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Title: Antler Point Restriction Trial in Florence County

The Problem

Deer hunter numbers continue to decline in Florence County. Hunter density in Deer Management Unit 50 was at a ten year low in 2011. The lower number of hunters afield results in decreased revenues for conservation efforts (less funding for conservation programs and higher license fees), poor economic results in the local area, and hunter exodus to other areas to hunt or exodus to other activities altogether.

Furthermore, hunting is changing. Our cherished outdoor lifestyle is competing with many other activities and simply losing out. The state has recognized this and implemented additional programs to bring in first time participants and most recently studied the movement of the adult population from the sport. This sport cannot stay status quo or numbers will continue to decline.

Finally, the yearling buck harvest in Florence County is high compared to many other areas of the state. The data indicates the percentage of bucks killed in Florence County that are yearlings is over 60% (2002-2011 average)!

The Solution

We believe people desire a quality deer hunting experience which equates to sighting and potentially harvesting a buck of elevated age and size. **This proposal is to trial an antler point restriction of 3 points (on one side) for bucks harvested in Florence County for hunters age 18 and over for an evaluation period long enough for a good population of elevated age bucks to exist on the landscape.** This way the hunting population will have adequate time to determine if they desire this strategy.

At least twenty-two states now have some form of antler point restrictions. The closest similar program is directly across our border to the north (MI Zone 122 in the Upper Peninsula). A published survey there indicates a good majority of the hunters in this zone are satisfied with their experience and would like it to continue.

Finally, it is apparent to us that the state recognizes hunter decline, and the challenges this sport has for the future as indicated by many new programs, the breakage of many of the long-standing paradigms, and the employment of 'Dr. Deer-James Kroll'. Our trial is a bold attempt to not only to maintain existing hunters but to revitalize the entire sport here in Florence County. We ask you to strongly consider being a part of a vision of the future where Florence County is a leader.

The Request

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Florence County on April 9, 2012 recommends that the Conservation Congress work with the Department of Natural Resources to take action to correct this situation by introducing rule change implementing a trial antler point restriction in Florence County.

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