

**Wisconsin Conservation Congress  
Big Game Study Committee Meeting Minutes  
Mead Wildlife Area Visitor Center  
Saturday December 19, 2009**

**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, Charlie Brown, Michael Demaster, Alan Gerber, Larrie Hazen, Mark Houslet, David Hraychuck, Allen Jacobson, Steve Klicko, Maynard Kuehl, Marlin Laidlaw, Gerald Merryfield, Arold Ninneman, Mike Riggle, Roger Sabota, Gary Schenck, Gary Severson & Paul Shaurette

**Members Excused:** Stan Brownwell & Douglas Williams

**DNR Liaison Present:**

Keith Warnke, Mark Burmesch & DNR Conservation Congress Liaison Kurt Thiede

**Others Present:**

Ed Harvey, Chair Wisconsin Conservation Congress & Rich Kirchmeier Secretary WCC

**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.”

**Meeting Agenda Revised**

Al Phelan suggested the meeting agenda be revised to let Ann Hraychuck address the committee after Keith Warnke’s presentation, to handle resolutions for authors present before lunch & to let Rob Bohmann present some info, under member matters, before lunch because he had to leave early afternoon. Agenda changes approved by the committee.

**Department Informational Items**

**A. Keith Warnke, Big Game Specialist, WDNR**

Keith passed out a handout from Matt Frank of the 2009 Deer Hunting Season Report which Matt prepared for the Natural Resources Board. Keith stated in 2009, outside the CWD area, we had 62 regular units, 50 herd control units, 2 day youth hunt and October & December antlerless hunt. Keith said the weather conditions during the 9 day gun season was warmer, mainly snow free & there was less corn harvested. He said preliminary deer totals were down 29% statewide; 40% down antlerless & 12% down in bucks with totals appearing to be down uniform across the state. Keith stated the preliminary analysis of deer population appears to be lower than last year, hunters were reporting lower deer sightings, many units below healthy goal, fawn production in Northern Forest were down 19% & 22% down in the Central Forest. Keith noted there were 13 units with no bonus tags, 38 units moved from herd control to regular season, 29 units moved from EAB to herd control. He noted the weather factors were counter balancing.

The October antlerless hunted harvested over 12,000 deer. The October Youth Gun Hunt harvested over 6,000 deer & sold over 10,000 licenses The early archery hunt was down with 52,000 deer harvested, down 32% antlerless & up 22% bucks

On CWD management Keith says there is unlimited EAB, had the same seasons & tagging requirements as 2008, 6,000 CWD deer samples were taken with 56 positives in 5,000 samples. He said new carcass

transportation restrictions were put in effect September 1, 2009.

Deer donation program was down 45%.

He noted the deer registration stubs now have fawn data, weather info, deer sightings on opening day & number of hours hunted. There is also a new web base hunter report system.

Concerning deer populations Keith says it is moving toward goals in many units, there were fewer antlerless tags for many Northern Units to allow herd growth, unit specific data is needed & the population estimate will be available in January 2010. The DNR will then assess where deer populations are relative to goals.

The committee expressed their thoughts & asked Keith the following questions:

- Mark Noll – stated buck only season is a fast way to get herd up
- Gary Severson – the fawn/doe ratio is key in SAK & the department must use the best professional judgments & consider combining units to get “best” ratio
- Rob Bohmann – What was the prehunt population? Keith said they will have in February & noted they did not make a prehunt prediction.
- Marlin Laidlaw – said units 57B & 55 were not in herd control but the DNR had 7,500 permits & 18,000 in 57B & 55 respectively which is insulting
- Ed Harvey – said unit history report for last year showing average growth rate production was not done. Keith says he will provide to the committee.
- Stece Klicko – said SAK in the 1980’s saves alot more deer, what changed in population estimates? Keith said they need to reevaluate.
- Mark Noll – stated some things happening with deer numbers in the Midwest, possibly due to the difficult weather or herd reduction plans. Keith said the DNR will be discussing with Minnesota & Michigan.
- Gary Severson – stated the four car kill deer indices all show they are down

### **2010 Draft Deer Time Table**

#### *Important dates include:*

- Feb. 2, 3 , 4 DNR Deer Committee Meeting in Tomahawk
- March 10 – 25 Deer Management information/ DMU review meetings
- March 18-31 Regional quota meetings
- March 24 Green Sheet approval of 2010 deer season recommendations
- April 28 NRB meeting in Madison for approval of 2010 deer season recommendations

