

# **DEER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

12/22/2014 Wausau Howard Johnson Hotel

**Introductions** - Kevin Wallenfang thanked the committee for their attendance. The main purpose of the meeting is to review the County Deer Advisory Committees (CDAC) population objectives recommendations. Not all of the recommendation forms were provided by council chairs, but all recommendations are known by county. Member introductions were made: DNR Forestry, DNR Law Enforcement, DNR Science Services, DNR Northeast District, DNR Northern District, DNR West-Central District, DNR Southern District, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, U.S. Forest Service, Wis. Conservation Congress, Wis. Wildlife Federation, and Wis. Bowhunters Association.

## **CDAC Population Recommendations Overview**

- Recommendation forms included areas for each stakeholder group to provide individual input.
- Recommendations will be provided to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) unaltered for approval. The DNR committee liaisons completed an assessment of the recommendations that will help identify any areas of concern through the review process.
- The Voigt Task Force will review final recommendations on January 7. The NRB will consider recommendations February 25.
- The first CDAC meetings were relatively successful and the process worked relatively well. Public attendance was generally low during early meetings, but was considerably higher in December. Local press releases occurred in each county and templates were available to CDAC chairs for use. A CDAC web page exists and houses all materials needed for CDAC chairs/members to use for posting meeting notifications and at meetings.
- Public survey was completed; participation varied by county and by zone (forest vs. farmland). Result can be found on the CDAC web site, *dnr.wi.gov* keyword search "CDAC."
- CDACs provided preliminary population objective recommendations in October and a public input process occurred afterwards of which the results were provided to the councils for consideration in developing final recommendations.
- Concerns exist in counties with metro subunits. Either tags need to be issued specifically for use in the metro subunit or enough tags need to be available to help achieve the desired change in metro subunits which in many cases differs from the greater unit. Some counties have small slivers of metro subunits which could cause issues with issuing permits/evaluating the population in those areas. The new licensing system in 2016 will have the ability to issue permits by subunit.
- The members of the CDAC committees in some cases recognized that deer herds need to be decreased but were unwilling to vote for a decrease vote for a variety of reasons; political pressure, repercussions towards their businesses, threat of losing their jobs, public outrage, etc. The NRB must consider that some counties were unwilling to make necessary recommendations. There is some developing social research to evaluate the effectiveness of the process.
- The forestry community has indicated that a lack of regeneration is wide spread and in some cases is increasing the cost of doing business.
- CDACs will provide quotas on public and private lands for issuing bonus antlerless permits. In 2015, every hunter will receive a free antlerless tag with each deer license purchase, valid in Farmland Zone units only.

**CDAC Population Recommendations**

The committee reviewed each of county deer population recommendations using CDAC recommendation forms as well as liaison assessment forms.

**CDAC Final Recommendations w/ Deer Advisory Committee Review - 12/22/14**

| County   | Deer Management Zone | Preliminary Recommendation | Final Recommendation | County of Concern | Deer Advisory Committee Comments  |
|----------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| Adams    | Farmland             | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Adams    | Forest               | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Ashland  |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Barron   |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Bayfield |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Brown    |                      | Decrease                   | Maintain             | x                 | Department liaisons would prefer to see a decrease objective. Brown County is in the category of intolerable damage and there are forest regeneration problems. Brown County is largely within a metro subunit and municipalities are pursuing a number of alternatives to reduce deer populations.   |
| Buffalo  |                      | Decrease                   | Decrease             |                   | A decrease objective is acceptable but it is unlikely to be met since harvest is not currently adequate for decreasing the population.  |
| Burnett  |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Calumet  |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             | x                 | Calumet County is in the category of intolerable agriculture damage and there are forest regeneration concerns. Though local staff would prefer a decrease objective, they can support the CDAC recommendation.   |
| Chippewa |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Clark    | Farmland             | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Clark    | Forest               | Maintain                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Columbia |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Crawford |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Dane     |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   | Unsure if free antlerless permits in the metro subunit would help decrease the population; both private and public lands bonus antlerless permits are still available for sale.   |
| Dodge    |                      | Increase                   | Increase             | x                 | DNR staff supports a maintain objective. Regardless of permit levels and season types (short of Earn-a-buck), harvest is always fairly consistent from year to year. Tools are not available to decrease the population. There is an understanding that there are a lot of deer in the county but they aren't accessible to public lands hunters. The committee's goal is to increase the population on private lands to the point deer spill over onto public and other lands. This is not desirable considering the problems it could cause in areas that already have high deer numbers. |

