

# **PUBLIC MEETINGS RELATED TO BUCK LIMITS AND TAGGING PROGRAMS**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – April, 2006**

### Introduction

For a number of years many South Carolina deer hunters have expressed concern over the unregulated harvest of antlered bucks in the state. Although there is a posted 5-buck limit in certain Game Zones these limits are additive among zones and these limits have never been enforceable. In other Game Zones there is no daily or seasonal limit on antlered deer. Many hunters feel that this situation leads to overexploitation of bucks, particularly young bucks, resulting in a poor overall management approach in most areas. There is interest among some hunters in reducing harvest pressure on antlered deer which should result in more total antlered deer, having the opportunity to see and harvest more mature bucks, and having a more balanced adult sex ratio. Limiting buck harvest may also shift harvest emphasis towards does in parts of the state where better population control is needed. Hunters have encouraged the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to investigate the issue of a statewide limit on bucks including the implementation of appropriate law enforcement measures to provide enforcement for such a limit.

In 2003, DNR conducted 5 public meetings related to the buck limit issue. These meetings were held primarily in the piedmont. Results of the meetings indicated that about 90 percent of meeting attendees supported the concept of a uniform limit of no more than 5 bucks with some form of tagging system in place to provide for enforcement. A statewide random survey of hunters conducted by DNR in 2004 indicated that about 70 percent of hunters across the state felt that the statewide limit on bucks should be 5 or less and that there should be some enforcement mechanism like tags.

With this information as a background, DNR conducted 12 public meetings in January and February 2006 to gather public sentiment data related to the issue of a statewide limit on bucks including some technique like a licensed based tagging system to provide for enforcement. Potential changes in the methodology used to issue antlerless deer tags and turkey tags that might arise if a buck-tagging program should be implemented were also discussed, as were potential costs to implement these programs. Three of the 12 meetings were held in the piedmont, with the remaining 9 meetings being held in the coastal plain.

### Public Notification

DNR produced a statewide news release that was distributed to the media in early December 2005 describing the purpose of the meetings and listing the location, date, and time of each meeting (Appendix 3). This news release was distributed again in mid January to inform the public that two additional meetings had been requested and scheduled. Additionally, approximately 200 posters were placed at hunting related retail outlets across the state frequented by hunters. Finally, a direct notification was sent by mail to 1,776 participants in the Antlerless Deer Quota Program (ADQP). Participants in this program own, manage, or lease approximately 3.8 million acres of property located primarily in the coastal plain representing about 40 percent of the available deer habitat in that region of the state.

### Description of the Meetings

Each meeting began with a presentation by DNR staff on the background and data related to the buck limit issue. Meeting attendees were informed that DNR was not proposing any

change at the present, but rather, the agency was attempting to determine how much interest there was among hunters in a statewide limit on bucks. Following the staff presentation significant time was devoted to public comments and questions (Appendix 2). At the end of each meeting attendees were asked for a show of hands related to the following topics: (1) a statewide 5-buck limit and (2) the concept of having a low cost set of deer/turkey tags to enforce limits with the funds earmarked for deer/turkey work. Additionally, at the 3 meetings that were held in the piedmont the meeting attendees were polled related to a 3-buck limit.

### Meeting Results

Total attendance at the meetings was 1,974 with an average of approximately 165 people. The meetings were the most heavily attended meetings ever hosted by DNRs Wildlife Section. This is likely attributable to considerable interest in the subject matter, as well as, the steps that were taken to notify the public of the meetings. Approximately 1.5 percent of South Carolina deer hunters attended the meetings.

Statewide, approximately 74 percent of meeting attendees supported a statewide 5-buck limit while approximately 95 percent supported the concept of having a low cost set of deer/turkey tags to provide tools for enforcement of limits. At the regional level, approximately 99 percent of piedmont meeting attendees supported both a statewide 5-buck limit and the concept of having a low cost set of deer/turkey tags to provide tools for enforcement of limits. Additionally, 94 percent of piedmont meeting participants supported the notion of a 3-buck limit in their area. Results for the 9 meetings held in the coastal plain indicate approximately 68 percent support for a 5-buck limit and 94 percent support for the concept of having a low cost set of deer/turkey tags to provide tools for enforcement of limits.

In general, concerns from hunters who opposed the idea of a statewide buck limit included the following: (1) private landowners should be able to harvest deer as they see fit, (2) we do not need more regulations, (3) the buck limit issue is an attempt to end dog hunting, (3) limits want work for dog hunters because deer are difficult to identify when running and the deer must be killed to keep dogs from getting on other properties, (4) there is no problem with the current system, (5) do not believe DNRs data which shows hunters favor a limit because no one really wants a limit, (6) if buck limit results in better quality bucks then do not support a limit because it will increase number of nonresidents, lease fees, etc.

In general, concerns from hunters who supported the idea of a statewide buck limit included the following: (1) difficult to have good management program on my property or club because neighboring hunters kill every buck they can, (2) no one needs to kill more than a few bucks each year, (3) exploiting young bucks leaves no bucks to mature, (4) must have a good way to enforce limits, (5) when could we expect to have limits in place.

There were a number of reoccurring issues that were not directly related to the meeting topics including: (1) need to do something about nonresident hunters because they drive-up the cost of leases and kill too many deer, (2) favor some form of antler restriction on bucks either alone or in conjunction with buck limit, (3) need to do something to get more young hunters involved, (4) nonresidents should pay more and be able to kill fewer bucks, (5) deer are now scarce in my area.

The following tables detail the attendance and polling at each meeting. For details on voting ground rules and question methodology see Appendix 1.

**Topic 1. Raise your hand if you would oppose a statewide 5-buck limit.**

Location	Total Attend.	Voting Attend.*	Opposed 5-buck limit	Abstain**	Support 5-buck limit-by subtraction
Greenwood	118	109	3	NA	106
Clemson	218	205	0	NA	205
Chester	106	96	1	NA	95
<b>Subtotal Piedmont (%)</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>4 (0.7%)</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>406 (99.3%)</b>
Florence	154	149	5	NA	141
Orangeburg	152	149	39	NA	110
Kingstree	154	146	14	0	132
Walterboro	333	319	171	5	143
Hampton	154	145	13	5	127
Columbia	231	217	97	1	119
Moncks Corner	302	277	98	7	172
Conway	9	2	0	0	2
Charleston	43	36	4	1	31
<b>Subtotal Coastal Plain (%)</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>1,440</b>	<b>441 (30.6%)</b>	<b>19 (1.3%)</b>	<b>977 (68.1%)</b>
<b>Statewide Total (%)</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>1,850</b>	<b>445 (24.1%)</b>	<b>19 (1.1%)</b>	<b>1,383 (74.8%)</b>

\*Voting attendance is total attendance less DNR staff and people who left the meeting prior to voting.

\*\*Following the Orangeburg meeting those abstaining were determined.

**Topic 2. Raise your hand if you would oppose having a low cost set of deer/turkey tags to enforce limits with the funds earmarked for deer/turkey work; not for general fund.**

Location	Total Attend.	Voting Attend.*	Opposed to Tags	Abstain**	Support Tags - by Subtraction
Greenwood	118	109	0	NA	109
Clemson	218	205	0	NA	205
Chester	106	96	1	NA	95
<b>Subtotal Piedmont (%)</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>1 (0.1%)</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>409 (99.9%)</b>
Florence	154	149	1	NA	148
Orangeburg	152	149	0	NA	149
Kingstree	154	146	0	0	146
Walterboro	333	319	30	5	284
Hampton	154	145	8	0	137
Columbia	231	217	29	1	187
Moncks Corner	302	277	1	6	270
Conway	9	2	0	0	2
Charleston	43	36	1	1	34
<b>Subtotal Coastal Plain (%)</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>1,440</b>	<b>70 (4.9%)</b>	<b>13 (0.8%)</b>	<b>1,357 (94.3%)</b>
<b>Statewide Total (%)</b>	<b>1,974</b>	<b>1,850</b>	<b>71 (3.8%)</b>	<b>13 (0.7%)</b>	<b>1,795 (95.5%)</b>

\*Voting attendance is total attendance less DNR staff and people who left the meeting prior to voting.

