

**SUBJECT:** Secretary's order relating to the 2009 deer hunting seasons.

**FOR:** APRIL, 2009 **BOARD MEETING**

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Keith Warnke, Big Game Biologist

**SUMMARY:**

Department staff have thoroughly analyzed the 2008 harvest and herd status data to prepare population estimates for each deer management unit. The deer herd estimates are smaller in most units this year. The 2008 harvest was also down.

The department has also spent significant effort this winter to collect public input on the hunting experience through the annual management unit meetings - attended by more than twice the usual number this year - annual mail survey, and a new on-line survey - completed by more than 6000 people.

While Earn-A-Buck has been a useful tool to help achieve healthy deer population goals, it has been and continues to be very unpopular among Wisconsin hunters. In light of the recommendation of the Conservation Congress and the expressed concerns of hunters, the DNR recommends a one-year moratorium on Earn-A-Buck in management units outside the CWD zone for the 2009 hunting season.

For 2009, the department recommends a regular deer season framework for 62 units, a herd control season for 50 units and an Earn-A-Buck season for CWD units only.

It is critical that we not abandon our long-term goal to reduce the deer herd where the herd size outstrips its habitat, cannot be sustained for future hunters and harms agricultural crops and forests. During the moratorium, harvest and populations data will continue to be analyzed. Additional data will be gathered and options for achieving population goals will be evaluated for the 2010 deer hunt.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Adoption of Secretary's order relating to modification of deer hunting regulations in select deer management units.

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:**

- |    |                                     |   |     |                                     |          |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|-----|-------------------------------------|----------|
| No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fiscal Estimate Required                              | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Attached |
| No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Attached |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Background Memo                                       | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Attached |

**APPROVED:**

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
Bureau Director, Tom Hauge

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date 4/09/09

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date 4/08/09

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
Secretary, Matt Frank

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date 4/08/09

cc: Laurie J. Ross - AD/8  
Scott Loomans - WM/6

Tim Andryk - LS/5  
Keith Warnke - WM/6

Tom Hauge - WM/6

DATE: April 8, 2009

TO: Natural Resources Board Members

FROM: Matt Frank

SUBJECT: 2009 Deer season recommendations

FILE REF: 2300

**Recommendation:**

The department annually recommends deer season frameworks to achieve healthy deer population goals in each management unit. The department recommends that the NRB approve the following:

Herd Control Seasons (50 units including state parks)

1M, 22A, 23, 23A, 27, 47, 51A, 51B, 53, 54A, 54B, 54C, 58, 59B, 59C, 59D, 59M, 60A, 60B, 60M, 61, 61A, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64, 64A, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A, 68B, 69C, 72, 72A, 73A, 73B, 73D, 74A, 74B, 77C, 77D, 77E, 77M, 80A, 80B, 80C, 81

CWD Management Zone Earn-a-Buck (EAB) Season (22 units including state parks):

54B, 70, 70A, 70B, 70C, 70D, 70E, 70F, 70G, 71, 73B, 73E, 75A, 75B, 75C, 75D, 76, 76A, 76M, 77A, 77B, 77C.

The DNR is recommending a one year moratorium on the use of Earn-a-Buck in deer management units outside of the CWD zone for the 2009 hunting season.

**Background:**

Deer hunting is a rich tradition in Wisconsin, and DNR takes our role in protecting this important part of our heritage very seriously. The deer harvest was down in 2008, as it was in neighboring states. With the cooperation and support of hunters and landowners, we have made concerted efforts over the past several years to reduce the deer population towards healthy, sustainable goals. Those efforts have resulted in considerable progress towards reaching these goals in many DMU's. Because of this progress, we are recommending that 40 DMU's that had the October antlerless hunt last year (without EAB) not have an October hunt for the fall 2009 season.

Deer population goals are established to ensure a healthy deer herd and habitat for the long term, ensuring the preservation of our great hunting traditions for future generations. We can expect fewer deer harvested as we get closer to these goals and a population that is in better balance with its habitat. Our population goals are also designed to protect the long-term vitality and economic viability of our forests and our agriculture lands. A deer herd above a healthy population goal stunts forest regeneration and causes significant crop damage. We strive to achieve a positive annual hunting experience, a long-term sustainable herd, and a strong agricultural and forestry economic base. By achieving the right balance, we preserve Wisconsin's great deer hunting tradition for generations to come, and maintain hunting, forestry and agriculture as key components of Wisconsin's economy.

Deer populations were lower than anticipated in fall of 2008. The impacts of the harsh winter weather and the late, cool spring reduced fawn production and deer survival more than we anticipated. While we underestimated the impact of the winter on fawn production, especially in the north, statewide we still had one of the largest harvests in the nation. We have taken action in response to avoid the problems encountered last season and improve our science base for decision making. One of the steps we have already taken is to establish more stations to measure winter severity and have a more complete picture of winter impact on fawn production and deer survival.

Based upon staff analysis of final numbers available relating to the 2008 hunt, in early March, the DNR released its preliminary deer season proposal for the fall 2009 hunt for public input and comment. The proposal included a significant reduction in DMU's with an October antlerless hunt. It also included proposed reductions in EAB in DMU's outside the CWD zone while maintaining EAB in the CWD zone.

