

DNR Deer Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday February 1, 2016

9:30 a.m.

Mead Wildlife Area

In attendance:

Kevin Wallenfang – chair, *DNR, Deer & Elk Ecologist*
Brian Dhuey – *DNR Surveys*
John Huff – *DNR, Northeast District*
Brett Owsley – *DNR, Southern District*
Rich Kirchmeyer – *Wisconsin Bowhunters Assc.*
Robert Rolley – *DNR, Science Services*

John Gilbert – *Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission*
Mike Zeckmeister – *DNR, Northern District*
Dan Storm – *DNR, Science Services*
Kevin Marquette – *Wisconsin Wildlife Federation*
Kevin Mickelberg – *DNR, Law Enforcement*
Brad Hutnik – *DNR, Forestry*
Dave Matheys – *DNR, West Central Region*

Guests:

Tom Hauge – *DNR, Wildlife Bureau Director*
Derek Johnson – *DNR, Assistant Big Game Ecologist*
Mary Annala – *DNR, Assistant Big Game Ecologist*
Keith McCaffrey – *Retired DNR Research Biologist*

**Agenda was revised to start with 2015 Deer Season Review*

2015 Deer Season Review

- **Season Highlights:**
 - Good snow cover in southern portions of state
 - Over 309,000 deer registered
 - About 151,100 antlered and 157,400 antlerless deer harvested
 - Buck kill was up 5% statewide and antlerless harvest was down 1% statewide, compared to last seasons

GAMEREG Year 1 Overview

- ≈ 70% of registrations were made online
 - ≈72% on a smartphone/mobile device
 - Other 28% were on a laptop/desktop
- Other 30% of registrations were over the phone
- Issues that arose:
 - Deer vs. bear registration.
 - Uploading the harvest data to WOLF was a challenge.
 - Farmland vs Forest zones
 - Customer information wasn't available in GAMEREG because the hunter had bought their license the day before registering
- On opening weekend 150 staffed lines were open for phone registration.
 - 97% didn't need help and registered deer correctly the first time.
 - Only around 3,000 calls were forwarded to Customer Service for assistance (3 fails sent them to CS).
 - Waiting times for opening weekend (the busiest period for registration):
 - Saturday – Longest wait time: 8 min. Average wait time: 1 min.
 - Sunday – Longest wait time: 15 min. Average wait time: 2 min.

- Issues:
 - Multiple registrations for one deer. Easily corrected in most cases
 - Harvest zone recorded as habitat type, not 'administrative' zone. This was prevalent along the borders of the Northern or Central Forest Zones and the Central Farmland Zone.
- Compliance: LE staff contacted about 281 hunters in the field and checked registration compliance for approximately 386 deer. Compliance rate at \approx 93%. Compliance will also be measured through the annual deer hunter questionnaire.
- **Deer Aging** Dan Storm reviewed data and methods from the aging process of 2015. This was the first year without in person registration, making the process of acquiring heads for aging a new challenge.
 - Total of 15,000+ deer aged (12,216 from the 9-day and rest were from other seasons * mostly before).
 - Success was highly variable across the state. Some teams had very helpful meat processors, 21 meat processors produced 400+ heads.
 - Some processors received deer from a very localized area, but some got deer from all over the state.
 - **Percent of yearling bucks and does:**
 - Yearling buck percentage up mostly statewide.
 - Yearling doe percentage down in NW forest and Lake Michigan farmland groupings. Same or up in other groupings, up 11% in Central Forest group.
 - 5 year averages suggest that there is lower recruitment in Vilas and Oneida counties.
 - **Fawn/doe ratios (Summer Deer Observations & Operation Deer Watch):**
 - Increased needed in numbers of observations.
 - In 2015 only 1,880 observations were made by staff, down about 1,000 from 2014
 - Operation Deer Watch had about 5,000 observations in 2015, down about 6,000 from 2014.
 - There was a big spike in doe/fawn ratio for 2014, closer to normal this year.
 - Ratios were generally up, compared to 2014; this may be due to a milder winter in 2014/2015.
 - As we have been doing in recent years, SDO and ODW are combined to determine F:D ratios

2016 Quota-setting Timeline:

- Late January – Final harvest data available
- Early February – First drafts of population estimates for field staff
- February 11th-18th – Regional population modeling meetings
- March 14th-24th – First round of County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) meetings
- April 4-17 – Public feedback survey live on internet
- April 11th – Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) Spring Hearings
- April 18th-21st – Final round of CDAC meetings
- May 25th – NRB meeting on approval of 2016 deer season recommendations
- Review of CDAC meetings:
 - Department staff will be present during CDAC meetings include Wildlife Management, Law Enforcement and Forestry

- CDAC workshop Saturday February 6th. All members were invited.
- ≈ 97% retention on members and average council has 7 members.
- Members have to reapply after 3 years of service. They could be removed if they are not representing their stakeholder group.

CDAC Timeline for 2017 Objectives and Boundary Review:

In 2017 CDACs will conduct a unit boundary review. Details of the process are being discussed.

- John Gilbert noted that the tribes should be brought into the discussion when these recommendations are being made.

2016 Ojibwe Tribal Threshold Calculations:

- Tribal harvest did not exceed the threshold calculations in any county

Tribal night hunting review:.

- Participants required to pass an advanced certification course including shooting test.
- Shooting plan for each property/fixed position required to be submitted/approved.
- Human population density was a factor in approvals.
- Participants noted that the process was very hard and may not have been worth the trouble.
- Statistics: 31 people passed the advanced certification, 9 of those submitted 14 plans, and only one deer was harvested.

CWD Update:

- 2015 was the lowest number of samples taken since discovered in 2002. Goal was 4,000 and result was about 3,500
- Crawford County had its first positive, bringing the CWD affected county total to 41.
- CWD Team Leaders will be meeting soon and a major task will be reviewing the 10 year CWD Response Plan.

Winter Severity Index (WSI) Update:

As of December 2015 the NOFZ WSI = 0, the average at that time is about 7.8. As of 2002 this has never happened.

First run of population estimates:

Robert Rolley gave a report on initial deer population estimates following the 2015 deer seasons. Numbers will be reviewed in the coming weeks with local managers at the regional deer meetings.

Research Updates:

Dan Storm gave updates:

- **Winter Health Assessments**
- **Mortality Study Report**

Deer Damage Program Update