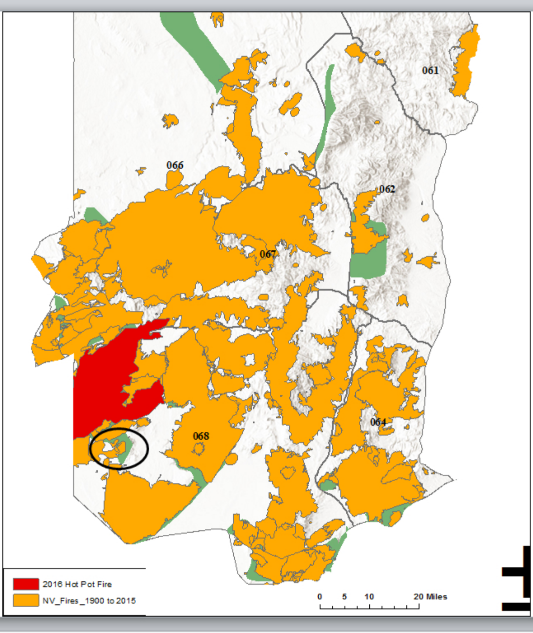
NV_Fires_1900 to 2015
0 5 10 20 Miles

1961-2015 Represents a loss of more than 90% of critical winter range due to fire. The circled areas represent some of the last remaining critical winter range for the Area 6 deer herd prior to this year's fire season.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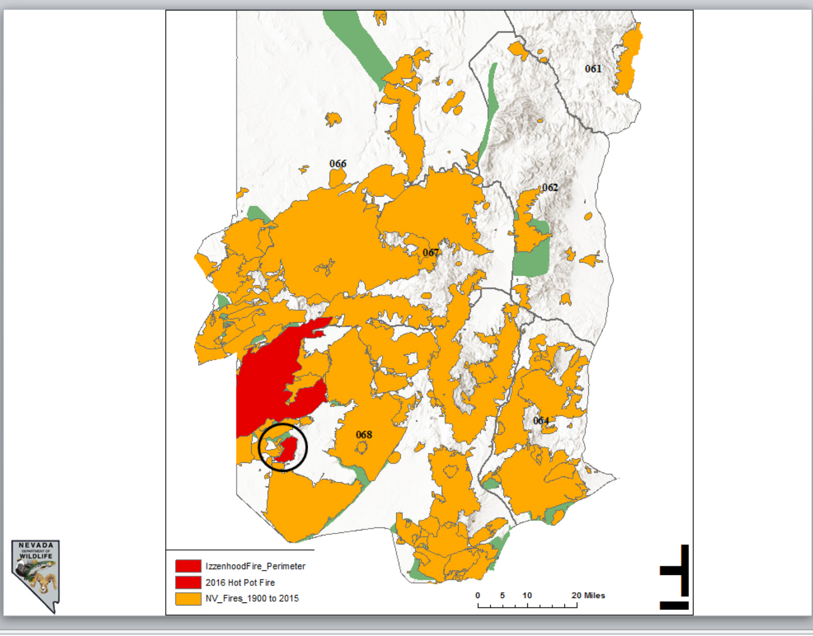
2016 Hot Pot Fire
NV_Fires_1900 to 2015
0 5 10 20 Miles

