

Citizen Advisory Committee Wildlife Management Unit 2G Final Report

March 30, 2011



Pennsylvania Game
Commission

Governor's Office of
Administration



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Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2G

Introduction and Overview

An objective in the Pennsylvania Game Commission's (PGC) deer management plan is the use of local stakeholder groups to recommend a Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) deer population goal. Through a local Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), comprised of representatives of stakeholder groups for WMU 2G, participants communicated population goal recommendations based on input from individuals from each stakeholder group. CAC membership and meeting attendance is shown in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1			
List of CAC Stakeholder Groups/Representatives and Attendance at Meetings			
Stakeholder Group	Representative (*Primary Member)	February 3	March 1
1. Agriculture	Les Robinson*	✓	✓
2. Forest Industry	John Levavasseur*	✓	✓
3. Public Landowner	Chris Nicholas*	✓	✓
4. Rural Non-Farm Landowner	Michael Lichty*	✓	✓
5. Rural Non-Farm Landowner	Ken Greg	✓	✓
6. Sportsman-Non-Resident	Charles Gingrich*	✓	✓
7. Sportsman-Resident	Robert Shields*	✓	✓
8. Sportsman-Resident	Cynthia Pavelosky	✓	

After recruiting stakeholder representatives from individuals recommended by PGC field staff, outside organizations, and those requesting to be considered through the volunteer nomination process, Office of Strategic Services (OSS)¹ staff convened and facilitated an introductory meeting on February 3, 2011.

OSS facilitated a subsequent meeting on March 1, 2011, to gather stakeholder feedback, discuss summaries of stakeholder perspectives, and reach consensus, if possible, regarding a deer population trend recommendation for WMU 2G.

Six stakeholder groups were represented. Where possible, two members were selected per stakeholder group. In the case of 2G, this resulted in eight CAC members. Primary members were identified for each stakeholder group and were responsible for coordinating their results with their partner. Attendance at the second meeting was optional, but encouraged, for the secondary member so they could participate in the discussion. Primary members reported the combined results and held the decision making power of the group they represented. Across the six stakeholder groups, CAC members collected input from 229 people.

The following report explains the CAC process for this WMU. It includes a description of the meeting, information provided by PGC staff, topics discussed, stakeholder representative findings, the context of various perspectives, and the resulting consensus process that led to the CAC recommendation of a deer population trend for WMU 2G over the next five years:

Consensus was not reached. Suggested population changes ranged from no change to over a 25% increase.

¹ OSS is a service agency within the Office of Administration and has provided facilitation services to the PGC since the inception of the CAC process when piloted in 2006.

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First Meeting Summary

Prior to the first meeting, members received a document entitled "Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), Objectives and Process Overview," which explained each of the items under the second area covered in the agenda and the worksheet and template listed in the fifth area of the agenda. Highlights from the first meeting included reviewing the following information.

PGC Deer Management Program Goals:

1. Manage deer for a healthy and sustainable deer herd.
2. Maintain deer-human conflicts at safe and acceptable levels.
3. Manage deer for healthy and sustainable forest habitat.
4. Manage deer to provide recreational opportunities.
5. Improve public's knowledge and understanding of deer and the deer management program.

Objectives of CAC's:

1. They provide an opportunity for the Game Commission to understand stakeholder values regarding deer management.
2. They provide an opportunity for stakeholders to interact with one another, facilitate communication among, and increase understanding of different stakeholder values and concerns.
3. They provide an opportunity for stakeholders to have direct input concerning deer population goals that ultimately affect all Pennsylvanians.
4. They provide an opportunity to inform stakeholders on the mission of the Game Commission, complexities of deer management, and the importance of proper management.

Outcome of CAC Proceedings:

1. The goal is to build consensus among the committee and agree on a recommendation to increase, decrease, or stabilize the deer population in their WMU.
2. *Definition of consensus: Consensus is reached if all but one member agrees with the other members.*
3. If a consensus has been reached, OSS will present the recommendation to the Game Commission in a written format that explains how each stakeholder group's concerns were considered in the decision.
4. If a consensus cannot be reached among committee members, a recommendation will be made following the guidelines given in the first meeting.

The purpose of the first meeting was to provide information to the members about the CAC process as well as background on deer management, both statewide, and within WMU 2G. OSS staff also polled members on their initial thoughts on the deer population in WMU 2G. This is presented in Table 1, which includes the complete voting history.