\*\*Following the Orangeburg meeting those abstaining were determined.

**Topic 3. Raise your hand if you would oppose a 3-buck limit.** Polling conducted at piedmont meetings only and at the request of meeting attendees.

Location	Total Attend.	Voting Attend.*	Opposed 3-buck limit	Abstain**	Support 3-buck limit - by Subtraction
Greenwood	118	109	15	NA	94
Clemson	218	205	7	NA	198
Chester	106	96	1	NA	95
Subtotal					
Piedmont (%)	442	410	23 (5.6%)	NA	387 (94.4%)

\*Voting attendance is total attendance less DNR staff and people who left the meeting prior to voting.

**Comments provided by Wildlife Section staff related to the issue of buck limits and tagging programs. These comments parallel the presentation that was made and are near verbatim.**

#### Opening comments

Welcome and thank you for attending. Attendance at these meetings has been outstanding and regardless of what you think about the discussion this evening it is encouraging that hunters are so interested in South Carolina's deer resource.

DNR is not proposing any change at this time, but rather, it is following up on requests by constituents to investigate the issue of buck limits. In order to get some measure of what constituents feel, two questions will be asked following the questions and comments period. Ultimately, any change would require action on the part of the SC General Assembly.

There are three important things that DNR considers when making decisions or recommendations; doing what is in the best interest of the resource based on science/biology, providing constituents with as much opportunity to recreate as possible, and providing this opportunity based on the desires of constituents within biological limits. This is the purpose of the meetings, to better understand constituents desires related to the buck limit issue.

The purpose of the meetings is not to discuss; season dates for deer or turkey, still hunting vs. dog hunting, baiting, turkey limits, nonresidents, eliminating the current antlerless deer tag programs, and antler restrictions or QDM.

On the other hand, the purpose of the meetings is to determine if hunters are interested in a statewide limit on bucks, buck tags to enforce a buck limit, and perhaps a better way of issuing antlerless deer and turkey tags if buck limits and tags are supported.

#### Background

Over the last 4 or 5 years, DNR has received numerous contacts from hunters indicating an interest in a statewide limit on bucks. Many hunters feel that bucks are exploited under the current system and some hunters would like to see more bucks and have an opportunity to harvest more mature bucks. Many hunters are concerned with what they see in the woods in terms of adult buck to doe ratios. Hunters understand that what happens on one piece of property affects other properties and DNR has completed 3 major studies over the last 20 years documenting this. Many hunters are now concerned with quality rather than quantity. Many hunters have been critical that DNR is never proactive in the state's deer management program. These meetings are an attempt to be proactive.

Hunters have encouraged DNR to look at the available data and attempt to determine public support for a limit on bucks. Keep in mind that a 5-buck limit already exists in each of the piedmont Game Zones and in some of the Pee Dee Game Zones. This buck limit is "on paper" and is not enforceable. Also keep in mind that there is no daily or seasonal bag limit on bucks in the lower coastal plain and in some of the Pee Dee Game Zones. (A map was shown depicting the current buck bag limit situation in SC.)

In 2003 5 meetings were held in the piedmont to discuss these issues (one meeting was in Columbia). In general, meetings attendees felt that the high harvest of young bucks was limiting the availability of mature bucks and that the current emphasis on bucks leads to

inadequate harvest of does and poor overall management. Ninety percent of attendees felt there should be limits on deer, particularly bucks, and 90% of attendees felt there should be some way to enforce limits like tags.

In January 2004, the annual Deer Hunter Survey was sent randomly statewide to 25,000 hunters included questions related to the buck limit issue. Respondents were simply asked to fill in a box with what they thought the buck limit should be or to check another box if they thought there should be no buck limit. Seventy-one percent of hunters surveyed indicated that the buck limit should be 5 or less and 72% of hunters felt that the limit should be enforceable with something like tags. From this survey it was interesting to learn that hunters who do not support the notion of having a buck limit and a way to enforce it harvest more buck than does while hunters who support the notion of having a buck limit and a way to enforce it harvest more does than bucks.

For information purposes, buck limits in the other southeastern states were briefly discussed. Alabama – 1 buck/day. Alabama is most similar to SC with respect to being very liberal on bucks. During the last few years Alabama has been undergoing some of the same discussions related to buck limits and at least one county has implemented some type of a limit.

Arkansas – historically 2 bucks season and a 3-point on 1 side rule was implemented statewide in 1996.

Florida – buck limit varies and they have been having discussions related to limits for several years.

Georgia – Georgia has historically had a 2-buck limit. Beginning in 2002 one of the two bucks was required to have at least 4 points on one side. Results indicate a decrease in buck harvest and a slight increase in doe harvest.

Kentucky – 1-buck season.

Louisiana – Buck limit discussions have been ongoing and preparations are being made to implement a 3-buck limit as soon as the wildlife agency can administer the tag program.

Maryland – 2 bucks season

Mississippi – 3-buck limit. Additionally, 4-point rule implemented statewide in 1995.

Missouri – 1 buck with firearms.

North Carolina – 2 bucks Western NC, 4 bucks Eastern NC. Buck limit discussions were ongoing in the late 1990s and in 2000 the buck limit was reduced in Western NC from 4 to 2. The limit in Eastern NC remained at 4. Results indicated a decrease in buck harvest and an increase in doe harvest in Western NC where a change was made and no substantive change in Eastern NC where no change in buck limits was made.

Oklahoma – 1-buck season.

South Carolina – 5 bucks in upstate and Pee Dee Game Zones, no daily or seasonal limit in coastal plain and some Pee Dee Game Zones.

Tennessee – 3 bucks season. In 1998 Tennessee reduced buck limit from 11 to 2. In 1999 the limit was changed to 3 and has remained at 3 since. Buck harvest decreased and doe harvest increased about 6 percent.

Texas – Regional 1, 2, or 3 bucks season.

Virginia – 2 Western, 3 Eastern.

West Virginia – 2 bucks season.

Overall what we can learn from the other Southeastern states is that most states have historically been pretty conservative with respect to buck limits. Also, states that have recently made changes to buck limits (limits were reduced) saw a decrease in the buck harvest and a slight increase in the doe harvest. This was the desired effect.

Some hunters say they would like to see more bucks, have the opportunity to harvest more mature bucks, and shift some of the emphasis from bucks to does. Will implementing a statewide limit on bucks accomplish what these hunters say they want? In order to determine if a buck limit would reduce the buck harvest we must determine; (1) the percentage of hunters that currently harvest more than “some buck limit” and (2) the percentage of total bucks killed by these hunters.

#### Data related to the issue.

What does the data say? Contrary to what some hunters believe, DNR does monitor the deer harvest in SC. Since 1997 the agency has used a large licensee based random survey to monitor the deer harvest. In addition, 3 times since 1997 DNR has contracted with a nationally recognized natural resource survey company to conduct an independent telephone survey and results have been consistent between the two surveys. Therefore, we have 8 years of data during which time nearly 2 million deer were harvested.

Data indicates that the average hunter takes less than 2 bucks per year. Why then, would the current system be a problem. Many hunters tell DNR they believe there are a relatively small number of hunters that take advantage of the current system to harvest a lot of bucks. Is this true or false?

For the sake of this discussion we will suppose that there is a statewide 5-buck limit in SC and that it is enforceable. Would there be some “savings” of bucks? What percentage of hunters kill more than 5 bucks per year? Over the last 8 years, only 4 percent of hunters took more than 5 bucks per year. However, this 4 percent of hunters took 20 percent of the total bucks each year. In this case, the net savings “on paper” would be 8 percent of the bucks annually. You can play these same numbers games with any hypothetical limit. With a 4-buck limit you find that over the last 8 years 7 percent of hunters took more than 4 bucks and these hunters took 30% of all the bucks annually which could result in about a 13 percent savings of buck with a 4-buck limit. With a 3-buck limit you find that over the last 8 years

12 percent of hunters took more than 3 bucks and these hunters took 45 percent of all the bucks annually which could result in about a 21 percent savings of buck with a 3-buck limit.

