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Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy "Blueprint" For the Future

The Wildlife Department invites you to attend an important wildlife conference July 13-15 at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. The conference is a master planning session for the state's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Conference input will help the Department create a "conservation blueprint" to shape the future of wildlife conservation for Oklahoma's 800-plus fish and wildlife species.

At the conference, you will be asked to take a habitat approach in assessing the relative health of all fish and wildlife in the state, especially Oklahoma's species of greatest conservation need. You will also pinpoint the most urgent threats to these species and their habitats and identify conservation actions to

counter those threats.

Based on your areas of knowledge and interest, small group sessions will provide opportunities to address needs within groups of species - such as mammals or birds - and also within ecological regions. Concurrent sessions provide the option to address the "people" side of the fish and wildlife business.

The strategy, or "blueprint," will create

a picture of the current state of Oklahoma's wildlife and identify specific recommendations to keep fish and wildlife populations healthy - cost-effectively and without federal regulations. It will take advantage of good work already being done in Oklahoma and fill in the gaps.

The Wildlife Conservation Strategy is a component of the State Wildlife Grants program, created

by the U.S.

Congress in 2001 to address under funded wildlife - species of greatest conservation need.

As the list of threatened and endangered species tops 1,000 and continues to grow, Congress recognizes America's wildlife needs a prescription for wellness. State Wildlife Grants provides funding to care for declining and at-risk wildlife species before they become endangered.

Congressman Brad Carson, a supporter of the State Wildlife Grants program is a "firm supporter of preventative care for wildlife."

"We can save taxpayers millions of dollars by intervening when species are in

decline instead of waiting for situations to become dire," the congressman said.

Rep. Tom Cole, along with Sens. Don Nickles and James Inhofe support the program for similar reasons.

"It will save our citizens money and the frustration of litigation often invoked by regulatory programs," Senator Inhofe said.

All 50 states, along with The District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and other US Territories, are developing similar conservation strategies. When fit together like a puzzle, they will show the current state of America's wildlife and demonstrate the need for continued funding.

A strategy is only as good as its components. To be effective, it must be shaped by the people who know the nooks and crannies of the state and who understand the issues, challenges and threats to Oklahoma's wildlife. As a private landowner, you have an essential perspective on the needs of Oklahoma's wildlife and people. Help Oklahoma develop a strong, comprehensive strategy. The Wildlife Department looks forward to receiving your input at the conference in July.

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**Oklahoma Department of
Wildlife Conservation Mission**

Statement: Managing Oklahoma's wildlife resources and habitat to provide scientific, educational, aesthetic, economic and recreational benefits for present and future generations of hunters, anglers and others who appreciate wildlife.

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Controlling Filamentous Algae

By Greg Summers, supervisor, Oklahoma Fishery Research Laboratory

Many Oklahoma pond owners have the problem of slimy, green/yellow/brown mats of fine, hair-like vegetation growing around the edge of their ponds. It fowls up fishing lines, smells bad and generally isn't very pleasing to look at. This bane of many pond owners is filamentous algae and it isn't doing the pond or the fish any good at all. When large amounts of this stuff start dying off and decomposing in the hot part of the summer, it can also cause some very serious problems to the pond's level of dissolved oxygen which may end up causing the death of your fish.

Before we start on the subject of controlling filamentous algae, it should be pointed out that this type of algae is really a symptom of another problem. Typically, ponds with a filamentous algae problem are the result of too many nutrients (nitrogen or phosphorus wastes or fertilizers) entering the pond. The most common sources of these nutrients are:

- pasture or crop fertilizers washing into the pond.
- up-slope septic systems that leech into the pond.
- waste products from livestock that water at the pond.

If any one of these can be identified and controlled, then the problem algae will go away. However, controlling the nutrient loading is sometimes not a realistic option, so the pond owner ends up controlling the symptom (filamentous algae) instead.

