

Citizen Advisory Committee Wildlife Management Unit 1B Final Report

March 19, 2007



**Pennsylvania Game
Commission**

**Governor's Office of
Administration**



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Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 1B

Introduction and Overview

An objective in the Pennsylvania Game Commission's (PGC) deer management plan was the use of local stakeholder groups to recommend a Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) specific deer population goal. Through a local Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), comprised of representatives of stakeholder groups within WMU 1B, participants communicated population goal recommendations based on input actively solicited and obtained from individuals within each representative's stakeholder group.

After recruiting stakeholder representatives from individuals recommended by PGC field staff and outside organizations, the Bureau of Management Consulting (BMC) staff convened and facilitated an introductory and educational meeting on February 7, 2007. BMC staff asked CAC members to attempt to communicate with 10 representatives from each of their respective stakeholder groups. BMC facilitated a subsequent meeting on March 7, 2007 for the purpose of representatives providing stakeholder feedback, collectively discussing summaries of stakeholder perspectives, and reaching consensus, if possible, regarding a deer population goal recommendation for WMU 1B. CAC membership and attendance at both meetings is shown in Exhibit 1.

The following is documentation relative to this process. It includes meeting agendas, information requested of and provided by PGC staff, stakeholder representative findings, the context of various perspectives, and the resulting consensus that led to the CAC recommendation of a deer population goal for WMU 1B over the next five years:

Eight attending CAC members agreed with an increase of 15% in the WMU 1B deer herd. The 15% increase over the next 5 years is supported if the forest habitat measure improves over the same 5 year period. An additional member, who did not attend the second meeting, provided his summary in advance of the meeting, and was in favor of an increase.

Exhibit 1			
List of CAC Stakeholder Groups/Representatives and Attendance at Meetings			
Stakeholder Group	Representative (* Primary Member)	February 7	March 7
Agriculture	Mike Isiminger*	✓	✓
Agriculture	J.R. Proper	✓	
Business (direct impact)	Ken Chernicky*	✓	✓
Business (direct impact)	Jim Buschak	✓	
Conservation/Wildlife Recreation	Linda Steiner*	✓	✓
Conservation/Wildlife Recreation	Richard Bowden	✓	
Forest Industry	James Chapman*	✓	✓
Forest Industry	Mark Webb*	✓	
Highway Safety	Mike Kabasinski*	✓	
Homeowner	David Davenport*	✓	✓
Public Landowner	Patty Nagle*	✓	✓
Rural non-farm landowner	Steve Rensma*	✓	✓
Sportsman-resident	John Ball*	✓	✓
Sportsman-resident	Victor Wheeler	✓	

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First Meeting Summary

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 1B. BMC staff also polled members on their initial thoughts on the deer population in WMU 1B. This is presented as part of Table 1 on page 8, which includes the complete voting history. The first meetings agenda is shown in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2 Citizen Advisory Committee Public Input for Deer Management Goals in Pennsylvania Meeting Agenda, February 7, 2007	
I. Introduction A. Stakeholder introductions II. Overview of the process A. Purpose B. Objectives C. Process/Consensus D. Role of participants i. Primary versus secondary E. Meeting ground rules F. Questions III. Present Tabulation of Initial Thoughts	IV. PGC Presentations A. PGC responsibilities and mission B. History of deer management in Pennsylvania C. Deer resource information and management system D. Consequences of biological and social management at different deer population levels E. Questions V. Preparation Work for Second Meeting A. Consensus B. Stakeholder Opinion Worksheet C. Presentation Template for Stakeholder Summaries D. Agenda for second meeting E. Primary and secondary designation VI. Questions and Comments

Prior to the first meeting, members received a document entitled “Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Pilot Study, 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. Maintain a healthy deer herd.
 2. Maintain healthy forest habitat for the deer herd.
 3. Reduce deer and human conflict.

- Objectives of CACs:*
- A. They provide an opportunity for the Game Commission to understand stakeholder values regarding deer management.
 - B. They provide an opportunity for stakeholders to interact with one another, facilitate communication among, and increase understanding of different stakeholder values and concerns.

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- C. They provide an opportunity for stakeholders to have *direct input* concerning deer population goals that ultimately affect all Pennsylvanians.
- D. 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, the committee 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.

PGC staff grounded the process in 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 1B was presented.

Members were provided with forms to collect opinions from other people within their stakeholder area as well as summarize the results into an overall 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 Exhibits 3 and 4.

