

Public Action Team Implementation Proposal

<p>Action Team: Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP)</p>	<p>Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits B.7, Chronic Wasting Disease D.4, D.7, Harvest Data, Herd Health and Productivity E.4 Habitat F.1, People G.1, G.2, G.5, H.8</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Draft <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submitted</p>	<p>DTR Report pages 30, 56-57, 59, 69, 70, 73-74, 77, 79-80</p>

This document shows the original Deer Trustee Report recommendation that the Public Action Team considered when developing proposals for implementing the recommendation in Wisconsin. The Public Action Team's implementation proposal is then presented followed by a brief summary by the WDNR.

Unlike the other proposals being drafted by Action Teams for implementing specific recommendations found in the Deer Trustee Report (DTR), the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) required a more general outline document to capture all the aspects of what such a program might look like in Wisconsin.

This document outlines the features and concepts the Action Team considered for defining DMAP in Wisconsin.

These are grouped below into the follow categories to help frame discussions, compare to similar programs in other states and present for additional public comments:

- Menu of Services Offered
- Project Size Requirements
- Application and Enrollment Process
- Fees and Fee Structure
- Administration
- Data Collection
- Annual Meetings, Workshops and Reports
- Antlerless Permit System
- Education and Outreach
- Public Land
- Pilot Program and DMAP Roll-Out
- Measurement of DMAP Success



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I. ORIGINAL DEER TRUSTEE REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

B.7. Establish a DMAP antlerless permit system. Regulations pertaining to DMAP Antlerless Carcass Tags will need to be developed. Major considerations include how tags are issued (individual tags sold to hunters or bundle of tags issued to cooperator for a specific property), private access or public access lands, fees, limits (per hunter, per unit of land area, Deer Management Zone), and establishment and allocation of funds generated from fees. DMAP permits are in lieu of tags issued with a license and are valid only on the specified DMAP property during regular hunting seasons.

D.4. We recommend implementation of a statewide DMAP program; and, nowhere is such a program needed more than in the DMZ. We recommend implementation of a statewide DMAP program; and, nowhere is such a program needed more than in the DMZ. We strongly recommend immediate development of cooperator DMAP management plans involving landowners, hunters and stakeholder groups. Establishing DMAP in the DMZ should be a high priority in implementing our recommendations. The benefits are significant. Improved landowner confidence in WDNR field biologists will serve to increase surveillance for clinically ill or recently dead animals, making possible more tracking of CWD-caused mortality. Further, this will increase buy-in by all individuals, especially in regard to population control through harvest management.

D.7. An annual meeting of DMAP cooperators would be an excellent venue for reporting on various aspects of CWD, in addition to the topics discussed earlier. This would greatly enhance public awareness and WDNR credibility.

E.4. An annual report should be prepared for each DMU and Region summarizing these studies and a PowerPoint/video presentation developed for annual DMAP workshops and public presentations. Health indices such as average number of fetuses by age, breeding phenology, lactation rates, true recruitment and antler development should be discussed.

F.1. As both part of DMAP activities and public lands management, local biologists/technicians should be required to conduct annual range evaluations to assess habitat health and condition. These assessments would have direct field involvement by the public and DMAP cooperators.

G.1. Implement a Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) We strongly recommend that a Wisconsin DMAP be developed and implemented with the objectives to: 1) improve relationships between hunters, landowners and the WDNR; 2) provide a means for site-specific management of antlerless deer; and 3) provide a data base for site-specific management that can also be used to supplement data bases for management decisions at the DMU and state levels.

G.2. DMAP data analysis and reporting. Each DMAP cooperator should receive an annual report summarizing current data and trend data over years to monitor progress toward goals (Appendix 4) from the Virginia DMAP as an example). Most of the report generation can be computerized and cooperators should be provided an option to allow online submission of data to reduce staff time commitments. It is desirable to provide a report of all DMAP cooperators within a DMU or other region to allow the cooperators to compare deer herd metrics on their property with overall herd conditions within their area.



