

Wisconsin Conservation Congress  
Ex. Comm. Meeting  
Dec. 08 2008

Meeting was called to order by Chr. Ed Harvey at 6:06 P.M. Participating in the conference call were V. Chair Rob Bohmann Sec. Rich Kirchmeyer, and the Co-Chrs. of the Big Game Committee Al Phelan and Mark Noll. From the Department were Kurt Thiede, Keith Warnke, Tom Hauge and Kari Lee-Zimmermann.

The purpose of the conference call is to inform the WCC leadership on what the DNR will present to the NRB on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Dec. about the 2008 9-day gun deer season, the early archery season, the Oct. youth hunt, and the Oct. herd control hunt.

In 2008 there were 22 regular units, 28 EAB units, 18 CWD units and 66 Herd control units. The past season consisted of a 2-day youth hunt, 4-day Oct. antlerless hunt in select units, 9-day gun season, 10-day muzzle loader season, 4-day Dec. antlerless hunt, and a CWD holiday hunt.

Overall the weather for the 9-day gun season was pretty good said Keith, the state was pretty much snow covered by Sunday, it was a bit cool in the north with temps. nearing zero. We had one of the latest openers that we possibly can have. The rut was still going on for most of the state as hunters reported seeing bucks still chasing does. Hunter numbers were a little above last years.

Preliminary registration numbers show about 277,000 bucks harvested which is down about 19%. About 178,000 antlerless were harvested which is also down about 19%. There were around 33,000 antlerless harvested during the Oct. herd control hunt, 55,000 archery harvested deer of which 37,000 were antlerless and 18,000 bucks. There were about 8,100 harvested in the CWD hunts of which 23 tested positive. Keith doesn't feel these numbers will greatly increase over the next few weeks because of registration stubs that will filter in from registration stations. The prehunt population estimate was 1.5-1.7 million deer. This number will probably change once all data is compiled and tabulated. One thing that will change the pre-hunt est. population is the fawn to doe ratio which was down considerably due to factors such as a sever winter in 2007-08 and a late Spring in 2008. Minnesota deer harvest was also down 9% and Michigan was down 22%. We really need to look at individual deer management units to see what future hunts will be prescribed. Keith is pretty sure there will be fewer herd control units and fewer earn a buck units for 2009. there was less antler development this year and less yearling does.

Tom Hauge said Randy Stark will be giving a report about the warden forces perspective of the past seasons. Some prominent topics told to wardens were hunting traditions and safety. A few convicted felons were caught, some intoxicated hunters, illegal ground blinds, and other various citations were written. Some confusions were still being had with the registration tags and the ability to now hunt with a rifle in some of the southern units.

The Hunter's Rights Coalition will be asking the NRB to cancel the Dec. 4-day antlerless hunt and the CWD holiday hunt. Tom replied that he didn't think that would happen being there was so little time to inform the public about the cancellations, and all data has not been compiled for the Department to support such a proposal.

Ed Harvey asked why the Oct hunt results were not out yet.

Keith said they should be out later this month.

Ed Harvey wants to make sure that people are well aware of the herd status meetings that are being scheduled for Feb and March. He wants to make sure the public is well informed when and where these meetings will be held.

Keith agrees that the herd has greatly decreased in the north and some units are already below goal. Total harvest may reach 450,000.

Rich asked about Over Winter Goal (OWG) changes. Right now the department is managing deer by adding up all the OWG numbers per unit and coming up with a population estimate for the state. If we manage deer at those numbers we will have about half as many deer on the landscape as we are now hunting. I think if the public knew that they would defiantly not be in support of harvesting the deer to anywhere near where the department is mandated to by state statute.

Al Phelan remembers finding 3 dead fawns this past spring which is real unusual for Grant county.

Hauge stated with the department stating that there were to be 1.5 – to 1.7 million deer in the state, a lot of people expected to see deer every where. The department doesn't try to put out misinformation to the public. The estimate could be off some by changing one number or another to a smaller number in the estimating equation.

Phelan said it was an unusual rut you couldn't predict or guess exactly what stage you were in at any given time

Rich said in his area the rut definitely was going on during the 9-day season.

Phelan thought there was less hunter movement.

Mark Noll reiterated what Rich said about reducing the population down to goal and that the public would really squeal if that were ever to happen.

Ed made a comment that people didn't like to see a 20% reduction in one year.

Rob stated that many people are micromanaging their own deer herds in their area.

Noll To much privatization of the deer herd right now, people don't want to make drives just want to sit so they don't scare their deer to other hunters.

Keith stated we will review each unit separately.

Noll asked if it would be possible to either make some smaller units or maybe combine some units.

Keith said some aggregation of units could be done

Hauge has heard that some people would like the department to take smaller steps in reducing the deer population.

Noll wants the department to notify the public as soon as possible if their unit will be a herd control unit.

Hauge stated that unfortunately that the department only reaches a small percentage of the hunting public with their notifications.

Harvey wants the department to tell the people that they will be conservative with their numbers.

Phealan asked if the department uses the Winter Severity Index (WSI) in southern WI or does it even ever come into consideration.

Hauge said they for the most part don't record or use WSI in southern WI. Maybe we should have last year for as bad as the winter was there, but the problem is we don't have a long term history of harsh winters to be able to tell us what a sever winter means in terms of mortality and reduced fawn production.

Rob asked if it were possible for the big game committee to meet again in March to review suggestions from the public.

Harvey said Yes. Kurt will schedule it.

Kurt asked for any new positive CWD tests near the edge or outside of the CWD zone. One near Boscobel and one in northern Portage co.

Comments were then opened up to all participating on their previous hunts.

Motion to adjourn by Rich 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rob Bohmann 7:07P.M.

Respectfully submitted Richard Kirchmeyer Sec.

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