Exhibit 3

Questions, Answers, and Comments Following PGC Presentations on February 7, 2007

1. Question: Define conflict?

Answer: Conflict is an unpleasant experience for humans (i.e. crop damage, landscaping being harmed, etc...)

2. Comment: With conflict, you can have a conflict. Adjacent landowners may have posted land where hunting is not permitted so conflicts may not be reduced in these areas. It is difficult for PGC to address because of individual land postings. Larger social issues occur because more land is being closed to hunting.

3. Question: What happens to the recommendation from the CAC?

Answer: The recommendation factors into the Deer Management unit's goals. Specifically, the recommendation fills out the 3rd goal in the deer management plan.

4. Question: What if the CAC recommends a 100% increase and the habitat can't support it?

Answer: The deer management section will look at the recommendation and make a responsible recommendation.

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Exhibit 3

Questions, Answers, and Comments Following PGC Presentations on February 7, 2007

5. Question: Does the process include other wildlife interests?

Answer: No, the CAC process is just focused on deer.

6. Question: Are we supposed to just focus on conflict with our stakeholder group?

Answer: The CAC members should be identifying what they think the deer herd should be doing (increasing, decreasing, held stable) and share with stakeholders the information the PGC presented.

7. Question: Is WMU 1B the most diverse in PA?

Answer: Maybe; but in actuality all WMUs are pretty diverse. We had to draw the line somewhere in creating them and the WMUs were constructed with a variety of issues and habitats in mind.

8. Question: Is the National Land Cover data the most recent data set?

Answer: Don't know.

9. Question: How can we recommend an increase if the habitat can't support this?

Answer: The whole process is an education process and not single-minded in nature. It is difficult to manage deer in PA. All participating groups have opinions and there is a need to combine these opinions and have a responsible decision emerge.

10. Question: Would you classify this evaluation as informal or formal?

Answer: The process gets you pointed in the right direction, with having different groups participating.

11. Question: Why aren't you including artificial habitat in the habitat measure?

Answer: As a rule, a higher deer population equals more agricultural damage. For artificial habitat to be included, the PGC would have to assign a measure of how much damage a farm could sustain.

12. Comment: WMU 1B isn't just comprised of forest and agricultural land, it has lots of mixed habitat (wetlands, etc...). Data presented does not look at these different types of land. "Poor habitat" doesn't take into consideration these other types of land. The habitat measure is solely based on forest regeneration.

13. Comment: Look at a landscape view and the deer seem fine (they have a place to go – farms). From a forest perspective, we're looking at the forest's ability to come back. We need to keep in mind these different views.

Exhibit 4

Information Regarding the Second CAC Meeting, February 7, 2007

The second CAC meeting will be held on March 7, 2007. It will take place at the Erie National Wildlife Refuge (same location) at 7:00 P.M.

The following stakeholder groups decided primary/secondary membership on the CAC as follows:

Stakeholder Group	Primary member	Secondary member
Agriculture	Mike Isiminger	J.R. Proper
Business (direct impact)	Ken Chernicky	Jim Buschak
Conservation/Wildlife Recreation	Linda Steiner	Richard Bowden
Forest Industry	James Chapman	Mark Webb
Sportsman-resident	John Ball	Victor Wheeler

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Second Meeting Summary

The purpose of the second meeting was for the members to present their findings, ask questions of one another, and attempt to move towards consensus. The meeting agenda is shown in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5 Citizen Advisory Committee Public Input for Deer Management Goals in Pennsylvania Meeting Agenda, March 7, 2006	
I. Quick review A. Review of CAC handout document B. Process for this meeting II. Interest Group Presentations A. Presentations B. Clarification C. Initial tally of interest group positions Break III. Discussion/Consensus	IV. Next Steps A. BMC completes summary of proceedings B. Summary is sent to CAC members and Game Commission staff C. PGC staff incorporates the recommendation into the deer management plan presented to the Commissioners V. Questions and Comments VI. Evaluation of the Process

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 feels the way they do. The individual stakeholder reports are included as Appendix A.

The questions are as follows:

- A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 1B) increasing, decreasing, or stable?
- B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 1B) 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 1B) increase or decrease?

At the beginning of this discussion, BMC tabulated the results of stakeholder sentiment reported at March 7th meeting (based on responses from 162 individuals) and displayed it on a table that was subsequently compared to the results of CAC member sentiment (based on responses from 13 individuals) that they provided at the beginning of the February 7th meeting. As indicated in Table 1, some results were unchanged and some demonstrated variance.

