

Citizen Advisory Committee Wildlife Management Unit 4A Final Report

April 8, 2009



Pennsylvania Game
Commission

Governor's Office of
Administration



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Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 4A

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 4A, 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 3, 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 4A. CAC membership and attendance at both meetings is shown in Exhibit 1. Ten different stakeholder groups were represented. CAC members collected input from 339 people. Where possible, two members were selected per stakeholder group. In the case of 4A, this resulted in 16 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 4A over the next five years:

All nine attending CAC primary members recommended stable to up to a 15% increase if supported by forest regeneration.

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

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 4A. OSS staff also polled members on their initial thoughts on the deer population in WMU 4A. 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 3	March 2
1. Ag-Commercial Nurseries/Orchards	Ricky Leese*	✓	✓
2. Ag-Livestock/Cash Crop	James Keebaugh	✓	
3. Ag-Livestock/Cash Crop	Raymond Morningstar*	✓	✓
4. Business-Direct	Timothy Clevenger	✓	✓
5. Business-Direct	Donald Lynn*	✓	✓
6. Conservationist	Harry Guyer*	✓	✓
7. Forest Industry	James Smith*	✓	✓
8. Homeowner- Developed	Robert Greenleaf, Jr.*	✓	✓
9. Homeowner- Developed	F. Gene Headley	✓	✓
10. Rural Non-Farm Landowner	Jamie Hersh*	✓	²
11. Public landowner	Jeffrey Krause*	✓	✓
12. Public landowner	Charles Pillar, Jr	✓	
13. Sportsmen-Nonresident	Brooks Fost*	✓	✓
14. Sportsmen-Nonresident	Walter Eichensehr	✓	
15. Sportsman-Resident	Stanley Grove	✓	
16. Sportsman-Resident	Freddie Lee McKnight*	✓	✓

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

² While not able to attend the second meeting, the Rural Non-Farm Landowner report was provided to OSS staff after March 2nd and is included as part of Appendix A.

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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.

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 4A 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 3, 2009

1. Availability of deer harvest data for public land.
2. Report card data elements.
3. Extent to which weather affects deer mortality.
4. Past PGC recommendations for the 4A deer herd.
5. County versus WMU allocation method.
6. Wildlife Management Unit size.
7. Factors considered in defining Wildlife Management Unit configurations.
8. Uniqueness of WMU 4A geographic characteristics.
9. Report card return rate.

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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.

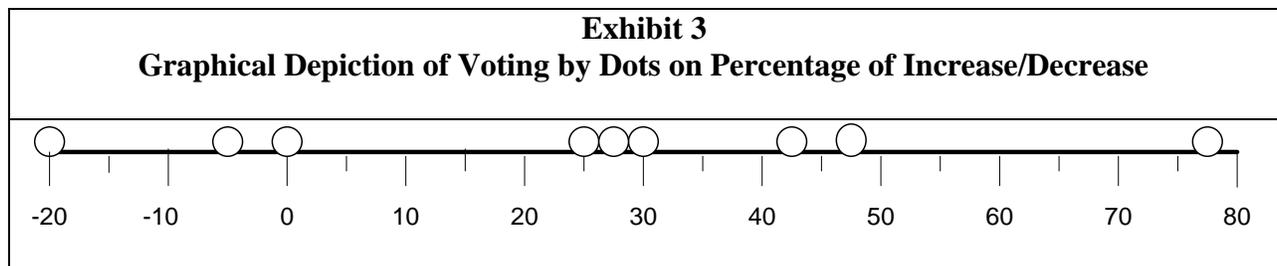
The questions are as follows:

- A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?
- B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) 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 4A) 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 3 meeting. As indicated in Table 1, the results were fairly consistent.

The individual reports showed that most view the deer herd as decreasing with a corresponding majority of stakeholder groups recommending an increase in the herd with two groups recommending a decrease and one recommending 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.



Common themes among the feedback received by CAC members was concern over not seeing deer in WMU 4A as well as concern over the impact on youth hunting. Those advocating a decrease reported crop damage and the need for further regeneration to occur to provide for both forest and wildlife needs. The position for keeping the herd stable came from those surveyed within the Forest Industry who reported seeing regeneration and acceptable levels of browse.

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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 among nine present primary members. A series of percentage increases were offered and discussed starting with 30%. Ranges were also considered including 15% to 25% and 10% to 20%. There was considerable discussion about the 4A habitat and the effect of increasing the herd. Some of the key “whys” of the discussion are included in Appendix B.

The following is the consensus decision:

All nine attending CAC primary members recommended stable to up to a 15% increase if supported by forest regeneration.