### **2009 DMU Goal & Boundary Review**

Twelve DMU’s 6, 14, 57, 59B, 59M, 60A, 60B, 64, 64M, 77C, 77M, & 80B had a increase in goals varying from three to five deer

Two DMU’s 49A & 68B had a five deer decrease in goals

No boundary changes were proposed

Mark Noll stated the Department may want to increase goals on public land noting on private land they do what ever they want

### **Spring Hearing Proposed Rule Changes (Preliminary)**

Keith briefly discussed briefly the Departments Spring Hearing rule changes. Rob Bohmann asked if the Department was going to advance no EAB & no antlerless October hunts to the Spring Hearing.. Keith said they are not being forwarded.

A motion by Rob Bohmann & second by Arold Ninneman to allow archery hunting during the 9 day gun season was passed by the Big Game Committee.

### **Deer Research & Funding Opportunities**

Keith said there were 4 deer projects; radio collaring bucks to get buck harvest rates, fawn population dynamics study, impacts of different density of deer in different areas of the state & hunting participation rates & declining rates of 25 – 40 year old hunters. He noted 2 million dollars were made available from the Pittman Roberson for this coming year deer projects.

### **B. Ann Hraychuck, Legislature - Chair of Fish & Wildlife – Guest Speaker**

Ann thanked the Congress for all their volunteer work & valuable input. She has heard the DNR is not listening. She noted Matt Frank was accountable at the recent legislature hearing. She wants to continue to foster the relation between the Congress, DNR and the legislature. She noted she could be called day or night. She said the Congress pays attention to what is going on out there & the legislatures are also accountable to the Congress. She takes the deer issues very seriously & is partially responsible for the problems. Ann discussed the need to restore the credibility & image of the DNR which she said was at an all time low. She noted we must stop killing does. She said she hopefully will see an improvement in deer management .

Mark Houslet asked about the override of Governors veto on the DNR Secretary bill. Ann said it would be very difficult to override. Mark said we really need this change on how the DNR Secretary is chosen. Al Phelan presented info at the legislature meeting & noted the legislature committee asked good questions. Mark Noll noted the DNR Secretary Matt Frank left the meeting & Mark thought he should have stayed & listened to the input. On a question asked on baiting & feeding Ann said she recently discussed with Matt Frank who said he is looking at the Minnesota model.

### **C. Mark Burmesch, WDNR Law Enforcement**

Mark passed out a “2009 DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement Deer Season Report” from Chief Conservation Warden Randy Stark. He said the foggy weather was not good especially in the western part of the state, there was a lot of corn standing, swamps were not frozen, quietest season yet, little hunted Sunday afternoon, hunters not seeing deer & wardens not seeing deer. Mark noted 2009 was the fourth safest deer season on record with 7 non fatal accidents & one undetermined accident. Accidents were showing a downward trend. He noted that rifles were no more dangerous than shotguns. There were 15 hunter harassment complaints compared to 4 in 2008. Under violations baiting was #1 at 334 with feeding violations at 42. Total violations in 2009 were 1404 & in 2008 there were 1400. Felon violations were high at 12<sup>th</sup> place. He noted 7 wolves were found dead. The Department is hiring a new class of wardens starting June 2010 (approximately 12) & now can apply on line. They have 206 wardens authorized for staffing and there is 175 – 180 on staff. With the budget crunch they are doing what they can & have setup the budget with more flexibility.

### **Mike Riggle - Report of Deer 2000 Ad –Hoc Committee**

Mike noted the committee wants \$0.25 of each license to go for deer research, deer populations by the DNR should change from deer / sq. mile to number of deer in a unit & deer range should be addressed by the DNR. He asked why DNR deer numbers from years ago that are similar to DNR deer numbers now have hunters seeing a lot less deer.

Mark Noll noted, we the Congress are not a special interest group, we represent all Wisconsin citizens

### **Resolutions**

***010109 Increase in Deer Management Unit Overwinter Goals*** – Ron Kulas spoke & discussed a 25% increase in deer number goals statewide. Motion by Jerry Merryfield & second by Steve Klicko to accept. Motion to accept passed unanimously.

***030509 Ag Tag Program*** – Author Steve Thoe spoke saying the present program was not working properly. He said the program was driven by money & said the long season was his biggest concern. Mark Noll stated that the bulk of the Ag damage claims do not get any money. Motion by Rob Bohmann & second by Mark Houslet to reject. Motion to reject passed unanimously. Committee thought the resolution would not improve the Ag tag program.

