

Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group Meeting
Springbrook State Park, IA
August 22-25, 2004

The plenary session featured presentations on Iowa's crop depredation program (2 biologists, management plans, in-season and out-of-season depredation permits, block hunts, ~60% of complaints are refuge related), a bobcat study, recent mountain lion reports (3 lions killed, 1 declawed, 2 appear wild, DNA analysis pending), deer harvest surveys and hunter demographics, and the youth education deer hunt conducted at the state park.

A round table discussion was held on state lease programs for hunter access and their impacts of deer and turkey management. Several states have large leasing programs (Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota). Concern that state leasing may be setting the market value for private leasing and that hunters are out bidding the state. It was felt that most land enrolled in state leasing programs may have already been open to hunting and these programs were not opening up new land. Illinois Supreme Court has struck down the recreational liability exemption in a case where the land was not wide open to the public. Timber companies in Minnesota and Michigan are leasing. Still most states report that only a small percentage of land is privately leased but the trend is for this to increase. Increasing demand for and availability of older bucks is fueling private leasing.

A report was presented on recent changes in the Pennsylvania deer management program. Deer managers have met with ~100,000 deer hunters in the past 2 years to promote harvest of antlerless deer. Prehunt population ~1.6 million deer. 2001 established concurrent seasons for antlered and antlerless hunting. Issuing ~million antlerless permits in 2002-04. Established antler point restrictions with large-scale research programs (> 550 bucks radioed). High non-hunting survival, little poaching, high harvest rates on bucks meeting point restrictions. Buck harvest reduced ~25%. Yearling buck percents reduced from ~80% to ~65%. Hunter support for point restrictions ~60%. Antlerless harvest increased from ~200,000 to 300-350,000. Population has at best stabilized, will need longer season or additional tools to reduce population. Concern about reduced number of hunters.

State Reports

Illinois: 2003 harvest ~ 170,000, record harvest. Population increasing after period of stability in late 1990s-early 2000s. Increase in archery, muzzleloader harvest. Changing handgun season to a late season population control hunt open to all firearms. Looking at telecheck for deer registration in seasons other than firearm. Established a quota for non-resident archery permits of 15,000, issued on first-come-first serve basis through a telephone callin. Use to sale out in 30 days, then 5 days, this year sold out in 10 hours, lots of complaints of callers calling for 9 hours. Expect to return to lottery issuance. Implementing a new POS system for license sales.

CWD: Tested 6,187, 51 positive, 4 county area. Attempting to increase harvest during hunting season, gun harvest increased only 8%, 3 county harvest ~1,500. Focused intensive culling in affected area, ~1,000 deer removed by sharpshooters.

Indiana: 2003 harvest ~ 107,000. Population peaked in mid 1990s, herd was reduced somewhat by high antlerless harvests, herd has slowly increased to new record. Farmers are more tolerant of higher population than in mid 1990s. 50% of hunters want more deer, 7% want fewer deer, 50% of farmers want fewer deer. Most farmers report some crop damage, only 4% have contacted DNR. Median reported loss was \$448. 82% of farm operators had some deer hunting on their property. 2% of farmers reported leasing land for hunting. Established a 1 buck rule, shifted harvest from bow season to gun season, no effect on harvest age composition. Nine months of meetings with the canned hunt industry, lots of public input, disbanded with no compromise, major sticking point is issue of fair chase. Undercover operation busted largest canned hunt operator with 35 Lacey Act violations. State parks hunts started in early 90s have eliminated browse lines and reduced damage outside of parks. Purdue University research on crop damage, video of difference between deer, raccoon, squirrel damage. 7th year of crossbows in late archery season, harvest = 67 antlerless deer. Little demand to include in early archery season.

CWD testing: 4,000 samples tested, all negative, plan to test 500 in NW and 500 in deer farm area, then only test suspect deer.

Iowa: 2003 harvest ~ 183,000, a new record. 30% higher than in 2002, mainly due to increased antlerless harvest, 98% of available antlerless licenses were sold. Antlerless deer were 63% of total kill. Population simulation suggest the higher antlerless harvests were sufficient to stabilize the population but even higher harvests will be needed to reduce population to goal in 2 years. Good correlations between spotlight surveys, aerial surveys and population simulations. Return rates on mail surveys used to estimate harvest have been declining and a phone survey suggests possible overestimates of harvest by the mail survey. A high percentage of hunters expressed satisfaction with the state's deer management program.

