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DNR Deer Streamlining Team Final Report

Introduction

The Deer Streamlining Team was assembled at the direction of Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Hassett due to the reports from deer hunters and department staff regarding the confusion over tagging and season options during the 2003 deer hunting season. The following recommendations are the product of seven meetings of the Deer Streamlining Team. This team, consisted of representatives from Law Enforcement, Wildlife Management, Legal Services, Science Services, Customer Service and Licensing and a representative from the Conservation Congress. The Secretary charged the team with finding a way to:

“Simplify deer harvest management to make it more user friendly while balancing science and enforceability needs.”

It was clear after the first meeting that the minor changes to the tagging, regulations and permits that was achieved based on team recommendations for the 2004 hunting season would not alone accomplish the goal of streamlining deer seasons. Therefore, these recommendations address primary issues, such as herd control, as well as permitting options as in order to develop long term strategies for simplification.

Executive Summary

The Deer Streamlining Team discussed and scored a number of recommendations that are intended to simplify deer hunting regulations through consistent and stable seasons and tagging options. These recommendations received the highest scores, when analyzed by the team with the help of simplification matrix (appendix A), and are expected to achieve the highest degree of simplification without compromising science or enforcement.

Tagging options:

- ⊙ The Hunter’s Choice option would be replaced by creating two unit types (Restricted Quota Units (RQU) and Unrestricted Quota Units (UQU)) and antlerless tags for each.
- ⊙ In Unrestricted Quota Units, antlerless tags would be available at 2-for-1 pricing in addition to one free antlerless tag with each license.
- ⊙ In Restricted Quota Units, antlerless tags would be available for purchase on a first come-first served basis.
- ⊙ Regular gun deer and archery licenses would be valid for one buck only.
- ⊙ Eliminate the ability for archers to fill a gun tag hunter’s choice authorization.

Season length and dates:

- ⊙ 16-day statewide gun deer season would begin the Saturday nearest November 15.
- ⊙ 4-day statewide October antlerless season starting the Thursday nearest October 15.
- ⊙ 4-day statewide antlerless hunt starting the second Thursday after thanksgiving.
- ⊙ Special youth hunt is replaced by the ability for a first time hunter’s education graduate to shoot a deer of either sex in any unit statewide.

Other:

- ⊙ Eliminate the River Block either sex season.
- ⊙ Fewer and larger deer management units.
- ⊙ Legalize crossbow use for all hunters.

*Note: Earn-a-buck seasons would be retained as a management tool and implemented in a unit after 2 consecutive seasons of unrestricted quota hunting and the overwinter population estimate is not within 20% of goal.

Advantages of these proposals include:

- Each license type (Archery and Gun) would come with two tags (1 buck tag and 1 UQU antlerless only tag). This would improve statewide consistency and simplification.
- A buck tag is the only tag that can be used on a buck and is weapon specific. There would be less confusion about which tag to use. Antlerless tags are not weapon specific.

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- There would be only two hunting structures (CWD notwithstanding): Restricted Quota Units and Unrestricted Quota Units. Currently there are at least 4 (EAB, Zone T, Regular, River Block). This would also reduce confusion.
- The early October gun season would be moved further away from the rut or “pre-rut” season. This would provide stability to this antlerless season, which is important for deer herd management.
- There would be no hunter’s choice application deadline or applications to deal with.
- Provide more opportunities to harvest deer with multiple openers, which will result in more deer harvested. This should reduce the frequency of more drastic herd reduction measures i.e. EAB.
- Legalization of crossbows would improve consistency and increase hunting opportunities.

