

Citizen Advisory Committee Wildlife Management Unit 2E Final Report

April 8, 2009



Pennsylvania Game
Commission

Governor's Office of
Administration



PAGE INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

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 2E, participants communicated population goal recommendations based on input actively solicited and obtained from individuals within each representative's stakeholder group. This is not the easiest of tasks as attested to by the CAC members.

After recruiting stakeholder representatives from individuals recommended by PGC field staff and other outside organizations as well as people requesting to be considered through the volunteer nomination process, Office of Strategic Services (OSS)¹ staff convened and facilitated an introductory and educational meeting on February 5, 2009. OSS staff asked CAC members to attempt to communicate with at least 10 representatives from each of their respective stakeholder groups. OSS facilitated a subsequent meeting on March 3, 2009, 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 2E. CAC membership and attendance at both meetings is shown in Exhibit 1. Eight different stakeholder groups were represented. CAC members collected input from 202 people. Where possible, two members were selected per stakeholder group. In the case of 2E, this resulted in 11 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 for the secondary member. They were encouraged to attend to participate in the discussion. Primary members reported the combined results and held the decision making power of the group they represented.

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 consensus process that led to the CAC recommendation of a deer population goal for WMU 2E over the next five years:

Seven of eight attending CAC primary members recommended a 15% to 25% increase to the WMU 2E deer herd over the next 5 years, if forest regeneration will support the increase.

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 2E. OSS

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.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

staff also polled members on their initial thoughts on the deer population in WMU 2E. This is presented as part of Table 1, which includes the complete voting history.

Exhibit 1			
List of CAC Stakeholder Groups/Representatives and Attendance at Meetings			
Stakeholder Group	Representative (*Primary Member)	February 5	March 3
1. Ag-Livestock/Cash Crop	Leon Kriner*	✓	✓
2. Ag-Livestock/Cash Crop	Victoria Wootten	✓	✓
3. Business-Indirect	Tom Grice*	✓	✓
4. Business-Indirect	Tom Grimminger, Sr.	✓	✓
5. Conservationist	Dennis McGraw*	✓	✓
6. Highway Safety	Kim Reese*	✓	✓
7. Homeowner-Developed	Steve Harmic*	✓	✓
8. Rural Non-Farm Landowner	Dennis Simmers*	✓	✓
9. Public Landowner	John Kline	✓	✓
10. Public Landowner	Bob Merrill*	✓	✓
11. Sportsman-Resident	Rich Ireland*	✓	✓

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.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

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.

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 2E was presented.

Members were provided with forms to collect opinions from other people within their stakeholder area as well as to 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 Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2

Topics During the Questions and Comment Period, February 5, 2009

1. Availability of deer harvest data for public land.
2. Report card data elements.
3. Forest regeneration plot location and tree species makeup.
4. Extent to which weather affects deer mortality.
5. Past PGC recommendations for the 2E deer herd.
6. County versus WMU allocation method.
7. Wildlife Management Unit size.
8. Uniqueness of WMU 2E geographic characteristics.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

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.

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 as Appendix A.

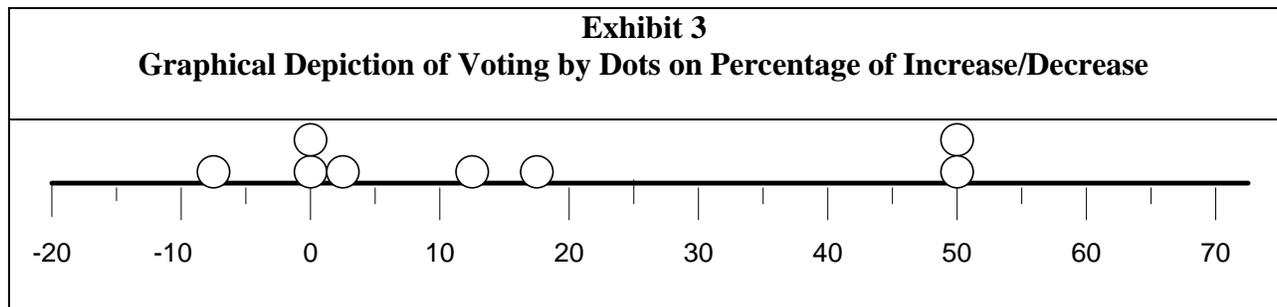
The questions are as follows:

- A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2E) increasing, decreasing, or stable?
- B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 2E) 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 2E) increase or decrease?

At the beginning of this discussion, OSS tabulated the results of stakeholder sentiment reported at the March 3 meeting and displayed it on a table that was subsequently compared to the results of CAC member sentiment that they provided at the beginning of the February 5 meeting. As indicated in Table 1, the results were fairly consistent.

The individual reports showed that most view the deer herd as decreasing. Stakeholder groups were split between an increase in the herd and keeping it stable (Appendix A).

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 their experience within 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. This is illustrated in Exhibit 3.



One common theme among the feedback received by CAC members was concern over not seeing deer in WMU 2E as well as concern over the impact on youth hunting. Those advocating staying the same cited concern over forest regeneration for the WMU as well as the agriculture interest being able to tolerate just so much crop damage from deer.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

Once various points were discussed, the group started the process of determining if they could reach a consensus decision. Exhibit 3 shows the large gap between the eight present primary members. A series of percentage increases were offered and discussed starting with 20%. Ranges were also considered, including 20 to 30%. Those advocating an increase had difficulty considering lower percentage increases. Another proposal for consideration was made for increasing the herd by 15% over the next five years. Some of the key “whys” of the discussion are included in Appendix B.