The individual reports resulted in a more pronounced view that the deer herd was currently decreasing and that the deer herd was about right. Though the same majority existed within the

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group on a recommendation towards increasing the deer herd over the next 5 years, a moderation in the relative increase was agreeable to all CAC members. The facilitators presented the amounts of increase and decrease and arithmetically accounted for the differences, coming to a general increase of 15% over the next 5 years.

The discussion on this matter was cordial and understanding amongst members. Viewpoints were listened to and common ground was sought by the CAC members. Details of this discussion are included in Appendix B.

After much thought and consideration, the following consensus was reached:

Eight attending CAC members agreed with an increase of 15% in the WMU 1B deer herd. The 15% increase over the next 5 years is supported if the forest habitat measure improves over the same 5 year period. An additional member, who did not attend the second meeting, provided his summary in advance of the meeting, and was in favor of an increase.

Table 1			
CAC Voting Summary for WMU 1B Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision			
Question	February 7, 2007 Initial Vote	March 7, 2007 Presentation Results	March 7, 2007 Consensus Decision
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU1B increasing, decreasing, or stable?			
o Increasing		1	
o Decreasing	8	6	
o Stable	3	2	
o Do Not Know	2	0	
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU1B too high, too low, or about right?			
o Too High	3	1.5	
o Too Low	4	5	
o About Right	3	2.5	
o Do Not Know	3	0	
Over the next five years, do you think the deer herd in WMU 1B should increase, decrease, or remain the same?			
o Increase	6	6	X
o Decrease	3	2.5	
o Remain The Same	2	.5	
o Do Not Know	2	0	
Increase by approximately how much (percent)?	5-10, 15, 25, 25, 40, 50	10.5, 28, 29, 32.5, 34, 70	15%
Decrease by approximately how much (percent)?	10, approx 20, 30	15, 16.5, 37.5	
Number of present CAC members	13	8	
Number of stakeholder feedback collected by CAC members	Not Applicable	162	

APPENDIX A: Individual Stakeholder Reports

- A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 1B) increasing, decreasing, or stable?
- B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 1B) 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 1B) increase or decrease?

1. Business Stakeholder Group – Ken Chernicky

(13 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-1, Decreasing-8, Stable-4
- B. Too Low-6, About Right-7
- C. Increase-9, Decrease-0, Remain the Same-4
- D. 10%, 20%, 20%, 25%, 25%, 30%, 30%, 50%, 50% (Average 29% Increase)

Whys – More deer equals more sales (member talked with retail businesses, sporting goods, auto body shops, etc....)

Benefits – More deer, more sales; increase is necessary to get younger people more involved

Consequences – Less habitat available (if a larger herd exists)

2. Agricultural Stakeholder Group – Mike Isiminger

(14 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-7, Decreasing-1, Stable-6
- B. Too high-7, About right-7
- C. Decrease-7, Same-6, Don't know-1
- D. Range from 25-50% (Average of 37.5% Decrease)

Whys – Crop damage; automobile damage

Benefits- Less deer equals higher crop yields

3. Forestry Stakeholder Group – Jim Chapman

(22 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-3, Decreasing-5, Stable-13, Don't know-1
- B. Too high-9, Too low-2, About right-11
- C. Increase-3, Decrease-10, Same-8, Don't know-1
- D. Average 16.5% Decrease

Whys – Allow forest regeneration to continue recovering; allow for sustainable, healthy forest and diverse forest; improve habitat for all species; keep deer population matched to their habitat

Benefits – Continue regeneration recovery; habitat recovery; deer health improvement (minimize disease); decrease vehicular damage and crop damage

Consequences – Lower hunting success rates (seeing or harvesting) for all hunters

4. Public Landowner Stakeholder Group – Patty Nagle

(7 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-0, Decreasing-1, Stable-5, Don't know-1
- B. Too high-1, Too low-0, About right-5, Don't know-1
- C. Increase-0, Remain same or decrease-3, Same-3, Don't know-1
- D. Range of 10-20% Decrease

Whys – Habitat and diversity improvement; increased hunter conflict; more car crashes

Benefits – Maintain/improve habitat and diversity

Consequences – Negative reaction from hunting groups

5. Sportsmen Stakeholder Group – John Ball

(35 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-1, Decreasing-28, Stable-4
- B. Too high-0, Too low-28, About right-4
- C. Increase-24, Decrease-5, Same-2, Don't know-1

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D. Average 30-35% Increase

Whys – Residents may lose a valuable resource; concern about future of hunting (youth interest)

Benefits – Preservation of sport for future generations; increased license sales

Consequences – More complaints from farmers, businesses, etc....