Filamentous algae should not be confused with the beneficial green algae in the form of tiny, one-celled organisms. These tiny organisms are both plant and animal-like in nature and are more-correctly defined as phytoplankton. A pond having a general light green water color, indicates it has phytoplankton. Having some phytoplankton is



actually a good thing provided it doesn't become excessive, which like the filamentous algae, usually indicates too much nutrient loading. A pond with a light green cast to the water will actually produce more pounds of fish than a clear or muddy pond.

When considering control of filamentous algae, there are really only two options: mechanical and chemical. Grass carp, typically, won't eat filamentous algae, so biological control methods are not currently available. Mechanical methods basically involve physically raking the algae mats out of the pond. Since the mats are usually not in deep water, mechanical removal is not a method that takes a lot of specialized equipment. What it does take is a lot of time and intensive labor. For those reasons mechanical removal is not often pursued.

Chemical control is the generally accepted method of controlling filamentous algae. If you ask a number of reputable farm chemical suppliers or even feed stores about what chemical to use, many will tell you copper sulfate, or, by another name, purple crystal. This is a very risky proposition. Copper is

lethal to all living organism, and if you treat with a little too much you run the risk of killing not only the pond's algae, but it's other desirable aquatic plants and fish as well!

The chemical of choice, currently on the market, appears to be a product called Cutrine Plus®, manufactured by Applied



Biochemist's, Inc. While this product also contains copper, it is in a "cleated" copper form that makes it like a timed-release compound. In this way, it's lethal properties are not so risky and a pond owner has much less fear of accidentally over-treating and causing fish to die.

Cutrine Plus® comes in both liquid and granular forms. Use granular early in the spring when you first start seeing the bright green algae appearing on the pond bottom along the shoreline. If you are treating the floating mats of filamentous algae later in the year, plan on using the liquid version.

Apply granular Cutrine Plus® at a rate of 60 lbs. per surface acre. Apply liquid Cutrine Plus® at a rate of 0.6 gal per acre/foot (1 acre/f t. = 1 surface acre that is 1 foot deep; 2 acre/ft. = 1 surface acre that is 2 feet deep; etc.). With the liquid, be sure and dilute the product with water at least 9 to 1 to make sure that you can spread it over the desired area.

With either the liquid or granular forms, treat only 1/3 of the pond at one time.

Too much decomposing vegetation at one time can cause rapid oxygen depletion, which will suffocate your fish population. If you don't see some dying algae within 6 weeks, you may have to treat again.

Another tip for applying your chemical control is to watch the weather and avoid applying the chemical on hot, cloudy, windless days. Every summer in Oklahoma there are at least one or two days on average, often in August,

when the Wildlife Department receives dozens of calls from alarmed pond owners that their fish are dying. Fortunately this natural phenomenon called "summer-kill" doesn't happen very often in Oklahoma due to our windy weather that actually mixes enough free oxygen into the water to sustain fish populations. However, summer kill can and will happen in months outside of August and can persist for several days provided this unique set of climatic conditions persist.

Because of the potential for summer kill, no chemical algicide should be applied

during this type of weather pattern.

Another common-sense tip for applying chemicals to ponds is to avoid treating the pond during times of high rainfall if you typically see water running over the spillway. This will dilute the concentration of chemical and you will definitely have to treat again.

Pond owners should always visually monitor their ponds in the hot summer, during the early morning hours if possible, to check for low oxygen levels. If fish are seen gasping near the surface of the water, or obviously if dead fish are found, then the pond owner needs to quickly reintroduce oxygen into the pond.

This can be accomplished by using a high volume pump (found at construction equipment rentals) to suction water from the pond and sprayed

back into the pond to create a fountain. Just like an aerator in a fish tank, this fountain can quickly generate enough dissolved oxygen to keep fish alive, but it has to be done quickly. There are commercially available fountains and air bubblers that can be temporarily or permanently installed within ponds to prevent summer kills as well.

Remember that you are treating the symptom of a much greater problem

associated with too many nutrients entering the pond. If this problem is not corrected or cannot be reasonably corrected, the treatment of filamentous algae will likely be an annual event.