In reality, there would be greater partitioning of the bucks resource, therefore, the net “savings” may be something less than project. In other words, if hunter A has been killing 8 or 9 bucks each year and he is then limited to say 5, then hunter B who has been taking 1 buck a year may pick-up a buck since hunter A no longer kills as many bucks.

The bottom line is that there is truth to the claim that there are a small number of hunters that kill a lot of bucks. In fact, hunters that kill more than 5 bucks per year kill 90 percent more bucks than does, whereas, hunters that kill less than 5 bucks per year kill 15 percent more does than bucks. There are two different philosophies among deer hunters.

How does what hunters do to bucks affect the biology of a deer population? There are a couple of things that hunters and biologists mention along these lines and neither is well documented or understood. (1) If too few bucks are available to breed does when they come into heat could it lead to problems? In other words, in cases where there is a lot of pressure on bucks prior to the breeding season there is naturally going to be widening of the adult sex ratios. If there are not enough adult bucks to go around then any does that do not get pregnant will come into heat the next month or the next month until they do get pregnant. This lengthens the breeding season which translates into a longer fawning season and the fawns that are born late will have a short first growing season and are likely to be small and have reduce body weights and antler development. (2) Could having few mature bucks affect social aspects of a population that in turn affect biology? Again, not well documented or understood. It is clear that when bucks are heavily exploited, there are few mature bucks around. Mature bucks are dominant and their presence in the population may be important. An analogy to humans would be having very few adult men and a population characterized by a large number of women and some number of young men/boys. Could this create problems?

Biologically, what hunters do to buck is most important if hunter selectivity of bucks over does leads to a failure among hunters to adequately harvest enough doe deer for good population control as it relates to the habitat. This has historically happened in SC because many hunters repeatedly harvest bucks, particularly young bucks, even when they have the opportunity to legally harvest a doe. As an example, the following scenario is played out across the state on virtually every evening during the deer season. The average hunter is in their stand on a food plot or oak ridge and about an hour before dark the deer start moving. A doe and two fawns appear then another doe and fawn. A few minutes later, a 120 pound 4 ½ year old doe with a head that looks like a Coca-Cola bottle steps out and right behind her is a 90 pound 1 ½ year old 4-point buck. The average hunter shoots the buck even though he had the opportunity to take the doe. As this is repeated over time, it becomes clear that what we do to bucks can impair our ability to adequately harvest does when needed.

The pros and cons of having a buck limit largely depend on where one stands on the issue. Negative aspects of having a statewide buck limit in SC include the following; (1) hunters used to harvesting more bucks than the “limit” would not be able to harvest as many bucks (advocates of buck limits think this is positive), (2) overall buck harvest would be lower (advocates of buck limits think this is positive), (3) some hunters do not favor change and want no more government restrictions, (4) effects on lease prices, hunting effort, hunter

numbers, non-residents – unknown but some would say that limiting bucks would negatively impact all of the above due to less opportunity to shoot bucks, and (5) enforcement issues (how to enforce).

Positive aspects of reducing the buck limit could include the following; (1) decrease the total harvest of bucks, (2) increase the number, size, and age of bucks available for harvest in future years, (3) shift harvest pressure more to females, (4) better overall population (body weights, antler size, and sex ratios), (6) effects on lease prices, hunting effort, hunter numbers, non-residents – unknown but some would say that limiting bucks would positively impact all of the above due to better deer management and potential for “bigger bucks”, and (5) enforcement issues (if good enforcement techniques are developed then LE would be in better position than ever).

### Tags and Law Enforcement

If there is support for some form of a statewide limit on bucks, how could it be enforced? Many hunters indicate that they do not have a problem with the concept of having limits but they want to be assured that if they are going to abide by limits that everyone else will abide by the limits. Most hunters indicate that they would like to see some form of buck tags. Obviously, tags do have merit for enforcement purposes because they can easily be seen which would allow hunters, as well as, officers to help out.

In addition to tags, from an enforcement standpoint it would be critical to validate the hunting license as well. In other words, when a hunter kills a buck the animal would be tagged. In addition, the license would be validated with the date, county, and time of kill. Bear in mind that tagging the deer alone is not a significant enforcement tool because there is no record of the kill once the carcass is gone. On the other hand, the hunting license stays with the hunter throughout the season and could serve as a deer harvest record. A second benefit to validating the license relates to the possibility of regionally based limits. If one region of the state desired a different limit it would be possible because the license validation technique would commemorate the county (region) where past kills were made. The caveat would be to have a single statewide limit then any regional limit below the “standard” could be put in place and enforced.

DNR is currently changing the way that licenses are issued and there may be an opportunity to issue tags associated with the hunting license. Many hunters are now receiving a notice in the mail that allows them to renew their license. Also, many hunters are using the Internet and telephone to purchase their license. If hunters support a statewide limit on bucks, one idea would be to issue buck tags associated with the license. From an administrative standpoint, if this can be accomplished why not issue antlerless deer tags and even turkey tags using the same format. This would result in a more user friendly, one stop shopping system. No longer would hunters need a different transaction to get antlerless deer tags nor would hunters have to go and get a set of spring turkey tags.

With a 5-buck limit for example, however the hunter gets their license (renewal, Internet, telephone, or over the counter) they would get 5 buck tags, some number of antlerless deer tags to be determined based on management needs, and 5 spring turkey tags. Tags would be sent by mail. If the hunter needed the tags immediately, a set of generic tags could be made available in the rules and regulations brochure and it would be the hunters’ responsibility to

coordinate the generic tags to coincide with their hunting license number. Again, validating the hunting license would be important in order to enforce some type of limit.

Under this type of hypothetical system, all deer and turkeys would be tagged. Every day beginning September 15 (October 1 in Game Zone 1 – mountains) would be a “doe day” as long as the hunter had antlerless deer tags. If the hunter used the antlerless deer tags that came with the license and felt the need to harvest additional antlerless deer then they could use the current Individual Antlerless Deer Tag Program to get additional antlerless tags. The current Antlerless Deer Quota Program (ADQP) that many hunt clubs and/or landowners use could be left in place.

This type of system would be good for law enforcement because, as it stands, it is very difficult to make an illegal deer case in SC. This system would also be good from a disease management standpoint if the state ever had a disease problem. Bear in mind that there are currently no significant disease issues in SC. Many hunters are aware of the chronic wasting disease situation (CDW) that is ongoing in the west and northeast. DNR has spent considerable resources conducting surveillance for CWD since 1998 and results have been uniformly negative. However, tagging deer could help in disease monitoring/management in the event of an outbreak. A large percentage of harvested deer are taken to deer processors, therefore, processors are the obvious place to conduct disease sampling. Processors cannot be relied on to keep necessary records for DNR. If deer are tagged it would streamline the process of relating a particular deer to an individual hunter since the tag number could easily be included as part of the sample record. In the event of a disease problem, DNR would need to get in touch with the hunter for two reasons. First, to let the hunter know that there was a problem with the deer and second, to find out where the deer was killed so additional disease surveillance could be conducted at the local level.

#### Cost of hypothetical tags.

Most hunters are aware of the budget issues that DNR has faced the last few years. Similarly, most hunters understand that DNR will not get state appropriated money over things like education, healthcare, and regular law enforcement. Finally, most hunters understand that if they want new programs like buck limits and tags, they will need to support DNR in the effort. Deer hunters have historically been willing to pay for programs and this can be seen in the current antlerless deer tag programs which hunters asked for and support.

If some licensed based buck tag system is developed and antlerless deer tags are included with the buck tags it will make the current antlerless deer tag programs nearly obsolete because hunters would no longer need to purchase antlerless tags. This means that DNR would no longer have the revenue associated with those antlerless tag programs. Also, it is important to consider that there would be a cost to administer a buck tag program. Therefore, it would be important for some source of revenue to be in place to offset the loss of current antlerless deer tag revenue and to pay administrative costs associated with a new buck tag program.

Turkey tags have always been free and most turkey hunters wonder why. Indications are that turkey hunters would support paying a small fee for turkey tags. The SC Chapter of the

National Wild Turkey Federation has been on record for many years in support of a small fee for turkey tags.

