

# **Citizen Advisory Committee Wildlife Management Unit 3C Final Report**

**March 30, 2011**



Pennsylvania Game  
Commission  
  
Governor's Office of  
Administration



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# Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

## 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 3C, participants communicated population goal recommendations based on input from individuals from each stakeholder group. CAC membership and meeting attendance is shown in Exhibit 1.

<b>Exhibit 1</b>			
<b>List of CAC Stakeholder Groups/Representatives and Attendance at Meetings</b>			
<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Representative (*Primary Member)</b>	<b>February 8</b>	<b>March 9</b>
1. Agriculture	Robert Fearnley*	✓	✓
2. Forest Industry	Dan DiMeolo	✓	
3. Forest Industry	Kathie Shelly*	✓	✓
4. Homeowner-Developed	Wayne Pisanchyn*	✓	✓
5. Public Landowner	Jim Kessler*	✓	✓
6. Rural Non-Farm Landowner	John Butler*	✓	✓
7. Rural Non-Farm Landowner	Bob Wagner		✓
8. Sportsman-Resident	Richard Rinebold*	✓	✓

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)<sup>1</sup> staff convened and facilitated an introductory meeting on February 8, 2011.

OSS facilitated a subsequent meeting on March 9, 2011, to gather stakeholder feedback, discuss summaries of stakeholder perspectives, and reach consensus, if possible, regarding a deer population trend recommendation for WMU 3C.

Six stakeholder groups were represented. Where possible, two members were selected per stakeholder group. In the case of 3C, this resulted in eight CAC members.<sup>2</sup> 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 121 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 3C over the next five years:

*Five of six attending CAC primary members recommended the WMU 3C deer herd remain the same.*

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Two people that had agreed to serve did not appear for either meeting – a conservationist and sportsman – resident. The sportsman declined because of their concerns over the negative effect on hunting because of natural gas development in 3C and resulting limited effectiveness of the CAC.

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

### **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 3C. OSS staff also polled members on their initial thoughts on the deer population in WMU 3C. 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 3C was presented along with land use information.

## **Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C**

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 8, 2010**

1. Definition of a public landowner; types of property owners to survey.
2. Confidence of sampling for estimating deer harvests and population trends.
3. Specifics on the PGC's process of comparing harvest report card information against field work completed with deer processors.
4. Details on the process used for assessing habitat plots including the total number of seedlings, stems per acre, and species.

### **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 3C) increasing, decreasing, or stable?
- B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) 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 3C) increase or decrease?

At the beginning of this discussion, OSS tabulated the results of stakeholder sentiment reported at the March 9 meeting and displayed it on a table that was subsequently compared to the results of CAC member perceptions provided at the February 8 meeting.

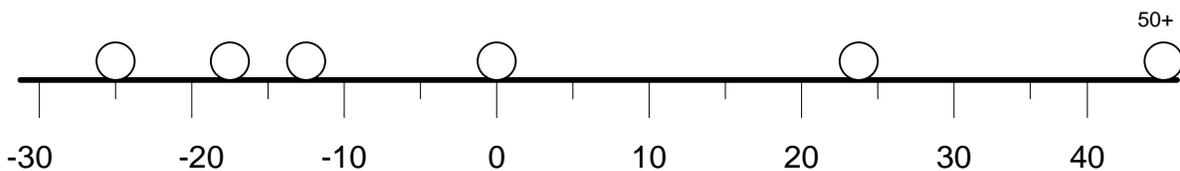
As indicated in Table 1, the individual reports showed a split between those viewing the deer herd as increasing, decreasing, or stable. While there was a slight tilt towards thinking the herd was too high, the stakeholder groups were almost evenly split between recommending the herd increase, decrease, or remain the same. (see Appendix A for details).

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

<b>Table 1</b>			
<b>CAC Voting Summary for WMU 3C Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision</b>			
<b>Question</b>	<b>February 8, 2011</b>	<b>March 9, 2011</b>	<b>March 9, 2011</b>
	<b>Initial Vote</b>	<b>Presentation Results<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Consensus Decision</b>
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU3C increasing, decreasing, or stable?			
○ Increasing	3	2	
○ Decreasing	3	2	
○ Stable	1	2	
○ Do Not Know	0	0	
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU3C too high, too low, or about right?			
○ Too High	4	3	
○ Too Low	2	1	
○ About Right	1	2	
○ Do Not Know	0	0	
Over the next five years, do you think the deer herd in WMU 3C should increase, decrease, or remain the same?			
○ Increase	2	2	
○ Decrease	4	2.5	
○ Remain The Same	1	1.5	<b>X</b>
○ Do Not Know	0	0	
Increase by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	24-30, 25-50	
Decrease by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	10-50, 50	
Number of present CAC members	8	7	
Number of stakeholder feedback collected by CAC members	Not Applicable	121	

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**



There was a clear split within the group between those advocating an increase and those supporting a decrease. The rural non-farm landowner group joined the resident sportsman in advocating an increase. The people they surveyed did not report negative impacts on

<sup>3</sup> 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.

## **Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C**

their properties from deer. Most took the position of wanting to see improvements in hunting opportunities, particularly for youth hunters. The agriculture, public landowner, and forest industry representatives expressed concern over the negative impact on crops and the habitat if an increase was allowed at this time. All supported a reduction in the herd.