Ponds with a filamentous algae problem are the result of too many nutrients entering the pond. Common sources of these nutrients are pasture or crop fertilizers, waste from livestock or up-slope septic systems leaking into your pond.



There is only two options to control filamentous algae: mechanical and chemical. Mechanical methods involve physically raking the algae mats off the pond. Chemical control is generally accepted and is successful if done with care.

A Few Words About Summer Kill

Summer kill is basically when the dissolved oxygen level drops in a pond to the point of suffocating fish. In most instances, this happens after several days of hot temperatures combined with cloudy skies and calm winds. With high water temperatures (i.e. water temperatures exceeding 85 degrees), the water loses its ability to hold the dissolved free oxygen molecules that pass through a fishes gill capillaries. Also, with cloudy skies, the plants in a pond will not photosynthesize nearly as much as on a sunny day to generate oxygen back into the water. This same factor is illustrated by the fact that most summer kills occur in the morning. Since plants don't photosynthesize after dark, no oxygen is produced throughout the night. If no wind and wave-action mixes oxygen back into the water, then the dissolved oxygen levels can plummet to below 5 ppm (parts per million) which begins stressing scaled fishes (i.e. bass and sunfish), and may even drop to the point of affecting scale-less fish (i.e. catfish species) at 3 ppm.

A Word From Your Regional Private Lands Wildlife Technicians

Alva Gregory - Northwest Oklahoma



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If you are a landowner in Northwest Oklahoma who would like to improve your wildlife habitat, then please let me introduce myself. My name is Alva Gregory. My position is the Private Lands Technician for northwestern Oklahoma. My position, along with three other technicians for the remaining three quadrants of the state, was created through a unique partnership between the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The focus of the Private Lands Technicians is to assist private landowners with implementing projects to enhance wildlife habitat. Many of the functions of my job are to not only give technical advice to landowners on how to improve their properties for wildlife, but also to assist them with getting cost-share assistance for those projects.

For example, here in western Oklahoma, we're losing literally thousands of quality wildlife habitat acres every year to the encroachment of Eastern red cedar (ERC). The most cost-effective management tool we have for stopping the spread of ERC is to begin a prescribed burning program.

However, getting firebreaks constructed can be costly.

That's where I can help. Through the various programs, particularly the wildlife habitat incentives program, also known as WHIP, I can assist landowners with the complexities of applying for cost-share assistance.

Just to tell you a little more about myself, I have been working for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for the past 16 years. I was raised on a working farm and ranch operation in Beaver County near Balco, in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

The past few months, I have been busy with implementing the new WHIP applications prior to the funding allocation cycle. I will be making contact with landowners who have a tentatively approved contract to complete the development of their wildlife habitat management plans.

For those of you who have ongoing WHIP projects, hopefully you have had a good late winter and spring season completing projects such as: planting tree/shrubs, discing fireguards, and completing your prescribed fires. Also, don't forget to monitor grazing activity so you leave enough cover on your property for quail and turkey nesting.

The wildlife habitat incentives program has been a success during the past five years in Oklahoma, I am looking forward to working with the landowners in the northwest region. If you have questions about the WHIP program in the northwest region please give me a call at (580) 571-5820.

Doug Schoeling - Southwest Oklahoma

Hello, my name is Doug Schoeling and I am working in the southwest region of Oklahoma as a Private Lands Technician for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC). Here in southwest Oklahoma, we've had a rough couple of years in terms of rainfall. With drought-like conditions, we've seen local wildlife populations such as bobwhite quail really suffer.

From a wildlife habitat standpoint, one of the biggest factors for healthy populations of ground nesting birds like quail or turkey is the amount and type of nesting structure. Because of the dry weather we've been experiencing, the importance of setting aside areas of native grass becomes very important, particularly when land is used for cattle grazing. A rancher who enjoys taking his grandson and bird dog out to chase a few coveys each fall, will certainly find more birds if some nesting structure is left on his place. But fencing off some acreage to keep the cows off can certainly cut into a ranch operation's bottom line. Well, one option available to landowners is to get cost-share assistance through the wildlife habitat incentives program, otherwise known as WHIP.