Like the current antlerless deer tag revenue, funds associated with the purchase of deer and/or turkey tags could be earmarked for management, research, and law enforcement related to those two species.

A ballpark figure on the cost is as follows, again using a 5-buck bag limit as an example. If you deer hunt you would get 5-buck tags and some number of antlerless deer tags to be determined based on management needs for around \$10. If you turkey hunt then you would get 5 turkey tags for around \$5.

Final comments.

DNR has heard a lot of discussion among hunters over the last 4 to 5 years concerning their desire to look into a statewide limit on bucks. Data indicates that a buck limit would likely do what many hunters say they want which is to allow more bucks to survive/mature. Limiting bucks may also shift some of the emphasis from bucks to does as has happened in other states. DNR is interested in this side effect of a buck limit as it relates to the overall deer management program in SC. DNR can likely develop a license based tag system with a minimal fee that will allow a buck limit to be implemented and enforced.

As far as deer hunting in SC, we have been doing the same thing for a long time. It is time that we consider some changes that may improve our deer management program and the future of our deer hunting?

Thank you for your attention.

We will now entertain questions and comments. If you have a question or comment please stand and state your name, where you are from, and the part of the state where you do most of your hunting.

Time was allowed for questions, comments, and discussion. Appendix 2 includes a summary of questions and comments from each meeting. After the questions and comments period, it was restated that DNR is not proposing a change at this time, however, in order to have some measure of what hunters think a show of hands will be taken related to two issues (see Appendix 1 for determining meeting attendance, voting ground rules and question methodology.)

The following was shown in writing on the slide screen.

Question 1. Raise your hand if you would oppose a statewide 5-buck limit in SC. (It was stated that if you would like to kill more than 5 bucks you should raise your hand now).

Question 1. Raise your hand if you would oppose having a low cost set of deer/turkey tags to enforce limits with the funds earmarked for deer/turkey work, not for general fund.

Additionally, at the insistence of the meeting attendees at the 3 piedmont meetings, a show of hands was taken on the following verbally introduced topic - Raise your hand if you would oppose a 3-buck limit.

To end the meeting participants were thanked for attending and it was stated that a complete summary of the meetings would be developed once the meetings were completed. If public interest in change was high there could be some future consideration on the part of DNR for making a recommendation to the SC General Assembly. Any change would ultimately require legislation.

## Appendix 1 – Determining meeting attendance, voting ground rules and question methodology

### Determining meeting attendance

At some point during the staff presentation, DNR representatives made a headcount of all people attending the meeting. A separate count was made of DNR personnel. At some meetings, a few people either entered or left the auditorium after the headcount was made. In order to moderate this situation a running count was made until voting was conducted.

### Voting ground rules

“Voting attendance” was determined by adding/subtracting the number of people entering or leaving the meeting following the initial headcount. DNR employees were not included in the “voting attendance” and votes cast by DNR employees were not counted.

### Question methodology

Several things influenced the question methodology during the 2006 meetings. In 2003 DNR held 5 similar meetings related to the buck limit issue. At the first meeting, which was held in Greenwood, the question was asked in the positive sense (i.e. raise your hand if you would support...). When the question was asked in this manner, it was apparent that virtually all in attendance supported the idea and that it would be more problematic counting those in support than in opposition due to the large number of people attending the meeting. Therefore, the question was immediately rephrased in the negative sense (i.e. raise you hand if you would oppose...). With this in mind, questions at the remaining 2003 meetings were phrased in the negative. The number of people supporting the issue was established by simply subtracting the number in opposition from the total number of people in attendance. There were no questions raised related to this methodology during the 2003 meetings.

In 2004 questions related to the buck limit issue were included in the Deer Hunter Survey that DNR conducts annually. Results of the survey indicated that approximately 71 percent of hunters statewide felt that the buck limit should be 5 or less.

The experience at the 2003 meetings and the survey results from 2004 demonstrated that there was considerable support for a statewide buck limit and that it was much easier to count those opposed to the idea in a crowded auditorium. Therefore, going into the 2006 meetings the decision was made to conduct polling as it was at the 2003 meetings, i.e. in the negative sense.

No issues were raised related to this methodology until the fifth meeting, which was held in Orangeburg. This was the first meeting at which any real opposition to the idea of a buck limit was raised. Following this meeting, there was a column in a local newspaper criticizing DNR for the manner in which polling was conducted. The implication was that by only asking meeting participants to indicate their opposition to a 5-buck limit, no measure of support was being taken, i.e. the newspaper column specifically mentioned that there was likely a large proportion of meeting attendees who neither supported or opposed, i.e. they would have abstained. Therefore, simply subtracting the number in opposition from the number attending the meeting did not yield a measure of support and was therefore, inappropriate.

With this in mind, the following approach was taken at all 7 meetings that were held after the Orangeburg meeting. The statement was made and shown in writing on the screen “Raise your hand if you would oppose a statewide 5-buck limit in SC.” The number of people opposing a 5-buck limit was counted. Then the following statement was made. “In order to clarify, are we to assume that if you did not raise your hand in opposition, then you would support a 5 buck limit in SC. Is there anyone that wants to abstain or not vote?” Results of this approach revealed that only 19 of 1,143 (1.6%) people attending the remaining 7 meetings chose to abstain when given the opportunity. Therefore, DNR staff believes that the original methodology of subtracting those in opposition from the number in attendance was valid.

## Appendix 2 – Summary of questions and comments

Greenwood, Piedmont Technical College – January 10, 2006

Attendance: 118

### Comments:

1. Saluda – What is the deer population trend?  
Why are we doing this? No real biological need.  
Supports the idea.  
Question about administering the system.
2. Abbeville – Does not believe in survey DNR does.
3. Abbeville – Believe in buck tag program.  
Wants to have the hunter turn in the tag with each kill and then get another tag.  
Hunter education should educate hunters to the need.
4. Greenwood – When would we see a limit happen?
5. Greenwood – Validate licenses – How would it affect lifetime licenses?
6. David Williams – Greenwood – Do not have a problem – Could not enforce a tagging system.
7. Greenwood – Why not take a county approach to this.
8. Greenwood – Lease 2000 acres – member & guests take excessive numbers of deer – could do better if owned the property.
9. Newberry – Processor – Would like to limit non-residents to the limit in their home state.
10. Lost WMA land forced to lease now – tags would work – Why pay more to have tag system? Need to drastically increase non-resident fees.
11. McCormick & Greenwood - \$50 and \$20 is a bargain – would pay more than you suggest.
12. Laurens – How do we regulate harvest on does – do not want to over do it.
13. Cothran – Baiting in low country – would support 3-buck limit.
14. Crosshill & Ninety Six – Already has buck limit on property – it does work.
15. Has not killed a buck in 4 years – neighbors kills all the deer – Deer population is down.
16. Anderson – question on percentage of buck harvest and buck : doe ratios.
17. Bob White – QDMA – is nonresident hunter – applauds this effort.
18. Scott – Greenwood – Is in a club, got pictures of deer at night. Club shot everything so no chance for good deer. Manages some property.
19. Why not order license from Columbia & do it like vehicle registration.

Clemson, Ramada Inn - January 12, 2006

Attendance: 218

### Comments:

1. Piedmont/McCormick – Seeing less and less deer, fewer young deer – how to fix young deer problems.
2. Abbeville – disagree with idea that habitat has affected deer population because still having clear cutting and deer not there like they used to be.

