

**Wisconsin Conservation Congress
Big Game Study Committee Meeting Minutes
Mead Wildlife Area Visitor Center Milladore, WI
Saturday March 19, 2011**

Meeting called to order by Chairmen Mark Noll & Al Phelan at 9:05 AM.

Members Present:

Mark Noll Chairman, Al Phelan Chairman, Tony Janecek Secretary, Wright Allen, Jerry Aulik, Norman Blohm, Robert Bohmann, Larry Bonde, Charlie Brown, Stan Brownell, Michael Demaster, Larry Hazen, David Hraychuck, Allen Jacobson, Steve Klicko, Marlin Laidlaw, Arold Ninneman, Mike Riggle, Roger Sabota, Gary Schenck, Gary Severson & Paul Shaurette

Members Excused: Alan Gerber, Gerald Merryfield & Douglas Williams

Members Absent: Mark Houslet

DNR Liaison Present:

Jeff Pritzl & Mark Burmesch

Others Present:

Ed Harvey, Chair Wisconsin Conservation Congress, Kari Lee – Zimmermann WCC Coordinator, Tom Hauge, Central Office Wildlife Management & Kurt Thiede, Central Office Lands & Program Management

Study Committee Mission Statement

“The Mission of the Big Game Committee of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is to represent the citizens of Wisconsin by blending the social and biological concerns of hunters, citizens and the Department of Natural Resources to provide successful management of Wisconsin’s big game animals which addresses the interests of all parties.”

Chairman Noll asked & received no changes to the mission statement

Chairman Noll ask for public comments with none being given

Department Informational Items - Jeff Pritzl, Regional Wildlife Supervisor, WDNR

A. 2010 Final Harvest Data

Jeff started by saying he was interested in the deer communication side. He stated his new DNR responsibility (filling in for Keith Warnke who took another job in the Department) was a one year deal for him.

Jeff discussed the buck & antlerless harvest for bow & gun in 2010 as compared to 2009. He noted the buck harvest was up 10% & antlerless was down 4%. He said the buck harvest is the most critical tracking measurement. He also noted the increase may have been due to better opening day hunting conditions in 2010.

DMU buck harvest per square mile was discussed. In discussion of deer range Mark Noll said it may

be better to express deer numbers as the “abundance within a DMU” instead of deer per sq. mile. It was noted the uneven deer distribution through out the DMU’s is a major problem. It was noted by the committee that some fields should be considered as habit (deer range) due to winds blowing snow off these field allowing deer to feed in these field through out the winter. Jeff said the DNR uses deer range in determining deer productivity. Concern was express that deer range was not correct since it has not been updated for over 15 years.

Jeff discussed HC (herd control) & EAB (earn a buck) “eligibility” for the 2011 DMU’s. He thinks it is unlikely there will be EAB in 2011. He noted the shaded HC & EAB areas, on the deer structure graph, shows where we are headed such that next year deer populations will likely increase in these shaded areas. He expected the season framework will not get to deer population goals. Ed Harvey asked how good were the deer numbers at the end of the year & does the DNR have the same urgency for DMU’s being under goal? It was also asked why the -20% to +20% range is considered the “green happy band” when the other bands are in 20% increments, that is, over 20% under goal, 21% to 40% above goal and more than 40% above goal? therefore why is 0 to -20% below goal in the happy band?

B. 2010 Fawn Production

Jeff discussed fawn doe ratios in the different regions of the state noting the Northern Region being the lowest at about 0.88 fawns per doe & the Eastern Farmland Region being the highest at about 1.15 does per fawn. The other three deer regions were somewhere in between. He discussed summer deer observations done in August & September noting public observations verse DNR were close but sometimes the public observations were less. He said this year the Department will use the combined public & DNR observations. He also discussed the internet reported deer seen per hour hunted.

Arold Ninneman said he was very concern with his area 2011 deer status meeting which was moved to Rhinelander. He said in their local meetings last year they had over 20 individuals at each at these meetings. He said there was poor notification of the meeting and with 15 units to be talked about at Rhinelander (most anywhere in the state). Arold said no delegates from Forest & Florence Counties attended this meeting, to far away. A recommendation was made to look at doing herd status meetings before the Spring Hearing Meetings say at 6:30 PM. Jerry Aulik asked what was the reason for consolidation so far away? He also noted his local area DNR rep was not orientated towards working with the public. Jeff Pritzl said the shortage of available DNR personnel was the reason for the Rhinelander combined herd status meeting.