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. The discussion started with the observation that the mid-point was in the range of remaining the same to a slight increase. The group first considered a slight increase recommendation, but could not agree to this because of habitat concerns. The resident sportsman could not support slight increase recommendations. In the end, movement towards the home owner position became the agreed upon decision when all but the resident sportsman could support this position.

The decrease proponents felt remaining the same over the next five years was preferable to any level of increase. The primary rural non-farm landowner representative acknowledged many of those surveyed felt the herd was stable and a majority felt the herd was about right (question B in the stakeholder report in Appendix A).

The following is the conclusion of the CAC:

*Five of six attending CAC primary members recommended the WMU 3C deer herd remain the same.*

# Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

## APPENDIX A: Individual Stakeholder Reports

### 1. Agriculture – Robert Fearnley (20 responses)

#### Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

**Increasing = 13**      Decreasing = 0      Stable = 7      Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) too high, too low, or About right?

**Too High = 11**      Too Low = 1      About Right = 8      Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 0      **Decrease = 10**      **Remain Same = 10**      Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increase or decrease?

#### Remain the same.

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### Whys

- Crop damage
- Too many deer to carry through winter
- Not enough forest regeneration
- Too many car collisions

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

### 2. Public Landowner – Jim Kessler (10 responses)

#### Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

**Increasing = 4**      Decreasing = 2      Stable = 3      Do Not Know = 1

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) too high, too low, or About right?

**Too High = 7**      Too Low = 0      About Right = 3      Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 0      **Decrease = 8**      Remain Same = 2      Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = N/A

**Percent Decrease = 50**

#### Whys

- Ground cover and habitat need more time to recover
- Seedling regeneration is too low
- We do not see as many deer

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

### **3. Homeowner - Developed - Wayne Pisanchyn** (8 responses)

#### **Answers to Questions**

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 2                    **Decreasing = 5**                    Stable = 1                    Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0                    Too Low = 0                    **About Right = 8**                    Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 0                    Decrease = 0                    **Remain Same = 8**                    Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increase or decrease?

#### **Remain the same.**

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### **Whys**

- Concerned about vehicle conflicts.

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

### **4. Rural Non-Farm Landowner – John Butler** (54 responses)

#### **Answers to Questions**

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 18      Decreasing = 14      **Stable = 21**      Do Not Know = 1

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 4      Too Low = 22      **About Right = 27**      Do Not Know = 1

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

**Increase = 35**      Decrease = 4      Remain Same = 14      Do Not Know = 1

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increase or decrease?

**Percent Increase = 24-30**

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### **Whys**

- Food is available
- Not seeing deer
- No opportunities for youth hunters
- Deer per square mile is too low
- Better hunting opportunities needed

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

### **5. Forest Industry – Kathie Shelly** (14 responses)

#### **Answers to Questions**

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 6                  Decreasing = 1                  **Stable = 7**                  Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) too high, too low, or About right?

**Too High = 8**                  Too Low = 2                  About Right = 4                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 1                  **Decrease = 9**                  Remain Same = 4                  Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = N/A

**Percent Decrease = 10-50**

#### **Whys**

- Forest regeneration concerns – afraid regeneration trend will reverse itself
- Over browsing evident
- Altering the composition of hardwood forest
- Allow for regeneration of desirable tree diversity
- Allow for forest ecosystems to regenerate
- Re-emergence of herbaceous plants

## Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C

### **6. Sportsman – Resident – Richard Rinebold** (15 responses)

#### **Answers to Questions**

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 0                      **Decreasing = 11**                      Stable = 1                      Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0                      **Too Low = 14**                      About Right = 1                      Do Not Know = 0

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

**Increase = 14**                      Decrease = 0                      Remain Same = 1                      Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 3C) increase or decrease?

**Percent Increase = 25-50**                      Percent Decrease = N/A

#### **Whys**

- Too few sighted deer
- Hemlocks not being browsed (not enough deer)
- Game land herd too low
- Season lengths decrease

**Total response for all stakeholder groups = 121**

## **Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3C**

### **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.

- The stakeholder groups were split between those supporting an increase – resident sportsmen and rural non-farm landowners – and those advocating a decrease – farmers, foresters, and public landowners.
- While most homeowner’s surveyed thought the herd was decreasing, they were unanimous in recommending the herd stay the same.
- Concern was expressed about the even distribution of plots across the unit used to measure forest health. The plots are evenly distributed across the unit with 20 percent assessed each year to provide the five year trend information.
- Opposition to any increase came from farmers, public landowners, foresters due to concern with habitat health and crop damage. More time is needed for forest regeneration to continue the status of 3C beyond the current “fair” assessment.
- There were some rural non-farm landowner survey respondents that felt predation from bear, coyotes, and bobcats are having a negative effect on the deer population.
- Both resident sportsman and rural non-farm landowners supported an increase to the deer herd to increase hunting opportunities as well as create better conditions for youth hunters. Most resident sportsman surveyed wanted increases of 50 percent or more.
- Consensus was reached when the rural non-farm landowner agreed to recommending the herd remain the same. In part, their shift to this position was because the majority of people they surveyed believed the herd is about right.

***Conclusion:*** Five of six attending CAC primary members recommended the WMU 3C deer herd remain the same.