3. Laurens Co – Is bag limit to change every other year?
4. Oconee Co – Not seeing deer – How can you compare a phone survey to a check station?
5. Union – What will harvest of more does do to population?
6. Mountain Hunt Unit – Explain mature pine situation (how habitat has affected deer).
7. Anderson Co – saw a lot more deer but mostly does.
8. Mountains & Central Piedmont area – Tagging quota for bucks, how many tags? What is the next step after we issue tags?
9. McCormick – Said private hunt clubs may be limiting number of bucks already. Some people say we are impacted by insurance companys? Do anti-hunters have any impact on our decisions?
10. Saluda – Mostly sees does; if take more does will it help their health?
11. Mt Rest – Remembers when there were no deer. Looks like we are going backwards.
12. Abbeville – Manage their own property. Said hunters should also give DNR more data. Turn tags in at end of year with more information. Would support a 3 buck limit.
13. Abbeville – Had club 5 years; 2 buck limit; weight & size up every year. Have seen habitat issue that DNR referred to.
14. Mountain Hunt Unit – 60 days in deer stand, saw 3 sick deer, found 2 dead. What does DNR do to monitor this? Did not have enough Law Enforcement. How can we enforce it?
15. McCormick – If buck tag limit, those caught where does money go? What about youth hunters and tags?
16. Liberty – owns hunting store – 5 seems fruitless since we already have that.
17. Mountains – In every state in the southeast when buck limit was decreased, doe harvest increases. We absolutely cannot stand any more does being harvested.
18. Six Mile – Have different rules now between upper & lower state – want 3 buck limit in upstate.
19. Greenwood – Can we limit size of tags?
20. Oconee Co – Need to have a doe limit – Late in December hunters kill more deer that are pregnant does. Hogs will move down.
21. Raleigh – would suggest 5 deer limit, 2 bucks, 3 does.
22. Oconee – What is definition of a buck? Button bucks should count as bucks related to a limit.
23. Why not just make a change in the upstate?
24. What good are the tags now? The only people who see tags are land-fill operators. If do not have check stations a limit will not work.
25. We will need check stations to enforce this.
26. Pickens – Confused – Button bucks get what kind of tag?
27. Newberry – Sounds like upstate supports the idea and the problem will be when DNR goes to lower state. Stress that this is for the quality of deer in the state.
28. Concerned about not having deer for kids to hunt.
29. Opposed to having all days either sex. One individual said he thought Kentucky gives half fine money to individual who turns someone in for not tagging deer.
30. Seen drastic decrease in deer.
31. We will not stop the crooks. Make it a reward for turning in information.
32. If goes into effect, when will it actually happen?

Florence, Pee Dee Research and Education Center – January 17, 2006

Attendance: 154

Comments:

1. Jeff – Implementing a deer quota – are game zones going to be dissolved/changed – Basically asking if there would be a change in Game Zone (bag limits).
2. Support idea of statewide buck limit – A.J. Prosser
3. Williamsburg Co – How would removed antlers be tracked/enforced?
4. Buddy – Florence – Support for a 3-buck limit. What about youths that are not licensed? Would they get tags too?
5. Michael Smith – Florence – Will we make this change or will it take a legislative action?
6. David – Outdoorsman – Is DNR considering taking Game & Fish regulations out of the hands of the legislature?
7. Dillon Co – Why would anyone want to kill 5 bucks? Wants 1 or 2-buck limit.
8. Steve – Moved from state where one could kill 2 deer a year – thinks a limit would improve quality of SC deer.
9. Randy – Florence/Marion – Are there going to be doe days?
10. Florence Co – How strict are we going to be on our enforcing buck tags?
11. Bob – SE Regional Director, commends the effort of state to implement buck limits.
12. John – Florence/Clarendon – Likes system in Texas – first 30 days of season antlerless only.
13. Kevin – Lee Co – What kind of feedback – wants to buy one license and be able to hunt and fish for one fee.
14. David – Lee Co – Will this effort include any change in the deer season?
15. Mike – Florence – Doe days only for couple years in order to accumulate bucks and let them get older.
16. Wayne – No deer at the bomb plant – Against unregulated doe harvest.
17. Kershaw Co – Supports buck limits – Also wants to see antler restrictions – Thinks we need to find a better way to distribute antlerless deer.
18. A. J. – Isn't there a program for depredation?
19. How do we keep antlered deer from being shot under depredation permit?
20. Joe – Marion Co – What is buck/doe ratio in SC?
21. Kevin – Darlington Co – What happened to other states when they change to a restricted system?
22. Terry – Do lower number of mature bucks?
23. Wants a 5-buck limit with 4 points on one side.
24. Coyotes – wild hogs, hurting deer.
25. Frank – How long would it take to implement such a program?
26. Doug – McCormick – Make buck tags part of big game license.
27. How many doe tags would a hunter get?

Chester, Chester Park Elementary – January 19, 2006

Attendance: 106

Comments:

1. How many doe tags will we get?
2. If purpose is to get larger bucks, since we have 5-buck limit now this will not change anything. We need some type of antler restriction.
3. Why not make one of the tags a buck of choice and others with some restriction on antlers?
4. Chester/York Co – Support two-buck limit with second buck having antler restriction.
5. In Kentucky have to call in when you harvest a deer.
6. Any idea what buck/doe ratio is in this area?
7. One year killed a lot more does, next year killed more and better bucks. It works.
8. I think 5-buck limit is too much, 3 is enough. Our mentality needs to change. If hunter is from out-of-state should pay more for tags. Button bucks should be one of the buck tags.
9. Have to figure out how to get tags to those who have permanent or gratis license.
10. From Gastonia, hunts Central Piedmont. Had hands tied compared to lower state for years.
11. At present time we have no program at all. DNR does not know how many deer everyone is killing.
12. Once we get results from 5-buck limit we could gradually drop it down to lower limit.
13. Has DNR looked at way other states issue their tags?
14. What we are trying to do with this is to improve quality of bucks. Do we have the genetics to get good bucks?
15. When all meetings are complete, will DNR give the information to legislators? There is a legislator from Chester – Delaney.
16. We do need some kind of buck limit. We do not see the buck sign we used to.
17. If this comes about, would not be much change in Piedmont other than enforcement. Is this an attempt to make things similar across the state? Having things different hurts all hunters. Do we have a plan to implement other changes down the road?
18. Would like to see lower limit because adjacent clubs are not respecting the current limit. Need to put penalties higher.
19. If we do not do something about the lease rates will not have a place for kids to hunt.
20. Have we ever thought about getting rid of doe tags and just selling buck tags?
21. Have we considered just having a doe only day?
22. At the club he is in, most deer would be left in the woods if there was an antler restriction.
23. Could we let hunters know how many does per buck they should take?
24. Counted his trail master pictures – 360 pictures – only 9 made in daylight.
25. Why does Piedmont have to accept 5? We want lower limit.
26. Went to Piedmont meetings before – few people will be making a decision – let all the hunters decide.
27. We need to kill a lot more does – few use all their tags. Thinks every day should be a doe day.
28. In counties with not many deer, is DNR telling them that other areas would not accept reduced ability to harvest does?
29. What do officer & biologists recommend? That is what I want to support.

30. Funds should be used only for deer related work.
31. Would it be possible to ask hunters questions on their licenses?

Orangeburg, Orangeburg Calhoun Tech. – January 19, 2006  
Attendance: 152

#### Comments

1. Recommend a sunset clause in any legislation so after a given period (5-years), it would have to be renewed or revert back to current limits.
2. Concerns that improved herd conditions resulting from this change will increase cost of hunting locally (drive lease fees up) (3 comments).
3. QDM proponent (7 comments).
4. Endorses planting more and better “food plots” to improve deer quality and quantity.
5. Questions about current deer population and sex ratio.
6. Concerned that entire public meeting process is “fluff” and DNR has already made decision as to what will happen (2 comments).
7. Questions about how data presented at meeting was collected, does not believe DNR data, does not believe many support notion of buck limit (2 comments).
8. Deer processor feels like “unpaid game warden” and is concerned that changes might increase burden on him. Also concerned that some processors are unethical in their business practice concerning overlooking illegal activities.
9. Concerned the proposed buck limit doesn’t benefit hunters from SC, but rather benefits non-resident (FL) hunters.
10. Opposes QDM (2 comments)
11. Recommends limits on number of tags/licenses issued to non-resident hunters (2 comments).
12. Increase fees for non-resident hunters (4 comments)
13. Will buck limit apply equally to non-residents?
14. Owns property (2,000 ac.) and trying to manage for quality. Has neighbors with little property that kill everything.
15. Size limit rather than number limit.
16. Peer pressure will improve enforcement of any rule or regulation (2 comments).
17. Recommends increasing youth participation in hunting or special youth hunts (2 comments)
18. Concerned this change is directed at reducing or harming dog hunting (4 comments). Limits want work for dog hunting. Need to be able to shoot everything since they are running and in bushes.
19. Concerned about eliminating requirement to check harvested turkeys at check station.
20. Concerned about how “tags” may impact clubs that share harvested deer – who or what is required to be tagged.
21. Supports increasing license fees (2 comments)
22. Concerned about impact of tags on WMA users – will they get additional tags?
23. Concerned about hunter ethics.
24. Farmer concerned about crop damage.
25. Concerned about crop depredation permits (2).
26. Recommends increasing doe harvest rather than restricting buck harvest.
27. Have earlier doe days to increase doe harvest.