We made additional efforts this year to gather hunter and public input. We expanded our information collection methods to include over 40 public meetings around the state. Attendance significantly surpassed attendance in recent years- more than twice as many people attended hearings this year as last year. For the first time, we offered an online survey, which was completed by over 6,000 people. Hunter frustration and concern with the fall 2008 hunt was particularly pronounced this year. Several themes emerged including: concerns about the DNR's deer count, hunters reporting seeing fewer deer, and doubts about management policies, with the biggest concern being EAB. While EAB has been a useful tool in reducing the size of the Wisconsin deer population, it has been and continues to be very unpopular among Wisconsin hunters. Concerns with EAB were aggravated this year by overall hunter frustration with the fall 2008 hunt.

The Conservation Congress Big Game Study Committee reviewed the Department's deer season proposal on March 28. The committee recommended that there be a one year moratorium on EAB (except in CWD zones) and that all recommended EAB units be changed to Herd Control units. The committee also recommended that all Herd Control units have the October gun season and the \$2 antlerless deer tags. The Big Game Study Committee was clear that if, during this moratorium, the deer herd increased, EAB would return in 2010.

In light of the recommendation from the Congress, and the concerns of hunters expressed at annual DMU meetings across the state, the DNR is recommending a one year moratorium on the use of EAB in DMU's outside of the CWD zone for the 2009 hunting season. Retaining EAB within the CWD zone maintains our commitment to controlling the spread of CWD by reducing deer population densities and moving towards goal.

While the DNR is recommending support for the proposal of the Congress for a temporary moratorium on the use of EAB outside the CWD zone, it is vitally important that we not abandon our long term goals to reduce the state's deer population. We have a concern that a one year moratorium on EAB in these units could potentially undermine the progress we have made in moving towards goal. In a number of units outside the CWD zone, the deer population is still well above goal.

At the same time, hunter support is critical to our ultimate success in managing the deer population. We are committed to listening and working with the hunting community as we work to achieve our goals. During the moratorium, the DNR proposes to work with the Congress, the Natural Resources Board, hunters, landowners and the public to consider potential changes to EAB or consider other herd control measures that effectively move the herd towards population goals. This year coincides with the regularly scheduled three year review of deer population goals which will provide additional opportunity for public input.

### Deer Harvest

Wisconsin has one of the strongest deer hunting traditions and some of the best deer hunting in the nation. DNR is committed to working with hunters to promote youth involvement, ensuring our traditions continue for future generations. We are committed to conserving the deer resource and deer habitat in order to provide a healthy sustainable deer population for generations of hunters to come.

The 2008 deer season total harvest was over 453,000 – including tribal harvest (Table 2), indicating progress toward healthy, sustainable deer population goals. There were 56 Herd Control units, 35 EAB units, and the southern third of the state remained under CWD regulations. Harvest during the 9-day gun season declined by 27% from 2007, but the October gun hunt and December antlerless harvest added to the gun harvest and the total gun kill declined by 12%. About 294,000 individual hunters (44%) killed at least one deer during the 2008 seasons.

Table 2. Deer Harvest by Season Compared to Prior Years

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Archery Season Harvest	54,093	95,607	103,569	78,028	113,884	116,042	99,284
Total Gun Harvest	317,888	388,344	413,559	385,907	393,063	402,531	352,601
Muzzleloader Season Harvest	3,905	6,092	7,074	8,476	10,231	10,417	8,522
Total Oct and Dec gun Harvest	36,228	57,792	86,627	85,049	23,029	34,260	49,230
Total Antlerless Harvest	216,249	291,017	350,153	274,364	326,065	345,143	310,366
Total Buck Harvest	155,792	192,934	166,796	183,135	177,293	171,142	139,022
Total Deer Harvest	372,021	483,951	517,128	463,935	506,947	518,573	453,480

Harvest results varied regionally around the state (Table 3) because the deer population abundance varies across the state. The deer herd was generally below goal in northeastern Wisconsin, and near goal in northwestern and central Wisconsin. In the farmland areas of the state deer populations remain well above goal, although populations there are moving downward.

Table 3. Deer Harvest by Region and Difference from 2008 (%).

Deer management region	2009 total harvest	Difference from 2008
Central Forest	31,168	-13%
Eastern Farmland	100,132	-17%
Northern Forest	91,236	-25%
Southern Farmland	131,959	-3%
Western Farmland	97,308	-6%

While Wisconsin saw a 13% total harvest decrease, Minnesota also saw a 19% total harvest decrease and Michigan's harvest decreased 20% in the Upper Peninsula. Even with the harvest decrease, Wisconsin still likely had the largest harvest in the upper Midwest and one of the largest in the nation.

#### Deer Population

Deer populations vary a great deal across Wisconsin. In the far northeast, deer populations are generally below a healthy population. In the northern forest and central Wisconsin deer populations are close to healthy goals. In the farmland regions most populations are somewhat smaller but remain above healthy goals.

Deer populations were lower than anticipated in fall of 2008. The impacts of the harsh winter weather and the late, cool spring reduced fawn production and deer survival more than we anticipated

The registered harvest was used with the Sex-Age-Kill and accounting style population models to develop an estimate of the deer population prior to the 2008 hunting season and to assess the effects of herd control seasons. The pre-hunt population *estimate* in 2008 was 1.5 million deer, 17% lower than 2007. The discrepancy between the predicted buck kill and the actual buck kill is a clear way to evaluate population projections. In the 17 years since 1992 the actual buck kill exceeds the predicted by an average of 1% annually. The actual has varied from predicted buck harvest from being 22% higher in 1998 to being 18% lower this past year. Actual buck kill has been more than 10% lower than predicted only twice in that time period, while it has been more than 10% greater than predicted 5 times. This year, the actual buck harvest was 18% below the predicted, indicating that last April's pre-hunt projection was somewhat high. We underestimated the impact that the harsh winter weather and the late, cool spring had on fawn production and deer survival 2007-2008. Data on fawn production show that fawn recruitment in 2008 was 14% below the long term average and the lowest it has been since 1996 (Table 4). The population projection and harvest were off by the largest amount in northern region where nearly all units are slated for a regular season in 2009. Although the population projection was somewhat high last year in units recommended for EAB, those units average 145% above population goals according to 2009 population estimates which are unrelated to last year's projections.

