

Program Area: Wildlife Management

Subject: Proposed guidance for administration and implementation of the deer management assistance program

Length of Public Input Period: 21 days

Staff Contact Name: Bob Nack
RobertR.Nack@Wisconsin.gov

The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) provides habitat and herd management assistance to landowners interested in managing their property for wildlife. The program is identified and defined under Wis. Stat. § 29.020 and Wis. Admin. Code NR § 10.70. This proposal would establish guidance related to basic program information, the application process and timeline, private and publicly enrolled lands, landowner workshops, and a voluntary mentored hunting and trapping program.

This draft guidance was developed by department staff and we will solicit comments on it for 21 days. All comments will be considered, revisions will be made to the guidance documents as needed, and final guidance will be made available to internal and external stakeholders.

-MORE-

CHAPTER 2 – SPECIES MANAGEMENT

2.5 DEER MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (DMAP)

2.5.1 Program Basics

1) Overview

The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) provides habitat and herd management assistance to landowners interested in managing their property for wildlife. The program is identified and defined under Wis. Stat. § 29.020 and Wis. Admin. Code NR § 10.70.

2) Objectives

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) set the following DMAP objectives:

- Promote sound land stewardship practices
- Provide outreach and educational information to landowners about wildlife habitat management practices
- Provide a means for site-specific deer management
- Improve relationships

3) Definitions

Individual property – A stand-alone piece of real estate that may or may not have multiple owners.

Group cooperative – An association of individual property owners or their representatives who are not organized as a business entity but are organized for the purpose of managing deer and other wildlife resources and whose members have agreed to participate in DMAP. Each property enrolled in the group cooperative must be within one –half mile of another property in the cooperative.

Public land – National, state, county or municipally owned land for which public access is available through DMAP. Properties enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) and Forest Crop Law (FCL) programs are considered private properties for DMAP purposes.

Primary contact – The primary point of contact for a property or group cooperative enrolled in DMAP. Responsibilities include:

- Complete and submit DMAP enrollment application for individuals or group cooperative
- Share information with other landowners or their authorized representative(s) participating in group cooperatives
- Schedule meetings and site visits between landowners enrolled in a group cooperative and department staff
- Attend workshops and meetings as a representative of the DMAP enrolled property(s); and
- Submit enrollment fees

Authorized representative – An individual who has received permission from a landowner to act and make decisions on the landowner’s behalf concerning DMAP, including granting access to the landowner’s property by department staff for DMAP purposes.

4) Participation levels

The following benefits will be given to landowners based on the DMAP level.

Level 1 (no minimum acreage requirement)

- DMAP educational resources
- Technical assistance from department employees including wildlife biologists and foresters
- Annual program reports
- An opportunity to attend annual workshops organized by the department or its partners
- Assistance with individual projects that have scientific value
- Information on forming program cooperatives
- Assistance with information for participation in other conservation programs

Level 2 (160 acre minimum)

Level two landowners will receive all the benefits of level one. The department may require that participants provide harvest reports and attendance at an annual meeting or workshop sponsored by the department or its partners. Additional benefits include:

- One on-site consultation visit by a wildlife biologist and/or a forester
- A management plan with habitat and harvest recommendations developed individually for the enrolled property or cooperative
- Reduced price antlerless tags (if applicable to management goals)
- Property specific harvest reports

Level 3 (640 acre minimum)

Level three landowners will receive all the benefits of levels one and two. The department may require that participants provide harvest reports and attendance at an annual meeting or workshop sponsored by the department or its partners. Additional benefits include:

- Assistance with deer population monitoring
- Technical assistance and design for habitat and property management activities
- Additional site visits when needed and detailed management recommendations

2.5.2 Application Process and Timeline

1) DMAP Website

Interested individuals may enroll in DMAP through the MyDMAP [online application system](#) or by mailing a [paper copy](#) of the application to the DMAP coordinator. MyDMAP is an electronic database that will be used to collect and store landowner application information, management plans, harvest data, photos, harvest reports and educational resources. Landowners will be able to access their information through a secure password connection.

2) Application Instructions

[Instructions](#) can be found on the DMAP web page (*dnr.wi.gov*, keyword "DMAP"). All level 2 and 3 cooperators will be asked to review and sign a landowner agreement (see Private Land, Section 2-

Landowner Agreements, below) to confirm their approval of site visits by Department staff and full program participation.

3) Approval Timeline and Process

DMAP applications may be submitted at any time. Applicants will receive the [auto generated email](#) when they have successfully submitted an application.

Another [auto-generated email](#) is sent to local wildlife staff to inform them that a property in their area of responsibility has been accepted into DMAP. This message provides information about wildlife staff responsibilities for the property.

