

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

**April 8, 2009**



Pennsylvania Game  
Commission

Governor's Office of  
Administration



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# Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 3A

## 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 3A, 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)<sup>1</sup> staff convened and facilitated an introductory and educational meeting on February 2, 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 2, 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 3A. CAC membership and attendance at both meetings is shown in Exhibit 1. Six different stakeholder groups were represented. CAC members collected input from 92 people. Where possible, two members were selected per stakeholder group. In the case of 3A, this resulted in 9 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 3A over the next five years:

*Five of six attending CAC primary members recommended a 10% increase to the WMU 3A deer herd, assuming the carrying capacity of the habitat can support the increase.*

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<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.

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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 3A. OSS staff also polled members on their initial thoughts on the deer population in WMU 3A. This is presented as part of Table 1, which includes the complete voting history.

<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 2</b>	<b>March 2</b>
1. Ag-Livestock/Cash Crop	Jerry Barnett*	✓	✓
2. Business-Direct	Patrick Maier*	✓	✓
3. Conservationist	Steve Trupe*	✓	✓
4. Conservationist	Merlin Benner	✓	
5. Forest Industry	Bill Niece*	✓	✓
6. Forest Industry	Tom Leete	✓	✓
7. Sportsman-nonresident	Brad Gehman*	✓	✓
8. Sportsman-Resident	Stephen Farrell*	✓	✓
9. Sportsman-Resident	Allen Gettle	✓	

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.

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### *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.

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 3A 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.

<b>Exhibit 2</b> <b>Topics During the Questions and Comment Period, February 2, 2009</b>
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Forest regeneration data details regarding the methods for assessing and the timeline.</li><li>2. Clarification on history of forest regeneration statistics for 3A.</li><li>3. Factors taken into consideration to determine forest health including tree species and other factors.</li><li>4. Comment that bear attacks on deer are a major issue regarding deer population in 3A.</li></ol> |
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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.

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

At the beginning of this discussion, OSS tabulated the results of stakeholder sentiment reported at the March 2 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 2 meeting. As indicated in Table 1, the results remain approximately the same from an original perception that the herd is currently stable or slightly decreasing.

The individual reports showed that most view the deer herd as stable or decreasing with a corresponding majority of stakeholder groups recommending an increase in the herd with two groups recommending keeping it stable (Appendix A).

Question	February 2, 2009	March 2, 2009	March 4, 2009
	Initial Vote	Presentation Results <sup>2</sup>	Consensus Decision
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU3A increasing, decreasing, or stable?			
○ Increasing	1	0	
○ Decreasing	5	2	
○ Stable	3	2	
○ Do Not Know	0	1	
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU3A too high, too low, or about right?			
○ Too High	1	0	
○ Too Low	3	3	

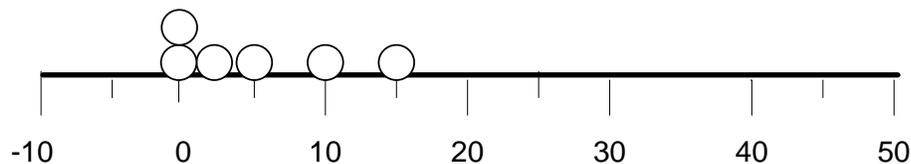
<sup>2</sup> Totals for first three questions are based on the majority of survey respondents. In some instances, stakeholder reports included percentage values for both increases and decreases. See Appendix A for individual stakeholder reports.

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<b>Table 1</b>			
<b>CAC Voting Summary for WMU 3A Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision</b>			
Question	February 2, 2009	March 2, 2009	March 4, 2009
	Initial Vote	Presentation Results <sup>2</sup>	Consensus Decision
<input type="radio"/> About Right	5	2.5	
<input type="radio"/> Do Not Know	0	.5	
Over the next five years, do you think the deer herd in WMU 3A should increase, decrease, or remain the same?			
<input type="radio"/> Increase	3	3.5	<b>X</b>
<input type="radio"/> Decrease	1	0	
<input type="radio"/> Remain The Same	5	1	
<input type="radio"/> Do Not Know	0	.5	
Increase by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	5, 28, 37, 50	<b>10</b>
Decrease by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable		
Number of present CAC members	9	6	
Number of stakeholder feedback collected by CAC members	Not Applicable	92	

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.

