

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

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TITLE: White-tailed Deer Research/Management

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TITLE: Wildlife Management Unit Citizen Advisory Committees

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COOPERATING AGENCIES: Office of Administration / Office of Strategic Services

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ABSTRACT Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) have been used by the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) since 2006 to improve public involvement in deer management, and address human/deer conflicts. CACs were conducted in Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) 1A, 2E, 3A, 4A, and 5B. Committee members communicated population goal recommendations based on input actively solicited and obtained from individuals within each member's stakeholder group. CAC consensus recommendations were: to increase the deer population 30-40% in WMU 1A; increase deer populations 15-25% in WMU 2E and 5-10% in WMU 3A dependent upon the forest habitat health measure; stabilize the deer population with up to a 15% increase in WMU4A if supported by the forest habitat health measure; and no consensus decision was reached in WMU 5B. Individual final reports for each WMU were completed and are available on the PGC's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Deer and Elk Section staff considered CAC recommendations as one of the 3 measures (i.e., deer health, forest habitat health, and CAC recommendation) used to formulate its antlerless license recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. From 2006 to 2009, CACs have convened in 15 WMUs. Three more (WMUs 2B, 3D, 5D) are scheduled for 2010.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide an opportunity to inform stakeholders on the mission of the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), complexities of deer management, and the importance of proper management.

2. To provide an opportunity for the PGC to understand stakeholder values regarding deer management.

3. To provide an opportunity for stakeholders to interact with one another and increase understanding of different stakeholder values and concerns.

4. To provide an opportunity for stakeholders to have direct input concerning deer population objectives for a Wildlife Management Unit (WMU).

METHODS

With the aid of trained, independent facilitators, committee members worked together to provide a deer population objective recommendation to the Bureau of Wildlife Management's Deer & Elk Section. The Deer & Elk Section considered this recommended population objective in its deer management recommendations for the WMU in question.

Each member represented a group of stakeholders and was vested with the decision-making power of that group. Members were to present values and concerns of their stakeholder group and not their own individual viewpoint. Members were encouraged to consider all relevant biological and social data as it pertained to their constituents. Input was sought from all members equally. Members were to foster a cooperative atmosphere and worked towards consensus on a recommendation for a deer population objective. Recommendations were made by consensus, which was defined as all but one member in agreement. The Committee was disbanded following completion of the assigned tasks.

Deer and Elk Section staff worked with the committee as advisory members. Staff provided technical information on deer management including biological and social data and needed background material. Deer and Elk Section staff had no voting or vetoing power within the meetings.

Independent facilitators worked with the Deer and Elk Section staff to choose stakeholder groups to be represented. Facilitators interviewed and selected members to the advisory committee and were responsible for organizing and conducting committee meetings. Facilitators were also the main point of contact for committee members. Facilitators were responsible for focusing advisory committee interaction in a positive manner.

If the committee reached consensus, the recommendation formed the basis of the public input recommendation for the deer population objective in the WMU in question for the next 5 years. Deer & Elk Section staff considered the recommendation as one of the 3 measures (i.e., deer health, forest habitat health, and Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC) recommendation) used to formulate its recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. If consensus was not reached, Deer & Elk Section staff considered the input of all members and information, and recommended an appropriate deer population trend to the Commission.

RESULTS

CACs were completed in WMUs 1A, 2E, 3A, 4A, and 5B. CAC consensus recommendations were: to increase the deer population 30-40% in WMU 1A; increase deer populations 15-25% in

WMU 2E and 5-10% in WMU 3A dependent upon the forest habitat health measure; stabilize the deer population with up to a 15% increase in WMU 4A if supported by the forest habitat health measure; and no consensus decision was reached in WMU 5B. Individual final reports for each WMU are available on the PGC's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Stakeholder groups represented on these committees can be found in Table 1. The Deer & Elk Section considered recommendations of the CACs in conjunction with measures of deer and forest habitat health when making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. Status of CACs in each WMU can be found in Table 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Obtain a commitment for a primary and secondary representative from each stakeholder group from different geographic areas of the WMU.
2. Retain the requirement that no representative shall hold an office or position of authority for his stakeholder group, hold an elected office, or be a present or past affiliate of the PGC. This increases community involvement and benefits the credibility of the CAC process.
3. Maintain the current time frame for meetings, i.e., Meeting 1 - early February, Meeting 2 - early March.
4. Identify potential members in the summer, July/August, through 4 avenues: PGC field staff, PGC website, press release to the public, and outside organizations and agencies.
5. Continue to use facilitators not associated with the PGC to conduct activities of CACs from interviews and selection of participants through the final meetings and reports.
6. Continue to minimize direct involvement of PGC staff and stakeholder organizations to keep the CAC process a free exchange of ideas and information between stakeholders.

Table 1. Stakeholder groups for each CAC.

Stakeholder Group	WMU 1A	WMU 2E	WMU 3A	WMU 4A	WMU 5B
Homeowners	✓	✓		✓	✓
Resident Sportsman	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nonresident Sportsmen			✓	✓	
Conservationist	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Business	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Forestry	✓		✓	✓	✓
Agriculture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Landowner		✓		✓	✓
Highway Safety		✓			
Rural Non-agricultural Landowner	✓	✓		✓	✓

Table 2. Status of CAC in each WMU

WMU	Year CAC completed	Deer population recommendation	Percent (%) deer population increase or decrease	Deer & Elk Section recommendation^b
1A	2009	Increase	30-40	Stabilize
1B	2007	Increase	15	Stabilize
2A	2008	Stabilize	N/A	Stabilize
2B	2010 ^a			
2C	2007	Increase	25-50	Stabilize
2D	2011 ^a			
2E	2009	Increase	15-25	Stabilize
2F	2011 ^a			
2G	2011 ^a			
3A	2009	Increase	5-10	Stabilize
3B	2007	Stabilize	N/A	Stabilize
3C	2011 ^a			
3D	2010 ^a			
4A	2009	Stabilize/Increase	15	Stabilize
4B	2006	Increase	10-20	Increase
4C	2008	Increase	20	Stabilize
4D	2008	Increase	15	Stabilize
4E	2008	Increase	40	Increase
5A	2008	Increase	12	Increase
5B	2009	No Consensus	-	Stabilize
5C	2007	Decrease	40	Decrease
5D	2010 ^a			

^a Anticipated year CAC will be completed. This is subject to change.

^b Deer & Elk Section recommendations are based on measures of deer health, forest habitat health, and input from each CAC. In some cases, Deer & Elk Section recommendations will not match CAC recommendations because of low deer health or forest habitat health measures.