

## Deer Advisory Committee (DAC) Minutes

Date: Oct. 29, 2019  
 Time: 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
 Location: Judicial Building, Capitol Complex, St. Paul

### Committee Purpose

To facilitate public communication and involvement, and cultivate new ideas and approaches, regarding deer management issues in Minnesota.

### Committee Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Present? (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Present? (Yes/No)</b>
Dllona Clendenen	N	Matthew Kotelnicki	N
Josh Doty	Y	Meadow Kouffeld	N
Nate Eide	N	Vicki MacGlover	N
Craig Engwall	Y	Jim Manolis	Y
Duane Fogard	Y	Benjamin Pena	N
Luke Freund	Y	Polly Rixe (skype)	Y (Skype)
Glen Groth	N	Jeremy Schmit	Y
Roland Hill	Y	Kathleen Shea	N
Josh Hoadley	N	Ku Thao	N
Spencer Kor	Y	Ted Wawrzyniak	Y

### Additional Attendees

#### DNR Staff

- Barb Keller, Big Game Program Leader
- Kelly Wilder, Meeting facilitator
- Leslie McInenly, Population and Regulations Manager
- Dave Olfelt, Director Fish and Wildlife Division
- Adam Landon, Human Dimensions Scientist
- Todd Froberg, Landowner Specialist

## Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Housekeeping
3. Deer Season and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Update
4. Surveys for Human Dimensions Research
5. Deer Population Goal Setting and Public Engagement
6. General Public Engagement Discussion

## Meeting Notes

### Welcome and Housekeeping

- Minutes for Aug 26. meeting will be finalized; only 1 edit suggested by DAC members.
- Charter will be finalized by wildlife division leadership.
- Work plan review: Need to add forest regeneration and regrowth focus to the working plan. Will decide on when that will be added to work plan and where that will fit in. Fawn rehabilitation and CWD have been added to the winter meeting topics.
- Is there a need to provide a platform for recordings? We have the past meetings recorded; Kelly Wilder will decide on best available method to provide this.
- If board members need travel reimbursements, talk with Kelly Wilder or Barb Keller for further information.

### Deer Season Update (Barb Keller)

#### *Youth Season and Harvest Numbers*

- The cumulative deer harvest before youth season is below 2018 harvest, slightly above 5-year mean, slightly below 10-year mean, but statistically similar to both 5- and 10-year mean harvests.
- The new statewide, youth deer season put cumulative harvest 18% above the 2018 harvest and 30% above 5- and 10-year-mean. This result was expected with more participation from youth hunters. The cumulative harvest will likely move back towards mean with firearms season.
- Youth licenses sales prior to opening day of youth season were 44% higher than the 5-year mean and 54% higher than youth sales at the same time in 2018.
- A total of 27,960 youth licenses were sold the Friday before the start of the youth deer season.
- From 2010 to 2018, youth license sales slightly declined (~3%).
- **Note for follow up:** Barb Keller will check with James Burnham about youth tracking overtime from licenses sold in previous years for youth to adult recruitment.
- Two surveys were completed to assess support for the youth season. A mailed survey [2017] showed a 51-53% support and 21-25% opposition for statewide youth season. An online survey [2019] showed 67% supported, 27% opposed, and 9% were neutral about a statewide youth season.
- A new online harvest reports and statistics webpage will be available for the public on the DNR website very soon. This will detail harvest statistics by each DPA and daily reports.

## *Chronic Wasting Disease and Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease Update*

- Two deer have tested positive for CWD so far in 2019 hunting seasons (one was confirmed in DPA 648; the other, found in DPA 646, is suspect, pending confirmatory IHC test).
- Stearns and Houston counties have 75-100 reported EHD mortalities. Reports have really slowed down since first week of October.

## *CWD Late Season Hunt*

Preliminary information about likely CWD late season hunt:

- Proposed dates
  - Dec. 20-22
  - Dec. 27-29
- License and tagging information: unlimited \$2.50 disease tags, either sex, and any unfilled license with specific weapon type.
- Proposed boundaries of the hunt zone: DPAs where CWD has been detected is the best-case scenario but will be under intense deadline, decision needs to be made by Nov. 20 for the rule review process to have rule effective by Dec 20.
- Members said they would like to have prioritized shipping on higher-risk samples rather than lower-risk samples so that results can aid in how the late season hunts are planned and signed into rule.
- Landowner shooting permits and Agency culling will likely happen this year, and will be based on where the testing results show positives and in the areas (section level) near those positives.
- Late season hunts will be based on DPA boundaries, not highways or other features as has happened in the past.

**→ INPUT NEEDED. We want DAC input on the proposed CWD late season hunt structure. Please send us your concerns, questions, or support by November 5.**

## **Human Dimensions Presentation (Adam Landon)**

Adam Landon, human dimensions scientist with the DNR, gave a presentation about the use of surveys for human dimensions research with specific examples of how surveys are conducted to best represent public opinion and are used to make management and regulatory decisions.

### *Q&A session*

- Q: Is the intent to survey Minnesota deer hunters annually?
  - A: For the foreseeable future we are aiming to survey MN deer hunters more frequently not necessarily annually.
- Q: Does the DNR have easily discernable demographics to pull from to conduct surveys?
  - A: Yes, we have ability to survey based on demographics.
- Q: Does the DNR have emails or ability to email to deer hunters?
  - A: We currently have about 20% of deer hunters or roughly ~100,000 emails for deer hunters. There are issues with ELS contracts and privacy concerns with getting emails, but we would like to enhance our email database in the future. It would be substantially cheaper to have emails and do digital emails, along with being substantially more expedient.
- Q: Would you ever use census surveys like they use for fisheries or waterfowl surveys?