The loss of Izzenhood Basin from the 2016 Hot Pot Fire represents the loss of the last large block of intact Wyoming sagebrush in the Izzenhood Range. However a small ridge that connected the Izzenhood Range to the Sheep Creek Range remained intact as of early August 2016. It was thought this ridge could support many of the deer displaced by the Hot Pot Fire given the sage covered ridge wintered deer already and it's close proximity to Roosters Comb, the south end of the Izzenhood Basin with some intact sagebrush left after the Hot Pot Fire.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🟥 IzzenhoodFire_Perimeter
🟥 2016 Hot Pot Fire
🟧 NV_Fires_1900 to 2015
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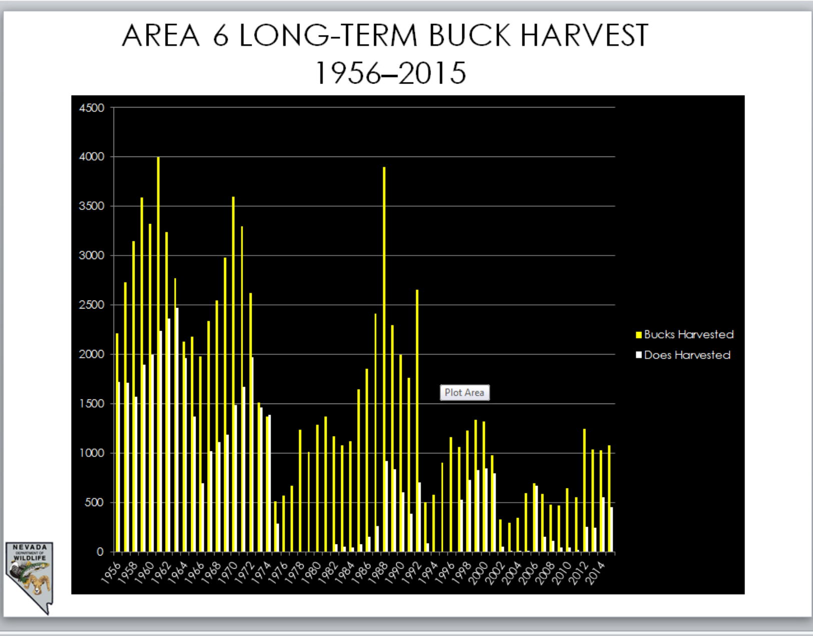
On August 18, 2016 the majority of the sage covered ridge south of Izzenhood Gap was consumed by the 6,600 acre Izzenhood Fire.



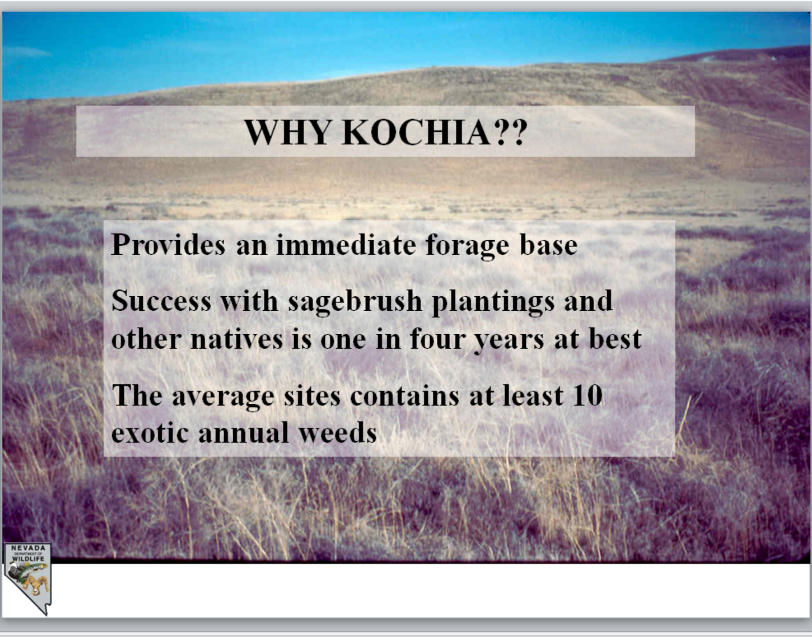
# AREA 6 LONG-TERM BUCK HARVEST
## 1956–2015

This graph is to show that we have been harvesting does for a long time in Area 6 to manage this herd within the confines of carrying capacity of seasonal habitats, primarily winter range. Given the loss of habitat combined with rehab efforts, we have and will continue to manage this herd within the confines of winter range carrying capacity using a combination of buck and doe harvest.

What has allowed the Area 6 deer herd to persist is the high fawn producing capabilities of summer range coupled with aggressive range restoration activities starting in the 1980's.

# >45,000 acres of kochia seeded on crucial deer winter range

Winter range is a different story.....Much of our southern winter ranges on the I-80 corridor are choked with exotic annuals. Type conversion from native Wyoming sage communities with exotic annuals is only exacerbated by the lack of rainfall realized along much of the low elevations winter ranges. NDOW biologists in cooperation with the BLM began planting forage kochia on the Area 6 winter ranges to battle the loss of habitat due to fire and the invasion of non-desirable exotic annuals with no wildlife values.