**110209 Crop / Ag Tag Proposals** – Author not present. Motion by Mark Houslet & second by Allen Jacobson to reject. Motion to reject passed unanimously.

**110409 One Buck per Weapon** – Author not present. Motion by Rob Bohmann & second by Norman Blohm to reject. Motion to reject passed unanimously.

**170309 Discontinue \$2 HC Tags & EAB** – Author not present. Motion by Mark Houslet & second by Marlin Laidlaw to table. Motion to table passed unanimously.

**190309 QDM Trial in DMU 50** - Author Jim Gehlhoff & Jeff Forbes spoke & provided a handout showing info on why they feel Unit 50 should have a trial antler point restriction deer season Motion by Jerry Merryfield & second by Charlie Brown to reject. Motion to reject passed 20 in favor, one opposed. Rob Bohmann to write a resolution to determine hunter interest in having special buck seasons in their deer management unit. (See below for new resolution info)

**190409 Include Archers Under Antlerless Quotas** – Author not present. Motion by Marlin Laidlaw & second by Larrie Hazen to reject. Motion to reject passed unanimously. Marlin Laidlaw to write a resolution addressing the above resolution concern. (See below for new resolution info)

**210309 16 Day Gun Season** – Author not present. Motion by Al Gerber & second by Jerry Merryfield to reject. Motion to reject passed unanimously.

**290409 Change in the Use of SAK**– Author not present. Motion by Jerry Merryfield & second by Arold Ninneman to reject. Motion to reject passed 18 in favor one opposed.

**360109 Stop EAB hunts**– Author not present. Motion by Tony Janecek & second by Jerry Aulik to accept. Motion to accept failed 8 in favor and 11 against. Motion by Marlin Laidlaw & second by Al Jacobson to reject. Motion to reject passed 12 in favor & 4 against. Major committee concern it was not the correct thing to do in CWD units.

**370209 Increase DMU Goals by 25%** – Author not present. Similar to Resolution 010109 which passed unanimously.

**430709 Landowner Antlerless Deer Permits** - Author not present. Motion by Jerry Aulik & second by Roger Sabota to reject. Motion to reject passed unanimously.

**440409 Legislation to Mandate DNR Follow Recommendations for Doe Tags** – Author Ed Choinski spoke on why we should have the attendees at the Spring Hearing say how many doe tags should be issued in each county & DMU. Motion by Al Jacobson & second by Mike Riggle to reject. Motion to reject passed 18 in favor one opposed. Motion by Jerry Merryfield & second by Tony Janecek to send resolution to the Deer 2000 Study Committee for review.

**550209 Ban Deer Baiting in Wilderness & Primitive Areas** – Author Ron Weber spoke on why we should ban baiting in wilderness/primitive areas in state & national forests. Motion by Mark Houslet & second by Wright Allen to reject. Motion to reject passed 14 in favor & 7 against. Committee concerned with the State writing rules for Federal Land & about bait then being ban for bear hunting & trapping.

**570109 Extended EAB Authorization** – Author not present. Motion by Wright Allen & second by Marlin Laidlaw to reject. Motion to reject passed 18 in favor & one opposed.

**570409 Increase Deer Management Overwinter Goals** – Author not present. Similar to Resolution 010109 which passed unanimously.

**570509 Group Hunting for Archery in EAB Units** - Author Kevin Hasheider & Brad H. spoke on why we should permit archery group hunting in EAB units. Motion by Marlin Laidlaw & second by Mike Riggle to amend to “group hunting for archery in **ANTLERLESS ONLY CWD** earn-a-buck units”. Motion to amend passed unanimously. Motion by Marlin Laidlaw & second by Steve Klicko to pass the amended resolution. Motion to accept the amended resolution passed.

**590309 Stop EAB Units** - Author not present. Same as 360109 which was rejected. Major committee concern it was not the correct thing to do in CWD units.

**590409 DMU's Remain Unchanged** – Author not present. Motion by Tony Janecek & second by Roger Sabota to accept. Motion to accept passed on a split vote favoring acceptance. Most in the committee thought we needed to stabilize the SAK model by not changing DMU's.

**630409 Group Deer Hunting During Archery Season** – Author not present. Motion by Larrie Hazen & second by Norm Blohm to reject. Motion to reject passed unanimously.