- A: The reliability of the ELS vendors currently are not very accurate or don't ask all the required questions.

## **Deer Population Goal Setting (Barb Keller and Kelly Wilder)**

### *Background*

Barb and Kelly provided an overview of how the DNR sets goals for deer populations across the state. Deer population goal setting is the public input process by which deer population goals are set for deer permit areas. Typically, surveys are conducted the winter prior to the goal-setting process. Deer permit areas are grouped into blocks for the goal-setting process. Citizen advisory groups are formed for each goal block. This advisory group makes recommendations regarding the population goals, which are taken into consideration by the big game program, which makes the final decision. Two public meetings are also held during the process in each block, and online input is also solicited.

Other details of the process:

- DPAs grouped into 15 blocks
- An advisory group is set for each block, made up of 20 people individual or group nominated.
- Options for deer population goals included: Increase, stabilize, or decrease (typically they used percentages for each of these, e.g., increasing by 25 or 50%).
- Population goals are behind for many parts of the state, and we would like to update this soon and start the process of applying goals for the DPAs.
- Goal blocks are set close to eco regions and an appropriate size accommodate public input .
- Adam Landon is preparing surveys for hunters and landowners for 2020 and 2021 for the initial blocks that will go through this process.

### *Proposed model replacement*

Discussion topic: We are reconsidering the current advisory group model for goal setting. Public input will still be a very important part of the process. We intend to conduct public input surveys prior to goal setting each year. However, rather than have two public meetings and two citizen advisory group meetings, we are proposing a merger of the two into public workshops, open to all who wish to attend.

Why are we reconsidering the current model?

- Only 3% of hunting public prefers advisory councils as method to provide input on deer management.
- There are very diverse perspectives and differing expectations about the scope of goal setting.
- Participants on councils feel frustrated that their input isn't as valued as they believed it would be based on amount of participation needed.

Our recommended approach to replace this model: workshops.

### **Workshop details**

- Open to all
- Includes robust communication and transparency

- 3 hours each
- Target stakeholders as invitees; RSVPs would be encouraged to provide more participation.

### **Workshop 1**

- Anyone from the public can show up.
- The DNR provides background information from surveys (Hunters/Landowner).
- Participants would be divided into working or scope teams, with two rounds of scoping issues. All workshop results/discussion would be reported to everyone at end.

### **Workshop 2**

- The hope is that the same participants would be able to participate.
- The DNR would recap process and the report from workshop 1.
- Two rounds of consensus decisions.
- All workshop members hopefully come to a consensus on recommendations.

### *Discussion*

Q: How would attendance be different from other public meetings?

A: Because there is a decision on the table, participation would likely increase. The literature shows that when participants are involved in the decision, participation increases.

Q: If there isn't enough structure or agenda will the workshop be run amok by a few loud voices?

A: We hope that our stakeholders can hold down the meetings and provide factual information and a good grounding/base discussion. Then provide for opportunities for everyone to provide input in a structural manner.

Q: How do have these without having a specific process? Or how will goals be set without a meaningful process? These may need to be adaptive on a yearly basis rather than longer-term goals.

A: There will be a process laid out, with biological goals with pragmatic solutions to those goals, but nothing will be off the table. There is a need to get outside information beyond what is laid out but there needs to be structure. There would be an adaptive management applied to this.

Q: Forest service has similar meetings and sometimes people come to slow down process based on what they prefer; do you anticipate this can happen?

A: That could potentially happen, but we anticipate the process to override and may be unavoidable in certain circumstances and would need to be addressed if serious issues arise. Ultimately they will be public and public input is encouraged so we may not avoid everything.

Q: What are differences for workshops vs. past advisory councils?

A: People in the past were frustrated that it seemed too hard to get on advisory councils and input wasn't considered equal compared to the time that they put in. Groups were big and didn't seem as applicable to each

members area or DPA, there was also a ton (almost too much) information to be digested. Workshops will have more structure.

Q: What happens if these are a complete flop the first few?

A: If they are a flop, we can change gears after the first year.

**→ INPUT NEEDED. We want DAC input on the proposed deer population goal setting structure. Please send us your concerns, questions, or support by November 5.**

## Discussion regarding public engagement

Barb Keller: Public attendance is very poor at the deer open houses. Multiple avenues for input but there wasn't much input.

DAC Comments:

These weren't well-attended because there wasn't much structure. The timing wasn't meaningful (at least August meetings) because the regulations were already set. Further, during the goal setting process there were minimal options (25% or 50% change) and those options could not compensate if there are stochastic events that really hurt the herd in one year, say a bad winter. The herd could be in bad shape, but since the goals had already been set, management options aren't as responsive as they could be. Also, the model can be inaccurate based on stochastic events and then not being able to adaptively manage tags for liberal or conservative regulations.

Public meetings are overall just not well-attended in general, not related to deer issues, but all issues. People use and connect on social media, and the DNR should be using this platform more.

Interdivisional public meetings could bring in more people and stakeholders who you may never hear from.

Social media needs to be utilized more. But there needs to be caution on what is presented, how it is received and the comments that are directed at the DNR, there needs to be moderation.

Collecting valid emails can be a key way to reach out to people.

The need to reiterate that moderation is key to social media.

## Review Action Items and Adjourn

Action items included:

- Send out PowerPoint, minutes to the group. (Barb)
- Follow-up with doodle poll for next meeting (Barb)
- Continue to explore meeting and document sharing software (Kelly)
- Consideration of DAC input on public engagement and open houses for public input (Barb and Leslie)
- Look into youth recruitment data (Barb)
- Provide input on late season CWD hunt structure by Nov. 5 (DAC members)
- Provide input on deer population goal setting process by Nov. 5 (DAC members)