WHIP is a cooperative program that provides cost-share assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to landowners for habitat projects. Essentially, myself and three other technicians with the ODWC are working around the state to assist landowners with the complexities of applying for WHIP grants.

I am just now finishing looking at some new applications that I hope will get funded in the region. For those of you, who have applied, I will be trying to get in contact with you to finalize your projects and also meet with you to see how you are progressing.

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This spring many of our ongoing WHIP projects have involved tree planting and native grass establishment. Hopefully, during the next few weeks the region will receive some much needed rainfall to give these plantings a jump-start for the summer. Other projects our WHIP enrollees are gearing up for include summer projects like building fence before it starts to get hot, or even getting a pond or wetland built in the dryer months. For those of you who have taken advantage of WHIP in the southwest region, I hope that you've started seeing a little more wildlife activity on your property. With any luck, maybe the folks who just recently finished up any dirt work, will have had the opportunity to catch some rain to fill new ponds and wetlands.

I am really looking forward to working with landowners in the southwest. We unfortunately can't control the weather, but the better the wildlife habitat is, the less effect adverse weather fluctuations like drought will have on your wildlife. If you have any questions about WHIP just give me a call at (580) 695-6278 and I will answer any question you may have.



Ian Campbell - Northeast Oklahoma

Northeast Oklahoma is a land of diverse wildlife habitats. Tall grass prairies, ozark streambottoms, rolling hills and crosstimbers can all be found in this part of the state. Because of its diversity, this region provides some excellent hunting, fishing and wildlife watching opportunities. As it is with any area, however, the land with the best wildlife habitat and stewardship is typically where you are going to find the healthiest wildlife populations.

Howdy! My name is Ian Campbell, and as a Private Lands Technician for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), my job is to work with private landowners to improve their habitat for wildlife. I am currently working from our Jenks office located adjacent to the Oklahoma Aquarium. I've been an employee of the ODWC for the past 25 years and I have a strong farming and ranching background. In addition, my wife and family raise and show horses.

Since starting my new position in October, I've been very busy training and learning how the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) operates to give landowners cost-share incentives for performing habitat enhancements. WHIP is a program of the Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS), and represents a big portion of what my job is all about. Basically, I'm here to assist landowners in all phases of applying for, implementing and follow-up consultation on approved WHIP projects. If you're a landowner in northeast Oklahoma and you've always wanted to improve your place for wildlife, but never found it economically realistic, then the WHIP program may be your answer.

The last several months I have been busy meeting with all 22 county district conservationists. We've been evaluating new proposed contracts and now I am focused on developing the wildlife management plans for the tentatively approved contracts. Whether or not you've been approved for a WHIP cost-share contract for one or more projects, landowners in this part of the state can accomplish a great deal this time of year that will pay dividends for wildlife. Summer projects such as, timber management, tame/introduced pasture re-establishment to a native grass cover, and in late summer building firebreaks to enable you to conduct a prescribed fire program.

Other activities in the northeast can be pond renovation and development, preparing seedbeds for food plots, and stocking farm ponds that were constructed the previous year.

One mistake I see all too often this time of year is the mowing of rangeland. In this region, it seems many property owners are mowing off their properties for no real apparent reason. Mowing just to make things look good and to remove weeds may, in fact, be detrimental to ground nesting birds and other wildlife species. If your place isn't holding the amount of quail or turkey that you think it should support, and you've mowed everything in sight, then perhaps you're part of the problem and not the solution. Mowing native grasses and forbs (weeds) removes critical nesting structure for ground nesting birds and as well as reducing food resources for a variety of wildlife species.

If you are interesting in learning more about some of the projects that can be approved through the WHIP program, or just want to learn more about what you can do on your own to improve your habitat, please give me a call at (918) 299-6711. I'll be happy to help you in any way I can.

