

**Wisconsin Conservation Congress  
Big Game Study Committee Meeting Minutes  
Mead Wildlife Area Visitor Center  
Saturday December 18, 2010**

**Meeting called to order** by Chairmen Mark Noll & Chairman Al Phelan at 9:00 AM.

**Members Present:**

Mark Noll Chairman, Al Phelan Chairman, Tony Janecek Secretary, Jerry Aulik, Norman Blohm, Robert Bohmann, Charlie Brown, Stan Brownwell, Michael Demaster, Alan Gerber, Mark Houslet, Steve Klicko, Marlin Laidlaw, Gerald Merryfield, Arold Ninneman, Mike Riggle, Roger Sabota, Gary Schenck, Gary Severson & Douglas Williams

**Members Excused:** Paul Shaurette, Allen Jacobson, Larrie Hazen, Larry Bonde & David Hraychuck

**DNR Liaison Present:**

Keith Warnke, Jason Fleener, Kevin Mickleberg & Conservation Congress Liaison Kari Lee-Zimmerman

**Others Present:**

Rich Kirchmeyer, Secretary WCC

**Study Committee Mission Statement**

“The Mission of the Big Game Committee of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is to represent the citizens of Wisconsin by blending the social and biological concerns of hunters, citizens and the Department of Natural Resources to provide successful management of Wisconsin’s big game animals which addresses the interests of all parties.” Motion by Charlie Brown & second by Mike Riggle to accept as is. Motion passed unanimously.

**Meeting Agenda**

Motion by Rob Bohmann & second by Jerry Merryfield to accept agenda as is. Motion passed unanimously

**Department Informational Items**

**A. Keith Warnke, Big Game Specialist, WDNR**

Keith started by comparing the 2009 final total harvest totals of 329,103 to the 2010 preliminary harvest noting the 9 day gun season was up approximately 11% over 2009. In 2010 there were 19 buck only units, 66 regular units, 46 herd control units, 2 day youth hunt & a 4 day December antlerless hunt. Keith distributed the 2010 Deer Season Report from Matt Frank.

Keith noted gun deer license sales were down 3% & archery license sales were about the same as last year. He said the DNR was looking at why people are dropping out of hunting noting the 25-44 year old range had the biggest drop.

Keith discussed the web survey, early archery hunt, October hunt, October antlerless hunt which had 9,500 stubs, CWD surveillance in Ashland / Bayfield area that was not positive, CWD management that had 29 positives of 1900 tested all inside the CWD area. He noted they are presently planning for the 2011 deer seasons & passed out a season setting time line.

Keith had Jason Fleener give an update on the Deer Research Project. Jason noted they are still looking for people to help out. Jason discussed the 5 year plan study of buck mortality noting hunters will be able to shoot tagged research deer. A modest award will be given for tags turned into the DNR. A fawn / doe study will also be done to determine what they are dieing from. Baited box & clover traps will be used to trap fawns & does with trapping likely starting January 10, 2011 and go through winter. He discussed helicopter

netting which will be used to capture bucks. Pathfinders, a New Zealand firm, will be doing the helicopter netting which will start January 17, 2011 in the Northern Area & go for about a week. The Central Wisconsin Area will start January 24, 2011. The netting will focus on bucks with ear tags & radio collars put on captured deer. He said a grad student will be in each area along with some support help. News releases will be out in the next few weeks on helicopter netting. There will also hold a media day.