All level 1 applications are immediately accepted into the program. The application deadline for level 2 and 3 applications to receive site visits in a given year is March 1 of that year. Applications received after March 1 will be considered for enrollment in the following year. The DMAP agreement will terminate on February 28, three years following the year of enrollment.

Example:

Application date	Termination date
March 1, 2015	February 28, 2018
March 2, 2015 (enrolled in 2016)	February 28, 2019

Following the March 1 deadline, the department will review and approve all level 2 and 3 applications that will receive site visits and management plans in that year. The department will assign local Wildlife and Forestry staff to work with as many level 2 and 3 applications as possible. In some cases, staff from adjacent counties may be called upon to help out. Level 2 and 3 cooperators will be notified of their application status in April. Site visits may occur from May – October with written management plans completed by mid-December.

When the level 2 or 3 application is approved, an [auto-generated email](#) is sent to the landowner notifying them of their acceptance into the program and outlining the necessary next steps to complete enrollment.

2.5.3 Private Land

1) Fees

When a level 2 or 3 application has been approved, a DMAP enrollment fee will be posted to the DNR customer account of the primary contact for the property(s). This is the same DNR account used to purchase licenses and permits. The enrollment fee may be paid online or at a license vendor.

The department may wave the fee for participation by governmental organizations or owners of other lands that the department determines are open to the public for hunting. The following are fees for 3-year DMAP participation and antlerless tags.

Level 1 \$0

Level 2 \$75
Level 3 \$150
Antlerless tags \$6 each (level two and three only, see below)

2) Landowner Agreements

Each landowner listed on level 2 and 3 applications must sign a landowner agreement form. The agreement form describes property access and other conditions of the program. Forms may be signed electronically or a paper copy can be provided. Instructions on completing the form electronically will be emailed to all property landowners listed on the DMAP application. Department staff are unable to conduct a site visit until all landowners or authorized representatives have signed the agreement form.

[Individual landowner agreement form](#)

[Public Land, organizations, clubs, corporations, and trust agreement form](#)

3) Group cooperatives

Group cooperatives (defined above) may be formed by landowners to meet the minimum acreage requirements for a particular DMAP level of participation. Group cooperatives provide a number of benefits, including:

- Large-scale habitat management opportunities
- Reduced habitat management costs
- Increased acreage for deer management goals
- Improved neighbor relations; and
- Ability to share data and information

Department staff will be available to provide technical assistance and information on forming group cooperatives. There is no limit to the number of landowners in a group cooperative. Group cooperative landowners are responsible for habitat and deer management objectives for the enrolled property. The cooperative will be asked to identify a “primary contact” (defined above) as the main point of contact with department staff. Properties may be added or removed from a group cooperative; however, the termination date for the DMAP cooperative agreement will not change. DMAP landowners that would like to add landowners to their DMAP application to form a group cooperative should notify the Department before the March 1 deadline. Department staff will conduct a site visit on all new properties.

4) Site Visit

Properties enrolled in DMAP at levels two and three will be eligible for site visits from a professional wildlife biologist and/or forester. The landowner or designated representative for an individual property or group cooperative must be present for the initial site visit. The site visit will allow department staff to learn property boundaries, evaluate habitat quality and deer densities, discuss and establish property goals and interact with the landowner(s). Level 2 landowners are eligible for one site visit and regular communication with department staff as needed. Level 3 landowners are eligible for multiple site visits, depending on the size of the property(s). The

number of visits will be based on the amount of time needed to fully evaluate the entire enrolled property(s). Department staff will give 72 hour advance notice to the landowner, authorized representative or primary contact before accessing the enrolled property(s). All level 2 and 3 landowners are required to pay the enrollment fee and sign a landowner agreement form before department staff can access their property.

a) Site Visit Checklist

The information collected on the [Site Visit Checklist](#) will be used to create a management plan for the property in the MyDMAP database. The purpose of the checklist is to serve as a collection spot for field notes and observations.

b) Forest Point Assessment

1. Using property maps and/or air photos, select approximately 5 - 12 assessment points, across the DMAP property to evaluate forested habitat conditions. Points should be located in areas that represent the major forest cover types found on the property. Each point should take approximately 15 minutes but depending on each point this will vary. The number of total forest assessment points will depend upon available time and priority of the landowner and DNR biologist and forester.
2. At each assessment point, record coordinates and if possible, permanently mark the location (ex. marked/painted wooden stake, fiberglass pole, etc.). Noting the point location will create the opportunity to reassess the same area at a later time.
3. Take a photo in each of the four cardinal directions from the point (e.g. four photos per assessment point). The photos should record the date and time the photos were taken. The purpose of the photos is to establish a baseline for future habitat assessment and management effectiveness.
4. Complete the [forest point assessment form](#) following the [instructions](#). This form is meant to be used at each individual assessment point (one form per point) and will allow staff to describe current forested habitat conditions.
5. Browse impact is a function of the deer population and the amount of available food sources within the area surrounding the assessment point. Using a 1/1000th acre plot (11.8' radius) or general observation, record browse impacts based on the following levels:
 1. No visible browse evidence.
 2. Low: Light browsing evidence observed. [1-25% stems browsed]
 3. Medium: Browsing evidence observed but not common, seedlings present. [26-50% stems browsed]
 4. High: Browsing evidence common, hedging of stems, and/ or seedlings are rare. [51-75% stems browsed]
 5. Very High: Browsing evidence omnipresent OR forest floor bare, severe browse line. [> 75% stems browsed]