Table 4. Summer Deer Observations. Statewide fawn to doe ratio 1998-2008.

Year	Fawns per doe
1998	0.94
1999	0.92
2000	0.87
2001	0.84
2002	0.90
2003	0.80
2004	0.80
2005	0.86
2006	0.86
2007	0.86
2008	0.74
<hr/>	
Long-Term Average	0.86
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10 Year Average	0.87
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% change from 10 Year Average	-14

The estimated deer population after the 2008 hunt is 1 million deer, 17% lower than last year, but still about 36% above the current overwinter goal of 737,000. The population estimates declined in nearly every deer management unit in 2008 indicating a combined effect of herd reduction seasons and weather related impacts to survival and recruitment. In several units in northeastern Wisconsin, deer populations are below goal and our 2009 season proposals there are structured to increase deer herds. Herd Control and EAB season structures were initially recommended again in 2009 to build upon the progress made in 2008 toward goal.

Figure 1.

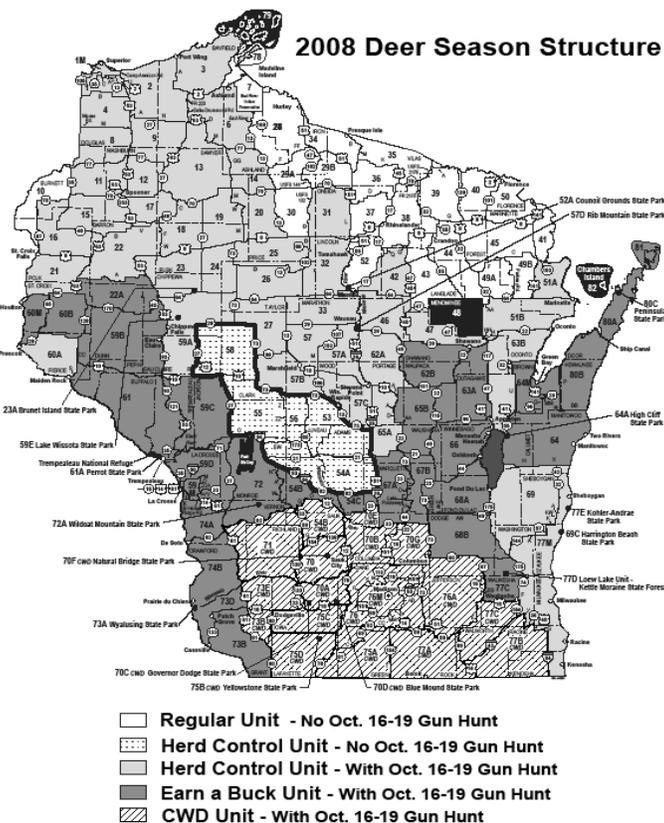


Figure 2.

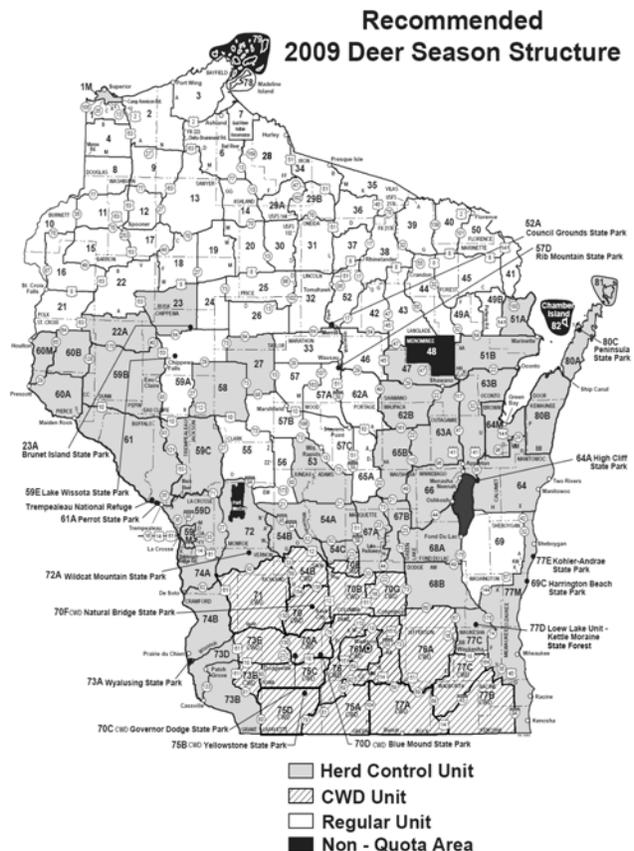
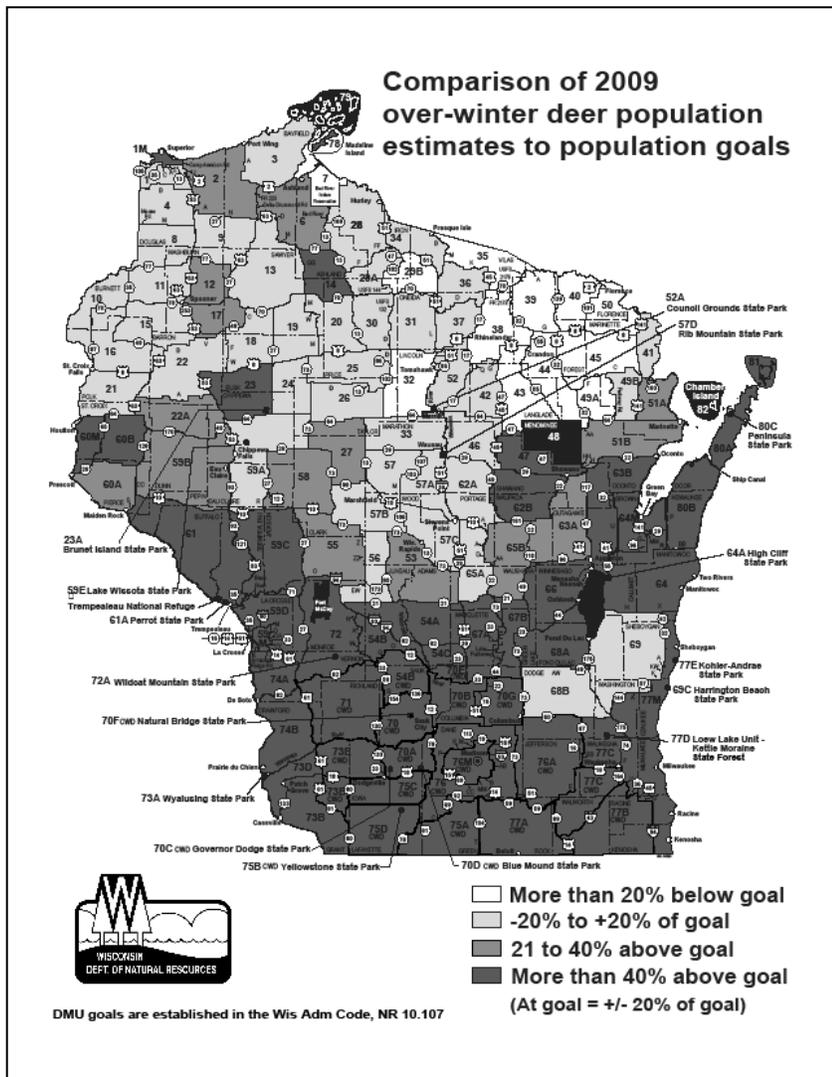