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G.5. Expand public education/outreach efforts to serve landowners whose goals include management for white-tailed deer and other wildlife species. The WDNR should provide technical assistance to landowners interested in wildlife management similar to that provided to landowners interested in timber management. Technical assistance should include on-site consultations by wildlife biologists/technicians and other natural resource specialists (forestry, fisheries, agriculture, etc.), development of management plans, field days at demonstration sites, workshops, and written and online materials. Management plans should be developed from an ecosystem perspective relative to landowner goals. These activities could be facilitated by DMAP cooperators, NGOs such as QDMA, WU, NWTF and RGS, and the cooperative extension and outreach programs at the University of Wisconsin. Other information popular with deer hunters such as the Wisconsin Big Game Records maintained by the Wisconsin Buck and Bear Club and QDMA's Annual Deer Report could be linked to the WDNR website.

H.8. Project results should be extended to the public through media, workshops and field days, as part of the DMAP program and regional stakeholder conferences. This will increase credibility of WDNR and techniques used to manage deer, habitats and people.

II. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of DMAP are:

- 1) Improve relationships between hunters, landowners, and the DNR
- 2) Provide a means for sustainable, long-term site-specific management of deer, other wildlife and their habitat
- 3) Provide a data base for site-specific management that can also be suited to supplement data bases for management decisions at the DMU and state levels

III. MENU OF SERVICES

DMAP participation will be available to private landowners at three levels of involvement to accommodate the wide range of landowner goals and deer management options across the state. The three levels of offerings are a list of possible options that have been recommended by the DTR and its authors, Action Team members and the DNR liaisons, and by others states who offer a DMAP.

Level 1. This will be the entry level option, best suited for small individual properties with minimal management objectives and where a financial commitment is not required. This option is focused on the dissemination of DMAP related materials and instruction on becoming more involved in DMAP.

- **Annual fee:** \$0
- **Minimum acreage:** none
- **Offerings:**
 - Consultation (no on-site visit) on habitat management and harvest practices.
 - Informational packet of DMAP related materials.
 - Access to online resources.
 - Annual statewide DMAP report.
 - Invitation to attend annual DMAP meetings and/or field workshops.
 - Information on participating in "citizen science" volunteer opportunities.
 - Opportunity to collect and submit biological harvest data.
 - Assistance with forming DMAP cooperatives with neighboring landowners.



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- **Participation requirements:**

- Basic online application:
 - Landowner/cooperative contact information, acreage, habitat types on property, property management and deer harvest history, management goals/objectives, current evaluation of deer herd/habitat, etc.

Level 2. This will be the entry level option for DMAP cooperatives and could apply to properties of all sizes.

- **Enrollment fee:** \$75 per 3 year enrollment period (per cooperative)
- **Minimum acreage:** 160 acres per individual landowner or cooperative. Cooperatives should consist of adjacent landowners when possible.
- **Offerings:** All *Level 1* offerings plus:
 - A site visit/consultation per landowner with a cooperating DMAP biologist and forester. The biologist and forester will provide a basic habitat assessment with verbal habitat and harvest recommendations.
 - Management recommendations for wildlife other than deer can be discussed based on landowner desire.
 - Management plan prepared by the cooperating DMAP biologist or private consultant.
 - DNR will provide a free management plan or the cooperative has the option of hiring a private consultant for a more detailed plan. Cooperatives will not be required to follow recommendations made in the management plan. Consulting plan writers will be certified in writing DMAP plans.