6. No Woody Palatable Vegetation Present: No direct browse visible, but most woody plants under 2 meters are absent.

5) Cooperator Data Collection

DMAP cooperators will be asked to collect harvest, biological and observational data on the deer and other wildlife on their property. Some, but not all, of this data will be used by the department for deer management purposes. A majority of the data will be used to provide information on the wildlife resources on the property and to develop a long-term data set of wildlife observations and deer harvest data. Although all levels may participate in data collection, level 2 and 3 cooperators are required to collect the following information for all deer harvested on the enrolled property(s): harvest date, sex, weapon type, and if a DMAP antlerless tag was used. DMAP cooperators are responsible for collecting this information on a [DMAP harvest data form](#) provided by the department and entering it into their account on the MyDMAP database by February 1. DMAP cooperators may choose to collect additional biological and observational data collection described below. Primary contacts are responsible for coordinating this data collection with landowners and hunters in a group cooperative and entering it into the MyDMAP database.

a) Biological Data

The collection of this data is optional for DMAP cooperators. The collection of biological data from deer harvested on the property will provide information on age structure and herd health and productivity. These data will be summarized in an annual harvest report for level 2 and 3 cooperators that will provide insight into progress towards property goals and objectives. This data includes:

- Deer age (jawbone collection)
- Antler dimensions
- Lactation status
- Weight

b) Observational Data

The collection of observational data will assist the DMAP cooperator and department staff with assessing the condition and quality of the habitat based on the type and number of wildlife species observed. In addition, this data will help to determine if deer management goals for an enrolled property are being achieved (i.e. increase or decrease deer numbers). DMAP cooperators are responsible for collecting this information on a [DMAP wildlife observation form](#) provided by the department and entering it into their account on the MyDMAP database by February 1. These data will be summarized in an annual harvest report for level 2 and 3 cooperators that will provide insight into progress towards property goals and objectives. This data includes:

- Observation date
- Counts of deer and wildlife species observed
- Hours hunted
- Weather conditions

6) Antlerless Deer Tags

The Department may issue antlerless harvest tags to level 2 and 3 cooperators in any deer management unit regardless of the current antlerless quota level or population objective. DMAP cooperators are not guaranteed to receive antlerless tags based solely on program participation. The decision to issue tags and the number of tags to issue will be based on the professional opinion of the DNR biologist and forester assigned to the property, in consideration of the following conditions:

- A site visit by a DNR wildlife biologist and forester has occurred, and
- Information collected on the site visit, including a browse survey, indicate that current deer densities are negatively impacting or have the potential to negatively impact forest regeneration, agricultural cropland, or wildlife habitat if not managed correctly; and
- DNR staff, in consultation with the program enrollee(s), have determined that antlerless deer harvest is necessary to achieve wildlife habitat management goals for the property.

Antlerless tags will be issued to the DNR customer license account for the primary contact for a property or group cooperative. Primary contacts may purchase the tags (currently \$6 each) online or at a department license vendor. If purchased online, primary contacts will receive the tags in the mail. There are no restrictions on the number of tags that can be purchased by the primary contact in one day. The DMAP customer number (primary contact customer ID) listed on the tag is assigned to the individual property or group of properties in a cooperative. Antlerless tags are only valid for deer harvested on the property or group of properties associated with the DMAP identification number on the tag. The department will create a boundary map for the DMAP enrolled property or group of properties (cooperative) to provide law enforcement officers the ability to confirm tags are being used on the correct property.

DMAP antlerless tags can be transferred by the primary contact, landowner, or authorized representative to any legal hunter that is hunting on the enrolled property during any firearm, archery or crossbow season. Tags may be sold for no more than the face value cost of the tag. Primary contacts, landowners, or authorized representative are responsible for recording information on all tag transfers on the [tag tracking form](#) provided by the department. Requested information on the form includes: hunter name, signature, phone number, department customer ID, # tags transferred, and price per each tag sold (if applicable). Primary contacts, landowners, or authorized representatives must be able to produce this form upon request by the department. Upon transfer of the tag, the hunter or landowner must write their name and department customer ID in the space provided on the tag.