Figure 3. Season structure recommendations correspond well with population estimates relative to goal.



Conservation Congress Review

The Conservation Congress Big Game Study Committee reviewed the Department’s deer season proposal on March 28. The committee recommended that there be a one year moratorium on EAB (except in CWD zones) and that all recommended EAB units be changed to Herd Control units. The committee also recommended that all Herd Control units have the October gun season and the \$2 antlerless deer tags. The Big Game Study Committee was clear that if, during this moratorium, the deer herd increased, EAB would return in 2010.

Herd Control

The October antlerless deer gun hunt was reinstated in most of the state last year and over 35,000 antlerless deer were harvested. The only area of the state remaining without the October antlerless hunt in 2008 was the Central Forest deer

management region. The antlerless to antlered harvest ratio there has 2.7:1 antlerless per antlered buck in Herd Control units with the October gun hunt (pre 2005), compared to 1.8:1 antlerless per antlered buck in Herd Control units without the October gun hunt (2006-2008; Table 4).

In 2006, in response to years of controversy surrounding the October gun hunt and EAB seasons, the Department established a stakeholder advisory panel which selected the primary performance measure for returning the October antlerless gun hunt; if the average antlerless:antlered harvest ratio in *Herd Control* units did not meet or exceed 2.0 in individual deer management regions (Figure 2), the October gun hunt would again be in place.

The 2:1 benchmark minimum was not met in the Central Forest deer management region for the second consecutive year (Table 5). We are recommending that the October gun hunt called for in Administrative Code be implemented in Herd Control and EAB units statewide in 2009.

Table 5. Antlerless:antlered deer harvest ratios by season structure 2008.

	Antlerless:antlered deer harvest ratio
Central Forest Herd Control Units with October gun hunt	2.7
Central Forest Herd Control Units without October gun hunt	1.8

Earn-A-Buck

EAB was initially recommended for 21 Deer Management Units for 2009 (Figure 2) where populations are estimated to be an average of 145% over goal. EAB moves populations down in a steady and generally predictable trend. If EAB is not consistently applied, populations in these units would continue to fluctuate without declining, resulting in a pattern of EAB in one year and not the next and a population that remains well over goal. The Department’s objective has been to eliminate that cycle and hence the need for EAB.

To address the question of the effects of an EAB moratorium in the 17 non-CWD units where it was preliminarily recommended, we compared the gun antlerless deer harvest needed hold the population (keep it from going upward after this season) with the all time high gun antlerless harvest during herd control (not EAB) seasons in these units (Table 6). We also compared the needed antlerless harvest with the average non-EAB Herd control antlerless gun harvest.

Table 6. Comparison of maximum and average historic antlerless harvests with out EAB to the antlerless harvest needed to hold populations stable in units for EAB seasons in 2009.