Brandon Baker - Southeast Oklahoma

Southeast Oklahoma is a beautiful place with its rolling mountains, pine-oak-hickory forests, clear running streams and last, but certainly not least, it's bountiful wildlife. But whether it's in the southeast or anyplace else in Oklahoma, areas with poor habitat, won't support healthy wildlife populations. Hello, my name is Brandon Baker and I am a Private Lands Technician for the southeast quadrant of the state. If you are a landowner in this part of Oklahoma, and would like to learn how to improve your property for wildlife, then you and I need to visit more.

Through a cooperative program between the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) my position was created to work with private landowners, particularly through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, also known as WHIP. Landowners in this part of Oklahoma can use the WHIP program for cost-share assistance with a variety of habitat projects, but one of the more common uses is for timber management.

Studies conducted by the ODWC on Pushmataha Wildlife Management Area over the past 20 years or so, have shown the benefits of timber thinning that is then followed up with a prescribed burning program. Once dense stands of timber are thinned, more sunlight reaches the forest floor, which enables better forb production. Forbs, commonly called weeds, are very beneficial to quail, turkey and other birds for not only food sources, but for nesting cover as well. By burning these areas every three-years, the fire will keep hardwoods (i.e. post-oak, black-jack oaks) from reestablishing back into the areas that were just thinned. This is just one example of several cost-share projects conducted through WHIP.

Landowners who are interested in WHIP projects can get involved at any time. The application process is very simple, a person may sign up at their local NRCS office or contact me to complete the application process. Once I have received the application, I will make contact with the landowner to set up an appointment to review his planned project and tour the property. After the initial visit, I will complete the program paper work and submit a proposed plan for the landowner's property to the NRCS office. The proposed contract then awaits the next funding cycle and will be reviewed with other projects across the state.

When a contract is tentatively approved for funding, I will then follow up with the landowner to finalize the plan and complete a detailed wildlife management plan for the property. I will then keep in contact with landowners to give whatever technical assistance they need to implement their approved WHIP projects.

If you would like further information regarding the WHIP program in southeast Oklahoma please give me a call at (918) 519-5392.



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WHY IS DMAP NOT WORKING FOR ME?

Russ Horton, senior wildlife biologist

This is a question asked with increasing frequency by many DMAP cooperators across the state. There are a number of reasons why a DMAP cooperator's goals are not being met after several



years of participation in the program, and this article will address those reasons.

The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) was implemented in 1992 in response to an increasing number of landowners and ranch or hunting lease managers who wanted to manage the deer herd on their property more effectively. At that time, and with the restricted number of days on which antlerless harvest was legal, many managers were not able to achieve the level of antlerless harvest needed to meet their deer management goals. By enrolling in the DMAP program (1000 acre minimum required), participants are given technical assistance and additional antlerless deer harvest options to help achieve their deer management goals for the enrolled property.

Participants are first asked to describe their deer herd management goals from one of the following:

1. Balance herd and range conditions at the highest herd level the land can support.
2. Increase the number of quality bucks, although total buck harvest will be reduced.
3. Compromise with some quality bucks and less than the maximum number of deer.

An ODWC biologist will then meet with the participant to assess current deer herd characteristics including population density, herd health and quality, hunting success, and crop damage. Participants are asked to collect information that will help the biologist formulate harvest recommendations to help meet the participants goals. The first information collected comes from annual spotlight counts (10 repetitions

between 15 August and 15 September each year) to determine the sex and age ratio of the deer herd. Participants are also provided a check station book, scales, a measuring tape and equipment for removing a jawbone from each deer harvested, and asked to record detailed harvest information from every deer harvested on the

enrolled property. From this information, and spotlight count data, the biologist is able to make harvest recommendations that will help the landowner achieve their herd management goals. Cooperators who provide as accurate, complete, and detailed information as possible ensure that their biologist can make well informed management recommendations which will ensure that herd management goals are met.

Far too often, however, after a few years of participating in the program, a DMAP cooperator confronts the biologist with the question "Why isn't DMAP working for me?".