PGC staff provided an overview of the mission and history of the Commission, as well as details about the deer management program in conjunction with the goals of maintaining a healthy deer herd and a healthy forest habitat. Especially effective was the historical perspective on how deer management has been an emotional and controversial issue going back to the origins of the Commission. Specific deer and habitat data for WMU 2G was presented along with land use information.

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Members were provided forms to collect opinions from other people in their stakeholder areas as well as to summarize the results into a report. For each stakeholder group, the goal was to speak with at least 10 other people. The meeting ended with questions and comments, as shown in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2 Topics During the Questions and Comment Period, February 3, 2011

1. Number of doe tags required to harvest a deer and trends.
2. Species that deer displace.
3. Number of forest plots in WMU 2G used to determine habitat health.
4. Process and timing of Commissioners receiving CAC reports.
5. The number of deer harvested through DMAP statewide and for WMU 2G.
6. Deer aging process.
7. Deer fetus number and distribution for WMU 2G.
8. Highway safety data involving deer for WMU 2G.

Second Meeting Summary

The purpose of the second meeting was for members to present findings, ask questions of one another, and attempt to reach consensus.

For each stakeholder group, four questions were posed for the members to answer. In addition, members were asked to collect comments to answer why those among their stakeholder group feel the way they do. The individual stakeholder reports are included in Appendix A.

The questions are:

- A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increasing, decreasing, or stable?
- B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) too high, too low, or about right?
- C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?
- D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increase or decrease?

At the beginning of this discussion, OSS tabulated the results of stakeholder sentiment reported at the March 1 meeting and displayed it on a table that was subsequently compared to the results of CAC member perceptions provided at the February 3 meeting.

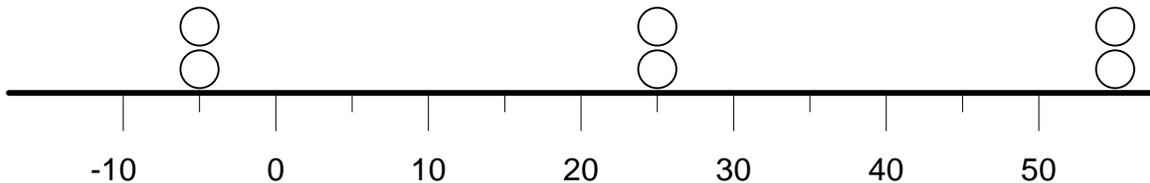
As indicated in Table 1, the individual reports showed a split between those viewing the deer herd as decreasing or stable. Four stakeholder groups advocated an increase and two supported the herd remaining the same (see Appendix A for details).

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Table 1			
CAC Voting Summary for WMU 2G Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision			
Question	February 3, 2011	March 1, 2011	March 1, 2011
	Initial Vote	Presentation Results ²	Consensus Decision
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU2G increasing, decreasing, or stable?			
○ Increasing	2	0.5	
○ Decreasing	5	3	
○ Stable	1	2.5	
○ Do Not Know	0	0	
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU2G too high, too low, or about right?			
○ Too High	4	0	
○ Too Low	3	4	
○ About Right	1	2	
○ Do Not Know	0	0	
Over the next five years, do you think the deer herd in WMU 2G should increase, decrease, or remain the same?			Consensus not reached
○ Increase	5	4	4
○ Decrease	0	0	
○ Remain The Same	3	2	2
○ Do Not Know	0	0	
Increase by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	24.1, 55, 68, 132.7	
Decrease by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	1.7	
Number of present CAC members	8	7	
Number of stakeholder feedback collected by CAC members	Not Applicable	229	

A second exercise provided each stakeholder the opportunity to place a dot on a graph at the place they felt best represented the type of increase or decrease that should take place, if any, based on the experience of their stakeholder group, what they learned during the survey process, and what they learned from PGC and each other during the course of the two meetings. This graphical depiction provided the stakeholders with a starting point for their discussion. Results of this exercise are shown in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3
Graphical Depiction of Voting by Dots on Percentage of Increase/Decrease



² Totals for first three questions are based on the *majority* of survey respondents. Ties are shown by .5 values. See Appendix A for individual stakeholder reports.

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While there was agreement that the deer population is down in 2G, members had differing opinions about whether the trend has leveled out. Some indicated that many of those they surveyed believe the decline in the herd is continuing. There was some discussion about variations within 2G with the southern portion holding less deer. The habitat data and trends were also discussed at length.

Once various points were discussed, the group started the process to determine if they could reach a consensus decision. Exhibit 3 shows the gap between the present primary members. A series of percentage increases were offered and discussed along with different range options starting with consideration of a 25 percent increase. The 25 percent increase proposal was augmented with a qualifying statement dependent on the habitat being able to support the increase.