DMU	Goal Density	Current Density	% over goal	Maximum historic antlerless harvest herd control (not EAB)	Average antlerless herd cont. (not EAB)	Would maximum antlerless harvest hold the population?	Would average antlerless harvest hold the population?
54B	25	41	64	2,177	1,872	No	No
54C	25	41	65	1,096	946	Yes	Yes
59C	25	52	106	9,162	7,975	Yes	Yes
59M	10	38	282	351	303	No	No
60M	10	30	201	756	552	No	No
62B	25	55	120	6,161	5,602	No	No
64	20	42	110	3,750	3,369	No	No
65B	30	42	39	5,831	4,711	Yes	No
66	25	57	130	2,713	2,208	No	No
67A	25	41	65	6,670	4,865	Yes	No
68A	30	80	168	2,464	1,921	No	No
73B	20	41	106	2,569	1,499	No	No
73D	20	43	115	1,653	1,608	No	No
74B	20	36	81	3,021	2,747	No	No
77C	15	44	191	2,045	1,251	No	No
80A	15	29	95	1,047	778	No	No
81	15	96	540	192	148	No	No
Average		47	145				

## History

In 2006, the department implemented a 2-year trial moratorium on the October gun hunt (with a sunset provision that re-established the October gun hunt as a tool in 2008). This change was supported by every major stakeholder group (except the snowmobilers) and was approved after extensive legislative review. Specific performance measures were established in Administrative Code to assess the effectiveness of the changes. The agreement was that the performance measures were not met, the 4-day October antlerless gun deer hunt would be reinstated. The stakeholders selected the primary performance measure: if the average antlerless:antlered harvest ratio in *Herd Control* units did not meet or exceed 2.0 in individual deer management regions, the October gun hunt would again be in place. The 2:1 benchmark minimum was not met. The October gun hunt was implemented as per the agreement.

After several years of EAB requirements in the CWD management zones, the Department in 2006 implemented an either sex season in response to hunter requests. Antlerless deer harvest declined 21% as a result. In 2007, EAB requirements were re-instituted in CWD zones resulting in an increase of 62% in the antlerless harvest.

## Quotas

In 2009, 62 units are recommended for a regular 9-day gun season (bucks plus quota) (Table 7). The quota (or allowable antlerless deer harvest after taking into account anticipated bow harvest) is determined by adding to the overwinter deer population estimate, expected fawn production and Subtracting anticipated overwinter mortality. We then subtract the expected archery harvest of antlerless deer to calculate an antlerless deer kill quota for each unit with the objective of maintaining the deer herd at the established deer population.

This year there are many DMUs where the SAK estimate is below goal. That does not mean (in all cases) that antlerless harvest is not needed to keep the population near goal. We use a model to predict next year's harvest based on historical population performance and hunting success. This model predicts gun buck, bow buck, and bow antlerless harvests, then compares those estimates to predicted necessary gun antlerless harvest to maintain the population at goal.

In many instances where DMUs are near or slightly below goal, gun antlerless harvest necessary to keep a unit at goal is substantial. In those cases where a unit is well below goal, antlerless harvest is not *necessary* to move the population upward toward goal. But this does not mean that there is no available opportunity to harvest antlerless deer in these units. Due to compensatory mortality, the biological fact is that antlerless harvest opportunity is always available (i.e. some antlerless deer will die whether through harvest or other forms of mortality and at low harvest levels those mortality forms compensate for one another). The DNR recognizes that this opportunity exists and that there is substantial interest in harvesting antlerless deer as evidenced by the fact that when a limited quota (and permits) is made available, the permits sell out rapidly.

However, this year there was strong sentiment from hunters attending some herd status meetings that antlerless quotas in units well below goal should be zero. If the gun antlerless quota is zero, opportunity to purchase an antlerless deer carcass tag is lost to regular gun hunters. Only first time hunter education graduates, active military personnel, and disabled hunters will have antlerless deer gun hunting opportunity (statutory authorities). In a zero gun quota situation, archery hunters will also continue to have the opportunity to take antlerless deer as allowed by administrative code.

Tribal antlerless declarations will still be viable as we estimate all antlerless harvest that will occur under the allowable methods (archers, first time hunter education graduates, and military licenses) and the tribal declaration can equal that estimate.

Because many hunters told us they are in favor of a zero gun antlerless deer quota this year, we respected those sentiments. In units where the quota to goal was below zero we offered recommended gun antlerless deer quota that was low enough that it would not impact the population growth (compensatory mortality). Hunters attending the herd status meetings were asked for input, and where the sentiment was to favor a small quota with no population impact, we support that in response to their input. If attendees at the herd status meeting favored a zero quota in a unit where the gun quota to goal is less than zero, we endorsed a zero gun quota.

Antlerless deer hunting permits are issued in sufficient numbers to achieve the quota by dividing the quota by the predicted hunter success rate (Table 7). The predicted hunter success rate used by the department to compute the number of permits for each deer management unit is based on the percentage of permitted hunters harvesting an antlerless deer in that unit during previous seasons.

### Population Goals

Over winter deer goals are reflective of the social and biological carrying capacity in individual units and are established to provide a healthy, sustainable deer herd in Wisconsin. Statewide, the deer population is still above goal; however, in northern Wisconsin it is close enough to return to the regular 9-day gun season structure with antlerless deer quotas in most units. EAB regulations have been implemented in many of the eastern, western, and southern farmland units for the past three years, and the result is that the population is moving toward healthy goals. A deer herd that is at goal throughout Wisconsin will provide an annual sustained harvest of 330,000 to 400,000 deer.

### **Deer herd status meetings:**

Deer herd status meetings were held at over 40 locations statewide in March to discuss herd status with the public. These meetings are held each year as part of the department's annual deer quota setting process. The meetings provide local wildlife managers with an opportunity to discuss the past and future deer seasons with local hunters and to gather hunter input that informs season recommendations. A summary of public comments collected during these meetings is provided as an appendix to this memo.

