

**PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION
BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
PROJECT ANNUAL JOB REPORT**

PROJECT CODE NO.: 06210

TITLE: White-tailed Deer Research/Management

PROJECT JOB NO.: 21011

TITLE: Deer Management Assistance and Agricultural Deer Control Permit Programs

PERIOD COVERED: 1 July 2010 through 30 June 2011

COOPERATING AGENCIES: None

WORK LOCATION(S): Statewide

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ABSTRACT To assist landowners in achieving their deer management goals, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) developed a number of landowner assistance programs. The Agricultural Deer Control Permit Program (Red Tag Program), established in 1995, and the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), established in 2003, provide landowners with additional permits for hunters to take antlerless deer. During the 2010-11 hunting seasons, 870 properties enrolled in DMAP. The PGC issued 27,588 DMAP coupons, of which 23,736 were redeemed for DMAP permits. Fifty-four percent of DMAP permit holders submitted their mandatory report card. Hunters using DMAP reported harvesting 4,423 antlerless deer. In 2010, 165 participants enrolled in the Red Tag Program and reported a harvest of 964 deer.

OBJECTIVE

To monitor participation and use of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's (PGC) Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) and Agricultural Deer Control Permit Program (Red Tag Program) programs.

METHODS

Prior to 2005, information on the DMAP was reported in Project Job No. 21001. Landowner participation and deer harvest for the Red Tag Program were not reported before 2005.

DMAP provides landowners with a method to increase antlerless deer harvests to meet individual landowner deer management goals. Eligibility requirements changed throughout the first 3 years of this program. In 2003, public landowners and private landowners enrolled in a PGC public access program such as Farm-Game, Safety Zone, or a Forest-Game Cooperative were eligible to participate. In 2004, DMAP was expanded to public landowners, private landowners who do not charge a fee to hunt, and hunting clubs of 1,000 or more acres that were established prior to 1 January 2000. In 2005, the 1,000 or more acres requirement for hunting clubs was removed. In addition, hunters could receive up to 2 permits per enrolled property.

For the 2010-11 hunting season, the Board of Commissioners significantly changed the DMAP program. Adopted changes included; 1) reducing the 2010-11 antlerless allocation in each WMU by the number of DMAP coupons from 2009-10, and 2) capping the 2010-11 DMAP coupon number to not exceed the 2009-10 coupon number. As a result of these regulation changes, administration of DMAP changed. Because of the DMAP coupon cap, DMAP applications were prioritized to determine which applicants received DMAP coupons for the 2010-11 hunting season. First priority was given to private landowners enrolled in a Game Commission public access program. Second priority was given to public lands. Third priority was given to private landowners not enrolled in a Game Commission public access program. In addition, the application deadline was moved up from July 1st to June 12th. The Board of Commissioners approved an additional 2,761 coupons above the cap to be issued to private landowners not enrolled in a Game Commission public access program.

Applications received by 12 June 2010 were reviewed by region Wildlife Management Supervisors. Following application approval, coupons were sent to landowners for distribution to hunters. Hunters then redeemed a coupon for a permit to harvest an additional antlerless deer on that specific DMAP property.

Hunters are required to return a postage paid report card regardless of hunting success. In the first year of the program, 2003-04, approximately 50% of all DMAP participants returned report cards by the deadline in February. Because it was a new program and the reporting requirement differed from regular hunting license reporting requirements, where report cards are only required when a deer is harvested, letters were sent to non-respondents to remind them of the need to report regardless of harvest. A second mailing was then made to the remaining non-respondents. Following the second mailing, 99% of DMAP participants had reported. The second year, 2004-05, nearly 80% of hunters submitted their DMAP report cards. No additional mailings were made. However, hunters who did not submit a report card were not eligible to participate in 2005-06. Following numerous complaints and disputes regarding whether a report card was returned, this requirement was relaxed, and hunter application ineligibility provision was removed if a report card was not received in 2006.

The Red Tag Program provides those landowners experiencing agricultural deer depredation a tool to remove antlerless deer outside of the regular hunting season. Applications are only accepted from persons who are currently enrolled and have participated in one of the PGC's public access programs (Farm Game Project or Safety Zone) for a minimum of 2 years, except for applicants in Wildlife Management Units (WMU) 5C and 5D. Applications for deer control permits are made through the district wildlife conservation officer. Following application

approval, a permitted landowner is authorized to enlist the aid of a limited number of hunters. Landowners distribute Red Tag permits to hunters that are valid from 1 February to 28 September each calendar year, excluding Sundays, during the hours between dawn and dusk only. The permit is not valid from 16 May to 30 June. Only antlerless deer may be taken under this program. Because of uncertainty about reporting consistency and procedures prior to 2005, summary data prior to 2005 are not included in this report.

For 2011, the Board of Commissioners approved the use of bait on approved properties enrolled in Red Tag in WMU 5C and 5D. Hunters on these approved properties would be allowed to distribute bait beginning 2 weeks prior and continue through the end of the permit period. Bait accumulation in any one location may not exceed 5 gallons total volume at any given time.

RESULTS

Over 850 properties were enrolled in the DMAP in 2010-11 (Table 1). Enrolled acreage increased from 2009-10 to 2010-11, however the number of coupons requested decreased (Table 1). Approximately 54% of DMAP hunters submitted report cards to the PGC which is a marked decrease from previous years. Hunters reported harvesting 4,423 antlerless deer with these permits. Harvest success for 2010-11 increased from 2009-10 but is still lower compared to the first 6 years of the program (Table 2). In 2010-11, DMAP harvests increased WMU antlerless harvests by 10% or less of the total antlerless harvest, except in WMU 2G where harvest was 48% of the total antlerless harvest (Table 3).

