

Washington WAFWA reports

Source: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife. Links to specific reports below.

The two tables below summarize the population ranges the state has provided to the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife. These estimates have not been updated using hunting data and public comments to reflect year to year population changes.

Washington Mule Deer						All Deer	
WAFWA		Range	Mid-point	Harvest	Hunters	Source	Harvest
2012	Year		no estimate				
2013	2012	85,000 - 95,000	90,000				
2014	2013	85,000 - 95,000	90,000	11,427			
2015	2014	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	10,097			
2016	2015	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	12,156		2015	40,338
2017	2016	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	8,669		2016	35,279
2018	2017	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	7,197		2017	26,537
2019	2018	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	7,148		2018	27,846
2020	2019	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	8,590		2019	27,187
2021	2020	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	10,282		2020	29,435
2022	2021	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	8,277		2021	24,318
2023	2022	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	7,264 7154*		2022	21,413
2024	2023	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	8,459		2023	21,585

Mule deer harvest are general season only. Harvest data is for the previous deer season. Total harvest numbers for 2015 don't match the annual report issued by the state.

*The 7154 value for mule deer harvest in 2022 was taken by digitizing a graphic in the 2023 report. See below

Washington Blacktail Deer				
WAFWA	Range	Estimate	Year	Harvest*
2012				
2013		100,000	2012	
2014	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	2013	10,937
2015	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	2014	11,336
2016	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	2015	12,156**

2017	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	2016	11,709
2018	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	2017	9,150
2019	90,000 - 110,000	100,000	2018	9,744
2020	No estimate	100,000	2019	11,470
2021	No estimate	100,000	2020	11,057
2022	No estimate		2021	10,783
2023	No estimate		2022	10,080 9062***
2023	No estimate		2023	11,954

*Harvest is for general seasons

** The state reported the same blacktail deer harvest for 2014 and 2015. Looking at the graphs provided the 2016 number is estimated from the graph

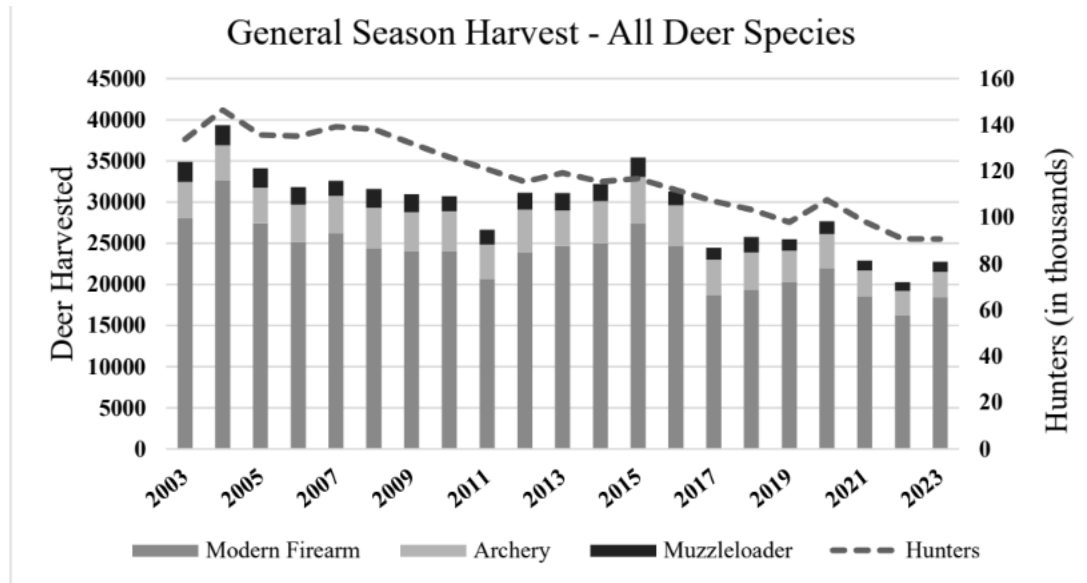
***The 9062 blacktail harvest number for 2022 is taken from the graph in the 2023 WAFWA report, see below. The graph and reported number did not match.