Over 6,000 people responded to the online survey that was developed in partnership with the DMU review stakeholders panel. Early results indicate that: the average age of respondents was 47 years (slightly older than average hunter age); 53% of respondents reported being primarily bowhunters; respondents reported harvesting an average of one deer each; and were generally dissatisfied with the deer season. Fifty percent of respondents registered a buck and 87% registered an antlerless deer. Over eighty percent hunted from a tree stand, while 35% reported driving deer. Most respondents reported that there were fewer deer than five years ago, and answered that they felt there should be more deer than there are now.

### **Timeline:**

The timeline for determining the deer season structure and quotas is tight. Following the close of hunting at the end of December, registration stubs are entered into the database and summarized by sex, unit, and county. Aging data and harvest structure are used to develop population estimates and season structure and quota recommendations by early April for action at the April Board meeting. Following changes (if there are any) by the board, the department will return to field staff and population experts to determine quotas and permit levels. We will continue to track winter and spring weather when making final quota determinations into May, but so far this winter appears much less severe than last. Antlerless permit and season structure information need to be available by late May for inclusion in the regulations pamphlet.

Table 6. Herd Control and Earn a Buck Units and gun antlerless harvest needed to get to within 20% of goal and maximum historic gun antlerless harvest without herd control seasons.

Unit	Population goal	Estimated post hunt population	Percent over goal	Gun antlerless harvest needed to get to within 20% of goal	Maximum historic antlerless harvest in regular season	Recommended season
1M	320	889	178	465	5	HC
6	6,552	8,933	36	2,305	969	HC
14	4,592	6,708	46	2,022	1,132	HC
22A	7,060	8,852	25	3,707	3,215	HC
23	8,060	11,944	48	4,854	3,679	HC
47	6,725	9,627	43	4,044	2,329	HC
51A	5,500	7,486	36	2,687	2,942	HC
51B	9,725	13,520	39	5,141	3,977	HC
53	11,525	14,537	26	5,081	4,696	HC
54A	12,100	20,560	70	13,347	4,788	HC
54B	4,650	7,637	64	4,635	4,778	EAB
54C	2,375	3,917	65	2,725	1,243	EAB
58	12,650	17,208	36	8,142	5,873	HC
59B	10,305	13,012	26	5,208	5,759	HC
59C	15,650	32,239	106	28,880	8,199	EAB
59D	7,680	13,438	75	9,026	4,031	EAB
59M	440	1,682	282	1,605	320	EAB
60A	3,400	4,575	35	1,841	1,632	HC
60B	1,660	3,003	81	2,215	797	HC
60M	800	2,404	201	2,329	727	EAB
61	19,160	32,475	69	23,493	9,185	EAB
62B	9,075	19,956	120	15,427	5,361	EAB
63A	8,475	11,759	39	5,226	4,293	HC
63B	6,300	9,419	50	3,479	2,569	HC
64	4,860	10,223	110	7,985	3,869	EAB
64M	810	2,032	151	1,454	916	HC
65B	10,410	14,465	39	7,331	5,067	EAB
66	4,300	9,869	130	7,430	2,702	EAB
67A	8,850	14,569	65	8,535	5,917	EAB
67B	4,700	7,133	52	3,347	3,426	EAB
68A	3,900	10,436	168	9,721	2,133	EAB
68B	5,490	6,295	15	2,611	1,504	HC
72	10,080	16,750	66	10,485	5,963	EAB
73B	3,700	7,607	106	5,642	2,110	EAB
73D	3,160	6,790	115	5,547	1,192	EAB
74A	4,000	6,539	63	4,224	1,652	EAB
74B	8,640	15,616	81	12,295	3,146	EAB
77C	2,025	5,889	191	5,333	2,219	EAB
77M	3,120	5,962	91	3,641	611	HC
80A	2,280	4,440	95	2,624	915	EAB
80B	3,880	7,403	91	4,830	2,593	HC
81	270	1,728	540	1,940	354	EAB

Table 7. Antlerless deer harvest quotas and bonus permit levels in deer management units with a regular gun season.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Proposed Antlerless Gun Quota</b>	<b>Number of Permits for Quota</b>
1	700	1,350
2	3,200	8,900
3	700	2,200
4	200	530
6	1,400	6,100
7	0	0
8	1,300	3,300
9	1,900	5,300
10	2,500	7,750
11	2,200	5,300
12	1,700	5,000
13	1,300	4,500
14	2,000	5,800
15	3,000	6,600
16	3,400	10,700
17	1,700	4,700
18	1,500	3,600
19	1,800	5,750
20	1,500	7,500
21	1,700	4,400
22	2,200	6,000
24	1,800	5,000
25	2,000	6,700
26	1,700	5,000
28	650	1,600
29A	300	1,200
29B	0	
30	400	1,400
31	0	
32	0	
33	500	750
34	200	700
35	0	
36	0	
37	800	2,250
38	0	
39	0	
40	0	
41	500	1,300
42	0	
43	0	
44	0	
45	250	640
46	1,600	3,100
49A	125	270
49B	1,000	3,100
50	0	
52	750	1,900
53	7,000	

55	5,200	18,200
56	1,000	1,250
57	900	1,800
57A	800	940
57B	2,200	5,100
57C	1,500	2,600
59A	4,500	17,100
62A	3,500	7,300
65A	1,200	2,700
69	4,000	18,300
78	200	1,000

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## **Appendix 1: Summary of 2009 Deer Management Information and DMU Review Meetings**

This year's deer meetings drew considerable attention. These meetings statewide had a combined focus of the local herd status which is discussed every year, and also public input on DMU boundary and goal concepts developed by the DNR's Deer Committee and the DMU Review Stakeholder Panel. Statewide public attendance was 2,124 with 39 out of the 40 meeting summaries reporting. Overall, public attendance was more than double than attendance in 2008. Public attendance at meeting locations varied between approximately 8 to 170 people. Meetings that drew higher attendance were generally where Earn-a-buck (EAB) recommendations were on the table. High attendance at some meetings in the northeast may be attributed to lower deer populations and poor hunter success there.