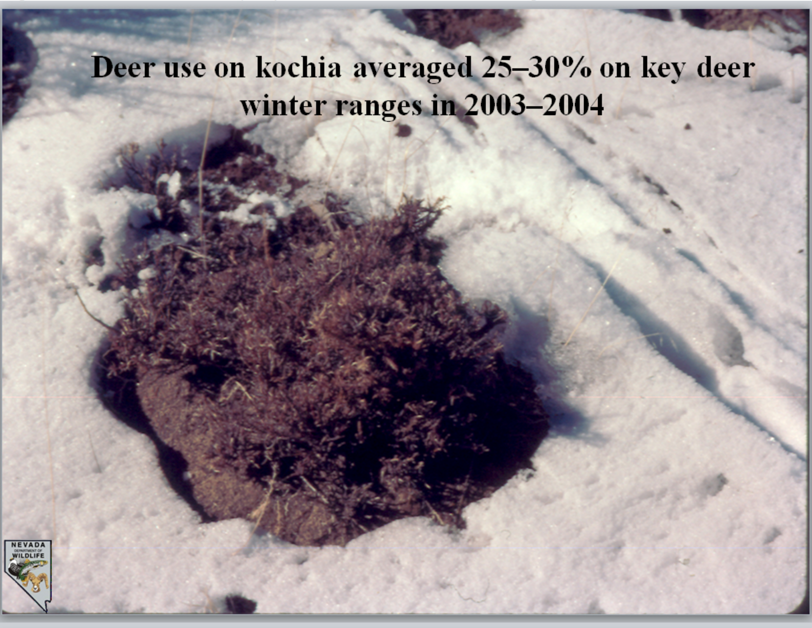
WHY KOCHIA??

Provides an immediate forage base

Success with sagebrush plantings and other natives is one in four years at best

The average sites contains at least 10 exotic annual weeds

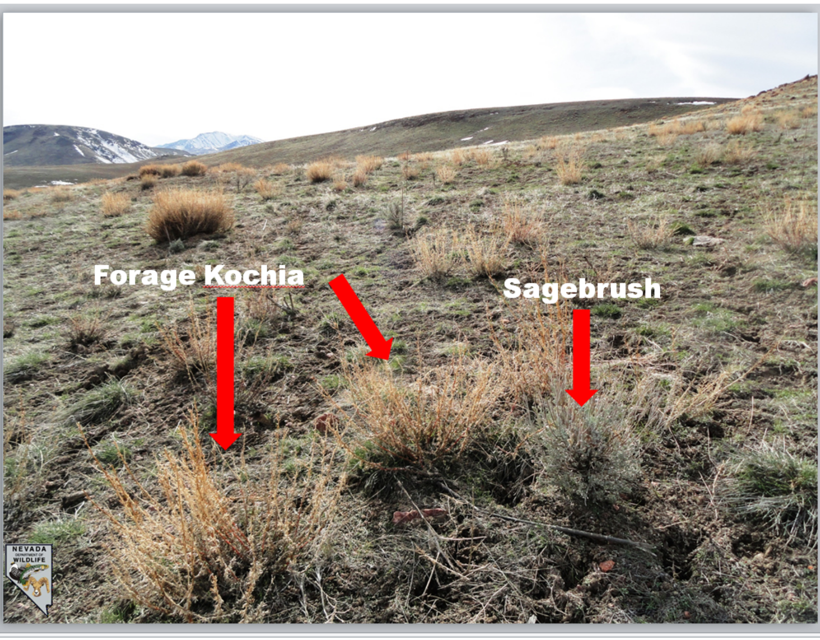
Forage kochia has provided immediate forage for mule deer on southern winter ranges and also competes well with cheatgrass. Under optimal conditions, sagebrush takes >decade to recover, and this is why NDOW and BLM often use a combination of kochia and sagebrush in post fire rehabilitation seed mixes. The fire resistant nature of Forage kochia can also act as a green strip, slowing wildfires to give firefighters a chance to better contain fires, competes with the invasive weeds and allows sagebrush a chance to recover.