From [2024](#) report

The statewide deer harvest estimate for 2023 was 23,902 deer (white-tailed deer, black-tailed deer, and mule deer; general and permit seasons combined), up ~12% from 21,413 harvested deer in 2022 and down 19% from a recent high in 2020 of 29,435 harvested deer. The dip in harvest is attributed to hemorrhagic disease outbreaks that reduced abundance in the summer and fall of 2021, which likely depressed hunter participation (i.e., fewer hunters in 2021). Lagging impacts of disease outbreaks and extreme drought in 2021, unseasonably hot and dry late-fall conditions in 2022 which kept deer at higher elevations longer, and reduced hunter participation (~9% reduction in general season hunters) are likely culprits for the documented decline in harvest for the 2022 season... In late summer of 2021, outbreaks of epizootic hemorrhagic disease and bluetongue in eastern Washington caused major and widespread deer mortality. This outbreak primarily affected white-tailed deer, P. 42

Populations within most of Washington's 7 mule deer management zones are generally stable p. 42

Harvest trends for three of five black-tailed deer management zones are stable to increasing, whereas two zones have exhibited recent declines in harvest. Black-tailed deer abundance, indexed via harvest, generally fluctuates in response to timber harvest rotation/frequency. P. 42



-Samantha Bundick, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

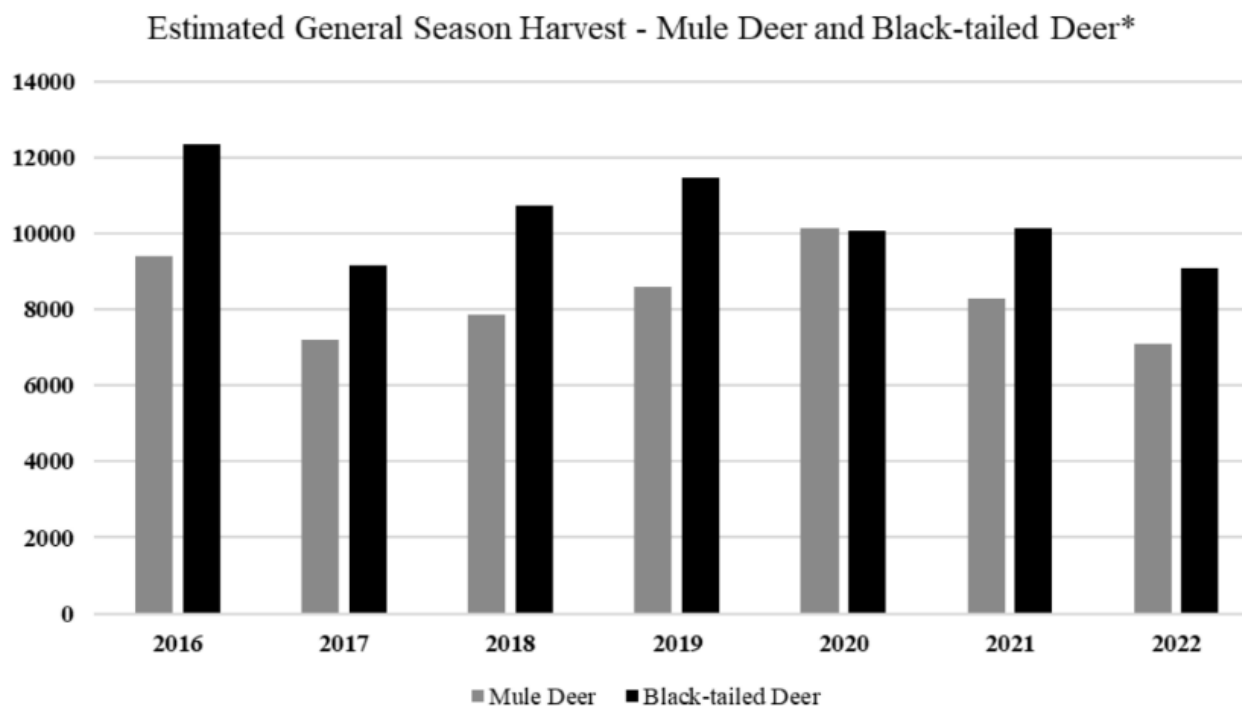
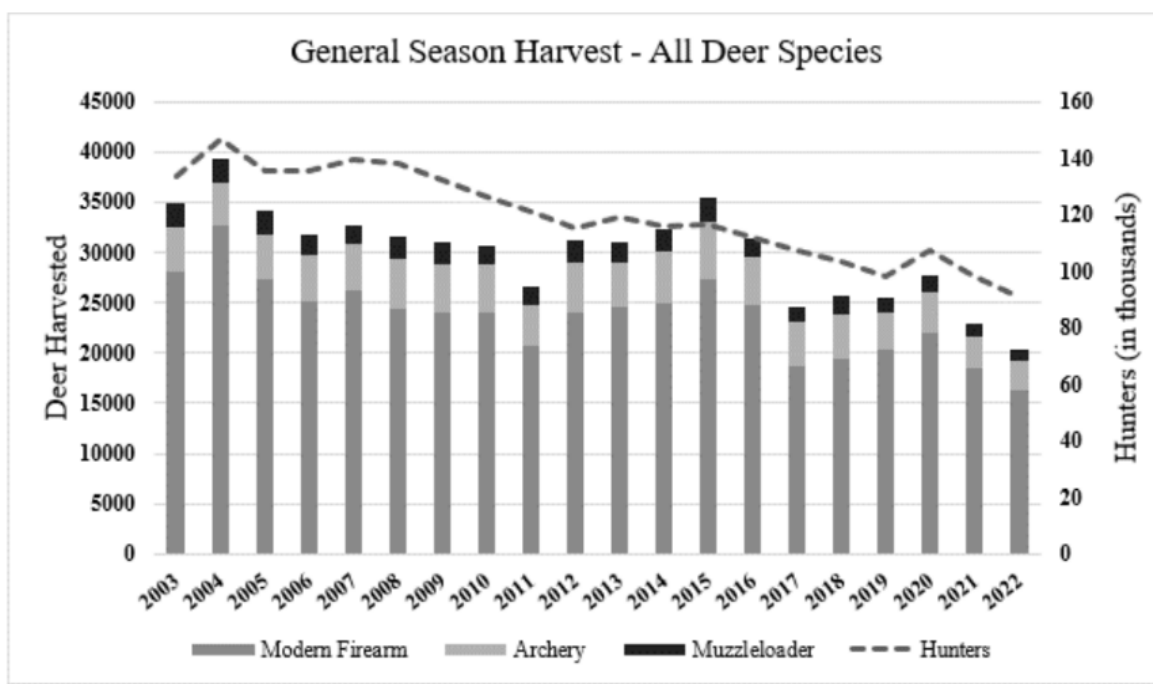
From [2023](#) report