Methods

The team consisted of representatives from Law Enforcement, Wildlife Management, Legal Services, Science Services, Customer Services and Licensing, and a Conservation Congress member. Team members were determined by Bureau designation and included:

Sue Acre (Facilitator) FH-CO	Jon Gilbert, GLIFWC	Mike Stahl, LE-NER
Tim Andryk, LS-CO	Brad Koele, WM-CO	Kurt Thiede, WM-CO
Dave Argall, CS&L-CO	Mark Mayo, CS&L-SCR	Tom Van Haren, LE-CO
Tom Bahti, WM-NER	Jeremy Peery, LE-NOR	Keith Warnke, WM-CO
Joe Caputo, Cons. Cong.-Dane	Rick Reed, LE-SER	Michele Windsor, WM-WCR
Steve Dewald, LE-WCR	Robert Rolley, SS-Monona	Mike Zeckmeister, WM-NOR

Critical sideboards were identified and included the following: mandatory deer registration, the variable quota system, backtags, tagging requirements, and antlerless harvest control. The team evaluated 14 options that dealt with season format (3 of which violated at least one sideboard), and eleven options dealing with tagging requirements (3 of which violated at least one sideboard) in our primary options matrix. If an option violated one or more of the sideboards, it was not evaluated further.

The team’s facilitator helped the team identify recommendations that would meet their charge. In addition, team members were allowed to bring new recommendations for consideration during the entire process. Outside interest groups also nominated recommendations. Recommendations were scored using 12 criteria. The 12 criteria were identified and clearly defined to rate each proposal uniformly. These criteria included:

- **Science** (Does the proposal provide the science needed to manage the deer herd?) (-5 to +5)
- **Compliance** (How easy is it for the hunter to comply to the regulations?) (-5 to +5)
- **Consistency** (Is the proposal consistent across the state or region specific?) (-5 to +5)
- **Costs** (Does the proposal increase costs for the customer?) (-1 to +1)
- **Maintain Harvest Control** (Will the proposal provide the ability to control the deer herd?) (-5 to +5)
- **Increase Revenue** (How will the proposal impact department revenues?) (-1 to +1)
- **DNR Support** (How much support will the proposal receive from the agency and other programs?) (-5 to +5)
- **Public Support** (How much support will the proposal receive from the public (hunters & non-hunters?) (-5 to +5)
- **Opportunity** (Does the proposal increase opportunity for hunters?) (-1 to +1)
- **Simplifies** (Is the proposal simple for hunters to understand and is it easy to administer & enforce?) (-5 to +5)
- **Stability** (Is the proposal one that will not change from year to year?) (-5 to +5)
- **Type of Change** (Does the change require a change to policy, rule or statute?) (+1, +2, +3)
- **Violate SB [Added by Committee]** (Does the proposal violate one of the established sideboards?) (Yes or No)

After brainstorming and then discussing a number of ideas and proposals, the team collectively discussed each of the proposals. A matrix was used to help guide discussions and in the end to provided a total score for each proposal (appendix A):

When an individual score could not be agreed upon, a vote occurred and the majority prevailed. Those recommendations that scored the highest were revisited, discussed in more detail and became the team’s final recommendations. After initial discussion, evaluation, and scoring with the matrix, those options with the highest scores were re-evaluated in further detail (several were combined).

Results

Recommendation: Replace Hunter's Choice and create two types of units types (Restricted Quota Units (RQU) and Unrestricted Quota Units(UQU)) and antlerless tags for each. All tags available over the counter.

Justification: Clarity, simplification of tagging procedures, consistency from year to year, and stability in statewide application. No more July 20 deadline for hunters or agency staff to rush to meet. All license purchasers get two tags per license (one statewide buck tag and one antlerless only tag that can be used in any UQU.) so opportunity is increased. There will be only two types of units statewide under this scenario (CWD notwithstanding) Restricted Quota Units and Unrestricted Quota Units.

Recommendation: In "unrestricted quota units (UQU)" in addition to the free antlerless tag that could be used in any UQU statewide, additional antlerless permits could be purchased (2 for 1) (currently \$12 each for residents, \$20 for non-residents) and would be good in any UQU.

Justification: Since Zone T and HC are eliminated, there needs to be a method to authorize the hunting of antlerless deer. 2 for 1 one antlerless permits would be sold that would be universally useable across the state during any open season in any UQU. This would greatly simplify hunting regulations and tagging procedures and would increase hunting opportunity across the state along with providing stability and consistency.

Recommendation: In "restricted quota units (RQU)" antlerless permits would need to be purchased (currently \$12 each for residents, \$20 for non-residents) and would be unit specific.