Season structures proposed in the north with fewer antlerless permits or an elimination of the October gun hunt were mostly accepted by the public. In areas where the deer herd was significantly below goal, most people felt a need to eliminate unit-specific gun antlerless quotas to help the deer herd recover faster. In areas where EAB is proposed again, many felt that the deer numbers are going down in these units. Many hunters commented on increasingly uneven deer distributions across the landscape and landowner/hunter impacts on those distributions. Units that proposed herd control seasons drew less opposition.

As always, baiting was a hot topic. Most comments related to baiting were in favor of getting rid of it, and few positive comments were made related to baiting. In the north, hunters commonly commented on or questioned perceived impacts of wolves and bears on fawns and the deer herd. Hunters across the state made comments related to a lack of seeing deer and hunter recruitment and retention. Many hunters had questions related to deer range and deer densities as biologists gave presentations.

### **Northern Region Summary**

Extra meeting sites were added to the north this year to accommodate an anticipated increased public turnout due to the deer population reduction in the north and the DMU Review process. Biologists proposed Deer Committee recommendations for Regular DMU season structures in a majority of northern units for 2009. Most of the public seemed satisfied with a regular season structure. There was discussion of predators in the north, especially wolves and bears. Many had questions on their impact on deer numbers and recruitment. The topic of baiting was also brought up at most meetings. All comments made at the meetings or on public comment forms appear to be in favor of eliminating deer baiting.

At the Iron County meeting, a large representation of the snowmobiling and tourism community showed up to voice their disapproval of gun hunting opportunities in December. The group particularly came to voice their opposition on advisory questions 60 and 61 of the 2009 Conservation Congress Spring Hearings.

### **Northeast Region Summary**

Meeting attendance in the northeast was higher than other regions. Many people who came to these meetings were most interested to find out if their unit was proposed as EAB and to voice their opinion. Despite the deer population model used for an area, many people did not believe the estimates, no matter what the estimates were. Private landowners with recreational property appeared to be the most vocal about EAB and deer population estimates. Foresters and farmers appeared to be the most in favor of herd control efforts. Most people who had positive things to say about herd control techniques or the DNR's efforts chose to speak with biologists individually rather than stand up in the crowd. In proposed Regular units in the far northern part of the region, hunters favored keeping small antlerless quotas rather than a zero, unlike meetings northern Wisconsin.

### **West Central Region**

Attendance at most meetings was significantly higher compared to the previous year. As expected, EAB was an issue of public interest. Many hunters pointed out that EAB was working and that deer numbers are going down. While most hunters were not in favor of EAB proposals, some hunters and landowners said it was good for deer management. Many people in this region suggested that EAB was creating a greater disparity in deer densities within management units. Others simply wanted a break from EAB but recognized its importance. Some hunters were so fed up with EAB that they threatened to not purchase a deer license this year.

The winter-severity from 2007-2008 was also brought up by some hunters in the WCR. Many felt that the DNR was not accurately taking WSI into account when we projected last year's population. Comments were received about wolf and bear impacts on deer survival.

Overall, people throughout the region acknowledged that they saw fewer deer. Despite these statements, there were also other hunters and landowners who made the opposite statements that there were still plenty of deer around on their properties.

### **South Central Region**

Public attendance at South Central Region meetings was lower this year, mainly because CWD rules were not on the table this year. Compared to other regions, interest in these meetings also seemed to be less. The smaller meetings were held entirely in an open-house format which allowed more one-on-one time with the public and the local biologists. The smaller meetings also appeared to exhibit less vocal opposition or controversy from the public. CWD was the main topic of discussion in the SCR. Even though EAB is recommended for all CWD units, there was considerably less opposition to EAB in this region. Some hunters thought that deer were simply not there anymore. A couple representatives of a group that intends on eliminating rifle-use came to a couple meetings and had discussions with biologists about the issue.

### **Southeast Region Summary**

A formal presentation was given in Campbellsport by local biologists who discussed unit histories and season proposals. In Big Bend, biologists held an open-house meeting. Hunters in this region hunted in local areas, but many other hunters who lived in these suburban or big city areas hunted up north and were concerned about the deer herd in the northern region. There seemed to be more questions in this region on population estimates and model inputs, especially since the biologists went over detailed unit histories.

Some hunters made complaints about other hunters shooting more buck fawns due to EAB, and some hunters have the impression that the DNR is not taking buck fawn harvest into account in the population models.

Some hunters voiced their opinion against EAB, but not nearly as much as in the NER or WCR. Hunters appeared to be satisfied with the Regular season proposal in DMU 69, but still insisted that there were not that many deer in the unit. There did not appear to be anybody who brought up the rifle/shotgun issue in this region. Some people inquired about the sharp-shooting activities in local municipalities or southeastern cities.

BEFORE THE STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

In the matter of a Secretary's Order pertaining to modification of 2009 deer hunting regulations in deer management units that comprise the CWD Management Zone.

**FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The deer population in deer management units or portions of deer management units 54B, 70, 70A, 70B, 70E, 70G, 71, 73B, 73E, 75A, 75C, 75D, 76, 76A, 76M, 77A, 77B, 77C, which are located in the CWD Management Zone, are estimated to be above the goals established in NR 10.41(3)(b).