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



One common theme among the feedback received by CAC members was concern over not seeing deer in WMU 3A as well as concern over the impact on youth hunting. Those advocating staying the same cited concern over forest regeneration for the WMU.

Once various points were discussed, the group started the process of determining 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. Those advocating an increase had difficulty considering lower percentage increases below what came to be the consensus decision. The Forest Industry representative was willing to agree to an

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increase recommendation, but not beyond the approximate five percent shown in Exhibit 3. Some of the key “whys” of the discussion are included in Appendix B.

The following is the consensus decision:

*Five of six attending CAC primary members recommended a 10% increase to the WMU 3A deer herd, assuming the carrying capacity of the habitat can support the increase.*

The Forest Industry primary member could not agree to this because the vast majority of his survey respondents advocated remaining the same (10 of 12). The 10% increase was well beyond any increase he could consider in representing his stakeholder group.

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## APPENDIX A: Individual Stakeholder Reports

### 1. Sportsman-resident – Stephen Farrell (42 responses)

#### Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 3                  Decreasing = 28                  Stable = 10                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 1                  Too Low = 28                  About Right = 11                  Do Not Know = 1

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

Increase = 30                  Decrease = 1                  Remain Same = 9                  Do Not Know = 1

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

Percent Increase = 37 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### Whys

- Hunters are not seeing as many deer as they use to, although they do not have to be successful in hunting either
- Food supply could support more deer

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### 2. Forestry– Bill Niece (12 responses)

#### Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 2                  Decreasing = 2                  Stable = 8                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 1                  Too Low = 1                  About Right = 10                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 1                  Decrease = 1                  Remain Same = 10                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 0 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### Whys

- They are content with regeneration
- Easier to grow trees without any deer

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### **3. Conservationist – Steve Trupe** (7 responses)

#### **Answers to Questions**

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

Increasing = 2                  Decreasing = 2                  Stable = 0                  Do Not Know = 3

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

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

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

Increase = 3                  Decrease = 1                  Remain Same = 0                  Do Not Know = 3

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

Percent Increase = 5 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### **Whys**

- Those who did not know believe recommendation should be considered by following all signs of the deer population and forest regeneration
- The habitat is currently ok, but the less deer the better the habitat can become

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**4. Agriculture – Livestock/Cash Crop – Jerry Barnett** (11 responses)

**Answers to Questions**

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

Increasing = 2                  Decreasing = 4                  Stable = 5                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 2                  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 = 1                  Decrease = 2                  Remain Same = 8                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = N/A

**Whys**

- None reported

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### **5. Business Direct – Patrick Maier** (10 responses)

#### **Answers to Questions**

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

Increasing = 0                  Decreasing = 8                  Stable = 2                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 0                  Too Low = 8                  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 = 10                  Decrease = 0                  Remain Same = 0                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 50 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### **Whys**

- Let the habitat recoup, then gradually introduce an increased deer population
- Some believe deer management means “economic growth”

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### **6. Sportsman-nonresident – Brad Gehman** (10 responses)

#### Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 0                  Decreasing = 8                  Stable = 2                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 0                  Too Low = 8                  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 = 8                  Decrease = 0                  Remain Same = 2                  Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 28 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

#### Whys

- Habitat can support more deer
- Hunters need more opportunity to harvest deer
- Youth need to see more deer to hold interest

**Total response for all stakeholder groups = 92**

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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.

- Wide spread reports from among stakeholder groups of not seeing deer.
- All stakeholder groups believed in the forest regeneration factor, and wanted that to rely on regeneration heavily when implementing a deer population change.
- Business Direct found it hard to attract visitors when forest regeneration and deer population seem to be at lower levels than in the past.
- Forestry industry believed that anything over a small increase (more than 10%) would have long term negative effects on forest regeneration.
- Reports by some groups that the habitat can sustain more deer.
- Forest regeneration takes time and can be quickly negatively effected by a significant increase in the deer population.

***Conclusion:** Five of six attending CAC primary members recommended a 10% increase to the WMU 3A deer herd, assuming the carrying capacity of the habitat can support the increase.*