

Regional Working Group Meeting Minutes  
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Fish and Wildlife Staff: Adam Murkowski (Wildlife Biologist), Forrest Hammond (Wildlife Biologist), Scott Darling (Wildlife Management Program Director), Mark Scott (Wildlife Director).

Vermont Deer Management Presentation

10:15 am - 11:10 am

Adam Murkowski gave a presentation on the annual activities of the Fish and Wildlife Department as they relate to white-tailed deer. This presentation included information on the types and methods utilized by the department to collect a variety of biological information annually. In addition, methods utilized to estimate white-tailed deer abundance and regional variations in deer management strategies were discussed.

Crossbow utilization in Vermont

11:10 am – 12:00

A presentation on crossbow utilization, first presented to the Fish and Wildlife Board on 15 February 2012, was presented by Adam Murkowski. The crossbow utilization presentation and minutes from the 15 February 2012 Fish and Wildlife Board meeting can be found on the Department's website at the following addresses:

[http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/library/reports\\_and\\_documents/Hunting\\_and\\_trapping/Crossbow\\_Hunting\\_Today.pdf](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/library/reports_and_documents/Hunting_and_trapping/Crossbow_Hunting_Today.pdf)  
[http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/calendaritems/Board\\_Minutes/2012-2-15.pdf](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/calendaritems/Board_Minutes/2012-2-15.pdf)

Group Crossbow Discussion and Debate Exercise

Regional working group members were randomly divided into groups by region. Each group developed a list of potential benefits and potential draw backs to increased crossbow utilization during Vermont's various deer hunting seasons. These articulated perspectives were retained by each group to foster and promote future discussions. Consensus of groups was to re-evaluate crossbow utilization as discussions on overall season structures and hunting regulations progress.

Buck Management and Harvest Strategies

12:30 pm - 3:15 pm

A presentation on the historical use of regulations aimed at achieving a variety of buck management objectives was presented by Adam Murkowski. This presentation utilized examples demonstrating the application of various harvest regimes in various Eco regions throughout North America dating back to the 1950s. In addition, information on a variety of currently employed harvest strategies was presented. Information detailing the benefits of different deer management strategies and potential negative implications of these management strategies was presented.

Idea Mapping Exercise

Working Group Members were asked to provide any questions, comments, insights, observations, and suggestions on the status of current deer herd health issues, harvest regulations, hunter recruitment, retention, satisfaction, habitat management, public land use, the current APR, and potential buck management strategies. A list of comments provided by the working group members can be found in Appendix A. These articulated perspectives were transcribed by the department and provided to the working groups to foster and promote future discussions on deer management. ***It is important to note that this list of comments found in the Appendix are initial thoughts and ideas from working group members and members have NOT discussed them.***

**Appendix A**  
**Vermont Deer Management Regional Working Groups**  
**Deer and Deer Management Idea Mapping Exercise**

**Deer Herd Health**

East Central Eastern Foothills

- Ban sale of natural based urine scents to help prevent CWD.
- Are you afraid of EHD?

Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Monitor each WMU's zone with or by use of today's technology to insure health and numbers.

Mountains and Northeast Kingdom

- Continue ban on baiting/feeding of deer.

**Deer Harvest Regulations**

DEER HARVEST REGULATIONS

Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Different rules, different WMU's.
- Manage antlered bucks by WMU

Mountains and Northeast Kingdom

- Change boundaries of "C" area to Route 242 on Northwest and Route 14 on the East.

MISCELLANEOUS DEER HARVEST CONSIDERATIONS

East Central Eastern Foothills

- Protect young bucks. Shoot a doe to be eligible for a buck tag.
- Spiked antler permits for archery or rifle season.
- Protect young bucks, one buck per year regardless of season.

Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Give hunter opportunity to purchase "trophy tag" extra deer of eight point plus.

- Changing bag limit to one buck per year.

#### Mountains and Northeast Kingdom

- Allow spike horn harvest but eliminate/ reduce two points to side harvest (or three points).
- One buck per year per hunter.
- Mimic the Michigan rule on archery/buck tags with a one buck limit or a choice to get a combo license.
- Limit number of bucks harvested per WMU.

### **Deer Hunter Recruitment, Retention, and Satisfaction**

#### YOUTH HUNTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

##### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Have in school days to introduce kids to hunting.
- Mentor program to have a “free” tag separate from mentor.

##### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Youth hunting coordinator.
- Require youth hunters to follow same regulations as normal season(s).

#### DEER MANAGEMENT OUTREACH

##### East Central Eastern Foothills

- More use of social media to connect with hunters and newer generations.

##### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Utilize modern technology.
- Keep the public and hunters informed and gather data from people in the field.

