

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting: November 4-5, 2011
Agenda Item 7: Detecting Ungulate Population Declines - **Briefing**
Prepared By: Jerry Nelson, Ph.D., Donny Martorello, Ph.D., and Dave Ware, Wildlife Program
Presented By: Dave Ware, Wildlife Program

Background:

Department staff will address the Fish and Wildlife Commission’s request to explain how population trends are monitored for ungulate species and how we can detect changes in population levels. The briefing will include a discussion on the process and steps that are taken by the department once a change is detected.

Overall, the Department attempts to manage for stable game population levels within habitat and environmental constraints, including human impacts and expectations. When a change in a population level is suspected, we begin to look for clues that might explain it and we may also begin collecting additional information to verify that a change is occurring.

We recognize that many factors influence big game populations and there is usually some evidence that one or more factors may be in play. Reports of carcasses being found, severe weather events, major fires, are all forms of information that may explain declines.

Because hunter harvest is usually the greatest source of mortality for adult ungulates, harvest strategies and especially antlerless harvest are usually the first things modified in response to population level changes. If a change in harvest strategies doesn’t address the change, then other actions are initiated.

The briefing will include several recent examples of ungulate population trends to help explain the steps that are followed once a change is detected. Staff will also provide an update on projects and studies being initiated to improve our understanding of population levels and trends and what is driving them.

Policy Issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

None - briefing only.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

N/A

Action requested (identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking):

None - briefing only.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A

Communications plan:

- 2009-2015 Game Management Plan
 - Elk Herd Plans
 - White-tailed Deer Plan
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