**CONCLUSION OF LAW**

1. According to s. NR 10.01(3)(et)2., Wis. Adm. Code, the department may, upon making the above findings, modify the deer season to require that hunters shall first tag an antlerless deer during the archery or firearm hunts or with an agricultural shooting permit, before they may tag a buck with either weapon in that deer management unit or units during the either sex hunts listed in s. NR 10.01(3)(et). This requirement shall also apply in state parks that are within or adjoining these units.

**ORDER**

1. *Earn-a-Buck*. Notwithstanding all other provisions of Ch. NR 10, Wis. Adm. Code, which remain in effect, hunters shall harvest or tag an antlerless deer in deer management units or portions of deer management units 54B, 70, 70A, 70B, 70C, 70D, 70E, 70F, 70G, 71, 73B, 73E, 75A, 75B, 75C, 75D, 76, 76A, 76M, 77A, 77B, 77C, which are located in the CWD Management Zone, with either a bow or a gun during any deer season where earn-a-buck regulations are in place, or with an agricultural shooting permit in an area where earn-a-buck regulations are in place, before they may harvest a buck with either weapon. The requirement to harvest or tag a legally harvested antlerless deer before harvesting or tagging a buck includes state parks and federal properties that are within or adjoining these units including; Belmont Mound, Blue Mound, Cadiz Springs, Devil's Lake, Governor Dodge, Mirror Lake, Natural Bridge, New Glarus Woods, Rocky Arbor, Tower Hill and Yellowstone state parks. One antlerless deer is required to authorize the harvest of one buck in these units or in state parks with gun deer seasons that are within or adjoining these units. Multiple bucks may be harvested with each weapon if each buck taken is pre-qualified by a legally harvested or tagged antlerless deer. Deer harvested as described in this paragraph shall be transported in accordance with s. NR 10.105 (2).

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin, \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL  
RESOURCES

\_\_\_\_\_  
By Matthew Frank, Secretary

BEFORE THE STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

In the matter of a Secretary's Order pertaining to modification of 2009 deer hunting regulations in select deer management units that are not CWD units.

**FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. It is unlikely the deer population in deer management units 1M, 22A, 23, 27, 47, 51A, 51B, 53, 54A, 54B, 54C, 58, 59B, 59C, 59D, 59M, 60A, 60B, 60M, 61, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A, 68B, 72, 73B, 73D, 74A, 74B, 77C, 77M, 80A, 80B, 81 will be reduced to within 20% of the overwinter population goals established in s. NR 10.104, Wis. Adm. Code, under the current deer hunting rules. In making this determination, the department compared the harvest required to reduce the deer population to goal to the harvest likely to occur under the existing season structure based on deer harvest data from past seasons, including the sex and age of the registered kill.
2. The average antlerless:antlered harvest ratio from deer herd control units the 2 previous years did not equal or exceed two antlerless deer to each antlered deer, as identified in NR 10.01(3)(ed)1.b., in the Western Farmland, Southern Farmland, Central Forest, Eastern Farmland, and Northern Forest Deer Management Regions.

**CONCLUSION OF LAW**

1. According to ss. NR 10.01(3)(e)e., and 10.01(3)(ed), Wis. Adm. Code, the department may, upon making the above findings, modify the deer seasons, deer registration and permit issuance procedures.

**ORDER**

1. *Free Antlerless Permits.* Notwithstanding all other provisions of Ch. NR 10, Wis. Adm. Code, which remain in effect, special deer hunting permits for antlerless deer issued under s. NR 10.104, Wis. Adm. Code and s. 29.177, Stats., shall be issued free of charge for use in deer management units 1M, 22A, 23, 23A, 27, 47, 51A, 51B, 53, 54A, 54B, 54C, 58, 59B, 59C, 59D, 59M, 60A, 60B, 60M, 61, 61A, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64, 64A, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A, 68B, 69C, 72, 72A, 73A, 73B, 73D, 74A, 74B, 77C, 77D, 77E, 77M, 80A, 80B, 80C, and 81. Hunters may receive one special permit with their archery license and one special permit with their gun license, or two special permits with their conservation patron license. Additional antlerless deer carcass tags may be obtained at no charge, except for a \$2.00 handling fee authorized under s. 29.556, Stats. and s. NR 19.02, Wis. Adm. Code, for the above units except 23A, 61A, 64A, 69C, 72A, 73A, 77D, 77E and 80C where additional antlerless deer carcass tags may be purchased only by those who have obtained a state park access permit for these units.
2. *October Firearm Deer Season.* Notwithstanding all other provisions of Ch. NR 10, Wis. Adm. Code, which remain in effect, a firearm season for hunting antlerless deer is established as described in Section NR 10.01(3)(e)e. The season begins on October 15 and will continue for four days in deer management units 1M, 22A, 23, 27, 47, 51A, 51B, 53, 54A, 54B, 54C, 58, 59B, 59C, 59D, 59M, 60A, 60B, 60M, 61, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A, 68B, 72, 73B, 73D, 74A, 74B, 77C, 77M, 80A, 80B, 81. This season does not include areas established in Ch. NR 11 and 15, Wis. Adm. code, or state parks that are within or adjoining these units. Sections NR 10.09(2) and 10.06(8)(b) Wis. Adm. Code are not applicable during this population control action. An archery license is not valid for taking an antlered deer in these areas during this period.

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin, \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL  
RESOURCES

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By Matthew Frank, Secretary