For the 2011-12 hunting season, the Board of Commissions again altered DMAP regulations requiring all public landowners to provide an approved deer management plan to be submitted with their DMAP application. The regulation also advanced the application date by month to 1 June. Reducing the antlerless allocation in each WMU by the number of DMAP coupons distributed and capping the number of DMAP coupons allocated that applied to the 2010-11 hunting season were not enacted for the 2011-12 hunting season.

One hundred sixty-five participants were enrolled in the PGC's Red Tag Program in the 2010 calendar year (Table 4). Mandatory monthly reporting by enrolled landowners showed 964 deer taken by hunters with Red Tag permits (Table 4). Eighty-one percent of the deer harvested were female and harvest levels varied by WMU (Table 5).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to collect and summarize DMAP and Red Tag participation and harvest data by WMU.
2. Maintain current DMAP regulations.
3. Investigates methods of increasing DMAP reporting rates.

Table 1. Number of units, acres enrolled, and coupons requested, approved, and redeemed by year, Pennsylvania's DMAP.

| Year | Units enrolled | Acres enrolled | Coupons requested | Coupons approved | Coupons redeemed |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2003-04 | 176 | 696,309 | 31,898 | 31,783 | 23,348 |
| 2004-05 | 696 | 1,722,619 | 47,848 | 47,812 | 34,135 |
| 2005-06 | 691 | 1,945,759 | 42,279 | 42,235 | 31,641 |
| 2006-07 | 758 | 1,877,850 | 36,841 | 36,816 | 28,432 |
| 2007-08 | 801 | 1,470,306 | 32,379 | 32,379 | 22,148 |
| 2008-09 | 841 | 1,502,896 | 30,474 | 30,476 ^a | 23,520 |
| 2009-10 | 920 | 1,650,783 | 33,637 | 33,642 ^a | 26,877 |
| 2010-11 | 870 | 1,658,732 | 29,169 | 27,588 | 23,736 |

^a This number is higher than Coupons requested due to approval to replace lost coupons and administration issues.

Table 2. Number of antlerless deer harvested, hunter success, and reporting rate by year, Pennsylvania's DMAP.

| Year | Antlerless harvest | Hunter success (%) | Reporting rate (%) |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2003-04 | 6,250 | 27 | 99 ^a |
| 2004-05 | 7,946 | 23 | 81 |
| 2005-06 | 7,644 | 24 | 84 |
| 2006-07 | 7,396 | 26 | 78 |
| 2007-08 | 5,006 | 23 | 79 |
| 2008-09 | 5,744 | 24 | 78 |
| 2009-10 | 4,305 | 16 | 54 |
| 2010-11 | 4,423 | 19 | 54 |

^a Hunters failing to report were contacted by mail; 2 mailings were sent.

Table 3. 2010-11 DMAP Harvest by WMU and subsequent increase in antlerless harvest in comparison to regular license antlerless harvests.

| WMU | Reported DMAP harvest | Increase in antlerless harvest^a (%) |
|--------------|------------------------------|---|
| 1A | 71 | 1% |
| 1B | 195 | 2% |
| 2A | 15 | 0% |
| 2B | 0 | 0% |
| 2C | 178 | 2% |
| 2D | 146 | 1% |
| 2E | 97 | 2% |
| 2F | 572 | 10% |
| 2G | 1727 | 48% |
| 3A | 121 | 2% |
| 3B | 148 | 2% |
| 3C | 255 | 3% |
| 3D | 157 | 3% |
| 4A | 145 | 2% |
| 4B | 21 | 0% |
| 4C | 70 | 1% |
| 4D | 302 | 6% |
| 4E | 41 | 1% |
| 5A | 72 | 2% |
| 5B | 79 | 1% |
| 5C | 8 | 0% |
| 5D | 0 | 0% |
| Not Recorded | 3 | |

^a For example, a DMAP harvest of 195 antlerless deer in WMU 1B increased the regular license antlerless harvest by 2%.

Table 4. Red Tag participants and harvest in Pennsylvania 2005-2010.

| Year | Participants enrolled | Harvest |
|-------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 2005 | 168 | 867 |
| 2006 | 197 | 1,013 |
| 2007 | 223 | 982 |
| 2008 | 169 | 1,002 |
| 2009 | 189 | 1,261 |
| 2010 | 165 | 964 |

Table 5. Reported Red Tag harvest by WMU, Pennsylvania 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

| WMU | 2006 harvest | 2007 harvest | 2008 harvest | 2009 harvest | 2010 harvest |
|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1A | 32 | 34 | 19 | 18 | 25 |
| 1B | 11 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 11 |
| 2A | 139 | 134 | 79 | 127 | 42 |
| 2B | 12 | 20 | 13 | 11 | 10 |
| 2C | 34 | 37 | 24 | 30 | 14 |
| 2D | 273 | 154 | 180 | 281 | 240 |
| 2E | 51 | 68 | 67 | 76 | 58 |
| 2F | 14 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| 2G | 5 | 5 | 3 | 17 | 5 |
| 3A | 21 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3B | 0 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| 3C | 22 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3D | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4A | 109 | 50 | 69 | 77 | 43 |
| 4B | 0 | 2 | 34 | 18 | 0 |
| 4C | 30 | 63 | 29 | 54 | 24 |
| 4D | 51 | 78 | 105 | 128 | 59 |
| 4E | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5A | 9 | 14 | 38 | 24 | 45 |
| 5B | 35 | 17 | 34 | 53 | 46 |
| 5C | 138 | 218 | 221 | 194 | 163 |
| 5D | 26 | 51 | 77 | 139 | 171 |