Plan components (may not be a complete list):

1. General description of property – ownership, legal description, acres, past/current land uses, habitat communities, common wildlife
 2. Land use and management goals and objectives
 3. Map – a map that includes property boundaries, roads, waterways, and habitat communities with the location of habitat management practices indicated
 4. Ecology information of target species
 5. Habitat management recommendations with an implementation schedule
 6. Recommended harvest strategies
 7. Implementation budget to perform management recommendations
 8. Resource materials – aerial photos, soil maps, technical articles on habitat management, contact information for resource professionals who prepared the plan and who can implement the management practices.
- Instruction on wildlife inventory and monitoring resources
 - Annual cooperative harvest reports prepared by the biologist
 - Reduced rate antlerless tags issued based on biologist recommendations made with landowner input. The fee for antlerless tags would be $\leq 50\%$ of the current antlerless tag fee established for the surrounding DMU. Antlerless tags will not be issued the first year of enrollment unless the cooperative can provide biological harvest data from at least one year prior to enrollment.
- **Participation requirements:**
 - Enrollment application:
 - Landowner/cooperative contact information, legal description of property, land use information, total acreage, total acreage in agricultural production, habitat types on property, property management and deer harvest history, management goals/objectives, current evaluation of deer herd, reasons for enrolling in DMAP, submission deadline, etc.
 - Enrollment fee



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- Collection and submission of biological harvest data annually along with harvest data (number of deer harvested, ages, weights, etc.) from at least one year prior to enrollment. The submission of data from previous years is contingent upon the availability of the data.
 - Data: Date of kill, sex, age (jawbone will be aged by the biologist or cooperatives can be trained), weight, antler measurements, lactation status, CWD tissue samples, etc.
 - Renewal should be contingent upon submission of this data. Cooperatives should be strongly encouraged to submit the data prior to the termination of the contract.
- Attendance at an annual field workshop/meeting by at least one member of a cooperative for certification purposes

Level 3. This option will include the full suite of program options and is best suited for medium-large properties with complex management goals and dedicated cooperatives.

- **Enrollment fee:** \$150 per 3 year enrollment period (per cooperative)
- **Minimum acreage:** 640 acres per landowner or cooperative. Cooperatives should consist of adjacent landowners when possible. DMAP project areas may be established where cooperatives could be formed by non-adjacent landowners.
- **Offerings:** All *Level 2* offerings plus:
 - Additional assistance/interaction with the landowner and/or cooperative
 - Management plan prepared by the cooperating DMAP biologist or private consultant.
 - Management plans will include the additional management options included at *Level 3*, including detailed habitat management recommendations and population monitoring techniques and can be adjusted based on management outcomes.
 - Assistance with population monitoring (i.e. trail camera surveys, spotlights counts, pellet counts)
 - Management recommendations for wildlife other than deer
 - Annual habitat assessments will be developed by the Bureau of Science Services and will be conducted by the DMAP biologist and/or forester. Landowners will be trained on the survey methods and required to participate.
 - Property design/layout (“deer-scaping”) recommendations to improve hunting experiences.
 - Identification and assistance with other programs and grant opportunities to conduct habitat improvement and management activities (Farm Bill programs, WDNR Landowner Incentive Program, USFWS Private Lands Program, WWOA, etc.).
 - A DMAP working group consisting of these programs may be organized by the DMAP coordinator through the development stages of the program. Partner programs may be involved on an as needed basis determined by the DMAP coordinator, biologist, forester, and landowner.
- **Participation requirements:**
 - Enrollment fee
 - Enrollment application
 - Collection and submission of biological harvest data
 - Attendance at an annual field workshop/meeting by at least one member of a cooperative for certification purposes

IV. Project Size Requirements

Private land

- There will not be a minimum property size for the basic program offerings (Level 1), recognizing that communication opportunities/relationship building can exist on small properties, but Level 2/3 will have



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minimum cooperative sizes of 160 and 640 acres (total acreage). Although DMAP is intended to be a people management program, not a deer management program, we recognize that the potential for deer herd management will be a function of property size. There is no minimum property size for individual properties included within cooperatives.

- Cooperatives between adjacent landowners will be strongly encouraged to meet the minimum acreage. Cooperatives formed between non-adjacent landowners will be at the discretion of the DMAP biologist based on land ownership and habitat patterns within the area. This will allow more cooperatives to achieve minimum acreage requirements.