As stated above, there are a number of possible answers to this question, but the answer(s) usually places blame squarely on the shoulders of the participant. The following are the most likely reasons why the goals of DMAP participants are not being met.

1 Inadequate, inaccurate or incomplete information gathering by the participant.

Let's face it....as anyone who has participated in a deer spotlight survey during August knows, it is not nearly as enjoyable as most people think it would be. This is especially true after the third or fourth night, when you have eaten about 10,000 bugs, been up until midnight or later and had to get up and go to your real job the next morning, and still haven't seen any of those Boone and Crockett bucks that you know are roaming across your ranch or lease. This is further compounded by a situation in which the people doing the spotlight counts (often hunters) live a couple of

hours away from their hunting lease, and thus spend four or more hours just driving to and from the DMAP property, making a spotlight count a 6-8 hour ordeal. Far too often, participants do not complete the recommended 10 repetitions of the spotlight count each year, and thus begins an attempt at managing a deer herd with inadequate information.

Problems also arise when incomplete information is recorded in the check station book. Quite often, hunters do not pull the jawbone from harvested deer, especially bucks. Without a jawbone, there is no way of telling the age of a deer. Another piece of information that is often missing is the antler beam circumference of bucks. Without this information, a biologist is trying to put together a puzzle with pieces missing, and, as expected, the results are less than perfect.

2 Failure to achieve recommended level of doe harvest, and/or over harvest of (young) bucks (including button bucks).

One of the most common problems that plagues DMAP participants is the inability or unwillingness to harvest the recommended number of adult does. Typically, hunters tend to let does walk by during the early part of the season, thinking that a Boone and Crockett buck must surely be following the doe, and they want to harvest the big boy. Later in the season, when they have decided to harvest a doe, they don't see any does. Another scenario is they let the does walk, and also let a number of smaller bucks walk, but finally end up shooting one of the small bucks and justify it by saying "I saw "X" number of bucks but never saw the big one so I finally just shot this one" or "I saw "XX" (usually a very high number) of does and this is the only buck I saw". When I hear this, my thought is "what is this guy thinking?". By letting does go and shooting young bucks, he is ensuring that he will never reach his management goals. Almost without exception, when a participant has failed to achieve adequate doe harvest, an honest assessment of all hunter's activities will reveal that every hunter had more than one opportunity to harvest a doe, but

chose not to. In this situation, it is impossible to lay the blame on the biologist. Also, a hunter who has killed three bucks usually has all the deer meat he can use in his freezer and doesn't want to "mess with" another deer, especially a doe. (Please remember the "Hunters Sharing the Harvest" program and donate a doe if you don't want it for yourself)

It is a fact that each time a hunter pulls the trigger he has made an irreversible management decision. He also, knowingly or not, makes a management decision each time he lets a deer go by, whether it is a buck or a doe. Another fact is this: there are not enough trophy bucks for every hunter to kill a trophy buck (let alone three) every season. Like it or not, in a true trophy management scenario, every year some hunters are going to go home without a buck (but hopefully not without one or more does). If a hunter kills a buck at any age before it reaches its prime, (usually at 5.5+ years of age), that buck will never reach its potential. Likewise, if not enough does are harvested to ensure that the herd is kept below carrying capacity, nutritional stress is going to prevent bucks from reaching their maximum potential.

Another common problem on DMAP properties is failing to completely shift to trophy harvest. Very often, participants will start letting small bucks walk, and within one or two years, they start seeing (and usually shooting) some very nice 2.5 and 3.5 year old bucks. On most properties, a 3.5 year old buck with adequate nutrition will have a rack that will make it into the Cy Curtis record book and, in fact, some Cy Curtis entries (usually at or just above the minimum score) are 2.5 year old deer. Most hunters find it very hard to let a buck of this size walk by. Studies show, however, that at 3.5 years of age, a buck has only reached about 65 - 75% of its antler development potential. This means that a 3.5 year old with a 125" rack could potentially have a 165"+ rack at age 5.5 or greater. There are very few hunters that wouldn't be elated to shoot a buck of this size. Unfortunately, these same hunters never make it to the point where they let the 3.5 year old buck walk by.