Questions & comments from the Big Game Committee to Keith Warnke

- Tony Janecek asked Keith to carefully review 2011 antlerless herd control units to reduce the number of units if at or slightly above goals. Keith said he would do.
- Marlin Laidlaw was concerned with the no doe units next to a “herd control” unit creating island type units. He said kill may **not** be correct in “island “type units because of jumping units.
- Jerry Merryfield said there were 14,000 antlerless permit issued in units #2 and #9 even though the goals were increased in these units
- Gary Severson was concern with units 59D and 72 that were in herd control but down 16% in the 2010 kill. He asked why are these units in herd control?
- Mark Noll talked about unit 61 with 96% private land in Buffalo County. He noted a hunting lease for \$25,000 and that hunters were not traveling to Buffalo County to shoot does. He said the disparity of deer distribution is getting worse & thought we were going to have high deer populations in the future in some areas. Mark noted there public lands are shot off & he thinks they will changes in Buffalo County.
- Mike Riggie said deer distribution is a statewide issue & feels there should be no antlerless tags on some public lands. He supports private land tags in certain areas.
- Marlin Laidlaw said the time has come to separate public & private land tags
- Mark Houslet said we need to fix not shooting bow bucks in special gun antlerless hunts in December. Why not allow shooting bucks during this special gun antlerless season? Mark also talked about female deer per square mile & getting that number down to permit more males in the unit.
- Stan Brownwell asked how does the DNR separate Federal deer in Fort McCoy that is not accessible to hunt? Keith said the DNR is not involved with Federal land in unit 72. Keith also noted we will never have an equal distribution of deer, saying it can be altered but never equal.

Keith presented the four DNR resolutions for the Spring 2011 Questionnaire. They were:

- Extend the archery deer hunting season by 9 days that are concurrent with the traditional November firearm season (2012)
- Repeal the requirement that elk hunters must wear blaze orange except that it would still be required when a firearm season is open (2012)
- Establish a September firearm & archery hunting season for elk. The season would run concurrently with the first 30 days of the archery deer hunting season (2012)
- Require that, if asked, hunters provide bear tissue samples to the department at the time of harvest registration (2011)

Rob Bohmann asked Keith what happened to the Big Game Resolutions that passed the Congress last year? Example given was allowing group hunting with the bow in CWD area. Tony Janecek asked Keith to present why Congress passed resolutions did not get advanced to DNR resolutions at this Big Game Meeting in the future. Keith said he would look at with Al Phelan & policy committee.

### **B. Kevin Mickelberg, WDNR Law Enforcement**

Kevin stated we are his boss & he should show us what wardens do. He briefly talked about the death of David Grove the Pennsylvania wildlife life officer killed doing his job. He noted the good weather for opening weekend, most corn was down, it was a quieter season, a changing landscape, had positive comments on “buck only” units and discussed the mentor program. He noted there were no fatalities & the accident trend was improving. Hunting accidents are very low at 1.93 per 100,000 hunters. He said the department has little concern over the use of rifles in previous shotgun only areas. He said mentor hunting continues to increase with a 12.5% increase in 2010. He discussed felon issues, intoxication in the field, continued hunter harassment complaints, new text a tip program, three illegal wolves were shot and noted hunters were frustrated with DNR Service Center hours & EAB.

## **Resolutions – Discussion & Action Items**

### **Resolution #270110 – Ag Tag Permits**

Resolution was presented by author Jim Johnson. Jim said some Ag damage permits are being used on food plots (cornfield) to kill deer & are shooting at all hours of night & day. Motion made to accept by Marlin Laidlaw with second by Jerry Merryfield. Al Phelan recommends an adhoc committee be establish to address & will ask to do this at the Executive Council. Al asked Jim Johnson to hold off with his resolution to have the entire program looked at. Marlin & Jerry amended their motion & second to form a adhoc Ag Damage Committee to address Ag tag permits. Amended motion passed unanimously.

### **Resolution #670210-Separate the Southern Farm Region from the CWD Zone**

Resolution was presented by Gary Kanarowski who wanted CWD info reported differently than in the present regions. Motion made to accept by Mike Demaster with second by Mark Houslet. Motion & second withdrawn because Keith said he would do.

### **Resolution #190210 - Antler Point Restriction Trial in Florence County**

Author not present. A power point presentation was shown by Keith. Resolution was to have a trial in units 40 and 50. Motion to reject by Rob Bohmann with second by Steve Klicko. During the discussion Arold Ninneman read several letters opposing the resolution from landowners & Goodman Timber Company. It was noted Forest County rejected 28 no 10 yes & it should be a volunteer type program not mandated. Motion to reject passed unanimously.

