

MULE DEER MIGRATION AND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

- **68 proposed oil and gas leases** overlap with corridors or winter range
- **54,911 acres of corridor or winter range are at risk**, including the Red Desert to Hoback migration corridor (Sublette herd) and the Baggs migration corridor (Baggs herd)
- Total acreage of the Bureau of Land Management's fourth quarter lease sale: **698,590 acres**
- Corridors and winter range represent **only 7.9% of this lease sale**

TALKING POINTS

The science is clear: development in mule deer habitat can have devastating impacts. In a 2017 study that examined 17 years' worth of data, scientists found that when only 3.5 percent of a deer herd's winter range was converted to energy infrastructure, the herd declined by 36 percent. Meanwhile, development in only one portion of a migration corridor can lead to a complete loss of corridor function. Since migration corridors are all about **connectivity** — or the ability for animals to move between their seasonal ranges— even if most of the corridor is protected, *some* development could be just as disruptive and do just as much harm as developing the entire corridor.

We need a permanent, science-based solution that gives us certainty that our deer will be protected. Currently, "lease notices" are attached to parcels for sale; these notices merely encourage oil and gas companies purchasing leases in a migration corridor to work with Wyoming Game and Fish officials to avoid harming migrations. These notices carry no legal weight. Neither the Bureau of Land Management nor the Office of State Lands think the current approach is working, and each agency is working separately to come up with a permanent, legally-enforceable solution (a "stipulation") that will ensure protection of migration corridors. Stipulations are the only way to guarantee that oil and gas infrastructure will not be placed within winter range or migration corridors. Leasing should be postponed until a stipulation is in place.

We can't leave the survival of thousands of deer — and other big game herds that may be affected by future oil and gas development in *their* habitats — up to chance. A real solution has to give us certainty. We believe in an even-handed approach to oil and gas development and conservation, in which the rules are clear, and a real "balance" is achieved, which means oil and gas development doesn't happen everywhere. We're asking to protect a very small but vital amount of acreage that supports our state's deer herds. The risk of losing this or any big game migration in Wyoming is too costly, and the risk is not necessary.

The Bureau of Land Management can postpone the sale of these leases, and it can even postpone leasing in just the parts of the leases that overlap with corridor and winter range. Earlier this year, the BLM postponed leasing in other parcels within the Red Desert to Hoback migration corridor, as well as parcels within the Greater Little Mountain Area, a critical big game habitat in the Red Desert. The BLM has the authority and the ability of zeroing in on parts of lease parcels and removing only those parts from sale. Leases in winter range and migration corridors can, and must, be postponed.

Oil and gas lease parcels overlapping migration corridors are not vital to the state's energy industry. The parcels in the Red Desert to Hoback corridor that were sold in September went for \$2 to \$9 per acre, which brought in only \$50,000 for the state (~5000 deer use that corridor, so that's less than \$10 per deer). The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has estimated the value of a single mule deer at \$3,000, and deer hunting in Sublette County alone brought in \$4.6 million in revenue in 2015. Deer are a renewable source of income.

Let's take the time to do this right. That's the Wyoming way.