From page 38: “The statewide deer harvest estimate for 2022 was 21,413 deer (white-tailed deer, black-tailed deer, and mule deer; general and permit seasons combined), down ~12% from 24,318 harvested deer in 2021 and down 27% from a recent high in 2020 of 29,435 harvested deer. The consistent reduction in harvest is attributed to hemorrhagic disease outbreaks that reduced abundance in the summer and fall of 2021, which likely depressed hunter participation (i.e., fewer hunters in 2021). Lagging impacts of disease outbreaks and extreme drought in 2021, unseasonably hot and dry late-fall conditions in 2022 which kept deer at higher elevations longer, and reduced hunter participation (~9% reduction in general season hunters) are likely culprits for the documented decline in harvest for the 2022 season.”

On page 2 the state provides an estimated **general season mule deer harvest of 7,264** with 94% bucks.

On page 3 the state provides an estimated **general season blacktail deer harvest of 10,080** with 90% bucks.

From page 38: “The **statewide deer harvest estimate for 2022 was 21,413 deer (white-tailed deer, black-tailed deer, and mule deer; general and permit seasons combined)**, down ~12% from 24,318 harvested deer in 2021 and down 27% from a recent high in 2020 of 29,435 harvested deer.” However, the general season mule and bl



The table above uses these numbers for 2022 which don't match the graph. The values below obtained by digitizing the above graph

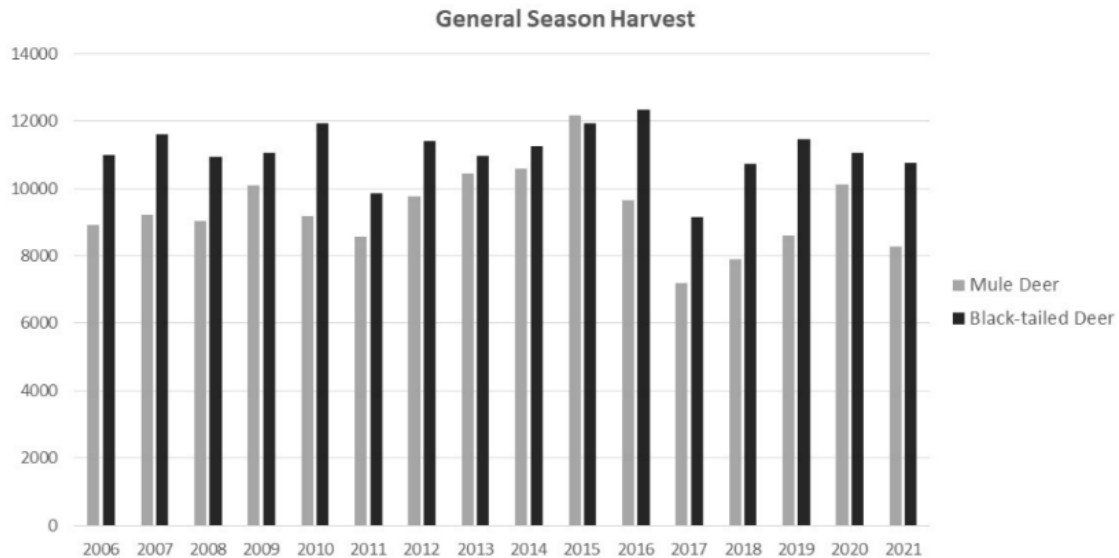
From graph	Mule	Blacktail
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2016	9343	12289
2017	7182	9174
2018	7828	10689
2019	8613	11447
2020	10100	10072
2021	8389	10156
2022	7154	9062

From [2022](#) report

... The statewide deer harvest estimate (all species, general and permit seasons combined) for 2021 was 24,318 deer, down ~17% from 29,435 harvested deer in 2020. The reduction in harvest is attributed to hemorrhagic disease outbreaks that reduced abundance and likely depressed hunter participation (i.e., fewer hunters in 2021). ...

...In late summer of 2021, outbreaks of epizootic hemorrhagic disease and bluetongue in eastern Washington caused major and widespread deer mortality. This outbreak primarily affected white-tailed deer, but mule deer were also impacted in many areas... WDFW managers have adjusted mule deer special permit opportunity for 2022 to maximize adult female survival by reducing antlerless special permit opportunity. Habitat management and restoration activities for mule deer are ongoing or in preparation in association with implementation of Secretarial Order 3362. [page 45]