## CDAC Final Recommendations w/ Deer Advisory Committee Review - 12/22/14 (continued)

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|-------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Door        |                      | Decrease                   | Decrease             |                   |  |
| Douglas     |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Dunn        |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   | The herd in Dunn County has the potential to increase rapidly if harvest is not adequate to maintain the population.   |
| Eau Claire  | Farmland             | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Eau Claire  | Forest               | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Florence    |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             |                   | CDAC members split vote between maintain and increase objectives. DNR liaison - no objection. Agriculture and forestry representatives voted to maintain population objective although public comment was primarily to increase the population. The CDAC can set quotas differently on public and private lands and quotas can be set on private lands to address agriculture and forestry concerns. |
| Fond du Lac |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             | x                 | There are significant forest regeneration problems in the county. Fond du Lac County is adjacent to the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) affected area of the state and disease issues are a concern. The liaisons support the original population objective of maintain but have concerns about the negative impacts of management to increase the deer population of the county.                      |
| Forest      |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   | Concerned with general disregard of forestry concerns by CDACs.  |
| Grant       |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Green Lake  |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Green       |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Iowa        |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Iron        |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Jackson     |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Jackson     |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Jefferson   |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Juneau      | Farmland             | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Juneau      | Forest               | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Kenosha     |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             | x                 | A large portion of the deer herd exists in the metro subunit and is not accessible to hunters. Increased damage is expected from an increased herd. Hunting pressure is very high on public lands and hunters are not seeing many deer as a result. Agricultural damage is likely low; very little information as Kenosha County does not participate in the agricultural depredation program.       |
| Kewaunee    |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| La Crosse   |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |

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|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| Lafayette |                      | Increase                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Langlade  |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Lincoln   |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Marathon  |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Marinette | Farmland             | Decrease                   | Decrease             |                   |   |
| Marinette | Forest               | Increase                   | Increase             | x                 | There are forest regeneration problems in this subunit and it is in the category of intolerable agricultural damage. Liaisons support an objective of maintain.   |
| Marquette |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Milwaukee |                      | Decrease                   | Decrease             |                   |   |
| Monroe    | Farmland             | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Monroe    | Forest               | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Oconto    | Farmland             | Decrease                   | Decrease             |                   |   |
| Oconto    | Forest               | Maintain                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Oneida    |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Outagamie |                      | Decrease                   | Maintain             |                   | Agricultural damage is at intolerable levels. DNR staff is accepting of a maintain objective in that regardless of the recommendation the herd is likely to remain high.  |
| Ozaukee   |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Pepin     |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Pierce    |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Polk      |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             | x                 | DNR staff concerned about current level of deer numbers and associated problems, even though the population is not far from the old overwinter goal at this time. Forest damage is felt to be significant and a shoot permit is being issued on county land as a result. Staff feel a decrease is needed. |
| Portage   |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |
| Price     |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |   |
| Racine    |                      | Increase                   | Increase             | x                 | Much of the unit is located within the metro subunit.   |
| Richland  |                      | Decrease                   | Maintain             |                   | The committee preferred a decrease objective and had concerns with the spread of CWD. The tools to decrease the population do not exist.  |
| Rock      |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |   |

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| Rusk        |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Sauk        |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Sawyer      |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Shawano     |                      | Decrease                   | Maintain             | x                 | Forest regeneration problems are severe in this County and there have been some disease concerns expressed by members of the public related to captive deer. Shawano is a CWD affected county. Department liaisons prefer a decrease objective though currently available tools may not be sufficient to achieve this.   |
| Sheboygan   |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             | x                 | Department liaisons are concerned that current problems with forest regeneration and conflicts with people in urban/suburban settings would increase under this objective. A portion of the county is within a metro subunit. Department liaisons would prefer a maintain objective in the unit. This would be consistent with adjacent counties within the same metro subunit which have either maintain or decrease objectives proposed. |
| St. Croix   |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   | A maintain objective is acceptable although the population will likely continue on a slight increase.  |
| Taylor      |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   | Agricultural damage permits increased this past year likely because farmers could not obtain antlerless tags due to the zero quota for the county. Agriculture damage does occur but unsure if the enrollees filled enough tags to qualify for the program next year.  |
| Trempealeau |                      | Increase                   | Increase             | x                 | The county does not fall within intolerable levels of agriculture damage. DNR staff has concerns with the objective.   |
| Vernon      |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Vilas       |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             |                   |  |
| Walworth    |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Washburn    |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             |                   | Next year it is likely there will be a private lands quota. DNR liaisons accept an increase objective as long as there is some level of antlerless quota.  |
| Washington  |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |
| Waukesha    |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   |  |

