The Red Desert to Hoback Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) Migration: A Case Study in Common Interest as a Basis for Coexistence

Joshua MORSE\textsuperscript{1} and Susan CLARK\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}University of Vermont Rubenstein School of the Environment and Natural Resources, Burlington, VT 05405
\textsuperscript{2}Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, New Haven, CT 06511

*Corresponding author: Joshua.morse@uvm.edu*

Human-human interactions that underlie human-wildlife coexistence are often overlooked in the conservation biology research, management, and practice [1]. However, human-wildlife coexistence depends on the ability of diverse human interest groups, often with competing values, to accommodate wildlife [2]. Interdisciplinary approaches to integrating human-wildlife and human-human coexistence challenges offer a promising path forward [3]. In our work on mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) migrations in southwestern Wyoming, USA, we applied an interdisciplinary framework—the policy sciences—to map the social and cultural context that exists alongside ecological concerns of migration. We conducted 45 semi-structured qualitative interviews with members of eight stakeholder communities whose interests were impacted by the Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration. We solicited perspectives on challenges surrounding the migration, and the values that drive stakeholders to engage with it. We also conducted informal key-informant interviews, participant observation, and document analysis of popular press articles, organizational websites, and professional publications. We coded interview transcripts, field notes, and supporting materials for value claims and problem definitions. Our results revealed that many of the key values driving humans to interact with wildlife in this case were shared across stakeholder groups that exist in conflict with each other over an appropriate policy response to the migration. We also found four competing problem definitions at play in the discourse, each supported by a distinct set of value claims, that undergirded policy preferences. These findings clarify the basis of human-human conflicts that threaten to stymie efforts to ensure a coexistence outcome with mule deer along the Red Desert to Hoback migration corridor. However, results also suggest that strong shared values exist surrounding the migration, which could be developed to promote common-interest policy and long-term human-wildlife coexistence.

References