CWD testing: focus on border counties of Wisconsin and Illinois and suspect animals. Still conducting low level statewide surveillance. Captives transferred to Ag department, no funding/no staff for a CWD program in Ag. Ag secretary is an elected position. Refuses to develop an unfunded program, no testing, waiting for federal program.

Kansas: 2003 harvest ~ 71,000. Population peaked in late 1990s, stable to slight decline since. State law has established caps on the percentage of permits that can be obtained by non-residents. 1/2 of non-resident permits are transferable deer permits that landowners can obtain and sale to highest bidder. E-bay auctions of \$800/permit. The legislature is excited that landowners are making money off of deer. Large landowners want a bigger share of the pie. Developing a program similar to Colorado's Ranching for Wildlife. Residents are concerned this will increase leasing and will decrease available land for hunting.

CWD testing: 2,372 tested. Will continue to test the NW corner of state annually. Elsewhere will focus on suspects after completing statewide sweep. Problems with poor location data from locker plants.

Michigan: 2003 harvest ~ 500,000. 743,000 hunters, 10 million recreational days. 45% of hunters harvested 1 or more deer, 15% took 2 or more deer. Upper Peninsula residents got the ban on supplemental feeding in the UP revised to permit feeding in 8 counties along the Lake Superior shoreline. 43 permits were issued in 2004, 106 tons were fed to 1,200 deer. Antler point restrictions have been adopted in 8 DMUs. The 1st DMU to adopt point restrictions completed its 5th year in 2003. Hunter and landowner support for continuing was 57%. Aging data from the DMU were inconclusive. The NRC discontinued the special regulation. Hunter and landowner support for a proposal to apply point restrictions to the entire UP will be evaluated this winter. Continue to use PDAs for collection of biological data and disease testing, link to license data base of names and addresses through bar-codes on license. Research projects to assess purchase histories and attitudes of antlerless permit buyers and population dynamics and movements of deer in the southern Lower Peninsula. Fawn survival to 180 days was 82-85% and annual survival was 75-76%. Hunting was the primary cause of mortality of deer older than 9 months of age, deer-vehicle accidents killed the same number of fawns as died of hunting. Predation accounted for only 6% of fawn mortalities.

CWD Testing: 5,609 deer and 86 elk tested, all negative. Plan to continue to test 60 deer/county, every county, every year in conjunction with TB testing. DNR is auditing captive cervid facilities, ~850 facilities. ~1/3 have little or no paperwork, don't know where deer came from or where they go. TB surveillance: 17,294 deer tested, 32 positive.

Minnesota: 2003 harvest ~ 289,400, new record, 30% higher than in 2002, 57% antlerless. Populations have increased in most of the state due to series of mild winters. Population stable to decreasing in SW intensive ag region. Populations at or above goal in all DMUs. Pre-fawn population estimated to be 846,000 deer, prehunt prediction is 1.26 million. Beginning in 2003, procedures for allocating either-sex permits were changed to eliminate the need for firearm hunters in many areas of the state to apply for a permit. DMUs are classified into 3 categories: lottery, managed, and intensive. The regular license can be used to tag a deer of either sex in managed and intensive units. Hunters in managed units may also purchase 1 bonus antlerless-only license. Hunters in intensive units may purchase up to 4 bonus antlerless-only license. The fee for nonresident archery license (1,400 hunters) is now reciprocal with fee changed to Minnesota hunters by that state or \$136, whichever is higher. Testing electronic registration of deer via POS terminals. Expect electronic registration to be operational statewide in 2005. A 2 day late October youth only hunt will be held in a 5 county area in the NW. Beginning a stakeholder round table process to reevaluate deer population goals. Expect to complete in 2-3 years. A bill introduced in 2004 would have mandated antler point restrictions in 5 northwest counties; it did not pass, but expect continued pressure to grow older bucks. Research projects to determine survival rates and mortality

causes in farmland regions, evaluating roadkills as a population trend index, evaluation sex and age registration data for population estimation, and assessing alternative harvest strategies.

CWD Testing. ~ 10,000 deer tested in 2003, all negative. Expect to complete 1st round of random tests this year and then will just test suspect deer. To encourage participation in testing, hunters received a DNR cooperator patch and were entered into several prize drawings. Carcass import restrictions were modified to specify counties rather than states from which whole carcasses may not be imported.