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| Waupaca   |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   | DNR staff recommends a decrease objective although tools are not available to meet this objective. Forest regeneration problems are the worst for oak species in Waupaca and Shawano counties.   |
| Waushara  |                      | Maintain                   | Maintain             |                   | Agricultural damage is at intolerable levels. High levels of antlerless harvest would still likely result in a population increase.  |
| Winnebago |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             | x                 | The county is in the category of intolerable agricultural damage and forest regeneration problems are severe. Consideration of a maintain objective for this county is warranted and would be supported by liaisons. This council understood that ag. damage levels are high. The vote was intended to express that the CDAC felt the majority of public opinion is to allow the herd to increase, so they felt it necessary to express this opinion through their vote, despite their awareness that "increase" isn't an option as it violates NR 1.15. |
| Wood      |                      | Maintain                   | Increase             |                   | DNR staff has concerns with increasing agricultural damage, high browse in forests and vehicle collisions if the population increases. The committee lacks transportation and agricultural representatives; the forestry representative voted for a maintain objective.  |
| Wood      |                      | Increase                   | Increase             |                   |  |

Northern District

- Meetings were relatively well attended. Most of the final recommendations were similar to the preliminary recommendations; some changed from maintain to increase objectives. Portions of the public feels buck harvest has been too high and are hoping for antler point restrictions in parts.
- In general, local DNR staff does not have concerns with recommendations across the district although some individual concerns do exist. Most DNR staff concerns were in the counties along the fringe between the forest and farmland zones. CDACs are interested in establishing some antlerless quotas to alleviate pressure on the buck harvest; establish some antlerless quota to satisfy public desire in farmland portions of counties while allowing the population to increase.
- A population objective of increase does not mean that the antlerless quota must be zero; herd growth can occur with an antlerless quota.
- At some point CDACs will have to recognize that they may have a need to establish quotas on public lands because there are other considerations other than the population objective at stake; many different entities are affected by public land quotas.

- CDACs consistently disregarded forestry and forest regeneration concerns; creating a situation where damage permits are likely to increase to address private issues with forest regeneration.
- No recommendations were provided for tribal units; tribal quotas (if any) will be developed between the department and tribes. Tribal quotas should be set between the individual tribes, not the Voigt Taskforce. The population objectives are not likely going to be of concern to the tribes as they will support population increases.

#### Southern District

- Decrease objectives for all counties are warranted but the tools to decrease the deer population do not currently exist.
- If a county is within a CWD affected county then the population objective should not be to increase; this should be a red flag warranting further consideration.

**Polk County Forest Regeneration** - Discussion directed by Michelle Carlisle, Polk County wildlife biologist, with comments provided by committee members.

- Deer browse has impacting Jack pine regeneration for several years. There is general acceptance for a site-specific approach to managing the problem rather than a county-wide approach.
- The county forest association is interested in protecting a recent planting of Jack pine. No damage permits have been issued on county forests in the past. Department administration is considering issuing the county damage permits as an option; 75 permits in which the county would direct hunting pressure using these permits. The permits would be issued for specific parcels. The department could issue the permits with a blaze orange requirement. The tags would be issued this winter because browse problems occur primarily during late winter. Issuing damage permits was mentioned at the first and most recent CDAC meetings; there were no public comments regarding these permits. This would be the first issuance of damage permits on public lands. The public will have access to these permits.
- How this issue impacts other counties will need to be considered. Issuing damage permits to limit deer browse is a multi-year issue; e.g., it takes 5-7 years to grow oak saplings to a size where they outgrow the impacts of deer browse.
- Agricultural damage permits are included in the tribal permit allocation equation.