28. Recommends focus on “stewardship” and improving quality of our resources.
29. Reduce doe days and/or doe tags because we have too few deer (3 comments)
30. Require hunters to harvest a doe before being able to harvest a buck
31. Open Season later (Sept 15) – 2 comments
32. Close Season Later (January 31)

Kingtree, County Complex Auditorium – January 26, 2006

Attendance: 154

Comments:

1. What is Doe/buck ratio?
2. Kingtree- How will this affect youth? How to enforce if hunter just gets more tags?
3. Williamsburg Co. – Bow & dog hunter. Any numbers on clubs doing trophy management? Is overall deer herd in any kind of trouble?
4. Hunt on club for 33 years, never killed does on 10,000 acres; adjoining clubs 3-4 years kill 3-600 does. Quality of bucks comes from not having acorns. Too many pines.
5. Kingtree – How can we manage deer when farmers have kill tags?
6. Can help bucks with weight limits on does.
7. Why 5 buck limit? Put a moratorium on killing bucks for 2 years and then implement a size limit when bucks are legal again.
8. Asked how many in people in the room are on some type of quality program. Requires members to mount what they kill.
9. Hemingway – Hunted Pennsylvania for years, put more emphasis on does & now not seeing deer.
10. Clarendon Co. – What about taking a young kid? Do not want to restrict youth to kill more than 5.
11. Georgetown/Charleston Co. – Since liberalization of doe harvest are we seeing improvement in sex ratio? Why not continue what we are doing now with education?
12. What effect on agriculture? How many deer should be on land?
13. Five buck limit is too many, 3 is better (local landowner).
14. Williamsburg Co – dog hunter – You say a lot of people are interested in having buck limit – do we know who they are – are they upstate hunter? Still hunters? We do not like to be regulated – will there be problems from this?
15. What about properties that bring in a lot of hunters w/5 buck limit each?
16. Talked about numbers game some hunters play– talked about violators that give us all a bad image for hunters – doing nothing to help our deer herds. What DNR is discussing are moves in the right direction.
17. Georgetown/Williamsburg – How we took total harvest 2005? Do we agree that deer density is different in certain areas? Why suggesting 5 deer statewide? In the year 2000 –there were 3,576 deer vehicle collisions, in 2003-1,585. In 2005 – Aiken Co. had 21 state record deer and they have no limit. Orangeburg County has high number of state records and no limit.
18. Do we know demographics of survey (mail) returns?
19. Berkeley (private farm) near Francis Marion National Forest – kill a lot of deer on Francis Marion.
20. Use doe quota program. How would buck limit apply to specific property?

21. Would we have time to implement change for next season?
22. Talked about a lot of bucks taken off properties. It is up to the club to limit this.
23. Why not put antler restrictions in place?
24. If go with tags for bucks will we need tags for does as well?
25. If own 200 acres and doing buck management, buck limit would help when adjoining club does not limit themselves.
26. Obvious that the biology behind this works and hunters have to make it work.

Walterboro, Hampton Street Auditorium – January 31, 2006

Attendance: 333

Comments:

1. We are saying they should pay more for less deer? What about youth tags? Does not care about other states. We have the best system.
2. Penn/NY have short deer season & see a lot of deer dead on road.
3. Need to control development & need more agriculture.
4. Individual said he had not hunted in years. Need to do it right – seasons, license, limits, shot load, etc. We do not need more laws.
5. (Round O area) Where do have to check deer? We divide hunters tonight – dog vs still hunters. Will not keep everyone legal. No way for us to manage it. We cannot manage for quality because of so many private landowners.
6. Small landowner – last 2 weeks was unable to hunt own property because of dogs. Does DNR think the non-residents will stop at a 5-buck limit.
7. How will we handle individuals who have meat to take to processor that has been given to them.
8. Cannot manage property if need to use all tags for cull bucks.
9. DNR has been trying to sell doe tag program for years and deer not any bigger.
10. If you cannot see them, do not pull the trigger.
11. In Marines, missed 20 years of his hunting. DNR should not tell him he could only kill 5 bucks. Every person attending this meeting should call legislators and stop this.
12. I am for bigger bucks, do not kill younger bucks, everyone can do this out of choice without a imposing a limit. Saw individual in Georgia written up for not tagging deer before he drug it to road. Most of individuals in Georgia kill more than 2 bucks. Cannot develop an enforceable system.
13. Hunting 53 years, always feed deer, hunters should be able to kill what they want. He said neighbors benefit from their program. Does not like idea of a limit.
14. Some regulation on bucks is needed in SC, why not a size limit. Sees fewer deer because of depredation permit by farmers. Do not need more pressure on does.
15. Is DNR a law-making agency?
16. What is logic behind the phased in 3 day doe harvest. Open season too early. Personally cut out two weeks in August.
17. SC & Texas – only 2 states where can shoot bucks in velvet.
18. Why are we overrun with non-residents?
19. How does buck limit effect hunting on government land?
20. Same program is designed to get bigger bucks. Way to get bigger bucks is to plant more food. Need to pay people to plant more food plots.

21. Hunted 35 years, taught to be sure of target. Several states, done studies – years with high water and high acorn crops not see as many deer. Very much in favor of limit – 1 buck/yr. enough.
22. Don't believe DNR data that many hunters are in favor of limit.
23. If limited to 5, two 10 yr old boys, is he supposed to sit home?
24. As long as we have deer, we need to kill them.
25. What is wrong with the current system?
26. Where does limit of 5 come from?
27. 10,000 acre hunt club, Jasper Co. If not for non-resident hunters could not pay his bills. With 5 buck limit may just quit hunting. Need to kill deer in areas being developed.
28. Georgia resident – just a poor old dog hunter, has 35 dogs; against buck limit. Need to get control of this idea in SC and stop it before we before we lose it.
29. Florida resident – time to do something; 2000 acres – his club killed only 9 bucks, Orangeburg. 5000 acres in Bamberg. Commends DNR about doing something about this. Would increase number of quality hunts.
30. Georgia – In Georgia wardens are always hassling hunters about seeing license and tags. Don't need this in SC.
31. My club kills more and more bucks each year. Neighbors get upset if dogs get on their land so we need to shoot deer ahead of dogs so dog want get away.
32. Does DNR information come from non-residents? Make non-residents go along with restrictions, not residents.
33. Did not answer question about what is wrong with the current system. Did not agree that DNR survey is adequate to determine statewide opinion.
34. Did not know problem with less bucks in state, not a problem in coastal plain.

Hampton, County Courthouse – February 2, 2006  
Attendance: 154

Comments:

1. Georgia resident hunts in SC– Against proposal for tags. Government needs to let people hunt as they please. Don't ruin it like they did in Georgia.
2. Just moved from Florida – because rules are simple; changes would be detrimental.
3. When take meat to processor, seen small deer w/spots. How limit that?
4. Florida – hunted 34 years. Buck limit will help quality. Supports concept of limit.
5. Not concerned with limit – club has antler restrictions. If want people to shoot older deer should use antler restriction.
6. Not easy for some to use tags with dog hunting; a dog hunter will be out of tags first week of season.
7. Georgia resident hunts in SC– Almost lost dog hunting in Georgia, must pay \$100 for dog hunting permit; not for buck limit – need to let Representatives know you don't support limit in SC.
8. Not enforceable – will make dishonest people out of honest people.
9. Hampton – dog hunt & still hunt. If limits on deer what will happen to deer population? Will explode.
10. Money tends to run a lot of things. Some hunters think they should kill a 10 pt every time they go out. If let deer walk is like watching a herd of cattle.

