

Wildlife Management Unit Citizen Advisory Committees^a

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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) 2D, 2F, 2G, and 3C in 2011. 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 2D; increase the deer population 15% in WMU 2F dependent upon the forest habitat health measure and DMAP regulation changes; and to stabilize the deer population in WMU 3C. No consensus decision was reached in 2G. 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. As of 2011, one CAC has been completed in each WMU.

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 2D, 2F, 2G, and 3C. CAC consensus recommendations were: to decrease the deer population 0-10% in WMU 2D; increase the deer population 15% in WMU 2F dependent upon the forest habitat health measure and DMAP regulation changes; and to stabilize the deer population in WMU 3C. No consensus decision was reached for 2G. 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 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 representative and statistically appropriate 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 2D	WMU 2F	WMU 2G	WMU 3C
Homeowners		✓		✓
Resident Sportsman	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nonresident Sportsman		✓	✓	
Conservationist	✓	✓		
Forestry	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agriculture	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Landowner	✓	✓	✓	✓
Highway Safety	✓	✓		
Rural Non-agricultural Landowner	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2. Status of CAC in each WMU, CAC and Deer & Elk Section recommendations, and whether Deer & Elk Section recommendations agreed with CAC recommendations, Pennsylvania 2006-2011.

WMU	Year completed	CAC deer population recommendation	Percent (%) deer population change	Deer & Elk Section recommendation ^a	Agreement with CAC?
1A	2009	Increase	30-40	Stabilize	No
1B	2007	Stabilize, if habitat supports more deer then increase	15	Stabilize	Yes
2A	2008	Stabilize	0	Stabilize	Yes
2B	2010	Decrease	0-10	Decrease	Yes
2C	2007	Increase	25-50	Stabilize	No
2D	2011	Decrease	0-10	Decrease	Yes
2E	2009	Stabilize, if habitat supports more deer then increase	15-25	Stabilize	Yes
2F	2011	Stabilize, if habitat supports more deer and DMAP regs change then increase	15	Stabilize	Yes
2G	2011	No Consensus	-	Stabilize	-
3A	2009	Stabilize, if habitat supports more deer then increase	5-10	Stabilize	Yes
3B	2007	Stabilize	0	Stabilize	Yes
3C	2011	Stabilize	0	Stabilize	Yes
3D	2010	Stabilize, if habitat supports more deer then increase	10	Stabilize	Yes
4A	2009	Stabilize, if habitat supports more deer then increase	15	Stabilize	Yes
4B	2006	Increase	10-20	Increase	Yes
4C	2008	Increase	20	Stabilize	No
4D	2008	Increase	15	Stabilize	No
4E	2008	Increase	40	Increase	Yes
5A	2008	Increase	12	Increase	Yes
5B	2009	No Consensus	-	Stabilize	-
5C	2007	Decrease	40	Decrease	Yes
5D	2010	Decrease	-	Decrease	Yes

^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. Deer and Elk Section recommendation is based on recommendation immediately following completion of CAC.