

**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

WORK LOCATION(S): Statewide

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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 deer-human conflicts. CACs were conducted in Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) 2B, 3D, 5D in 2010. 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 decrease the deer population 0-10% in WMU 2B; increase the deer population 10% in WMU 3D dependent upon the forest habitat health measure; and to decrease the deer population in WMU 5D. 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 1 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 2010, CACs have been completed in 18 WMUs.

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 2B, 3D, and 5D. CAC consensus recommendations were: to decrease the deer population 0-10% in WMU 2B; increase the deer population 10% in WMU 3D dependent upon the forest habitat health measure; and to decrease the deer population

in WMU5D. 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.

In February 2010, a legislatively-sponsored comprehensive review and evaluation of the deer management program was released by Wildlife Management Institute (WMI). As a result of this review, WMI noted several major shortcomings of WMU-level CACs. Their recommendation was to have a statewide CAC that meets on a periodic basis and institute a statistically viable public survey to collect citizen preferences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Discontinue WMU-level CACs and replace them with a statistically viable public survey.

2. In accordance with Strategy 5.1.3 of the 2009-2018 Deer Management Plan, establish a statewide stakeholder committee to provide communication and discussion on the deer management program.

Table 1. Stakeholder groups for each CAC.

Stakeholder Group	WMU 2B	WMU 3D	WMU 5D
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	CAC deer population recommendation	Percent (%) deer population increase or decrease	Deer & Elk Section recommendation ^a
1A	2009	Increase	30-40	Stabilize
1B	2007	Increase ^b	15	Stabilize ^b
2A	2008	Stabilize	N/A	Stabilize
2B	2010	Decrease	0-10	Decrease
2C	2007	Increase	25-50	Stabilize
2D				
2E	2009	Increase ^b	15-25	Stabilize ^b
2F				
2G				
3A	2009	Increase ^b	5-10	Stabilize ^b
3B	2007	Stabilize	N/A	Stabilize
3C				
3D	2010	Increase ^b	10	Stabilize ^b
4A	2009	Stabilize/Increase ^b	15	Stabilize ^b
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	Decrease	-	Decrease

^a 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.

^b In these WMUs, the CACs recommended deer population increases if forest regeneration was adequate. As none of these WMUs had adequate regeneration, Deer and Elk Section recommendations of 'Stabilize' were consistent with CAC recommendations.