Justification: Since Zone T and HC are eliminated, there needs to be a method to authorize the hunting of antlerless deer. Antlerless permits would be sold for use in RQU that would be valid in only that unit. Permits could be purchased at a rate of one per license per day until supplies ran out. This would greatly simplify hunting regulations and tagging procedures and would increase hunting opportunity across the state along with providing stability and consistency.

Recommendation: Regular gun deer and archery licenses are valid for one buck each only.

Justification: Simplification, consistency, year in year out stability, easy to comply with, provides any hunter with opportunity to hunt in any unit in the state every year. Also clears up confusion of having to carry around an HC card to validate a back and carcass tag (which registration stations do not often check). Eliminates confusion over which tags can be filled with which weapons (buck tags can be filled with specified weapon only – all other tags are non-specific.)

Recommendation: Eliminate the ability of archers to fill a gun tag with HC

Justification: See justification for elimination of HC...there would be HC no more, thus no tag for bowhunters to fill.

Recommendation: 16-day statewide gun season beginning the Saturday nearest Nov. 15 (Note: This recommendation can be a stand-alone recommendation and is not necessarily an integral part of the entire set of recommendations).

Justification: This proposal ranked relatively high on our matrix (22). Scored high for compliance, consistency, and stability. Increase in harvest, consistency across the state for all gun hunters, has DNR support, will result in ease of compliance and enforcement. A 16-day season has the potential to allow for additional harvest and could help avoid the need for EAB. Opportunity is increased, more antlerless deer may be killed. Days would be added to the front end of the season which would allow for better weather, more rut hunting opportunities for gun hunters and it not interfere with the muzzleloader season.

Recommendation: 4-day statewide October antlerless season starting the Thursday nearest Oct. 15

Justification: This proposal ranked very high on the matrix (25). Scored high for consistency, opportunity, increase of harvest, and stability. This antlerless season would be a permanent part of the traditional gun-deer season. This eliminates the annual question by the typical WI-deer hunter: *"Will My Unit be a T-zone this year?"* This proposal eliminates "temporary" zones that change in many parts of the state from year to year. This proposal would ensure more regular antlerless harvests every year and in every unit statewide. In the long-run, this could reduce the need for more drastic herd reduction methods. The season would open two weeks earlier than the existing season. Timing of this new season opener is critical and should pay a major dividend with bow hunters because it would be less intrusive on the early bow season i.e. further away from the rut. The October antlerless seasons has a proven track record of high antlerless removal (>5 deer/square mile South > 2 deer/square mile North). There are four major reasons for this: 1) hunter behavior (pre-season game); 2) weather conditions inherent to this

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time of year (less chance of inclement weather affecting hunter access); 3) multiple opener effect (good for the hunter and catches the hunted off-guard); and 4) spreads out the harvest (great for commercial and home processors). This proposal eliminates the need for a special youth hunt (next recommendation) and eliminates confusion by the non-hunting public about whether there is a gun-deer season going on. The Final recommendations from the Deer 2000 Herd Size Study Group recognized that "If this antlerless hunt were part of the regular season framework, there would be complete consistency from year to year, whether there was a need for special herd reduction incentives or not".

Recommendation: Replace the Special Youth Hunt with a program where a first time hunter education graduates can take a deer of either-sex with a special gun deer license.

Justification: This will allow first timers to hunt in any of the seasons - statewide, and harvest a deer of either sex. This will remove the confusion of where they can or cannot hunt during the youth hunt, simplifies the regulations, and will be stable and consistent from year to year.

Recommendation: 4-day statewide antlerless season starting the second Thursday after Thanksgiving.

Justification: This would also provide consistency, simplification, stability, clarity, compliance and will reduce confusion over which units are "in" or "out" of a zone T by replacing zone T with a statewide hunt open to all who hold a unit specific antlerless tag in RQUs (see below) or a free bonus tag (in UQUs). Better ability to control populations and avoid EAB.

Recommendation: Eliminate River Block either sex season

Justification: Deer hunting in the entire state would be offered in a consistent clear manner. There would be only two hunting structures (CWD notwithstanding): Restricted Quota Units and Unrestricted Quota Units.

Recommendation: Combine existing deer management units into larger management units with common characteristics, reducing the total number of deer management units by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$.