Another issue is the accidental shooting of "button bucks" by well meaning hunters who think they are doing the right thing by harvesting an antlerless deer. In this regard, two things must be said. First, in any scenario where antlerless harvest is emphasized (especially at the extended ranges possible during blackpowder and modern firearm season), there is inevitably going to be some degree of accidental button buck harvest. Second, every buck, including the state record, was at one time

a button buck. This being said, button bucks should be considered as part of the buck harvest and not the antlerless harvest, and every effort should be made to extensively educate everyone hunting on your DMAP property on identification of button bucks (look for the short nose and "flat-top" appearance when a deer is looking directly at you), and emphasize the desirability of harvesting mature (1.5+ year old) does.

Willingness to put in the necessary time and effort will ensure that the DMAP program works for you!

3 Trying to manage a deer herd on too small an area.

Even though the minimum acreage requirement for enrollment in the DMAP program is 1000 acres, in reality it takes far more land area than this to truly manage a deer herd. Assuming a deer density of 20 deer per square mile and a sex ratio of 2 Does:1 Buck, the deer herd on 1000 acres comprises 31 deer, (~10 bucks and 20 does). Of these, the majority are younger deer...very few are older deer, and even fewer are older (trophy) bucks. Most of these deer will at some point (often daily) cross the property boundary onto one or more neighboring landowners. If these landowners (or the persons hunting on their land) do not share the same management goals as the DMAP participant, they will not adhere to the same harvest strategies. No matter how many times you let a 1.5 year old buck walk by you, he will never reach his potential if he is shot as soon as he crosses the property boundary. This should not, however, influence your decision to let him go by. If you let him walk, there is always a chance for him to survive and reach his full potential, but if you succumb to the thought "I might as well shoot him because if I don't my neighbor will", you are guaranteeing that he will never reach his potential. The most effective solution to this problem is to increase the size of the property enrolled in DMAP, often through deer management cooperatives comprising properties owned or leased by several entities. Informing and educating others of your trophy management goals will often cause them to shift their goals as well and thus complement your management efforts.

4

Expecting immediate results.

Often, a participant will enroll a property that has a long history of buck only or limited doe harvest, and expect to immediately begin shooting trophy bucks. This is an unrealistic expectation. Two of the classic symptoms of a buck only harvest system are a very unbalanced doe:buck ratio (often 7 or more does:buck) and almost all of the bucks being fawns or 1.5 year old bucks. In this scenario, and remembering that a buck reaches his prime at 5.5 years of age, it takes several years of intensive doe harvest to bring the sex ratio to the desired balance while allowing the young bucks to mature to their potential. If the hunters fail to shoot the recommended number of antlerless deer and/or start harvesting bucks before they reach their prime, then the time period to reach the desired goal is extended even further. Often, a participant will enroll a property that has a long history of buck only or limited doe harvest, and expect to immediately begin shooting trophy bucks. This is an unrealistic expectation. Two of the classic symptoms of a buck only harvest system are a very unbalanced doe:buck ratio (often 7 or more does:buck) and almost all of the bucks being fawns or 1.5 year old bucks. In this scenario, and remembering that a buck reaches his prime at 5.5 years of age, it takes several years of intensive doe harvest to bring the sex ratio to the desired balance while allowing the young bucks to mature to their potential. If the hunters fail to shoot the recommended number of antlerless deer and/or start harvesting bucks before they reach their prime, then the time period to reach the desired goal is extended even further.

In summary, to take full advantage of the additional management opportunities offered through the DMAP program, participants must also be willing to take full responsibility for ensuring that the data they gather is complete and accurate. Shoddy record keeping and data collection will guarantee less than desired results. Conversely, accurate, precise and detailed record-keeping, along with meeting annual harvest goals will ensure that management goals are met in a timely manner. As with any worthwhile endeavor, deer management is not easy.

Willingness to put in the necessary time and effort will ensure that the DMAP program works for you.