



Special Interests

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EVER tried to get money from an insurance company? You're a good customer, you pay your bill on time, and you've never filed a claim. So why does it take an act of congress to get a check for damages that are clearly covered by your insurance? Then they increase your rates because you made a claim. Isn't that why you've been buying insurance all these years?

Why would we think insurance companies are going to give away money if they don't have to? They aren't. But that doesn't stop people from believing there is some corporate conspiracy between insurance companies and the Game Commission. The word on the street is that the Game Commission is receiving financial kickbacks from insurance and timber companies for instituting policies to lower deer populations. Of all the myths and legends out there, this is the most ridiculous.

The deer program and the resulting policies are a product of the goals of the deer management plan, which were given to the Game Commission by "stakeholders" in 2002. Of the 19 external stakeholder groups invited to participate, 6 were sportsmen's groups. Their representation on the panel was double that of forestry and conservation interests and triple that of agricultural interests. So, who's the special interest group with disproportionate representation?

The goals this group unanimously agreed upon were: to improve and maintain a healthy deer herd; to reduce human/deer conflicts; to improve the health and sustainability of the ecosystem; to increase recreational opportunities involving deer; to increase citizen understanding of healthy ecosystems and deer herds; and to provide public and private landowners with the deer management tools they need to achieve their land use objectives. With the direction set, the Game Commission got to work recommending and implementing policies to achieve those goals. But, accomplishing those goals meant reducing deer numbers. Eight years later, a reduced but stable deer population is allowing those goals to be met.

The agency's annual budget is reported each January in the pages of this magazine. The next time someone mentions that the deer program is the result of some special interest group, be sure to tell them which special interest group it really is.