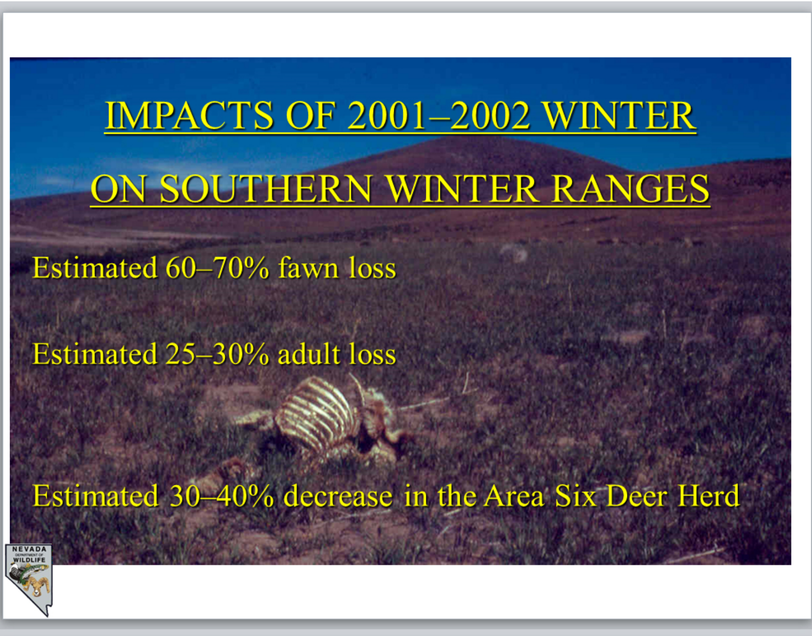
Deer use on kochia averaged 25–30% on key deer winter ranges in 2003–2004

While rehabbed winter ranges allow us to maintain herds during normal to below average winters, normal to severe winters take a toll on deer due to the lack of thermal cover. January 2013 view of the east side of the Sheep Creek Range with ~6" of snow. With the sagebrush destroyed by fire, there is no thermal cover to protect the deer when temperatures drop.

January 2013 view of Bob's Flat looking towards the Dunphy Hills with 6" of snow. Notice how well the remaining small islands of sagebrush stand out.


Forage Kochia
Sagebrush

In addition to fire rehab the winter following a fire, 1000's of sagebrush seedlings have been planted throughout key migration routes and winter ranges to improve habitat. This is a photo from earlier this spring of the 2012 Middle Rock Creek sagebrush seedling planting sponsored by Nevada Muleys. Sagebrush persisted through four years of drought and is seeding itself within a stand of forage kochia.