Justification: Combining neighboring units of similar ecological makeup, harvest history and performance would have no negative impact on managing the deer herd and could have a positive impact. Historical data on existing DMU's would still be relevant and could easily be used in the SAK formula in the same manner that exists currently. Fewer DMU's would simplify regulations statewide and create an increased opportunity for hunters by increasing the area where a unit specific UQU permit would be valid. Having fewer DMU's could also significantly simplify regulations in individual counties where there are currently multiple DMU's.

Recommendation: Legalize crossbows.

Justification: Making the crossbow a legal archery weapon would simplify existing regulations by eliminating special crossbow permits for disabled hunters and increase consistency with hunters of all ages. Crossbows are currently legal for individuals 65 years of age and older. Legalizing crossbows for all legal hunting ages would increase opportunities for those hunters who currently do not bow hunt perhaps due to some physical limitation which is often related to increasing age. This is especially significant considering that the number of Wisconsin residents between 55-65 years of age grew more than six times faster than the rest of the population from 2000-2003 according to recent census data.

Affected Parties

The 16-day statewide gun season beginning the Saturday nearest Nov. 15 (possible opener Nov. 12-18) may potentially affect approximately 250,000 bow hunters and over 650,000 gun hunters, non-hunters, the economy and potential schools as well. For bowhunters, this proposal would remove 4 days in mid-November from the existing early archery season. As with any gun hunting extension in early fall it may affect the ability of archers to hunt during the late portion of the "rut", which may result in a slightly reduced archery buck harvest. For gun hunters it will allow the retention of a Saturday opener, but would allow the gun season to open 4 days earlier than currently possible. The proposal adds 7 days and 1 weekend to the "traditional" firearm deer season, provides opportunity to gun-hunt during more of the "rut", and should result in gun hunters seeing more deer activity and more deer. Gun season buck and antlerless harvests should increase which may help to avoid EAB in some DMUs. The extended gun hunt provides another weekend of hunting opportunity earlier with less chance of inclement weather. Especially significant in Northern Wisconsin where snowfall can limit hunter access. Other hunters that normally are not required to wear blaze orange would be required to do so during the longer gun season.

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Under this proposal, there is potential for more other-than-hunting recreational conflicts. Local and the statewide economy would likely benefit from increased revenue to local businesses (grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, hotels/motels, restaurants, etc.). Primarily due to another gun hunting weekend. A concern for schools may be increased absenteeism during gun season. However, this may be mitigated by another weekend of hunting opportunity. By spreading out the pressure over a 2 week time period would likely reduce complaints of hunter conflicts. It would also extend the time and number of weekend hours needed to be worked by department staff, including law enforcement.

The 4-day statewide October antlerless season starting the Thursday nearest Oct. 15 (possible opener Oct. 12-18), like the 16-day season proposal would affect the same parties. For bowhunters, this proposal would conflict with 4 days of the existing early archery season, but unlike the current early Zone T hunt, this proposal would move the early antlerless season to a time period not impacting the "pre-rut". This may reduce complaints about early antlerless season impacting subsequent buck activity. Under this proposal, blaze orange and antlerless only hunting would be required of archers during this period. The proposal does not address a request to hold the antlerless gun hunt in September. For all hunters, gun and bow, there would be no confusion over whether or not a DMU is included in the early antlerless hunt. Gun hunters may be hampered since leaf fall may not be as advanced as with later (Thursday closest to Oct. 27) opener. Youth hunters will not be off of school during Teacher's Convention in parts of the state. Local and the statewide economy may again benefit from increased revenue to local businesses (grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, hotels/motels, restaurants, etc.). For the non-hunter, there is potential for more other recreational conflicts especially due to earlier timeframe. However, unlike current seasons, other recreational users would better be able to adjust due to the stability of the season. There is the potential for more accidents as a result of heavier foliage. Less annual educational efforts would be required, as the season would be the same statewide in all units each year. Similar to expanding the 9-day season to a 16-day season, this statewide season would require some increase in work demands for Wildlife and Law Enforcement staff including additional weekend hours.