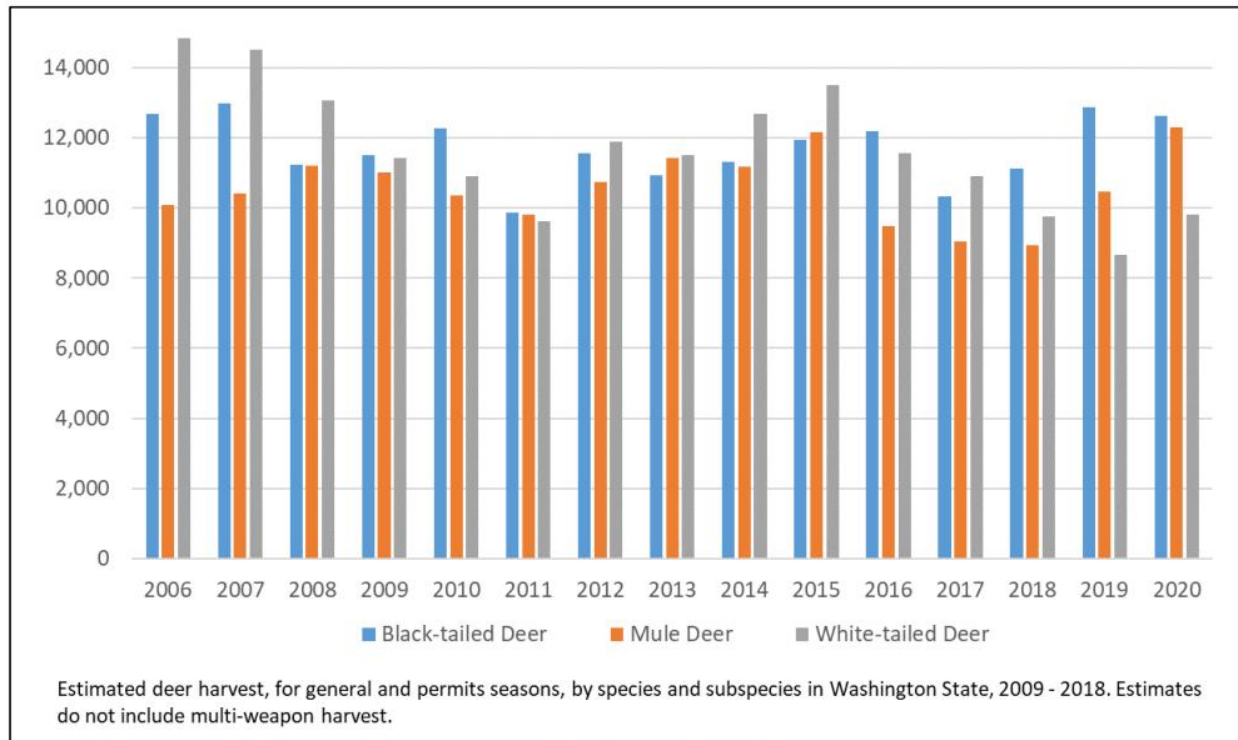


-Kyle Garrison, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

From [2021](#) report

... Populations within most of Washington's 7 mule deer management zones are stable but status varies by region. Populations within the 5 black-tailed deer management zones are stable to increasing. The statewide deer harvest estimate (all species, general and permit seasons combined) for 2020 was 29,435 deer and increased by ~8% compared to 2019 (27,187 deer)... [Note that the total harvest represented in the chart below are higher than these reported numbers]

... Populations within most of Washington's 7 mule deer management zones are stable but status varies by region. Populations within the 5 black-tailed deer management zones are stable to increasing... Trends in harvest estimates indicate mule deer and black-tailed deer populations have returned to historical levels after experiencing declines 2015-2017... Harvest estimates and composition ratios from annual monitoring efforts for mule deer indicate populations along the northern Cascade Mountains, are likely stable to increasing. However, southern herds remain stable to decreasing. Similar to last year, antlerless permits for mule deer will be limited in most management zones.



-Brock Hoenes, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

From [2020](#) report

... Populations within most of of Washington's 7 mule deer management zones are stable but status varies by region. Populations within the 5 black-tailed deer management zones are stable to increasing. The statewide deer harvest estimate (all species, general and permit seasons combined) for 2019 (27,187 deer) was similar to 2018 (27,846 deer) and remained just below the 10-yr mean (2010-2019) of 31,834...

... Populations within most of of Washington's 7 mule deer management zones are stable but status varies by region. Populations within the 5 black-tailed deer management zones are stable to increasing. [page 42]