11. Hunted all season except 5 days. Saw 100's of deer. Killed 15 deer and wife killed 5.
12. Directed at comment #11. How many of those 20 deer you and your wife killed were 10 pointers. Need to let some grow up, then we all will be shooting 10 pointers.
13. If limit number of bucks, to create trophy deer state will raise the price of places to hunt.
14. Put a limit on small bucks, but not larger bucks
15. Wants to know how to get the deer? Thinks taking too many deer.
16. Jasper – hunts 3 clubs & runs property. Why so much emphasis on killing does? Seeing a lot less deer. Will hurt community if restrict out of state hunters.
17. Charleston/Barnwell – If 5 buck limit in upstate, hear that LE not checking. In 15 years, will it be a \$300 tag? What does auto insurance companies say about this? Bow hunters offered to pay a license!
18. Jasper/Saluda – 5-buck limit in upstate – has it made a difference?
19. Bow hunters – how keep up with doe harvest?
20. What will we do with a point restriction?
21. Barnwell – if shift more emphasis on does & problems with habitat will get long term decline in deer numbers.
22. Hampton – lost a lot of farmland because of deer. Favor anything to reduce deer population; no limit on does.
23. Deer processor – have 5 tags and have buck days.
24. Have a lot of hunters who come in late at night.
25. Think buck limit is great. Good for youth and dog hunters; can still kill a lot of deer.
26. Family farm – Estill, quit planting beans because of damage. Said DNR has all the information needed to make the change.
27. Bamberg – appreciate youth day but should be at beginning of season.
28. This year 10-17 years old, should be lower age! We do not kill enough does, do not see many bucks.
29. Would like to have 5 bucks & 10 does – farmer – needs to kill more deer.
30. Support some type of antler restrictions because all 5 could be young deer.

Columbia, Riverbanks Zoo Auditorium – February 7, 2006

Attendance: 231

Comments:

1. Explain about children (how they would get tags)?
2. If object is to get money, why fix something that is not broken?
3. Orangeburg/Aiken – What to do about tags for dog hunters?
4. A lot of clubs are already on a voluntary basis. This will make cost of leasing go up.
5. Who controls the hunting/game?
6. Everyone would rather harvest mature deer, biologist should do what is necessary to make this happen. Need teeth in enforcement.
7. Why not do buck tags to amount of property?
8. Against it, been taxidermist 30 years. Kills 5-8 bucks year. Don't need limit because knows hunters all smart enough to manage their deer. Has a friend who killed 25 bucks last year, but this is minority.
9. What about button bucks (how would they be treated)?

10. Aiken/Orangeburg – 500 acres, took 10 deer 50/50 buck/doe. Early in season saw a lot of young bucks but not late in season because adjacent club on 183 acres killed 43+ deer.
11. What are the facts about deer killed by autos?
12. Where are all the people that DNR says want limit- Don't believe DNR survey.
13. Problem with the way this was brought about. How was it publicized? Most people are intelligent. We need to educate hunters better. We do not need to limit children.
14. What about antler restrictions rather than limits?
15. All other species have limits so why not deer.
16. Does not think it will work – kill more does & will kill more button bucks.
17. (Deer processor) – seen a lot of change in last number of years, we have pushed our local hunters out. We do need to make a change – deer size has declined. Hunters will not bring untagged deer.
18. Should let youth shoot more deer. Would be good to limit adults.
19. Should have same limit for kids & adults & learn to live with it.
20. Other states do not have dog hunting. This will eliminate dog hunting.
21. Dog clubs killing half the deer they used to. There is more pressure on deer now. How do we get buck limit pushed thru with all these people opposing?
22. Is deer herd on a decline?
23. Would we have less overall deer population since we would kill more does?
24. Do we have a ratio of deer for specific acreage?
25. Clarify that it is a 5-buck limit, not 5 deer limit.
26. Question about farmers killing deer & letting them lay in field.
27. What do farmers think about this?
28. Said he knew 3 clubs who were not notified.
29. From deer harvest data, do larger bucks come from coastal plain? Why do we need to change?
30. Have to kill does to keep herd in balance.
31. A club in Salley – are limited on the number of tags they get (are ADQP)
32. Have a problem with money. DNR is doing it for the money.
33. Where I hunt there is more deer.
34. Why not charge \$1 extra on the cost of hunting license and send everyone a questionnaire?
35. Savannah River – explain limit imposed this year on SRS hunts.
36. Our point is to save bucks, only way to save bucks is to open season later when bucks are not in groups.
37. To go from unlimited to 5 is extreme. Why not start out at 10-buck limit.
38. Have young son and if he is limited to 5 bucks he will quit deer hunting.

Moncks Corner, Santee Cooper Auditorium – February 9, 2006

Attendance: 302

Comments:

1. What would we do for kids under 16 (how would they get tags)?
2. Lifetime license, how get tags?
3. Never killed more than 5 bucks but does not want to be told not to kill more than 5. If we need more revenue then increase nonresident license fees.

4. Only a few hunters killing most of bucks. Has 5000 ac and has system in place, does not agree with it. Clubs have to take responsibility.
5. Hunts Francis Marion National Forest – how to manage for bucks if no food for them to hunt.
6. Someone carried 15 deer to processor and did not pick them up. How to control processors?
7. How many years will it take to change from 5 to 3?
8. Harvest ratio is 50/50. What do we want?
9. On WMA can hunt bucks 16 days, but few there are few doe days.
10. Roads are closed on National Forest which makes it hard to hunt.
11. Should send a survey to every license holder, rather than 25,000 in current survey.
12. Put survey on back of license and require it to be sent in.
13. Took daughter hunting 7 times. He killed 7 bucks. Does not agree with limit.
14. Hunts government woods, number of hunt days have been lost. We will never get those days back?
15. How did all this come about?
16. It started in the upstate.
17. Is it not true that if you increase doe harvest that the button buck harvest increase.
18. Have we considered a program to limit the harvest of button bucks instead of a buck limit.
19. This is a great idea for upstate, however, lower state does not need this. Everyone is down on dog hunting. We also have no count on coyotes, bobcats.
20. Landowner – Berkeley Co. – farmers killed a lot of deer with crop permits.
21. Would rather go to an antler point restriction rather than tags.
22. We have a lot of nonresident hunters shooting anything they want to.
23. Everyone needs to call his or her representative and stop this.
24. Small landowner – if he is limited then he will not spend as much money on his property.
25. People will kill more than 5 bucks if they want to regardless of tags.
26. Ravenel – works hard to manage herd, lease keeps going up and up; now (if limited on bucks) feels like he is being punished.
27. Hunters paying \$20 for doe tags. If DNR charges \$10 for buck tags and hunters get doe tags with buck tags then you are losing money. This is going the wrong way. Keep figure at \$20
28. Will we do away with doe tags?
29. Some people want whole state a trophy management area. Do not see as many deer as we used to, and DNR is encouraging harvesting more does.
30. Individual has knowledge of other states that have limits. People in these states do not like the limits. Maryland has a 2-buck limit and he killed 7 there last year.
31. Over last 10 years have bucks & does increased statewide?

Conway, Horry/Georgetown Tech. - February 16, 2006  
 Attendance: 9

Comments:

1. If there is a 5-buck limit there should also be an antler restriction. Also non-residents should pay more for buck tags.

2. Has 3 grandsons, wants them to be able to kill the first deer that comes out so he buys doe tags.
3. Would like to see it implemented as soon as DNR could.
4. What is buck size potential in coastal plain?