A statewide 4-day antlerless hunt starting the second Thursday after Thanksgiving was proposed previously as a recommendation of the Deer 2000 and Beyond initiative, that proposal fell short of being enacted statewide due to concerns over lost revenue and opportunity for snowmobilers and other winter non-hunting recreationalists at that time of year. Again, with this gun season extension it will conflict with 4 days of the 36-day-long late archery season, however based on the Deer 2000 statewide questionnaire, this proposal ranked higher than other gun season extensions amongst archers. The proposal continues to require blaze orange and antlerless only hunting by archers during this 4-day-period. With all of these proposals the consistency from year to year will reduce confusion over whether or not a DMU is included in the late antlerless hunt. Statewide gun hunters would be provided with an additional 4-days of antlerless only hunting. Since significant snowfall has been absent from northern Wisconsin for a number of years during early December, local economy would likely see a slight increase in revenue to local businesses (grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, hotels/motels, restaurants, etc.). However, snowmobilers may be impacted in some years although long-term trail opener data by County in Northern Wisconsin leads us to anticipate limited, if any, conflict. Like having a consistent statewide 4-day October antlerless season, having a consistent statewide December antlerless season would mean less annual educational efforts would be required as the season would be the same statewide in all units each year. Such a statewide season would require some increase in work demands for Wildlife and Law Enforcement staff including additional weekend hours.

The youth hunt, as it currently exists, only affects a portion of the state's deer management units (DMU). In 2004 less than half of the DMU participated in the special one day hunt for youth hunters. Since the October 4-day hunt would now take place statewide, the opportunity for young hunters to experience a gun hunt during warmer weather will be available to all youth hunters. However, the committee understands the need to provide opportunities to not only young hunters, but to new hunters as well. Therefore, by allowing first time hunters to take a deer of either-sex it affords them an opportunity that may not exist for all hunters depending on the regulations in place for the unit (Earn-a-Buck). However, in order for the first time hunter to be the one that is able to take advantage of this opportunity, we would recommend that group bagging under this new license be rescinded so you don't have other hunters taking advantage of this provision meant for first time hunters.

The Elimination of the Hunter's Choice system and creation of two types of units and antlerless tags for each should reduce much of the current regulatory complexity regarding types of units and tagging deer. For bowhunters, this creates a 2-deer bag limit (one buck and one antlerless deer) in Unrestricted Quota Units (UQU), but bowhunters will have to purchase an antlerless tag(s) in Restricted Quota Units (RQU). Although this will likely encourage increased antlerless harvest, bowhunters will lose the ability to harvest an antlerless deer or a buck as they are currently allowed to do, if they hunt in a RQU. For gun hunters, this eliminates another application process, it creates a 2-deer bag limit (one buck and one antlerless deer) UQU, and hunters have to purchase an antlerless tag(s) in RQU. As with archers this system will encourage increased antlerless harvest and it actually maximizes "hunters choice" by allowing the gun hunter to shoot both a buck and an antlerless deer instead of "either-or". Our cooperative deer registration stations should benefit from this proposal as it simplifies the deer registration process.

Another issue that will need to be addressed is the need to develop a State Park hunting access system. Currently access to those State Parks where access is restricted by drawing and utilizes the Hunter's Choice application process to determine the successful applicants. Only those who possess an access permit for the specific State Park are allowed access to the park.

As mentioned previously, the archery license would no longer be either sex. This creates uniformity between the gun and bow hunter and eliminates confusion over which tags can be filled with which weapons. A buck tag is used for a buck deer and an antlerless tag is used for an antlerless deer. While this change will make both types of seasons more consistent, there will have to be strong educational efforts the first year or so do to the change in the long standing ability to hunt deer of either sex with a regular archery carcass tag.

Under this package of seasons and tagging options, the Mississippi River Block either sex season would be replaced with the same season and tagging options proposed for the remainder of the state. This creates statewide uniformity for deer hunters and eliminates confusion over which tags can be filled with which weapons (a buck tag is used for a buck deer and an antlerless tag is used for an antlerless deer). While this change will make the river block units consistent with the remainder of the state, there will have to be strong educational efforts the first year or so do to the change in the long standing ability to hunt deer of either sex during the gun deer season in these units.

