

Citizen Advisory Committee Wildlife Management Unit 2B Final Report

March 31, 2010



Pennsylvania Game
Commission

Governor's Office of
Administration



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Pennsylvania Game Commission Citizen Advisory Committee: WMU 2B

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 2B, 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 1, 2010. 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 1, 2010, for the purpose of representatives providing stakeholder feedback, collectively discussing summaries of stakeholder perspectives, and reaching consensus, if possible, regarding a deer population trend recommendation for WMU 2B. CAC membership and attendance at both meetings is shown in Exhibit 1. Six different stakeholder groups were represented. CAC members collected input from 452 people. Where possible, two members were selected per stakeholder group. In the case of 2B, this resulted in 8 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 resulting consensus process that led to the CAC recommendation of a deer population trend for WMU 2B over the next five years:

CAC primary members recommended a 0-10% decrease to the WMU 2B deer herd over the next five years.

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 2B. OSS staff also polled members on their initial thoughts on the deer population in WMU 2B. 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 1	March 1
1. Business-Direct	George Sullivan, Jr.	✓	✓
2. Conservationist	Michael Harcher	✓	✓
3. Highway Safety	David Mikec, Sr.	✓	✓
4. Homeowner-Developed	Tim Hatfield*	✓	✓
5. Homeowner-Developed	Karla Maruca	✓	✓
6. Rural non-farm Landowner	Edward Sedlmyer	✓	✓
7. Sportsman-Resident	Frank Sowers*	✓	✓
8. Sportsman-Resident	David Michalek	✓	

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.

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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 2B 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 1, 2010
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Process questions regarding the expected number of surveys, geographical representation, and difficulties in gathering information for some constituency groups.2. Question regarding the WMU 2B fawn reproduction rate of 33% and the fact that a fawn's receptivity to being bred peaks in early December. It was also noted in the discussion that yearling bucks can breed; and that button bucks are not likely to breed.3. Question/discussion related to hunter access issues and their impact on deer control methods.4. An inquiry was made on the potential for legalization of deer baiting in WMU 2B.

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

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

The individual reports showed that most view the deer herd as stable or increasing with a corresponding majority of stakeholder groups recommending either a decrease or a recommendation to keep it stable (Appendix A).

Question	February 1, 2010	March 1, 2010	March 1, 2010
	Initial Vote	Presentation Results²	Consensus Decision
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU 2B increasing, decreasing, or stable?			
o Increasing	2	3	
o Decreasing	2	2	
o Stable	3	1	
o Do Not Know	1		
In your opinion, is the deer herd in WMU 2B too high, too low, or about right?			
o Too High	4	2	

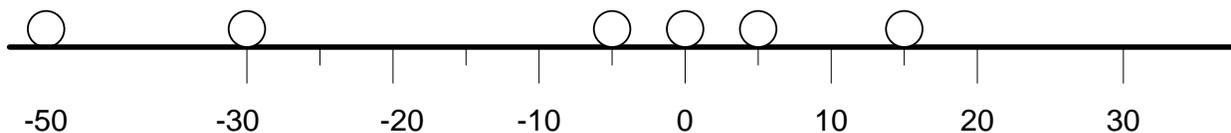
² Totals for first three questions are based on the majority of survey respondents. In some instances, stakeholder reports included percentage values for both increases and decreases. See Appendix A for individual stakeholder reports.

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Table 1			
CAC Voting Summary for WMU 2B Deer Herd Questions and Consensus Decision			
Question	February 1, 2010	March 1, 2010	March 1, 2010
	Initial Vote	Presentation Results ²	Consensus Decision
○ Too Low	0	2	
○ About Right	3	2	
○ Do Not Know	1		
Over the next five years, do you think the deer herd in WMU 2B should increase, decrease, or remain the same?			
○ Increase	1	1	
○ Decrease	4	4	X
○ Remain The Same	3	1	
○ Do Not Know	0		
Increase by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	15, 17, 50	
Decrease by approximately how much (percent)?	Not Applicable	1-5, 10-15, 33, >50	0-10% decrease
Number of present CAC members	8		
Number of stakeholder feedback collected by CAC members	Not Applicable	452	

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 the disparity in deer populations between urban (developed) and rural areas throughout the WMU. Representatives vantage points varied with the group they were speaking for and the area of the WMU their input came from. The homeowner-developed group provided considerable back-up to its desires to have the deer herd reduced. Those advocating staying the same or

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an increase were able to weigh their reasons against those put forth by groups suggesting a decrease.