From [2019](#) report

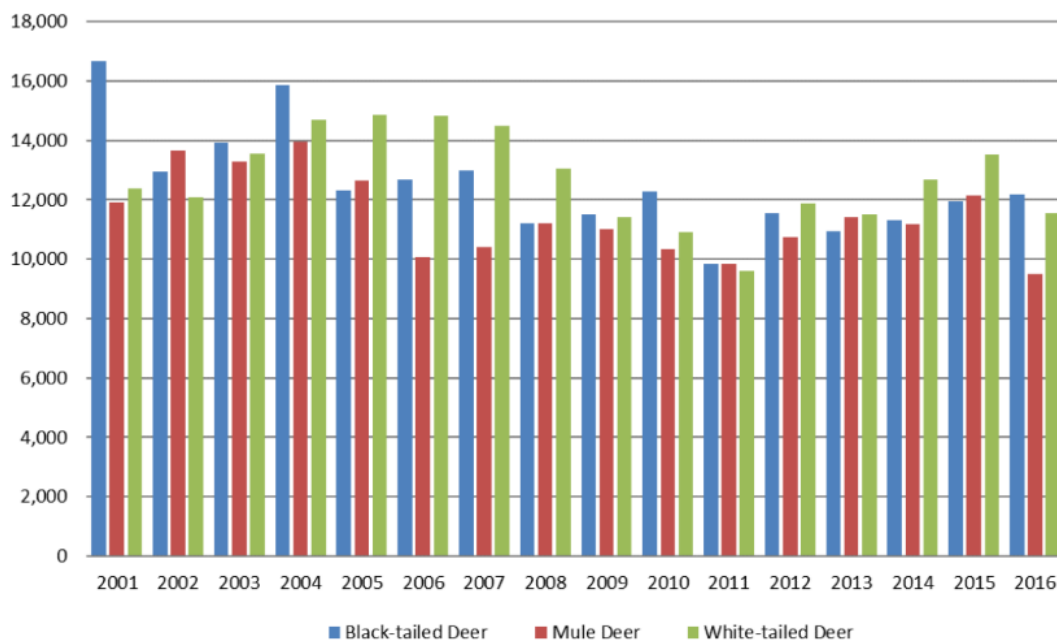
Populations within some of Washington's 7 mule deer management zones are stable to decreasing, but remain within objective. Populations within the 5 black-tailed deer management zones are stable to increasing. [page 40]

From [2018](#) report

Populations within WDFW's 7 mule deer management zones and 5 black-tailed deer management zones are stable to decreasing in some zones compared with previous years, but remain within objective. The statewide harvest estimate (all species, general and permit seasons combined) for 2017 was 26,529 deer, below the 10-yr mean (2008-2017) of 33,285 deer, and the harvest estimate for 2016 was 33,230 deer. [page 35]

From [2017](#) report

Populations within WDFW's 7 mule deer management zones and 5 black-tailed deer management zones are within objective. The statewide harvest estimate (all species, general and permit seasons combined) for 2015 was 40,338 deer, well above the 10-yr mean (2006-2015) of 35,705 deer, and the harvest estimate for 2016 was 35,279 deer. Ground and aerial monitoring efforts indicate mule deer populations experienced severe winter conditions during 2016-2017, likely affecting over-winter survival of fawns to a greater degree than in the past 5 years. In response, WDFW has decreased antlerless permits for mule deer in most management zones. Management activities for mule deer will continue to focus on habitat enhancement, including prescribed burns and thinning, on public lands. Regional harvest trends indicate black-tailed deer in western Washington have been stable. Some localized population segments in each zone fluctuate due to forest production rotations, but potential remains to increase abundance if private and public forests were managed for greater early successional habitat. Loss of black-tailed deer habitat due to encroaching human development continues to be a concern. [page 32]



Estimated deer harvest, for general and permits seasons, by species and subspecies in Washington State, 2001 - 2016. Estimates do not include multi-weapon permit harvest.

-Sara Hansen, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

From [2016](#) report

... Washington state mule deer and black-tailed deer populations are meeting management objectives as outlined in the 2015-2021 Game Management Plan and the recently completed Washington State Mule Deer Management Plan (wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/game). Some

localized areas in the eastern portion of the state have been affected by recent wildfires but mule deer populations overall are doing well. Per the Mule Deer Management Plan, mule deer monitoring and management will be based on 7 ecologically distinct management zones which are discussed below.

In the East Slope Cascades zone, aerial monitoring efforts indicate mule deer have been near the nutritional carrying capacity of the landscape and mild to average winters the last 6 years have allowed for better over-winter survival and strong recruitment. The 2014 and 2015 fires in Okanogan, Chelan, and Douglas counties have affected winter range but the landscape is responding well and natural regrowth is being further supported by restoration efforts on state and federal lands. Though restoration efforts are ongoing, the fires have probably reduced available forage for mule deer for the next 3 to 5 years in these areas.

Limited information is available for mule deer in the Okanogan Highlands and Northern Rocky Mountains zones but more habitat enhancement (e.g., prescribed burns and thinning) is being focused on public lands that would benefit mule deer in the northeast. Aerial survey work in the Columbia Basin zone indicates mule deer populations have remained stable though recent severe drought conditions are a concern.