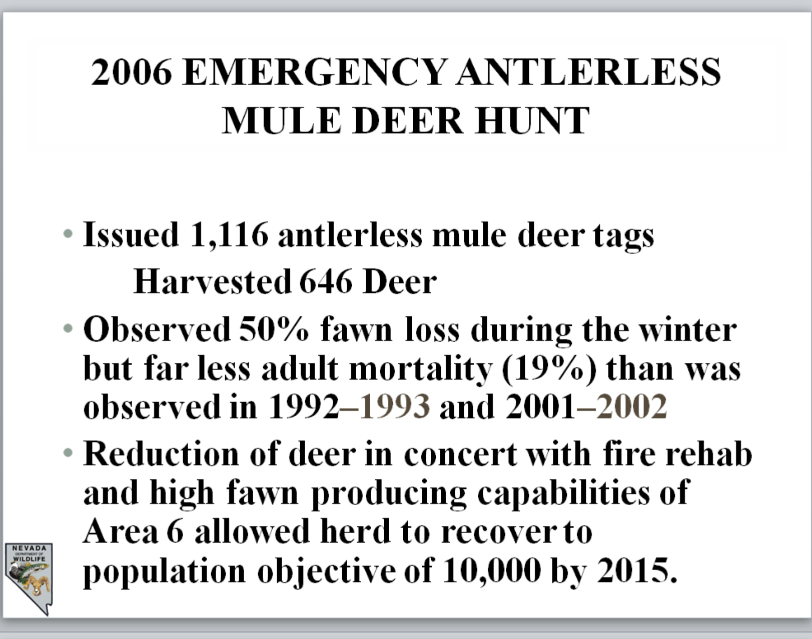


## IMPACTS OF 2001–2002 WINTER ON SOUTHERN WINTER RANGES

Estimated 60–70% fawn loss

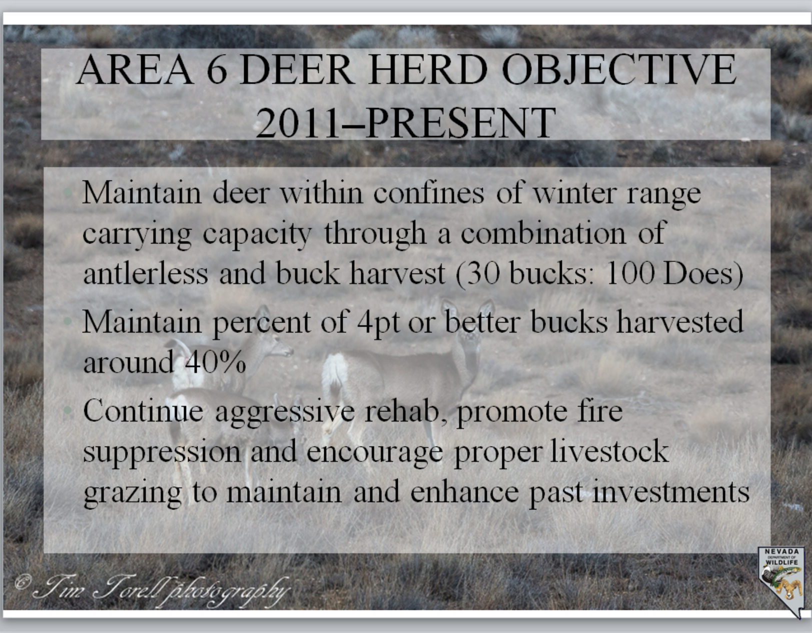
Estimated 25–30% adult loss

Estimated 30–40% decrease in the Area Six Deer Herd



## 2006 EMERGENCY ANTLERLESS MULE DEER HUNT

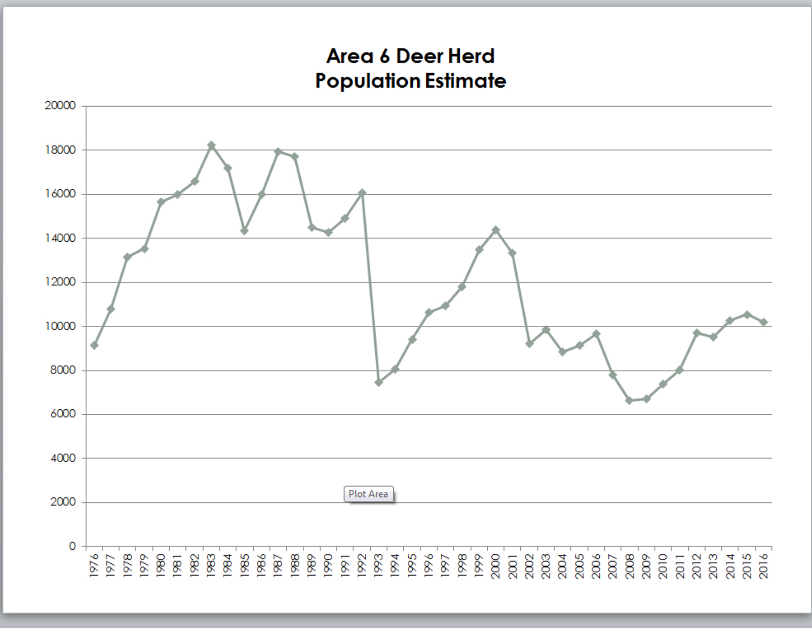
- **Issued 1,116 antlerless mule deer tags**
  **Harvested 646 Deer**
- **Observed 50% fawn loss during the winter but far less adult mortality (19%) than was observed in 1992–1993 and 2001–2002**
- **Reduction of deer in concert with fire rehab and high fawn producing capabilities of Area 6 allowed herd to recover to population objective of 10,000 by 2015.**