A final recommendation forwarded by the committee was to legalize crossbows. Exclusive bow hunters and gun hunters will initially oppose this proposal. Additionally, some deer hunters may oppose this because of traditional thoughts of "their deer, in their woods, during their season" mentality. In addition, there is widespread misinformation about the range and effectiveness of this weapon. The American Crossbow Federation has been working to improve educational efforts in this area. State and National members of this organization will support this initiative. Aging hunters will benefit by legalizing crossbows during the archery season. This will keep more bow hunters in the sport and possibly attract gun hunters who normally did not archery hunt with a bow. In addition, legalizing crossbows in other states have attracted non-traditional hunters into the sport. Most States (35) permit crossbows for physically challenged hunters. Twenty-three states (AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IN, KY, MD, MI, MO, MT, NH, OH, PA, SC, TX, WY) allow crossbows to be used by non-physically challenged hunters during the deer firearm or archery seasons, or in the case of Kentucky, during a special crossbow season as well. Crossbows have been legalized for 20 years in Ohio. In Indiana, crossbows has been legal for hunting under an archery license for 7 years. In Georgia, crossbows have been a legal archery weapon during the archery season since 2002. In the states where crossbows are legal, the crossbow regulations vary in complexity. For example, "permitted during any legal season for legal game" (Wyoming) to "crossbows allowed during the late archery season for antlerless deer only" (Indiana). As with each of these proposals local and the statewide economy will witness a slight economic increase due to increased equipment sales and hunting opportunities. There will be increased sales of crossbows and related equipment. There will likely be an increase in the number of archery license sales.

Other alternatives considered

Several additional alternatives were considered and not included in the final proposal since they did not score well when discussed in the context of the matrix criteria or because they violated one of the established sideboards (appendix A). Some of these proposals include:

- Maintaining the current 9-day regular season. This proposal scored nearly as high as the 16-day season recommended but was not included because we believe that a 16-season will result in more consistency due to increased deer herd control.
- Evaluation of the current season structure. The current season was evaluated and rejected because it scored poorly in the matrix due to the confusion and complexity of Hunter's Choice and Zone-T.
- An antlerless only regular gun deer tag along with a drawing for an antlered deer authorization. This proposal was rejected because it violated the sideboard of maintaining the variable antlerless quota system.
- Statewide antlerless tags. This proposal was rejected because it violated the sideboard of maintaining the variable antlerless quota system.
- Wisconsin Bowhunters' Association (WBHA) recommendation (appendix B). The primary objective of this recommendation was to discontinue the special 4-day antlerless Zone T seasons, particularly in October and to create a way to earn a buck for the following year. The team discussed the elimination of the October antlerless gun hunt and agreed that eliminating the 4-day hunt would negatively impact overall antlerless harvest. However, moving the hunt earlier in the month of October may be an option, to conflict less with a rut, which is a final recommendation of the streamlining team. Under this proposed scenario, EAB could only occur every other year, which may not work in all units, especially those well above goal. There were concerns about utilizing this proposal in northern units. If there were a severe winter in the north, it is possible for a deer

management unit to go from a “pre-EAB” unit (defined in the WBHA proposal as a unit that could potentially be an EAB the following year) to a unit where there was a low or no antlerless quota in one season, which would be difficult to explain to hunters. Hunter would have to decide upon registering a doe whether they wanted their buck sticker for the current year or for the following year. In addition, record keeping and dealing with lost stickers from one year to the next would be problematic. Lack of herd control strategies and the associated administrative hassles, enforcement concerns and complexity resulted in a low score. Due to the complexity of the system, specifically having to decide a year in advance whether a unit would be in EAB the following year and having to explain these regulations to hunters, a low score was agreed on by the committee.