6. Conservation Stakeholder Group – Linda Steiner

(40 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-3, Decreasing-23, Stable-8, Don't know-6
- B. Too high-6, Too low-21, About right-5, Don't know-8
- C. Increase-20, Decrease-7, Same-6, Don't know-7
- D. Average 34% Increase

Whys – Sufficient deer numbers for recreation; concern for ecology, forest regeneration

Benefits – See more deer; encourage next generation's appreciation for wildlife

Consequences – Impacts on vegetation (monitored by PGC)

7. Homeowner Stakeholder Group – Dave Davenport

(11 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-1, Decreasing-7, Stable-3
- B. Too high-1, Too low-7, About right-3
- C. Increase-7, Decrease-1, Same-3
- D. Average 28% Increase

Whys – Generate license sales; interest youth; happy hunters; don't jeopardize resources; revenue generation (hunting sports businesses increased license sales from out-of-town hunters); want to see more deer

Benefits – Happier hunters; more youth involvement; revenue generation

Consequences – Yard/shrub damage

8. Non-farm Landowner Stakeholder Group – Steve Rensma

(10 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Increasing-1, Decreasing-6, Stable-3
- B. Too high-2, Too low-5, About right-3
- C. Increase-5, Decrease-2, Same-3
- D. Average 10.5% Increase

Whys – INCREASES --Young hunter participation would increase; like to view deer;
DECREASES -- fewer accidents, less damage around homes; fewer hoof prints in yards

Benefits – Young hunter participation; viewing deer

9. Traffic Safety Stakeholder Group – *(Due to an unexpected commitment, Mike Kabasinski was unable to attend Meeting 2, however, he provided the following input he received from stakeholders, via e-mail, before the meeting and BMC presented on his behalf.)*

(10 responses)

Answers to Questions

- A. Decreasing-10
- B. Too low-10
- C. Increase-10
- D. Range of 35% to 150% (Average of 70%)

Whys – Deer herd is too low now (so low that Chronic Wasting Disease may wipe the herd out)

Benefits – Preserve the tradition of hunting

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APPENDIX B: CAC Member Points During Consensus Discussion and Decision

The highlights of the discussion focus on how current decisions significantly affect the future.

- CAC member comment – Issues and concerns are very diverse; each member tried to present their viewpoints fairly. Can the data be looked at objectively?
- The CAC is not charged with managing the deer.
- There is a need to take into consideration natural habitat for the deer. There has been too much reliance on artificial habitat in the past.
- CAC member comment – If there was good habitat there would not be a problem with deer/human conflict.
- Question: How long has the PGC been dealing with the habitat issues? The CAC member acknowledged that they've only seen tree planting over the past several years. Answer: There should be reliance on natural regeneration in Pennsylvania. The Forest Service has been trying to plant trees for over 20 years.
- The norm had been to fence and herbicide until the deer herd was reduced. I've not had to do this over the past 2 years. There has to be a focus on good regeneration. Forestry thanks the PGC for the DMAP program. It's a tool that is used to get results.
- Question: How can deer human/interaction result in an increase? Answer: The deer/human conflict goal in the PGC plan really speaks to how much the WMU will tolerate. The question becomes, "Will the members tolerate or support a recommendation for an increase in population."
- Deer damage has not gone down; the natural habitat is not there to support the deer herd.
- Question: Can something specific be done? The damage is in a myriad of areas/farms cutting across different crops.
- Deer run to remote/unhunting areas when the hunting season starts.
- Public landowner perspective—hard to support the 15% increase when no one said increase the population.
- So much subjectivity exists that agreement will not be reached without a compromise.
- The "art of compromise" – how to come up with something that everyone can support not one group gets their own way.
- Agriculture would like to see the natural habitat support the population.

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- Forestry supports the 15% increase if all the tools currently available remain available.
- Suggestion was made to take away some areas of concern from the group to be sensitive towards in the future.
- A 15% increase of the next 5 years was supported *if the forest habitat measure improves* over the same 5 year period.

Conclusion: *Eight attending CAC members agreed with an increase of 15% in the WMU 1B deer herd. The 15% increase over the next 5 years is supported if the forest habitat measure improves over the same 5 year period. An additional member, who did not attend the second meeting, provided his summary in advance of the meeting, and was in favor of an increase.*