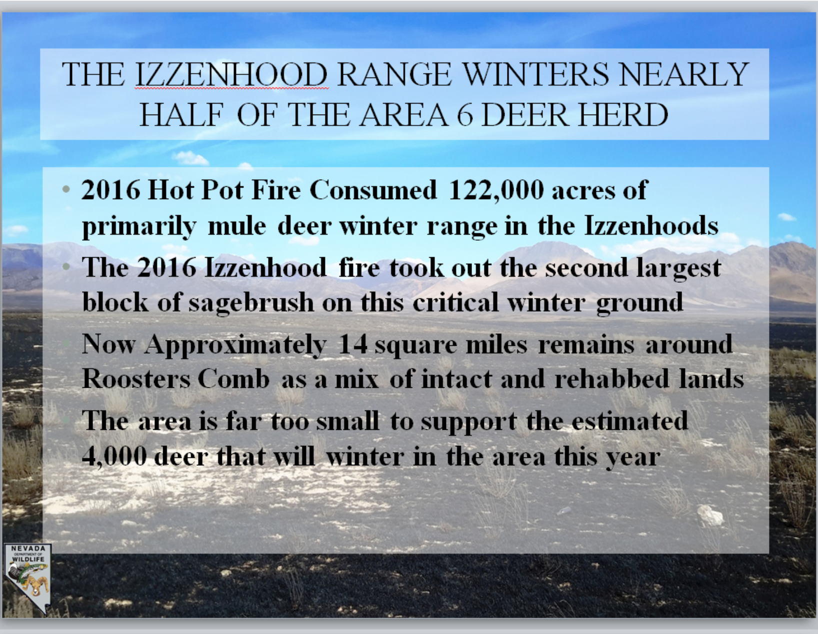
## AREA 6 DEER HERD OBJECTIVE 2011–PRESENT

- Maintain deer within confines of winter range carrying capacity through a combination of antlerless and buck harvest (30 bucks: 100 Does)
- Maintain percent of 4pt or better bucks harvested around 40%
- Continue aggressive rehab, promote fire suppression and encourage proper livestock grazing to maintain and enhance past investments

© Tim Torell photography



By initiating doe hunts in an effort to maintain this herd around 10,000 between 2012-2016, we were attempting to reduced the boom and bust cycle of Area 6. Last winter and the winter of '12 / '13 saw very little in the way of elevated adult mortality which indicates the NDOW was successful at managing the herd below the carrying capacity of impacted winter ranges.