7) Management plans

The department will provide property management plans to properties enrolled at levels two and three. If the property(s) already has a management plan in place (MFL, Forest Stewardship plan, master plans, etc.), the DMAP management plan will provide more detail on any wildlife objectives in the existing plans for the property(s). Staff from the department will work with the landowner to develop realistic goals for the property(s). Management plans will provide recommendations to find a balance between habitat quality and deer density, which may include habitat improvements

and deer harvest strategies. The management plan will include an aerial photo of the property and information on cost-share programs available to the landowner. Department staff will have management plans available by mid-December in a given year. Management plans will be made available to landowners via their MyDMAP account or hard copies will be sent to those without computer access. There are no penalties for landowners that do not follow management plan recommendations.

8) Annual Harvest Report

The department will provide annual harvest reports to properties enrolled at levels two and three. These reports will summarize deer harvest and observations from the previous hunting season at the statewide, county, and property level. Property-specific information will be based on the biological and observational data entered by the cooperator. Annual harvest reports will be provided to DMAP cooperators by April, provided that cooperators have data and information entered into their MyDMAP account by February 1.

Example: [Annual Harvest Report](#)

2.5.4 Public Land

The Department may cooperate with the managers of national, state, county or municipally owned land that wish to participate in DMAP. The DMAP coordinator, biologist and forester will work together with public land managers, tribes and the public to enroll public properties in DMAP. There are two primary opportunities that exist for enrollment of public land in DMAP:

- Provide management options to address deer management concerns and reach wildlife habitat objectives.
- Promote wildlife habitat improvement projects on public properties where quality habitat is limited.

The agency or municipality with property management authority should complete the DMAP application and designate an individual as the authorized representative for the enrolled property. A wildlife biologist will schedule a site visit with the authorized representative and department forester to complete a forested habitat assessment including a browse survey, and to discuss habitat improvement projects and deer herd management options that will help achieve property management goals.

Based on information collected during the site visit, the DNR may issue antlerless harvest tags to deer hunters as a way to address, or prevent negative browse impacts on vegetation and to provide deer hunting opportunities. DMAP antlerless tags are property-specific and can only be filled during an open deer season and with a weapon that is legal to use during that season. Antlerless harvest tags issued with a license purchase or purchased as bonus tags will continue to be valid on the property. A list of public land enrolled in DMAP, property maps and regulations, and tag availability and purchase instructions will be made available to the public by the department or the public land manager in advance of the deer hunting season. Antlerless tags may be sold by the department for \$6 each. Tag purchases will be limited to one tag, per person, per day and sold through the end of the deer hunting season or until all available tags have been sold.

Public land managers do not need to enroll an entire property, but may choose to identify specific areas of the property to enroll. Boundaries of these specific areas should be clearly identified by roads, water bodies, or obvious land features. By enrolling in DMAP, the public land enrollee agrees to:

- Attend a property site-visit
- Conduct a local public meeting to discuss property-specific management concerns and review property-specific antlerless harvest quotas, if necessary
- Supply maps and aerial photos to the department, with clearly marked property boundaries, access points and parking areas
- Provide property-specific regulations
- Cooperate with department to collect deer harvest data for the property
- Participate in the program for a 3-year time period

2.5.5 Workshops

The department and conservation partners may host regional workshops for DMAP participants to attend. The workshops will provide information on habitat management techniques, deer management, program opportunities, and first-hand landowner experience. Invited speakers will cover a suite of topics that will be of interest to landowners and hunters alike. The workshops will be a great opportunity for DMAP participants to interact and network. Workshops may include a site visit of a DMAP property and DMAP updates. Participants will be informed of “citizen science” opportunities in their area and additional training opportunities with partner agencies and organizations.

2.5.6 Voluntary Mentored Hunting and Trapping Program

DMAP cooperator participation in this program is purely voluntary and in no way opens their property to any form of public hunting or trapping. The objective of the program is to unite DMAP cooperators with organizations that provide mentored hunting and trapping opportunities to novice hunters and trappers. In return for permission to hunt and trap on the property, the cooperator may request a work day to accomplish habitat improvement recommendations for the property. In addition, this program may assist cooperators reach their property goals by reducing game species that are having negative impacts on wildlife habitat, wildlife populations, infrastructure and property. The program will focus on promoting respect for landowner rights and instilling a land ethic in program participants. The DMAP cooperator has complete control and may specify the date, time, species, sex, harvest number, etc. of all hunting or trapping allowed on the property. Landowners do not need to be present on the date of the mentored event, but are encouraged to participate as much as they want.

DMAP cooperators can participate in the program by submitting an application form to the DMAP coordinator. The form will be reviewed and shared with the organization identified by the cooperator on the form. A representative from the organization will contact the cooperator to make logistical arrangements and schedule the hunting or trapping event. Participation in this program by the DMAP cooperator and the organization is good for one hunting or trapping season and is not guaranteed in the following year(s).