Missouri: 2003 harvest ~ 290,600, 62% antlerless. Switching from DMUs to counties for deer management regulation. Firearms hunters are aging and older hunters are killing fewer deer. Harvest potential declining. Liberalizing permit system. Deer population in north is slowly declining but farm bureau has legislature fired up. Firearm antlerless permits valid for any county open for their use, no longer unit specific. No limit on firearm antlerless permits in 81 counties, limit of 1 in 19 counties, and none in 19 counties. An any-deer permit is good statewide. An increasing proportion of hunters want an opportunity to take older bucks. Concern that Missouri may be at the limit of current system for taking antlerless deer. Conducted a long public input process with 30 public meetings and over 3,000 written responses. Decided to pilot antler point restrictions in 29 counties with the objective of shifting harvest pressure from antlered deer to antlerless deer. Will monitor changes in herd composition and public attitudes over next 5 years. Research project evaluating telecheck registration showed results similar to checkstation registration, expect to go statewide with telecheck in 2005.

CWD testing: 6,019 deer tested from 30 counties, all negative. On-site tissue collection saved >300 person-days of staff time. Debating future use of random hunter sampling versus targeted surveillance.

Nebraska: 2003 harvest ~ 53,300 deer, 41% antlerless. Drought and EHD have caused significant population declines in several western units.

CWD testing: 4,985 deer tested, 18 positives, all in western panhandle, mainly 3 clusters, discovered new cluster in area thought to be well tested. Backing off from the long season in CWD area, reducing numbers of permits, increasing use of focal control. 60 deer radioed for movement study.

EHD: significant EHD outbreak in central Nebraska, collected blood serum from hunter harvested deer, 181 usable samples, high prevalence in one district. Believe have endemic area with high prevalence and high % protected, low mortality, periodic mortality event when disease spreads to unprotected area. Plans to assist with multi-state EHD serum collection.

North Dakota: 2003 harvest ~100,000. 80% success rate for firearms hunters. Winter aerial surveys indicate that white-tailed deer populations are at record levels and mule deer populations are above the long-term average. Roadkills are an increasing problem.

Hunters who bought multiple licenses kept hunting and killed multiple deer. A proposed early October antlerless season was not approved.

CWD testing: ~1/4 of state is well tested. Plan to rotate through 8 regions on a 3-5 year cycle.

Ohio: 2003 harvest ~ 197,800, 57% antlerless. Yearlings were 58% of adult bucks. Yearling antler beam diameters have declined in eastern and southeastern Ohio over past 30 years. Reported deer-vehicle accidents were 31,700 in 2003. 1,500 crop damage complaints were received in 2003, up 9% from 2002, 6,900 deer were killed on damage permits. Interest in mining data from POS system to better understand license buying behavior of hunters. Classifying buyers into 3 categories: sporadic, casual, and avid. Investigating marketing strategies to increase license-buying frequency of sporadic and casual buyers. Keying hunter id from checkstation data to assess effect of harvest success on license buying behavior. Struggling to keep check stations. Considering telecheck. Discontinued Columbus Metro park PZP study, ongoing study in Cleveland Metro Parks. Bill was introduced to make fertility control illegal, failed to advance out of committee. DNR is looking to acquire a FLIR system with Homeland Security money, hope to use for deer surveys.

CWD testing: 600 deer sampled/year, focused on high density counties and region with most of captive facilities.

Ontario: 2003 harvest ~ 80,600. Primary issue has been crop damage permits. A landowner rights group blockaded MNR offices and attracted significant media attention. Liberalizing conditions for use of permits. 22 permits were issued in 2003 up from 7 in 2002. Fewer than 200 deer have been killed on these permits in last 5 years.

CWD testing: still developing plan in conjunction with federal government. Some low level hunter testing.

South Dakota: 2003 harvest ~ 70,000. Need to kill more antlerless deer. Seasons were extended by 1 week. Reduced fees for antlerless permits, instituted over-the-counter sales of unsold tags. Populations and harvests increasing in most of the state except the Black Hills. Youth season is 35 days, split between mid September and mid-late December. Youth license sales is gradually increasing (3,200 in 2003). Muzzleloader license sales is increasing (3,300 in 2003).

CWD testing: 2,498 cervids tested in 2003, 7 positives (2 WT, 1 MD, 4 elk), 22 positives total to date. Focusing on Black Hills area and around positive captive cervids. No plan for statewide testing.