

# Mule Deer – HD 312



## Draft Changes for 2022-2023 Hunting Regulations:

Combine Hunting Districts 312, 390, 393 and the southeast portion of the current HD 380 (area between U.S. Hwy 287 and the Missouri River). This proposal also affects elk (see Elk – HD 312 for rationale for combining HDs).

The general deer license would not be valid on National Forest (USFS) land for mule deer. Hunters hunting mule deer on USFS land would be required to have a drawn special permit (312-50).

### General Deer License

- Archery season: either-sex mule deer **not** valid on USFS land.
- General rifle season: antlered buck mule deer **not** valid on USFS land.

### Special Permit 312-50 (75 issued)

- Antlered mule deer buck only, **only** valid on USFS land (archery and rifle season).

### Mule Deer B-license 312-01 (300 issued)

- **Not** valid on USFS land (archery and rifle season).

### Existing mule deer B licenses in HDs 390 and 393

- Eliminated because HDs 390 and 393 would no longer exist.

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## Biological Implications:

Allows maintenance of the special buck management area in the newer, larger HD 312 but without assigning it to a portion. The USFS encompasses much of the known year-round buck use, thereby largely retaining the buck management strategy as described in the Adaptive Harvest Management strategy.

## Social Implications:

This special buck management area is one of few opportunities to harvest older age-class bucks in southwest Montana. It is a prized opportunity that many sportspersons would likely rise to defend. However, others may be concerned about losing some opportunity on the USFS parcels in the current HDs 390 and 393. Some public hunters may be concerned that some private landowners who were once within the special buck management area portion will now be able to hunt bucks without the special permit. This could be construed as a loss to those hunters. Some members of the public may contend that FWP is expanding a hunting regulation that has been shown to result in higher CWD prevalence in an area where CWD has been detected. However, CWD is believed to be at a low level in this area (only one deer tested positive in the area in the last two years) and is not a high concern yet.