- Advanced Earn a Buck Options (Conservation Congress Resolution – appendix C). Under this proposal, you could earn your buck only during the late Zone T and archery hunt rather than the entire season (Wisconsin Bowhunters’ proposal) and the October 4-day antlerless hunt would still be available. Keeping October is good but it is too complex of a system to track. The team agreed that this proposal would not lead to regulation or season simplification.
- Wisconsin Deer Hunters Coalition (#2 sideboard violation, #3 scored)(appendix D). Emergency season extensions would be utilized to control deer populations where sufficient antlerless harvest was not achieved during the 9-day deer gun season and there would be no early antlerless gun hunt opportunities. The team felt that this would be a step backwards in deer management. This type of system did not work a decade ago to control deer populations and has contributed to high populations leading to the complex framework we have today. This would create a problem because the season likely would not be extended statewide and this would create confusion. Elimination of the special 4-day gun hunts, EAB and returning to a 9-day gun season would likely lead to public support for this recommendation, but it would not allow for herd control which is a required by law.

Fiscal Effects

One of the Fiscal impacts of these recommendations will be a decrease in revenues associated with the application fees for Hunter’s Choice permits. Based on data from 2003 hunter choice applicants the revenue generated from these applications is over \$140,000 (table 1). However, when you consider costs (\$32,807.14) and staff time, which is not calculated in this analysis, the costs match the revenues which is the intent of application fees.

Hunter's Choice Costs	
Money generated from the collection of the \$3 application fee.	\$140,238.15
Total Revenue	\$140,238.15
Cost associated with the collection of application data	\$12,062.01
Printing and postage for the HC notifications	\$11,439.73
Printing of the HC applications	\$3,169.40
Rental of the Hunter's Choice PO BOX	\$136.00
Distribution of Hunter's Choice applications	\$6,000.00
Total Costs	\$32,807.14
Bonus Costs	
Programming change to issue bonus permits 2 for 1(One time cost)	\$5,000.00

Table 1. Fiscal analysis of 2003 Hunter’s Choice application data.

An additional fiscal effect of these recommendations, is the proposal that additional bonus permits purchased in Unrestricted Quota Units would be available at a rate of one free antlerless permit for every additional antlerless permit purchased (two for one). In 2003, 43,438 hunters purchased more than one additional bonus permit in Zone T or what would potentially qualify for a UQU under this proposal (supply of antlerless bonus permits exceeds demand) (Table 2). Given these figures there is a potential decrease in revenue for the already struggling agricultural damage account of approximately \$433,932 if every other permit was provided free for every additional permit issued. For this reason, the Team felt that the department should consider an increase in the cost of bonus permits under this recommendation package. The Team also realized that there is a committee looking specifically at the issue of alternative agricultural damage funding that may help to mitigate the potential loss of the sale of second bonus permits if the cost were not to increase.

Number of Bonus Tags Purchased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Non-resident	5424	1761	271	134	24	18	4	4	4
Resident	80,327	29,213	7159	3023	867	593	181	137	45
Non-resident	\$108,480	\$35,220	\$5,420	\$2,680	\$480	\$360	\$80	\$80	\$80
Resident	\$963,924	\$350,556	\$85,908	\$36,276	\$10,404	\$7,116	\$2,172	\$1,644	\$540

Table 2. Additional bonus permits purchased in 2003 by hunters in units that would likely qualify as Unrestricted Quota Units.

However, we anticipate that the revenue generated in the Restricted Quota Units (RQU) will more than make up for the loss that we anticipate by selling the bonus permits at a two for one level in the UQU. Again using 2003 data, if we look at the units that we anticipate would fall into the category of RQU (those units that have a limited number of antlerless permits available and are able to satisfy their antlerless quota through the issuance of Hunter’s Choice permits and a limited number antlerless bonus permits). In 2003 there were 18 deer management units that issued hunter’s choice permits and then sold out of antlerless permits. If we assume that hunters would purchase an antlerless permit in addition to the buck tag that comes with their gun or archery license, and each of these permits were sold at the existing \$12 for a resident antlerless permit issued over the counter, the revenue generated for the Agricultural Damage account is anticipated to be \$656,304 (Table 3). The final fiscal consideration is difficult to quantify, but conceptually, the additional hunting opportunities and simplified and consistent hunting regulations could result in increased license fees with more hunters choosing to participate.

	Hunter’s Choice Issued	Antlerless Bonus Permits Issued	Total Revenue
Permits Issued	27,120	27,572	
X \$12	\$325,440	\$330,864	\$656,304

Table 3. Antlerless permits issued in 2003 by hunters in units that would likely qualify as Restricted Quota Units.