Public land

- State owned properties in Wisconsin range from a few acres to over 190,000 acres, with the average property size being 1,777 acres. County forests range from <1,000 acres to 267,000 acres with an average of 79,000 acres. National Forest districts can easily exceed the largest state and county owned properties.
- There will not be a minimum property size for public lands to enroll in DMAP. Enrollment of public lands will be at the discretion of the biologist, DMAP coordinator, and property manager with input provided by hunters and neighboring private property owners. Public lands enrolled in DMAP will not have to be contiguous acres.
- DMAP cooperatives can be formed between adjacent public and private landowners to achieve management goals. There will not be a minimum size for these cooperatives.

V. APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT

- Landowners seeking involvement in DMAP would fill out an application form indicating the location of the property, the landowner's management objectives, property history, deer harvest history, and applicant's evaluation of the deer herd.
- Dependent on the level of enrollment, additional information would be required including the location and ownership of all properties included in the cooperative, a history of prior deer management activity, and an identified coordinator or contact, which will function as the primary conduit for annual reporting, meetings, and renewal with DNR. At least one individual per cooperative will be required to attend a DMAP certification workshop (additional cooperating landowners also welcome) as a condition of enrollment. Once a cooperative is approved/established, new properties may be added to the cooperative with the consent of the biologist.
- Approval of the application will be at the discretion of the biologist primarily based on habitat management opportunities and the ecological capacity of the property to meet the goals and objectives of the landowner(s). If the number of applicants exceeds the work capacity of the staff involved, applications will be ranked based on the information provided in the application. Applicants that are not accepted will be put on a waiting list and reviewed the following year.



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VI. FEES AND FEE STRUCTURE

- A small annual fee will establish a commitment to the program and cover some of the costs of the program. Establishment of a fee will require legislative approval.
- The annual fee will be based on a combination of landowner goals, DMAP offerings, and property size. Cooperatives at Level 2/3 will enter a three year enrollment agreement.
 - Level 1 - \$0
 - Level 2 - \$75 for 3 years
 - Level 3 - \$150 for 3 years
- There will not be a fee charged to public lands, or to the hunters who hunt public lands, enrolled in DMAP.
- All fees that are generated in the program (including enrollment fees and antlerless tag fees) would be used to fund the administration of DMAP.

VII. Administration

- The success of DMAP will be dependent upon the technical expertise and communication skills of the staff interacting with the landowners and hunters. To best address the goals of DMAP as stated in the DTR, current DNR biologists should be used to deliver DMAP.
- A generic field Wildlife Biologist position description has 5% of duties dedicated to private land assistance (1 day every 3 weeks). If this time were allocated to DMAP, this would equate to 16 days/yr for a biologist to interact with DMAP cooperators.
 - site visits/habitat analysis with landowners
 - management plan development
 - annual cooperative and statewide reports
 - annual meetings/workshops
- There will be variability in DMAP participation and workload across the state. Staff position descriptions and performance objectives will need to be customized based on local needs to maintain or grow the DMAP program. One option would be to have 3-4 biologists dedicated to DMAP duties within each WM district. These biologists would possess an interest in deer management, have strong communication skills, and will attend annual trainings on current deer management techniques (possibly the QDMA deer steward courses).
- Upon full implementation, regional DMAP staff could be hired, following the current model of state Farm Bill biologists which are funded by a partnership between several agencies and conservation organizations. Regional DMAP staff would provide support to the field biologists and foresters to develop maps and management plans, collect and enter data, and schedule site visits.
- The development of a certification process will be incorporated into the program in order to meet the needs of a wider array of private landowners while keeping the administrative costs lower. The certification process will identify current and emerging management options, survey/assessment



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standards and requirements, management plan specifications, data collection/submission requirements, etc.