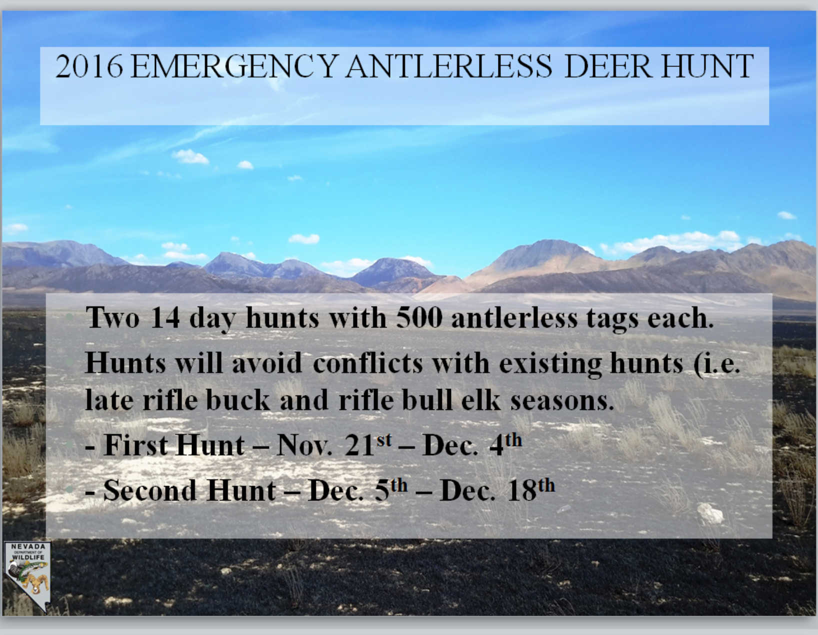


## THE IZZENHOOD RANGE WINTERS NEARLY HALF OF THE AREA 6 DEER HERD

- 2016 Hot Pot Fire Consumed 122,000 acres of primarily mule deer winter range in the Izzenhoods
- The 2016 Izzenhood fire took out the second largest block of sagebrush on this critical winter ground

Now Approximately 14 square miles remains around Roosters Comb as a mix of intact and rehabbed lands

The area is far too small to support the estimated 4,000 deer that will winter in the area this year

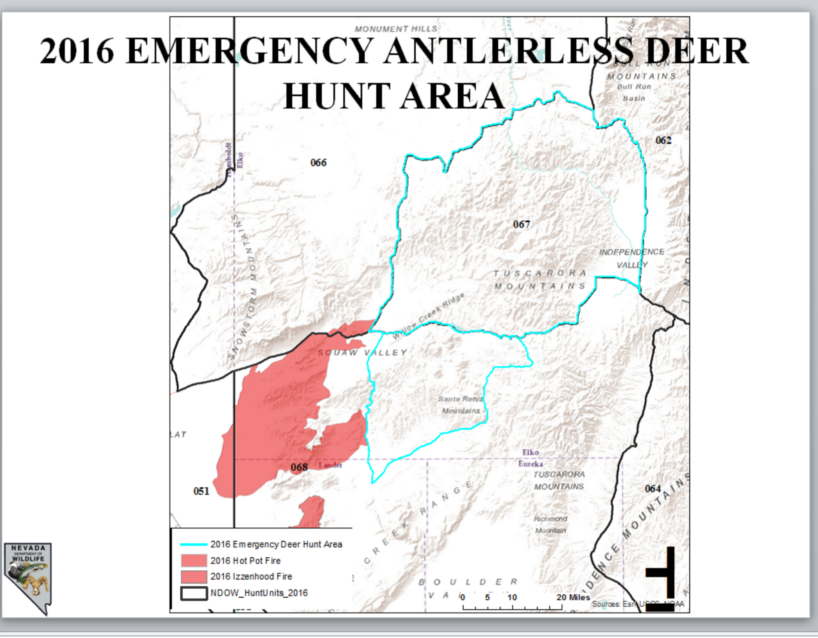


## 2016 EMERGENCY ANTLERLESS DEER HUNT

Two 14 day hunts with 500 antlerless tags each.

Hunts will avoid conflicts with existing hunts (i.e. late rifle buck and rifle bull elk seasons.

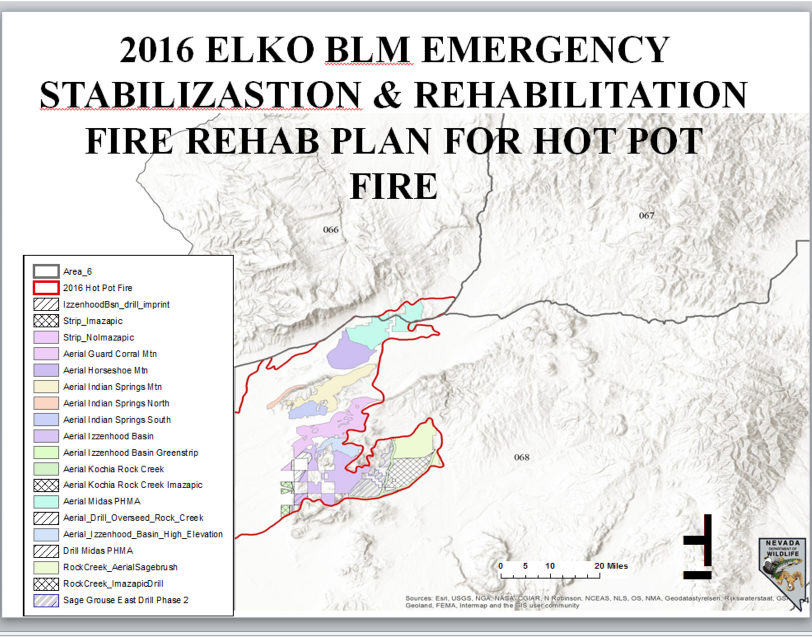
- First Hunt – Nov. 21st – Dec. 4th
- Second Hunt – Dec. 5th – Dec. 18th