Recommended Public Involvement

The public outreach component of these recommendations is crucial. Without public input, specifically the input of deer hunters or without the buy in by legislators these recommendations will not advance. The team recommended that major deer hunting groups (Wisconsin Bowhunters, Whitetails Unlimited, Wisconsin Conservation Congress, etc.) along with the Tribes be engaged, along with the legislature at meetings to discuss and explain these recommendations and explain how these recommendations were developed. The means by which a more broad polling of the hunting public must still be determined, it could take place via a questionnaire, weighed scientific poll or public hearings.

Timeline

Timing is an important consideration for these recommendations. Whether these simplification proposals, if supported, are implemented in 2006 or 2007 depends greatly on the means by which public input is gathered, both in terms of initial outreach and final rule hearing comments. The first timeline scenario factors in a rule process independent of the standard Spring Hearing rule process. The second plays out in the context of utilizing the Spring Hearings to gather public feedback on proposed rules. The Conservation Congress should be engaged and involved in discussing these two options. The recommendation of the Team was to move forward with the first timeline in an effort to expedite the implementation of these simplification measures.

I. Deer Streamlining Team Report: Implementation and Outreach Timeline (**Non-Spring Hearing Option**)

November 9, 2004	Final report is completed.
Mid-November 2004	Present the Deer Streamlining Team final report, recommendations and outreach plan to the Wildlife Management Policy Team, the Law Enforcement Management Team, Division Administrators and the DNR Deer Committee.
Late November 2004	Present the final report, recommendations and outreach plan to Secretary Hassett for approval.
December 8, 2004	Deer Season Report – Informational item – Natural Resources Board. - Subject of Deer Streamlining Team recommendations will be addressed in the context of the presentation and copy of the final report will be distributed.
January 7, 2005	Briefing at the Conservation Congress Executive Council meeting
Mid-January 2005	Initiate outreach plan by meeting with user groups and stakeholders
February 2005	Complete outreach phase.
March 2005	Compile feedback and prepare implementation plan.
April 2005	Promulgate administrative rules pertaining to Deer Streamlining Team recommendations.
May 25, 2005	Hearing authorization – Present rules to the Natural Resources Board for authorization to take out for public hearings.
July 2005	Public hearings.
September 22, 2005	Rule adoption – Present rules to the Natural Resources Board for adoption.
October/November 2005	Legislative review.
March 1, 2006	Effective date of new rules. Will be in effect for the 2006 deer hunting season. < Pending Prompt Legislative Approval >

November 9, 2004

II. Deer Streamlining Team Report: Implementation and Outreach Timeline (**Spring Hearing Option**)

November 9, 2004	Final report is completed.
Mid-November 2004	Present the Deer Streamlining Team final report, recommendations and outreach plan to the Wildlife Management Policy Team, the Law Enforcement Management Team, Division Administrators and the DNR Deer Committee.
Late November 2004	Present the final report, recommendations and outreach plan to Secretary Hassett for approval.
December 8, 2004	Deer Season Report – Informational item – Natural Resources Board. - Subject of Deer Streamlining Team recommendations will be addressed in the context of the presentation and copy of the final report will be distributed.
January 7, 2005	Briefing at the Conservation Congress Executive Council meeting
Mid-January 2005	Initiate outreach plan by meeting with user groups and stakeholders
February 2005	Complete outreach phase.
March 2005	Compile feedback and prepare implementation plan.
April 2005	Promulgate administrative rules pertaining to Deer Streamlining Team recommendations.
September 2005	Annual Wildlife/LE/CS&L Rules Mtg.
January 1, 2006	Hearing authorization – Present Spring Hearing rules to the Natural Resources Board for authorization to take out for public hearings.
April 2006	Spring Hearings.
June 2006	Rule adoption – Present Spring Hearing rules to the Natural Resources Board for adoption.
July/August 2006	Legislative review.
January 1, 2007	Effective date of new rules. Will be in effect for the 2007 deer hunting season. < Pending Prompt Legislative Approval >