**640209 Re-establish the 5 day rest period to the November deer season** – Author not present. Motion by Wright Allen & second by Mark Houslet to reject. Motion to reject passed.

**640309 North / South Deer Season Proposal** - Author Ron Waller spoke on why there should be no deer gun season north of highway 8 after December 1<sup>st</sup>. Motion by Jerry Merryfield & second by Arold Ninneman to reject. Motion to reject passed 12 in favor & 8 opposed.

**650609 Reimbursement to DNR for Deer Farm Inspections / Escapes** – Author not present. Motion by Tony Janecek & second by Jerry Aulik to accept. Motion to accept passed unanimously.

**680609 Quartering of Harvested Deer** – Author not present. Motion by Mark Houslet & second by Jerry Aulik to accept. Motion to accept passed. Resolution will be sent to the Executive Council if the DNR Department does not have on their portion of the Spring Hearing.

**720209 Three Year Moratorium EAB & HC** – Author not present. Motion by Tony Janecek & second by Larrie Hazen to accept. Motion to accept passed 11 in favor & 7 against.

**Two new resolutions will be submitted by the Big Game Committee for the Spring Hearing meetings.**

- **Concept to Support Antler Restrictions** – Motion by Mike Riggle & second by Marlin Laidlaw to accept. Motion to accept passed with one opposition
- **Archery Buck Season** – Motion by Marlin Laidlaw & second by Steve Klicko to accept. Motion to accept failed 7 in favor & 13 rejected. Resolution was rewritten to have similar to gun tag. Motion to accept rewritten resolution by Mike Riggle & second by Roger Sabota. Motion to accept passed.

**Resolutions to be advanced to the Spring Hearing**

Resolutions to be written by **Al Phelan** for advancement to Spring Hearing are:

- 010109 / 370209 - Increase in deer management unit overwinter goals
- 570509 - CWD EAB units antlerless group hunting
- 590409 – DMU's unchanged

Resolutions to be rewritten by **Mark Noll** for advancement to the Spring Hearing are:

- 650609 – Reimbursement for deer farm inspections
- 680609 – Quartering deer

Resolutions to be rewritten by **Tony Janecek** for advancement to the Spring Hearing are:

- 720209 – 3 year moratorium on EAB & HC
- ( ) – Concept to support antler restrictions
- ( ) – Archery buck license

### **Committees Member Matters**

Rob Bohmann – Rob distributed a handout & talked about a season structure same changes. He is sending this info to the Executive Congress for discussion.

Gary Severson – Concerned with coyote fawn predation with SAK numbers

Maynard Kuehl – Thinks we should look at having a predator bounty season

Allen Jacobson – Fawn recruitment is his major concern.

Jerry Aulik – Concern with wolves, bears & coyotes noting excessive amount of bears & wolves were devastating the deer herd & we need to put pressure to get under control

Marlin Laidlaw – Asked what was the success ratio for bear in unit “C”

Mike Riggle – noted no bear baits hit in certain time of the season, should radio collar fawns, bears & bob cats are biggest fawn predators

Roger Sabota – had 4 grand children hunt with him & only one saw a deer

Steve Klicko – must address people not seeing deer, need to build up deer on public land with less antlerless tags

Wright Allen – no comment

Tony Janecek – deer numbers are drastically down & the DNR needs to find out why their numbers are so far off

Mark Houslet – deer numbers a major concern & need to work with hunters, reward deer hunters where appropriate, EAB needs to be buried with no EAB for 10 years

Paul Shaurette – baiting / feeding is effecting deer movement

David Hraychuck – concern with baiting & feeding, recommends no baiting from November 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of the gun season

Al Gerber – need different practices for north & south

Larrie Hazen – concern with trespassing

Norman Blohm – EAB has got to go, deer disappearing statewide, noted 1850 – 1954 deer book saying in 1932 had 1<sup>st</sup> season (9 day), deer herd has moved

Arold Ninneman – concern with coyote fawn predation

Jerry Merryfield – volunteering for committee has been very rewarding & thanks for the opportunity to be on the deer 2000 Study Committee

Mark Noll – as a farmer nature is not stable, in 1992 Tom Hauge over estimated deer herd & it was thought to be the end of the world, deer will come back, swings back & forth this is nature, no exact science

Al Phelan – thanked the committee for being respectful

Meeting adjourned 4 PM

Tony Janecek, Big Game Committee Secretary