The following is the consensus decision:

Seven of eight attending CAC primary members recommended a 15% to 25% increase to the WMU 2E deer herd over the next 5 years, if forest regeneration will support the increase.

The Agriculture/Cash Crop-Livestock primary member could not agree to this decision because the vast majority of his survey respondents were farmers who are still bearing significant losses from the deer herd.

**Table 1
CAC Voting Summary for WMU 2E Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision**

Question	February 5, 2009	March 3, 2009	March 3, 2009
	Initial Vote	Presentation Results ²	Consensus Decision
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU2E increasing, decreasing, or stable?			
○ Increasing	1	0.5	
○ Decreasing	7	5	
○ Stable	2	2	
○ Do Not Know	1	0.5	
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU2E too high, too low, or about right?			
○ Too High	0	0.5	
○ Too Low	6	3.5	
○ About Right	3	4	
○ Do Not Know	2	0	
Over the next five years, do you think the deer herd in WMU 2E should increase, decrease, or remain the same?			
○ Increase	5	4	
○ Decrease	1	0	
○ Remain The Same	3	4	
○ Do Not Know	2	0	
Increase by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	0, 16, 25, 27.3, 35, 101.92	15-25%
Decrease by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	10, 20	Not Applicable

² Totals for first three questions are based on the majority of survey respondents. In some instances, stakeholder reports included percentage values for both increases and decreases. See Appendix A for individual stakeholder reports.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

Table 1
CAC Voting Summary for WMU 2E Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision

Question	February 5, 2009	March 3, 2009	March 3, 2009
	Initial Vote	Presentation Results ²	Consensus Decision
Number of present CAC members	11	11	
Number of stakeholder feedback collected by CAC members	Not Applicable	202	

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

APPENDIX A: Individual Stakeholder Reports

1. Conservation– Dennis McGraw (2 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

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

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

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

C. In your opinion, do you think the deer herd should increase, decrease, or remain the same?³

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

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

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Increase
 - Promote outdoor recreation
 - Increase environmental awareness
 - Involvement of youth
- Decrease
 - Forest health

³ Reported conclusion was for the herd to remain the same.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

2. Sportsmen – Resident – Rich Ireland (53 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 0 Decreasing = 29 Stable = 22 Do Not Know = 2

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

Too High = 0 Too Low = 53 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 = 53 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 0 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 101.92 (Average) 15-400 (Range) Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Preserve the future by keeping youth interested
- Preserve the local economy and businesses that rely on hunter residents
- Not enough deer in the woods

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

3. Highway Safety – Kim Reese (12 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 1 Decreasing = 6 Stable = 3 Do Not Know = 2

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

Too High = 0 Too Low = 5 About Right = 7 Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 5 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 7 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 16 (Average – weighted) Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Deer/vehicle collisions are down considerably
- Deer population is down considerably
- The increase in population would not have adverse impact on habitat and deer/vehicle collision rate would be acceptable

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

4. Rural-nonfarm Landowner– Dennis Simmers (20 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 1 Decreasing = 16 Stable = 3 Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 1 Too Low = 13 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 = 15 Decrease = 1 Remain Same = 4 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 27.3 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Lack of deer
- Eco-system sustain increase
- Increase herd to retain hunters

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

5. Agriculture – Livestock/Cash Crop – Leon Kriner (70 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 21 Decreasing = 30 Stable = 19 Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 17 Too Low = 21 About Right = 26 Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 21 Decrease = 17 Remain Same = 26 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = 10 – at least (Average)

Whys

- Economic loss to agriculture
- Herd health
- Negative impact on other wildlife/habitat damage

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

6. Public Landowner – Bob Merrill (13 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 1 Decreasing = 5 Stable = 6 Do Not Know = 1

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

Too High = 0 Too Low = 5 About Right = 7 Do Not Know = 1

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

Increase = 6 Decrease = 1 Remain Same = 5 Do Not Know = 1

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

Percent Increase = 18 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Hunters not seeing deer as accustomed
- Deer herd healthy, habitat recovering, plenty of recreational opportunity on public land
- Posted/private land has severely affected hunting opportunities
- Go to 2G type season in 2E

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

7. Business -Indirect – Tom Grice (20 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 0 Decreasing = 17 Stable = 3 Do Not Know = 0

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

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

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

Increase = 20 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 0 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 35 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Economic negative impact
 - Gun shops, restaurants
- Hunters down
- Concern over youth interest in hunting – not seeing deer

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

8. Homeowner-Developed – Steve Harmic (12 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 3 Decreasing = 4 Stable = 5 Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 3 Too Low = 3 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 = 3 Decrease = 3 Remain Same = 6 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Maintain balance deer/habitat
- Deer are healthy
- Want to prevent further damage to gardens/landscape

Total response for all stakeholder groups = 202

Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2E

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.

- Farmers were concerned about the amount of losses they are being forced to assume because of deer.
- Most stakeholder groups report seeing fewer deer. This has resulted in fewer deer/human conflicts being reported.
- The ability to attract and retain young hunters was discussed at length.
- Stakeholder group representatives discussed the effects an increased deer herd would have on the ecosystem. With the exception of the Agriculture group, representatives felt the ecosystem could sustain an increase to the deer herd.
- Posted private land has severely limited hunting opportunities in WMU 2E. The movement toward a “WMU 2G” type season was discussed by representatives.

Conclusion: *Seven of eight attending CAC primary members recommended a 15-25% increase to the WMU 2E deer herd over the next 5 years, if forest regeneration will support the increase.*