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 primary members who were present. An initial suggestion to keep the deer herd stable was made and discussed by the CAC. Upon reflection, and considerable discussion of the "whys", the CAC ended up considering a series of small percentage decreases. Those initially advocating an increase had an opportunity to discuss further the decrease recommendation, and ultimately consensus was reached a recommendation of a 0-10% decrease over the next five years. Some of the key "whys" and other items brought up during the discussion are included in Appendix B.

The following is the consensus decision:

CAC primary members recommended a 0-10% decrease to the WMU 2B deer herd over the next five years.

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APPENDIX A: Individual Stakeholder Reports

1. Highway Safety – Dave Mikec (8 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

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

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

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

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

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = 10-15

Whys

- No interest in non-traditional management methods
- Need to educate motorists (and public safety officials)
- Decrease property damage

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2. Sportsman-Resident – Frank Sowers (91 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 23 Decreasing = 49 Stable = 19 Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 14 Too Low = 51 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 = 55 Decrease = 14 Remain Same = 22 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 15

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Not seeing deer as they have in the past
- Increase buck to doe ratio
- Too many antlerless tags
- Posted land
- Youth hunting

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3. Rural Non-Farm Landowner – Ed Sedlmyer (13 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

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

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

Too High = 4 Too Low = 4 About Right = 4 Do Not Know = 1

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

Increase = 4 Decrease = 4 Remain Same = 3 Do Not Know = 2

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

Percent Increase = 17

Percent Decrease = 33

Whys

- Decrease
 - Plant damage
 - Auto accidents

- Increase
 - Lack of deer to hunt

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4. Homeowner-Developed – Tim Hatfield (322 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 212 Decreasing = 36 Stable = 61 Do Not Know = 13

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

Too High = 219 Too Low = 15 About Right = 72 Do Not Know = 15

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

Increase = 23 Decrease = 214 Remain Same = 68 Do Not Know = 17

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

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = Greater than 50

Whys

- Auto accidents
- Property damage and over-browsing
- Disease and health measures (human)

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5. Conservation – Michael Harcher (9 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 6 Decreasing = 0 Stable = 3 Do Not Know = 0

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

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

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

Percent Increase = N/A

Percent Decrease = 1-5

Whys

- Over-browsing in suburban areas
- Deer/human conflicts
- Access to deer by hunters (limited access due to refuge areas)

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6. Business-Direct – George Sullivan (9 responses)

Answers to Questions

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

Increasing = 0 Decreasing = 6 Stable = 3 Do Not Know = 0

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

Too High = 0 Too Low = 6 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 = 0 Remain Same = 8 Do Not Know = 0

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

Percent Increase = 50

Percent Decrease = N/A

Whys

- Reserves for future
- Taking too many deer

Total response for all stakeholder groups = 452

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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.

- There are various hunter access issues in the WMU. It’s hard to match hunters to the areas where the deer are too abundant.
- There was a sentiment that deer management efforts will only be successful where access to hunting can be maintained.
- The resident sportsman’s group believed that a big decrease (greater than 15%) in the deer herd would tough to sell to it’s constituency group.
- Hunter behavior can sometimes be detrimental to the cause and trigger even more restrictions on hunting access.
- If the deer herd is to really decrease, the following need to be addressed; accessibility, antler restrictions, and more time to hunt (Sunday hunting).
- The group also engaged in a discussion of Gonocon (what is it/what is it’s role) and the feeding of deer (can a ban be instituted).

Conclusion: *CAC primary members recommended a 0-10% decrease to the WMU 2B deer herd over the next five years.*