Charleston, DNR Marine Center Auditorium, Fort Johnson - February 21, 2006

Attendance: 43

Comments:

1. Middleton Hunt Club – Why do we think the small number of hunters who currently kill a lot of bucks will not continue to do so?
2. Public lands – generally is more deer on private lands; on Francis Marion there are almost no deer. Palachucola – almost none. Said N. Forest are destroying habitat.
3. Ever any consideration to put minimum weight limit on deer that can be killed? How do we compare to Georgia in deer per sq./mile?
4. Williamsburg – now you can take untagged deer or parts of deer to processor. Would need to enforce it at processors.
5. Dorchester/Calhoun Co. – Hunted in NC 13 years – phone system works well. Processors can call in to report deer harvest.
6. Charleston Co. – one problem w/current system, some people hunt continuously. Need to have a size limit & train club presidents to call game warden if violate.
7. James Island – Pres. of club in Dorchester Co. already enforce all these things on their clubs. Not killed a big buck since 1996. Is a size limit on these clubs. The biggest problems we have is what others think about hunters.
8. What about allocating buck tags to clubs?
9. Has attended three of these meetings – what is behind this? Is DNR to get more money? Go to legislators and ask them to fund DNR.
10. Charging a fee is a no-brainer, we support it. Is 5 an arbitrary number for a limit?
11. Francis Marion – cannot use tags on FM, would like to see tags (doe) legal on Francis Marion.
12. Tags at the cost you are talking about would be a deal!
13. If limit is implemented, would there be any other restrictions?
14. How would you handle out of state hunters?
15. Some hunters may not want to continue hunting if there is a limit.

**PUBLIC MEETINGS TO DISCUSS POTENTIAL  
CHANGES IN DEER LIMITS AND TAG PROGRAMS.**

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has scheduled 10 public meetings to receive input from hunters concerning limits on buck deer and potential changes to antlerless deer and wild turkey tag programs in South Carolina.

“With respect to buck limits, hunters have been encouraging DNR to consider a statewide buck limit for some time, however, the agency would like to attempt to measure public support prior to recommending any changes to the South Carolina General Assembly,” said Charles Ruth, DNR Deer/Turkey Project leader. Each meeting will include a presentation by DNR on the background and data related to the concept, as well as, public comment and questions.

Contact DNR at (803) 734-3886 with any questions about agendas or sites.

All meetings will begin at 7 p.m. and the dates and locations are as follows:

- \* Tuesday, Jan. 10–Greenwood, Piedmont Technical College, Cont. Ed. Bldg. Auditorium Rm. 136, 620 North Emerald Rd.
- \* Thursday, Jan. 12–Clemson, Ramada Inn, Intersection of Highway 123 and 76.
- \* Tuesday, January 17–Florence, Pee Dee Research and Education Center Auditorium, 2200 Pocket Road.
- \* Thursday, January 19–Chester, Chester Park Complex Little Theater, 835 Lancaster Hwy.
- \* Tuesday, January 24–Orangeburg, Orangeburg–Calhoun Tech. College, Building C Room 118, 3250 St. Mathews Road.
- \* Thursday January 26–Kingstree, Williamsburg County Complex Auditorium, 147 West Main St.
- \* Tuesday, January 31–Walterboro, Hampton Street Auditorium, 491 Hampton Street.
- \* Thursday, February 2–Hampton, Hampton County Courthouse, 1 Elm St., Courthouse Square.
- \* Tuesday, February 7– Columbia, Riverbanks Zoo Auditorium, From I-126 take Greystone Blvd. exit and follow signs to Riverbanks Zoo.
- \* Thursday, February 9– Moncks Corner, Santee Cooper Auditorium, One Riverwood Drive off of Highway 52 Bypass.

“Many hunters indicate it is time for South Carolina’s deer management program to become more proactive and that they would support a move to reduce the harvest pressure on bucks in order to increase both the chance of seeing more bucks and the opportunity to harvest mature bucks,” said Ruth.

Advocates of the proposal also feel that law enforcement measures should be implemented, as well, to ensure that limits would have the desired effect. This could take the form of hunters receiving a set of buck tags. DNR staff will discuss the possibility of issuing buck

tags, antlerless deer tags, and turkey tags using several methods including the possibility that tags could be associated with the hunting license.

“This grass roots effort originally began in 2000 when a group of deer hunters in Saluda County approached DNR officials about buck limits in their county. Since that time interest among hunters has spread,” said Ruth. In 2003, 5 preliminary meetings were held across the upstate and 90 percent of hunters supported the idea of a reasonable limit on bucks along with some type of tagging system to enforce the limit. In 2004, results of DNR’s annual Deer Hunter Survey, which was sent to 25,000 randomly selected hunters, indicated that over 70 percent of hunters statewide felt that the limit on bucks should be 5 or less and that some form of enforcement, such as tags, should be in place.

DNR wildlife biologists have looked at harvest data and discussed the merits of the idea. Although hunters see the plan as increasing their chances of seeing more mature bucks, biologists believe that it will reduce the emphasis on harvesting bucks that currently exists, leading to increased harvests of doe deer, which is the main factor in managing the state’s deer population.

Although DNR has significantly liberalized antlerless deer harvest opportunities over the years, many hunters repeatedly harvest young bucks even when they have the opportunity to harvest a legal doe.

Though a limit will not prevent hunters from harvesting young bucks it would limit the total number of bucks that they can take, which should shift harvest pressure more to does and mature bucks.

“Will the plan work?” Ruth asks. “Harvest data collected over the last 8 years suggest that it could. The common perception that a small percentage of hunters exploit the current system and harvest large numbers of bucks is essentially true. For example, only 4 percent of hunters harvest more than 5 bucks annually, however, these hunters harvest 20 percent of all the bucks taken each year. It would follow then, that if a limit were in place there should be fewer bucks harvested leaving more bucks to mature for the following season. Also, if buck harvest pressure shifts to females then it is a win, win situation.”

Before any recommendations for change are made, DNR staff would like to fully evaluate the pros and cons of the ideas by receiving information from the public.

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DNR News (803) 734-3950

## DNR SCHEDULES TWO ADDITIONAL MEETINGS TO DISCUSS BUCK LIMITS AND TAG PROGRAMS.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has scheduled two additional public meetings to receive input from hunters concerning limits on buck deer and potential changes to antlerless deer and wild turkey tag programs in South Carolina. The meetings will be held at Horry-Georgetown Technical College Conway Campus Burroughs and Chapin Auditorium on Thursday, February 16 and the DNR Marine Center Auditorium at Ft. Johnson on Tuesday, February 21. The meetings were scheduled after the department received requests to hold additional meetings in these areas.

“With respect to buck limits, hunters have been encouraging DNR to consider a statewide buck limit for some time, however, the agency would like to attempt to measure public support prior to recommending any changes to the South Carolina General Assembly,” said Charles Ruth, DNR Deer/Turkey Project leader. Each meeting will include a presentation by DNR on the background and data related to the concept, as well as, public comment and questions.

Contact DNR at (803) 734-3886 with any questions about agendas or sites.

All meetings will begin at 7 p.m. and the dates and locations of the remaining meetings are as follows:

- \* Tuesday, January 31-Walterboro, Hampton Street Auditorium, 491 Hampton Street.
- \* Thursday, February 2-Hampton, Hampton County Courthouse, 1 Elm St., Courthouse Square.
- \*Tuesday, February 7- Columbia, Riverbanks Zoo Auditorium, From I-126 take Greystone Blvd. exit and follow signs to Riverbanks Zoo.
- \* Thursday, February 9- Moncks Corner, Santee Cooper Auditorium, One Riverwood Drive off of Highway 52 Bypass.
- \*Thursday, Feb. 16 – Conway, Horry-Georgetown Technical College Conway Campus, Burroughs and Chapin Auditorium, D. Kent Staples Student and Community Life Complex, Building 1100, Room 707, Highway 501 East.
- \* Tuesday, February 21 – Charleston, SCDNR Marine Resources Research Institute (MRRI) Auditorium, 217 Ft. Johnson Rd.

“Many hunters indicate it is time for South Carolina’s deer management program to become more proactive and that they would support a move to reduce the harvest pressure on bucks in order to increase both the chance of seeing more bucks and the opportunity to harvest mature bucks,” said Ruth.

Advocates of the proposal also feel that law enforcement measures should be implemented, as well, to ensure that limits would have the desired effect. This could take the form of hunters receiving a set of buck tags. DNR staff will discuss the possibility of issuing buck tags, antlerless deer tags, and turkey tags using several methods including the possibility that tags could be associated with the hunting license.

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