Table 1			
CAC Voting Summary for WMU 4A Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision			
Question	February 3, 2009 Initial Vote	March 2, 2009 Presentation Results ³	March 2, 2009 Consensus Decision
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU4A increasing, decreasing, or stable?			
<input type="radio"/> Increasing	1	1	
<input type="radio"/> Decreasing	10	6	
<input type="radio"/> Stable	5	2	
<input type="radio"/> Do Not Know	0	0	
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU4A too high, too low, or about right?			
<input type="radio"/> Too High	1	2	
<input type="radio"/> Too Low	11	6	
<input type="radio"/> About Right	4	1	
<input type="radio"/> Do Not Know	0	0	
Over the next five years, do you think the deer herd in WMU 4A should increase, decrease, or remain the same?			
<input type="radio"/> Increase	12	6	X
<input type="radio"/> Decrease	1	2	
<input type="radio"/> Remain The Same	2	1	X
<input type="radio"/> Do Not Know	1	0	
Increase by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	5-10, 29, 30, 39, 43, 40-50, 50, 78	0 to up to 15%
Decrease by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	5-10 (2), 25, 56	
Number of present CAC members	16	11	
Number of stakeholder feedback collected by CAC members	Not Applicable	339	

³ 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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APPENDIX A: Individual Stakeholder Reports

1. Conservation– (Harry Guyer) (45 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 6 Decreasing = 28 Stable = 8 Do Not Know = 3

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 5 Too Low = 21 About Right = 14 Do Not Know = 5

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

Increase = 26 Decrease = 9 Remain Same = 9 Do Not Know = 1

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 43 (Average)

Percent Decrease = 56 (Average)

Whys

- Increase
 - Hunters: low number of deer
 - Forest can sustain larger herd
- Decrease
 - Crop/shrub damage
 - High number of road kills

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2. Sportsmen – Resident – (Freddie Lee McKnight) (124 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 1 Decreasing = 112 Stable = 11 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0 Too Low = 120 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 = 122 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 2 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 78.2 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- No deer
- Concern for youth opportunities
- Too many hunters on public land vying for too few deer

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3. Non-Resident Sportsmen – (Brooks Fost) (70 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 0 Decreasing = 62 Stable = 8 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0 Too Low = 64 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 = 65 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 5 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 30 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- More hunting opportunities
- More harvest opportunities
- Bring new hunters in if more deer are present to hunt

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4. Forest Industry – (James Smith) (11 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 1 Decreasing = 0 Stable = 10 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

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

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 5-10

Percent Decrease = 5-10

Whys

- More deer present than most people believe
- Seeing more forest regeneration than in the past
- Acceptable balance between deer and browse

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5. Agriculture – Livestock/Cash Crop – (Raymond Morningstar) (23 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 0 Decreasing = 20 Stable = 3 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0 Too Low = 15 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 = 17 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 5 Do Not Know = 1

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 29 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- More bear damage now than deer damage
- Posted ground makes it difficult to control
- Kids not seeing deer making it harder to keep their interest

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6. Agriculture – Commercial Nurseries/Orchards – (Ricky Leese) (7 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

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

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 3 Too Low = 1 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 = 1 Decrease = 4 Remain Same = 1 Do Not Know = 1

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 50

Percent Decrease = 25 (Average)

Whys

- Crop damage continues
- Vehicle accidents
- Still see herds of 12 to 15 deer after hunting seasons

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7. Public Landowner – (Jeffery Krause) (8 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 2 Decreasing = 0 Stable = 6 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 4 Too Low = 1 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 = 1 Decrease = 4 Remain Same = 3 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = 5-10

Whys

- Regeneration goals
- DMAP is being used to reduce herd size
- Improve habitat to bring more deer back
- State and Feds are still fencing

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8. Business -Direct – (Donald Lynn) (17 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 2 Decreasing = 10 Stable = 5 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 1 Too Low = 11 About Right = 5 Do Not Know = 0

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

Increase = 13 Decrease = 2 Remain Same = 2 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 40-50

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- License sale decrease, especially non-resident
- Posted ground
- Fear of losing sport
- Like antler restrictions

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9. Homeowners – Developed – (Robert Greenleaf, Jr.) (14 responses)

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 3 Decreasing = 8 Stable = 3 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 1 Too Low = 12 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 = 12 Decrease = 1 Remain Same = 1 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 39 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Low deer herd results in lower license sales, fewer hunters
- Land can support a larger deer herd
- Concern over dramatic increase in deer on private land versus too few on public land

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10. Rural Non-Farm Landowners – (Jamie Hersh) (20 responses)⁴

Answers to Questions

A. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increasing, decreasing, or stable?

Increasing = 4 Decreasing = 14 Stable = 2 Do Not Know = 0

B. In your opinion, is the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) too high, too low, or About right?

Too High = 0 Too Low = 12 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 = 16 Decrease = 0 Remain Same = 4 Do Not Know = 0

D. In your opinion, by what percentage should the deer herd in your area (WMU 4A) increase or decrease?

Percent Increase = 23 (Average)

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Lack of habitat
- Over hunting/harvesting
- See less deer then they would like to see

Total response for all stakeholder groups = 339

⁴ The Rural Non-Farm Landowner was not able to make the meeting or get the results to OSS in time to be considered as part of the March 2nd meeting. It is included here for informational purposes.

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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.

- Many are not seeing deer.
- Negative effects of a decreasing deer herd include not being able to hold the interest of youth hunters and a decrease of non-resident hunters which bring additional revenue into the area.
- There seems to be a growing incidence of posted land in 4A resulting in reduced hunting opportunities, deer sanctuaries, and less deer on public land.
- Commercial nursery, orchard, and vegetable farmers are reporting crop damage along with seeing herds of deer in the range of 12 to 15 deer.
- There was lengthy discussion about the current state of the habitat for 4A and the impact of increases to the deer herd.

***Conclusion:** All nine attending CAC primary members recommended stable to up to a 15% increase if supported by forest regeneration.*