

August 27, 2011

President's Message

The meeting for hunt guidelines took place today at the Arizona Game & Fish Headquarters. In a full meeting of the Commission, The Arizona Deer Association presented a plan that differed from the Recommendations of the Arizona Game & Fish Department. That plan had been discussed with the Department for the past 3 months and today was decision day.

With the support of the Arizona Deer Association and the expertise of Jim Devos and Jim Hinkle, I supported a plan that would remove current guidelines of 10 – 20 bucks per 100 does and instead we will now have guidelines of 20 – 30 bucks per 100 does. Currently, the Department has stated that a majority of the units have about 22 bucks per 100 does but that many are below that number. The point of contention has always been that we as hunters want to see more quality bucks, but with an increasing demand to have hunt tags, the Department was operating under guidelines that afforded more hunts but less bucks remained in the hunting pool.

The Commission listened to several blue slip speakers, including former commissioner Bob Hernbrode. His message was that 7 -10 bucks could scientifically satisfy a genetic pool and that therefore the need for more tags could be met. The Arizona Deer Association has long held that we need to see more deer on the ground and larger ones would be preferred. After a lengthy debate, Pete Cimellaro spoke to the Commission and pointed out that the department over the past 29 years has lost over 60% of our deer tags. That number is fairly even across the western states, but the Arizona Game & Fish Department as managers and we as hunters had failed to properly figure out that our herd was becoming more and more marginalized as years passed. Drought, predation and loss of habitat all have played a part in the diminishing deer herd and yet the Department still had tried to satisfy the demand for more tags.

The final vote was cast and the Department is now under direction to work towards goals of having 20 – 30 bucks per 100 does for the future. I would really appreciate hearing from the deer hunting community on these actions. The Arizona Deer Association has been labeled by some former commissioners as a special interest group that represents only a tiny vocal minority. This is an opportunity for the average deer hunter who does not like to get involved to make your comments. We are trying to make deer hunting in Arizona a better sport and would really like to hear from you.

Regards,

John Koleszar ADA President