The proposals failed to reach consensus due to concern of the Public Landowner and Forestry members about the poor habitat status and the need for more time over the next five years for continued forest regeneration. An increase in the deer population at this time would be premature. A final proposal of an increase of 5 to 15 percent subject to habitat conditions did not sway them from their recommendation of remaining the same. The other groups represented in the CAC – Agriculture, Rural Non-Farm Landowner, Sportsman – Resident, and Sportsman – Nonresident – all advocated for an increase in the herd and felt even a 25 percent increase was already going down to a level below what they could recommend. As a result, the CAC could not reach consensus.

The following is the conclusion of the CAC:

Consensus was not reached. Suggested population changes ranged from no change to over a 25% increase.

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APPENDIX A: Individual Stakeholder Reports

1. Agriculture – Les Robinson (33 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 10 Decreasing = 11 **Stable = 12** Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 6 **Too Low = 14** About Right = 13 Do Not Know = 0

C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?

Increase = 17 Decrease = 4 Remain Same = 12 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 24.1 (Average)

Percent Decrease = (Included in increase calculation)

Whys

- Too few deer to hunt
- Not providing opportunities for youth
- Crop damage (decrease perspective)

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2. Public Landowner – Chris Nicholas (23 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 9 Decreasing = 1 **Stable = 13** Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 3 Too Low = 2 **About Right = 18** Do Not Know = 0

C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?

Increase = 2 Decrease = 4 **Remain Same = 16** Do Not Know = 1

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increase or decrease?

Remain the same.

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Habitat is improving
- Less of a need to fence post-harvest
- More time is needed to ensure the habitat improvements are sustained

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3. Sportsman Non-Resident – Charles Gingrich (35 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 0 **Decreasing = 29** Stable = 6 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0 **Too Low = 35** About Right = 0 Do Not Know = 0

C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?

Increase = 35 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 0 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 132.7 (Average) Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- People are seeing very few deer in the woods.
- Aerial survey showed deer density is way down.
- Concern that interest in hunting among youth is way down.

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4. Rural Non-Farm Landowner – Michael Lichty (22 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 1 **Decreasing = 12** Stable = 9 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0 **Too Low = 16** About Right = 6 Do Not Know = 0

C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?

Increase = 17 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 5 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 55 (Average) Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Fewer hunters have a negative impact on local economies
- People want to see more deer
- Declining deer population makes it less likely that young adults will hunt
- Belief that coyote and bear are taking their toll on the deer population
- People believe 2G is too large

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5. Forest Industry – John Levavasseur (15 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 7 Decreasing = 1 **Stable = 7** Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 3 Too Low = 1 **About Right = 11** Do Not Know = 0

C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?

Increase = 3 Decrease = 3 **Remain Same = 9** Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increase or decrease?

Remain the same.

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = 1.7 (Average of all values)

Whys

- Buck/doe ratio is in balance
- Deer herd is in balance with the habitat
- Concern of over browsing and impact on regeneration

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6. Sportsman – Resident – Robert Shields (101 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 7 **Decreasing = 71** Stable = 22 Do Not Know = 1

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0 **Too Low = 81** About Right = 17 Do Not Know = 1

C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?

Increase = 86 Decrease = 2 Remain Same = 12 Do Not Know = 1

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 2G) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 68 (Average) Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- To improve opportunities for youth
- To improve opportunities to see more deer/improve hunting opportunities
- Habitat is sufficient to support more deer

Total response for all stakeholder groups = 229

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APPENDIX B: CAC Member Points During Consensus Discussion and Decision

The focus of the discussion was on the “whys” underlying opinions to increase or decrease the deer herd.

- Most stakeholder groups believe the deer herd has decreased to unacceptable levels.
- The Public Landowner and Forestry stakeholder representatives expressed concern over the habitat being able to support more deer. While there has been some regeneration, the overall habitat rating for 2G is still poor. More time – five years or more – is needed for further regeneration to occur before the deer population is allowed to increase.
- Deer herd differences within WMU 2G were discussed with less deer being in the southern portion of the unit.
- There is concern that predation from bear and coyotes are having a negative effect on the deer population.
- Those advocating for an increase made large breaks from their survey results to move to the center after the dot exercise (Exhibit 3). Of these most could not support the suggested 5 to 15 percent increase conditional on habitat improvement as being too low. Hunters are not seeing deer.
- Because of these factors, a compromise could not be reached.

Conclusion: *Consensus was not reached. Two members recommended remaining the same while four members advocated for an increase in the herd over 25 percent.*