#### **Additional Recommendations of the CDACs**

- This is the first step to evaluate how to handle non-population objective recommendations.
- Some of the recommendations require rule changes which the department does not have the authority to make.
- On January 31, the department will hold a training session with CDAC Chairs and alternate Chairs, where one of the discussions will be these additional recommendations and the department's authority to implement them.
- The department will be creating a summary spreadsheet of these recommendations that outlines the department's authority.
- Recommendations
  - Logging on private lands: Master plans already exist for public lands. The department can help ensure that back plans are not delayed further. Master plans cannot be changed

mid-plan as they were approved through the public input process. Cutting trees alone does not equate to an increase in the deer population. The department deer advisory committee, U.S. Forest Service, and DNR forestry representatives will compile a list of discussion items pertaining to these recommendations.

- Study deer populations on public lands: The Deer Management Assistance Program may be an outlet.
- Eliminate seasons other than 9-day season: Seasons are set in administrative code or state statute; recommend the Wis. Conservation Congress rule-recommending process.
- Feeding programs: NRB policy does not allow the DNR to establish feeding programs. The state could encourage public feeding if warranted.
- Adjust Unit and subunit boundaries: This can be done during the next review in 3 years.
- Public education: Ongoing.
- Crop rotation on public lands: Comment likely relates to food plots. Current share cropping practices require acreage rotations. Owsley assigned to develop more materials on this topic.
- Eliminate public land antlerless permits: The CDACs already have this authority. Permits for youth, disabled permit holders, and certain qualified military personal are set in state statute.
- Evaluate crossbow harvest specific to metro subunits: These data will exist and be evaluated.
- Encourage more timber cutting on federal/corporate lands: The department lacks authority to force timber cutting on federal and private lands.
- Eliminate baiting in 3-year trial: Baiting and feeding is established in state statutes; the department lacks rule-making authority.
- Antler point restrictions: The Wis. Conservation Congress Big Game Committee advanced this recommendation this year. The draft DTR rule gives the authority to implement antlerless point restriction options to the department with two-thirds CDAC support in zone.
- Eliminate December antlerless hunts: Established in the Deer Trustee Report rule.
- Hunt clubs distribute nuisance permits: Issuance and distribution of permits via DMAP or agriculture damage programs.
- Maintain wolf population goal of 350 wolves: A recent court order relisted the gray wolf as a federally protected endangered species. A new wolf management plan is under development, including population goal options, and will go through the public input process when completed.
- Institute party permits: Can be presented via the Wis. Conservation Congress rule-making process.
- Reduce damage permit issuance: Ability already exists with the department.
- October antlerless hunt: Creating an October hunt requires an emergency rule order. Additional details pertaining to the regulations are needed.
- Issue free permits in metro subunits and track harvest separately: This is the current plan.
- Additional recommendations that require further discussion: issues require statutory changes, are currently ongoing, or require providing recommendations to other committees:

- Institute flexibility to end late seasons if winter severity is impacting deer
- Extend the 9-day gun season to 15 days
- Reduce carnivore populations; coyote bounties, increased bear/wolf harvest
- Restore trust between department and public
- Find ways to open private lands to hunting
- Bonus tag cost
- Increased youth opportunities in urban areas
- Open hunting on Milwaukee County public lands
- Improve habitat
- Buffer zone on public lands for non-consumptive users
- Allow an earn-a-buck option

### **Quota Setting Timeline**

- The process will begin as normal in February for field staff with an update by Robert Rolley, DNR Science Services. Local managers will communicate this information to the CDACs. Will expand these meetings to occur Feb. 9-13.
- The deer committee will meet February 4<sup>th</sup> to kick off the annual process.
- CDACs will receive updated population and harvest data to set quotas (deer population metrics) including harvest information (public vs. private), population estimates and quota starting points.
- There are no changes to the tribal quota setting process.

### **Deer Trustee Report Rules Package**

- A summary of the DTR rule changes was provided to the committee.
- The rule looks mostly the same, but there are several changes, most of which provide new regulation options for CDACs to consider.
- Public hearings occur in late January.

**Next Meeting:** February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Location TBD