

Testimony from North Central PA Sportsmen as related to 5 Bills and 1
Resolution before House Game and Fisheries Committee,
March 19, 2014.

We thank the members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee for the opportunity to express our opinions on deer management bills and resolutions before your committee. We, as sportsmen encompassing the counties of Elk, Jefferson, McKean, Potter, Cameron, Clinton, Centre, and Clearfield, met on 2/15 to discuss our concerns with this legislation amongst ourselves. **We request our testimony be entered into the official record. Thank you.**

In general, we do not view the legislature as the appropriate venue for discussions concerning the scientific management of wildlife. We believe that wildlife management is better left to the Pennsylvania Game Commission; as such, we have also shared our comments with the eight PGC Commissioners.

In general, we feel all of this legislation is an attempt to return our PA deer herd to the small weights, poor antler growth, undernourished herd of twenty years ago that also decimated the understory needed to support small game for our children and grandchildren to hunt.

We do not want to hunt antlerless deer weighing 50 pounds and shoot 2-4 point bucks weighing 80# when we have learned a better relationship between deer numbers and habitat will produce 80# fawns and 120-150# bucks with excellent racks, AND allow the wood industry so important here in the northern tier of PA to be able to regenerate the forest that also supports grouse, hare, woodcock, rabbits, bobcats, etc. Deer numbers need to be balanced with habitat across the landscape.

HB 870 which excludes public lands from DMAP – we are opposed to this proposed legislation as DMAP is necessary to maintain a healthy deer herd on public lands. In addition, we feel hunters should be able to get two DMAP coupons for an area, versus just one DMAP coupon. AND we feel DMAP should be available on some State Game Lands recently acquired by the PGC in order to continue the sustainable wood harvest and forest regeneration that has been ongoing on those previously private woodlands.

HB 1146 which would remove antler restrictions – we are opposed to this proposed legislation because antler restrictions have been able to improve the age structure of the herd, increase the body size of harvested bucks, and improve antler growth.

HB 1370 which would restrict the length of, and change the start date of antlerless deer season – we are opposed to this proposed legislation because

going back to the old way would once again skew the herd to a preponderance of antlerless deer, and leave too many deer on a landscape that would not support that number of deer, and then the health of the deer herd would decline.

HB 1724 which would redesignate WMUs and issue antlerless deer permits on a county basis – we are opposed to this proposed legislation because it doesn't take into account habitat differences on a landscape scale, doesn't account for other game species (as do the current WMUS), and once again puts hunters into a position of knowing counties boundaries (which are not marked), whereas WMUS are designated on identifiable boundaries such as roads, rivers, etc.

HB 1726 which would direct the PGC to utilize the Maximum Sustained Yield method of game and deer – we are opposed to this proposed legislation. The Commissions are charged with managing lands for all wildlife and fish, not just game and deer.

HR 576 which would allow a Saturday opener for the first day of deer season – we are opposed to this resolution because we would lose another day of small game hunting, lose paid time from work, the deer season would end up like the bear season – one and done, Sunday becomes a wasted day between Saturday and Monday hunting unless Sunday hunting is approved, and loss of economics because sporting goods stores will lose the Saturday day of spending (or more).

Sincerely,

Philip Labant, Chairman of the NC Division of the PFSCs