## 2016 EMERGENCY ANTLERLESS DEER HUNT AREA

MONUMENT HILLS
BULL RUN MOUNTAINS
Bull Run Basin
062
066
Humboldt
Elko
SNOWSTORM MOUNTAINS
067
INDEPENDENCE VALLEY
TUSCARORA MOUNTAINS
Willow Creek Ridge
SQUAW VALLEY
Santa Renia Mountains
LAT
068
Lander
051
Elko
Eureka
TUSCARORA MOUNTAINS
064
Richmond Mountain
INDEPENDENCE MOUNTAINS
CREEK RANGE
BOULDER VALLEY
2016 Emergency Deer Hunt Area
2016 Hot Pot Fire
2016 Izzenhood Fire
NDOW_HuntUnits_2016
0 5 10 20 Miles
Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA

Timing of hunts and hunt area specifically targets the segment of Area 6 deer that winters in the Izzenhood Range.



## 2016 ELKO BLM EMERGENCY STABILIZASTION & REHABILITATION FIRE REHAB PLAN FOR HOT POT FIRE

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068
Area_6
2016 Hot Pot Fire
IzzenhoodBsn_drill_imprint
Strip_Imazapic
Strip_NoImazapic
Aerial Guard Corral Mtn
Aerial Horseshoe Mtn
Aerial Indian Springs Mtn
Aerial Indian Springs North
Aerial Indian Springs South
Aerial Izzenhood Basin
Aerial Izzenhood Basin Greenstrip
Aerial Kochia Rock Creek
Aerial Kochia Rock Creek Imazapic
Aerial Midas PHMA
Aerial_Drill_Overseed_Rock_Creek
Aerial_Izzenhood_Basin_High_Elevation
Drill Midas PHMA
RockCreek_AerialSagebrush
RockCreek_ImazapicDrill
Sage Grouse East Drill Phase 2
0 5 10 20 Miles
Sources: Esri, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user community

>5 Million dollar rehab plan with several treatments identified for different habitat types, soils, wildlife species, etc.

## Snowstorm Forage Kochia

We are going to plant a new cultivar of forage kochia newly released for use on public lands in 2012. Higher stature, easier to digest and higher protein content. We currently have first dibs on three crops of Snowstorm Forage Kochia (~5,000 lbs of seed). The higher stature will help get feed above the snow for deer to browse and provide some thermal cover for the deer.

# BOTTOM LINE

- Issuing 1000 antlerless tags for the emergency hunt will not eliminate the risk of deer starving on winter range, particularly fawns.
- Only eligible if you don't hold a deer tag.
- By harvesting 400–600 does, we will reduce competition on the limited amount of remaining winter range allowing adult deer that survive to be in better body condition.
- This is not a one and done approach. We will need to keep this segment of the Area 6 deer herd below capacity of the winter range as we wait for rehabilitated lands to recover.

If we don't kill deer, mother nature will and she will likely take many more than what we are proposing. Such a die off event will not only put us further back but also too much competition for too few of resources will leave all deer in poor body condition, leading to long lasting effects on adult survival and future recruitment. Just this week BLM received word the ES&R Hot Pot Fire Rehab plan was fully funded at >5 million dollars.

NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF
WILDLIFE

# 2016 AREA 6 EMERGENCY DOE HUNT

- **Sept. 29 – Oct. 20 – Application Period**
- **Friday, Nov. 11 – Draw Results Posted**
- **Nov. 21- Dec. 4 – First Hunt -500 Tags**
- **Dec. 5 – Dec. 18 – Second Hunt – 500 Tags**
- **Go to www.huntnevada.com to apply**
- **Hunters who received a Nevada mule deer tag this year are not eligible.**