#### DEER MANAGEMENT MARKETING

##### East Central Eastern Foothills

- More good “press” such as Eric Nuse (Orion Hunter’s Institute) but all year long and all seasons.

##### Mountains and Northeast Kingdom

- Provide more hunter promotional information to public.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Advertise to out of state hunters. Too many hunters spending money to hunt elsewhere.

### DEER HUNTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Bow to be included with hunting.
- More deer ecology education.
- Education of youth on what is a mature whitetail and what we are trying to do.

### MISCELLANEOUS DEER HUNTER RECRUITEMENT AND RETENTION

#### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Protection from “ANTI’s”.
- Conservation stamp, proceeds to purchase land.
- Use food co-op seminars to recruit members to hunt as a sustainable food life style.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Poaching
- Recognition! State used to issue successful hunters patches. This may be good idea to re-instate.

### **Habitat Management and Public Land Utilization**

#### PRIVATE LAND(S)

#### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Grants for wildlife based forest management for lands not posted.
- Prevent land use participants from posting property.
- Disallow posting in land that is enrolled in current use.

#### Mountains and North East Kingdom

- Optional payment (voluntary) by hunters into a fund to deal with posted land issues, similar to Maine.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- State offering habitat improvement seminars or similar for land owners.
- Maintain current use program.
- Promote dialogue with land owners.

## DEER WINTERING AREAS (DWAs)

### East Central Eastern Foothills

- No snow-mobiles in deer yards.
- State should incorporate more food plots on state lands.
- Protect young bucks; develop good winter food plots i.e. small sequential clear cuts, private food plots.

### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- More protection of deer wintering areas.
- Protect winter yards.
- Improve yarding areas/increase.

## FOREST AND TIMBER MANAGEMENT

### East Central Eastern Foothills

- More logging both in WMA's and state forests to improve wildlife habitat.
- Tree planting programs in cut areas to produce and promote mast producing species.

### Mountains and North East Kingdom

- Monitor more closely logging operations in deer wintering/yard areas.
- Work closely with logging operations to ensure forest regeneration in smaller areas.

### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- More controlled logging on state lands to improve habitat.
- More logging for better undergrowth on state land.
- More timber harvest in state and federal lands.

## MISCELLANEOUS HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC LAND(S)

### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Moose ruining a lot of forest vegetation.
- Suitable mineral licks for antler growth.
- Land acquisition for hunting and fishing.

- Mapping state forests and put in a book like WMAs, also municipal forests should be included in this effort.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Influence national forest management.
- Manage state lands habitat and work with federal land use.
- More public lands.
- Food plots/food sources.

### **Antler Point Restriction and Buck Management Strategies**

#### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Remove APR
- Discontinue APR

#### Mountains and North East Kingdom

- Does APR provide better buck age structure and better quality deer hunting experience?
- Do we have support from hunters to remove the APR as of the current date?
- Allow spike horn harvest with limited season on implement.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Remove APR.
- Eliminate APR.
- Is APR conducive to good herd health?
- Sort of eliminate APR. First buck no restriction, second has restrictions.
- Make APR zone/WMU dependent.
- Temporarily eliminate APR/compile data to compare pre/post.

### DEER SEASON DATES AND STRUCTURE

#### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Push rifle season back a few days.
- Mimic New Hampshire's deer seasons.
- Have muzzy before rifle season and extend rifle into December.
- Continuous archery season, October 1<sup>st</sup> till December 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### Mountains and North East Kingdom

- If we remove APR's, go to one buck per year and schedule an early muzzle loader antlerless season.

- Increase the length of rifle season to all of November to decrease pressure on both deer and hunters.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- Extend archery season.
- Do not change season dates.
- Shorten rifle season.
- Change dates on rifle and muzzle loader season.

### ANNUAL BAG LIMITS

#### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Deer season equals one deer per year at any time of year.
- Two deer limit and extend a season a day or two to offset the loss.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- One buck annually.
- One buck only with option to purchase second tag.
- Change youth hunting to harvest one deer then added to regular season.
- Have a buck tag lottery.
- One buck per year. Gives hunters the ability to harvest what caliber of buck they want.

### **Miscellaneous Deer Management Considerations**

#### East Central Eastern Foothills

- Total average of all time kills. Compare year to year numbers against previous year.
- Add poaching, road kill, etc. into harvest info.
- Form depredation permits for deer.

#### Mountains and Northeast Kingdom

- Make all permanent licenses out of better material.

#### Lake Plains and Western Foothills

- More stuff F&W store.
- More data collection.
- Predator control.
- Have a standard for checking in deer at tagging stations. All cleaned, heart and liver, etc.
- Reduce fawn mortality by predators and hay mowers.