The question on whether doing only gun aging surveys represented an accurate aging sample was asked. It was felt the bow harvest should also be included in the aging sample. Jeff Pritzl said it is only done during the gun season due to cost restraints.

C. CWD Update

Jeff said the DNR is not finding CWD outside of the zone. Jeff showed a graph of the prevalence of bucks in core area which showed an increasing trend. He said the DNR was concerned that some deer counts in the CWD area showing over 200 deer per square mile. Wright Allen asked what is the goal? Jeff Pritzl said it was to not see deer outside the black box & to reduce prevalence.

D. Deer Research Review - Mike Riggle

Mike discussed local High School building deer traps, field staff very concern with welfare of deer, clover trap usage and IV dose in does changed to vein which improve reaction & recovery times. He also noted the ultra sound checking for fawns was very successful. He talked about the taking of blood, deer weighing & vaginal in plants. He said no deer were hurt in box traps & clover traps were modified to address a problem with these traps. He said they now have remote control drop nets to catch deer. He recommended tattooing deer ears instead of using ear tags. He said long term he felt the sportsmen clubs will do the trapping. Tom Hauge said we need to keep this project going.

Discussion & Action Items – Jeff Pritzl

A. 2011 Proposed Deer Season Structure

Jeff started by saying the Deer Committee makes a recommendation for the 2011 deer season framework to the DNR Secretary's office. He noted:

- EAB was unlikely in 2011 outside of the CWD area
- it will be another year of HC (herd control)
- they did not want to go back to 2000 deer numbers
- does think "some" units should be in EAB
- will present season framework to the DNR Board in April meeting
- recommends HC in units over goal

Rob Bohmann asked if we could take EAB out of the requirement for the CWD area in 2011. He also asked if the deer population in the CWD area was growing, decreasing or was stable? Tom Hauge said the deer population had a modest decrease in the last 4 to 5 years.

It was also noted that hunters statewide do not believe deer numbers & do not support EAB. Stan Brownell said you cannot put numbers on the social aspects, that we are going to loose hunters & we must get something done in hot pocket areas. Marlin Laidlaw said we must not go to EAB. Mark Burmesch (DNR) said distribution of deer is the issue asking if there was some kind of incentive a land owner will take to shoot deer on his land. Mark Noll said when over 50% go to a doe only season. Mike Riggle said the Department can no longer manage the deer. He stated hunters were filling doe permits on National Forests to make numbers come out. Marlin Laidlaw said we should have two different type of antlerless tags one for public land & one for private land. Al Phelan said we need a disincentive for to many deer on a persons land.

Motion by Gary Severson with second by Marlin Laidlaw to not have EAB in the DNR's tool box for 2011, outside of the CWD area. Motion passed 16 yes 1 no.

Motion by Larry Bonde with second by Marlin Laidlaw to not allow archers to harvest antlerless deer in zero quota units. Motion passed unanimously. In discussion stage both Rob Bohmann & Mike Riggle said they do not believe the deer numbers.

Motion by Rob Bohmann with second by Arold Ninneman to have DMU #50 available deer quota tags to remain at 850 the same as last year (2010). Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Rob Bohmann with second by Larie Hazen to eliminate the 4 day antlerless hunt.in HC units outside the CWD area. Motion passed 10 yes 7 no.

Motion by Tony Janecek with second by Rob Bohmann to allow archery buck harvest during December 4 day antlerless hunt. Motion failed 1 yes 15 no.

Motion by Rob Bohmann with second by Charlie Brown to have no EAB in CWD area for one year (2011). Motion passed 10 yes 6 no. In discussion stage Rob Bohmann said we need to throw them a "bone". Al Phelan said it is a tough area to keep people interested.

Motion by Rob Bohmann with second by Roger Sabota to use last years (2010) zero quota map of 18 DMU's for zero quotas in these same units for 2011. Motion passed unanimously.

Jeff Pritzl said the long term future of the Northern deer herd is not bright because of Aspen shrinkage, poor habitat, logging changes & productivity compromise.

B. Ag Damage Committee

Al Phelan asked the Big Game Committee committee to send him their shooting permit issues.

C. State Proposal to Purchase Hall Farm

Motion by Rob Bohmann with second by Larrie Hazen to support DNR purchase of the Hall farm. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourn 3:05 PM

Tony Janecek, Big Game Committee Secretary