VIII. Data Collection

- Citizen-based Science monitoring is a growing opportunity for biologists and the public to establish cooperative relationships. Data collection by DMAP cooperators was one of the primary goals of DMAP in the DTR. The collection of biological data will be an important step in building relationships between landowners, hunters and the DNR, add to the current statewide database of biological data, and may be used to demonstrate program success. However, results from the biological data may have limited applicability to demonstrate significant changes in the local deer population due to the low sample size of deer harvested off of individual properties and hunter selectivity on these properties.
- Cooperators at *Level 2/3* will be required to collect and submit harvest data requested by the DNR, such as sex, age (or submit jawbone), weight, antler measurements, lactation status, and disease samples (ex. lymph nodes for CWD testing). At a minimum, all harvest data collected through normal registration should be collected by DMAP cooperatives. Additional data that could be used to demonstrate program success (weights, antler measurements, etc) should also be collected. Data should be submitted within 10 days of the close of the hunting season. Annual renewal in DMAP would be contingent on receipt of required data and involvement in training opportunities/workshops.
- Cooperators at *Level 3* could also be provided the opportunity to participate in standardized trail camera surveys, collection of winter severity data, deer browse surveys, and hunter observations/effort journals. DMAP biologists would analyze the data and include this information in the annual report provided to the cooperative. Trail camera surveys can be one of the most influential management tools when working with landowners to estimate local deer densities, sex ratios, buck age structure, and fawn:doe ratios.

IX. ANNUAL MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND REPORTS

- Annual meetings of DMAP cooperators would be established at a statewide and/or regional level depending on program participation and cooperative distribution in the state. Participants at all levels of the program will be invited to attend the annual meeting.
- Annual field workshop(s) will be conducted, perhaps in conjunction with annual meetings as an overnight/second day option. Field workshops will only be offered to all program participants.
 - Field workshops will cover habitat management and property design techniques. DMAP properties should be used as demonstration properties for the workshop when possible.
 - Field necropsies (not complete necropsies) could be conducted as part of the annual workshops, if carcasses are available.
 - Various partners with land conservation initiatives will be engaged to participate in workshops (and meetings) to expand the awareness of the resources they have to offer and help grow their programs as well.



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- Annual cooperative reports will be provided to all cooperatives at *Level 2/3*. The report will contain a review of the previous management actions of the cooperative, harvest statistics and analysis, and habitat and harvest recommendations for the following year.
- A statewide summary of DMAP participation, accomplishments, and harvest summaries will be produced annually and be made available to the public.

X. ANTLERLESS PERMIT SYSTEM

- DMAP cooperators will be provided a recommended antlerless harvest in consideration of their stated objectives, identified community issues related to deer abundance, and landowner input.
- Antlerless tags could be issued to DMAP cooperators when harvest needs have been identified by the landowner and DNR biologist that cannot be met by the season framework in the Deer Management Unit. This would require legislative approval.
- The fee for DMAP antlerless permits should be earmarked for DMAP implementation. This would require legislative approval.
- Antlerless tags issued to DMAP cooperatives (including public lands) would be cooperative specific, not hunter specific, meaning the cooperative could distribute the tags to any hunter that they choose. Public properties may issue tags on a first-come, first-served basis similar to how antlerless tags are currently issued.
- Reduced rate antlerless tags issued based on biologist recommendations made with landowner input. The fee for antlerless tags would be $\leq 50\%$ of the current antlerless tag fee established for the surrounding DMU. Antlerless tags will not be issued the first year of enrollment unless the cooperative can provide biological harvest data from at least one year prior to enrollment.

XI. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- In addition to the annual meetings, workshops, and reports for DMAP cooperators, information will be shared with the general public through online, print, and broadcast media to promote DMAP participation and improve the relationship between all hunters, landowners, and the DNR. The DMAP Coordinator will be in charge of developing the outreach with help from the Office of Communications:
 - DMAP website with program information, technical brochures, etc.
 - DNR YouTube Channel video installments addressing deer management issues
 - Regular articles submitted to general and conservation print media
 - Promotion for TV news coverage and sponsorship of syndicated outdoor programs
 - Regular radio appearances on various talk shows
 - Appearances at annual sport shows and conservation organization conferences
 - Information and maps will be printed in many DNR publications, including the deer hunting regulations.