Aerial monitoring efforts in the foothills of the Blue Mountains have indicated robust to increasing mule deer populations associated with private agricultural land. Recent wildfires in localized areas will likely facilitate reemergence of early successional species but summers are a critical time of year for deer in this area of the state and conditions have been consistently dry and hot. Mule deer populations in the Naches zone (Yakima and Kittitas counties) continue to show resurgence after recent declines attributed to hair loss caused by exotic lice. Deer numbers are still below what they were prior to the occurrence of hair loss, but are steadily increasing. The mule deer/black-tailed deer transitional populations along the East Columbia Gorge zone, on the state's southern border, have been stable with harvest and post-hunt buck numbers responding to more restrictive hunting season structures that were implemented recently. Regional harvest trends indicate black-tailed deer in western Washington have been Stable...[page 28 & 29]

From [2015](#) report

... Washington state mule deer and black-tailed deer populations have rebounded and are doing well, with some exceptions. In north-central Washington (Okanogan, Chelan, and Douglas counties) mule deer seem to be at the capacity that the habitat will support and continue to respond positively to habitat improvements on WDFW Wildlife Management Areas, state forest, and federal forest. Mild to average winters the last 5 years allowed for better over-winter survival and strong recruitment...

Aerial survey work in the foothills of the Blue Mountains showed robust to increasing mule deer populations associated with private agricultural land. Summers are a critical time of year for deer in these portions of the state and conditions have been

consistently dry and hot. Wildfires have affected habitat slightly to benefit mule deer by setting back succession and promoting early successional species...

The mule deer/black-tailed deer transitional populations along the Columbia River gorge on the state's southern border were stable, with harvest and post-hunt buck numbers responding to more restrictive hunting season structures that were implemented recently. Black-tailed deer in western Washington were stable. Some localized segments of the population vary up and down due to forest production rotations. There is still potential to increase black-tailed deer numbers if private and public forests were managed for an increase in early successional habitat. Habitat loss due to human population increase is also a factor for black-tailed deer in western Washington... [page 26 & 27]

From [2014](#) report
[same as 2015]

From [2013](#) report
... Mild to average winters the last 3 years allowed for better over-winter survival and strong young of the year recruitment. In the northeast, mule deer numbers have climbed slightly. More habitat enhancement (e.g., prescribed burns, thinning) is being focused on public lands that would benefit mule deer in the Northeast. The Palouse, southeastern Blue Mountains, and the Columbia Basin mule deer populations were all stable. Summers are a critical time of year for deer in these portions of the state. The last summer in these 3 areas have been dry and hot. Wildfires have affected habitat slightly to benefit mule deer by setting back succession and promoting early successional species. South-central mule deer populations (Yakima and Kittitas counties) experienced a slight resurgence after recent declines attributed to hair loss caused by exotic lice. Deer numbers were still below what they were prior to the occurrence of the hair loss. The mule deer/black-tailed deer transitional populations along the Columbia River gorge on the state's southern border were stable, with harvest and post-hunt buck numbers responding to more restrictive hunting season structures that were implemented recently. Black-tailed deer in western Washington were stable...

From [2012](#) report

... Washington state mule deer and black-tailed deer populations have rebounded and are doing well with a couple of exceptions. In North-Central (Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas counties) mule deer seem to be at the capacity that the habitat will support and continue to respond positively to habitat improvements when they occur. Mild to average winters the last two years allowed for better over- winter survival and strong young of the year recruitment. In the Northeast, mule deer numbers have climbed slightly. More habitat enhancement (prescribed burns, thinning) could be accomplished on public lands that would benefit mule deer in the Northeast. The Palouse, Southeast-Blue Mountains, and the Columbia Basin mule deer populations are all stable and doing well. Summers are a critical time of year for deer in these portions of the state. The last two summers in these three areas have been near normal to slightly cooler and wetter

than normal, so the ill effects of summer drought have not been a problem for mule deer. South-central mule deer populations (Yakima and Kittitas counties) are experiencing a slight resurgence after recent losses attributed to hair loss caused by exotic lice. Deer numbers are still well below what they were prior to the occurrence of hair loss...