### **Resolution #190310 – Antler Point Restriction**

Author was not present. Motion to reject by Rob Bohmann with second by Roger Sabota. Motion to reject passed unanimously.

### **Resolution #130110 – Allow Rifle for Deer Hunting Statewide**

Resolution presented by author Al Phelan who spoke on why this should be permitted. Motion to accept by Mike Riggle with second by Rob Bohmann. Motion to accept passed.

### **Resolution #520310 – Creation of a General Deer License (not weapon specific)**

Author Rob Bohmann was present & gave a short discussion to support. Motion to accept by Rob Bohmann with second by Mark Houslet. Motion to accept passed unanimously.

### **Resolution #580410 – Divide State in North / South Deer Zones**

Al Gerber was present & gave a short presentation. Motion to reject by Mike Riggle with second by Jerry Merryfield. Motion to reject passed with recommendation to bring up by Al under member matters changing the resolution wording to manage Wisconsin's deer on DNR regional basis.

### **Resolution #640410 – Use of Crossbows in Metro DMU's Under Archery License**

Author not present. Motion to reject by Mike Riggle with second by Marlin Laidlaw. Motion to reject passed.

### **Resolution #660610 – Clam Lake Elk Restoration Area Special Bear Zone**

Author not present. Motion to reject by Jerry Merryfield with second by Jerry Aulik. Motion to reject passed.

### **Resolution #720310 – No Harvest of Antlerless Deer until Deer Population is 30% Over Goal**

Author not present. Motion by Mark Houslet to reject with second by Jerry Merryfield. In discussion it was thought it should be limited to public land. Motion to reject passed.

## **Member Matters**

Al Gerber – made a motion to modify his Resolution #580410 discussed earlier from managing deer by a Statewide “Deer Committee” or by North / South Zones to managing Wisconsin's deer herd on a regional basis. Motion to accept by Al Gerber with second by Mike Riggle. Motion

to accept passed.

Steve Klicko – concerned with low deer numbers

Stan Brownwell – felt we are at the cross roads of deer management

Roger Sabota – felt our biggest challenge was to increase more individuals into hunting & fishing

Mike Riggle – made a motion to “allow crossbows to be used to hunt deer by anyone possessing a valid archery license without restrictions of age or disability during the archery season”, second by Roger Sabota. Mike said he thought it was good to put controversial questions on the Spring Questionnaire because it would increase attendance. He also said he felt the Congress may be eliminated in the future. It was noted this crossbow season could reduce the length of the archery season. Tony Janecek stated adding a new resolution at the Big Game Meeting was not the proper place to submit and said it should go the “normal” Congress process of being submitted & voted on at the Spring Hearing County Meetings. The motion passed 8 yes 7 no’s with one abstaining.

Mike Demaster – felt the baiting / feeding issue in the North needs to be addressed

Jerry Merryfield – said baiting & feeding needs to be addressed

Gary Severson – said he had a frustrating season, thought we need to address hot spot issues, did not see the does to shoot and noted it was a quiet year with no shooting

Mark Noll – said he is worried about the Congress with the new changes in administration, notes special interest groups sneaking in the legislature back door and thinks there are threats to pull the Congress.

Al Phelan – is concern with Grant County deer populations not there & being in herd control. He feels Grant County’s deer numbers supposedly 140% over goal are incorrect. He asked where are the deer? Why aren’t they being shot? He said this is the same problem with deer numbers as in the North. He feels a few more reps from the southern part of the state should be on the “committee”.

Rich Kirchmeyer – noted Kari would like the committee to fill out expense reports my email. He also talked about archery hunting during the 4 day December antlerless hunt.

Motion by Rob Bohmann with second by Jerry Merryfield to adjourn passed.

Meeting adjourned 2:45 PM

Tony Janecek, Secretary