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- These recommendations collectively will increase program participation, information sharing, overall support of the program, and most importantly cooperation & trust between landowners, hunters, and the DNR.

XII. PUBLIC LAND

- Public lands across Wisconsin represent the full spectrum of deer management issues, from low deer densities that are negatively impacting recreational opportunity to high densities that negatively impact plant communities, native habitat, and commercial products.
- As such, public lands could benefit from DMAP participation:
 - Engagement of local communities and users to identify habitat improvement needs and adjustments to antlerless harvest will allow the public more opportunities to provide input on the management practices on these properties.
 - Increased promotion of wildlife habitat management by the DMAP coordinator and/or biologist on the properties enrolled.
 - Access to additional harvest opportunity (antlerless permits) where forest regeneration is a concern or reduction in antlerless harvest where warranted.
- The DMAP coordinator and biologist will work with land managers to enroll properties into DMAP on an as needed basis based on habitat evaluations, local deer populations, and public desire. In addition, the public will be encouraged to contact their local biologist, land manager, or DMAP coordinator if they feel the property could benefit from DMAP. The annual Conservation Congress spring hearings, March public deer forums, and other meetings will provide an opportunity for citizens to recommend DMAP on specific properties.
- Local public input sessions with the property manager, biologist, forester, hunters, and landowners would be used to set antlerless harvest quotas for enrolled properties. Antlerless harvest could be increased/decreased on certain areas of the property depending on localized issues. For public lands enrolled in DMAP, hunters must possess a property-specific antlerless tag to be able to harvest antlerless deer on those properties. All other antlerless tags would not be valid on public lands enrolled in DMAP. Antlerless tags would be issued on a first-come, first-served basis similar to how antlerless tags are currently sold in regular units. Hunters would not have restricted buck harvest opportunities.
- During the initial stages of DMAP implementation, it is recommended that DMAP be used on a limited basis on public properties until more is learned about how DMAP can be applied to these properties. The initial properties that will be enrolled will be limited in number, should consist of various land owners with different management goals, and should be geographically spread across the state.



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XIII. PILOT PROGRAM AND DMAP ROLL-OUT

- The initial few years of DMAP will consist of a staged initiation and not necessarily a pilot, recognizing that the program will be part of deer management well into the future. The program will be allowed to change and adapt as information is learned over the first few years.
- The number and locations of initial DMAP cooperatives will be determined based on landowner goals, property size, location in the state, staff workload, and ability to demonstrate success. Applicants that are not accepted the first year will be put onto a waiting list and re-evaluated the next year.
- Annual workshops/meetings and a strong media campaign will be used to build program support and enrollment over time.
- It is anticipated that DMAP will be initiated in 2014. Prior to the implementation of DMAP in 2014, DNR biologists and the DMAP coordinator will begin to build awareness of the program through media, the DNR's website, and through conversations with the public.

XIII. MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

- The success of the of the program will indicated by measureable outcomes such as the number of cooperatives participating annually, acreage enrolled, customer satisfaction (through surveys), amount of biological data provided to the department, through observations of landowner/hunter attitudes and overall support of the program.
- Relationship improvement will be measured by a combination of anecdotal observations of increasing or decreasing support of DNR, often appearing through media coverage; and documented experience and attitude measurements of DMAP participants and surrounding community members through surveys conducted by DNR Science Services or a contractor.
- Site-specific deer management success can be measured as it relates to DMAP participant satisfaction through the above mentioned survey. Impacts on regional deer population management will likely take years to measure, but can be accomplished with established or newly developed harvest statistics collection and deer population trend monitoring.
- Success of the program will also be monitored by the DMAP cooperators ability to provide the required biological data and remain enrolled in the program. The ability for this data to become a significant source of regional or statewide deer population monitoring will depend on the growth of the program and size of the data bases which can be established.