Big Game Species Conservation Program

CALIFORNIA PISMECANE

LMAC Prospectus

Survey of hunter attitudes towards deer management in California

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Proposed Start Date: January 2012

Proposed Completion Date: June 2013

Executive Summary including Statement of Need

Understanding hunter attitudes towards hunting programs is a fundamental role of wildlife managers and is an essential part of the Department's mission. Deer hunting opportunities offered to the public are based, in part, on the Department's efforts to meet public demand while providing for appropriate uses of the deer resource. Objective data regarding hunter attitudes towards deer management and deer hunting opportunities offered by the Department is lacking. This information is needed to design programs that best meet the needs of our constituents.

Introduction

Deer hunting in California provides significant public recreational opportunities and results in substantial economic benefits to the state. The Department manages deer populations principally through bucks only hunting within specific hunt zones. A variety of opportunities are offered ranging from low hunter success/high opportunity to premium hunts where hunter success is relatively high, but the odds of receiving a tag are low.

It is widely recognized that deer populations in many areas of California have declined substantially since their peak in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Public criticism of the Department's deer management program has contributed to the need for current information from deer hunters regarding their attitudes towards hunting programs. This will allow the Department to tailor management programs for deer that are biologically sound to better meet the needs of the public.

Objectives

The objective of this survey is to assess deer hunter attitudes towards current deer hunting opportunities offered by the Department and to explore their views of a variety of alternative strategies to managing deer.

<u>Methods</u>

A statistically valid survey and sampling strategy will be developed under consultation with Dr. Jody Enck at Cornell University and other experts in investigating public attitudes towards resource management and hunting. The survey will be designed to evaluate hunter attitudes towards hunter success, hunter opportunity, the current zone system, allocation of tags among user groups, and antlerless hunting.

In summary, a random sample of hunters purchasing deer tags will be selected to participate in the survey. Survey recipients will be requested to complete an online or mail survey developed by the Department. Participants will be provided a unique access code to participate in the online survey. Respondents unable to access the survey online will be provided with a hard copy to complete. A follow up mailing will be used to solicit participation for recipients failing to respond to the initial invitation.

Products (and estimated dates of completion)

- Study proposal development (February 2011)
- Sample survey participants (June 2011)
- Enter survey data (August 2011)
- Data analysis and report preparation (December 2011)
- Publication of results (June 2012)

Collaborators

Richard Callas: Senior Environmental ScientistCraig Stowers: Senior Environmental Scientist

Russ Mohr: Environmental Scientist
Bob Schaefer: Environmental Scientist
Brett Furnas: Environmental Scientist
Dr. Jody Enck: Cornell University

Personnel Requirements and Funding from CDFG

Collaboration with wildlife management personnel statewide will be needed to further define the scope of the survey and to design survey questions. Consultation with Dr. Enck and other experts will be required to finalize survey questions, sampling techniques, and to analyze survey responses. Scientific aide time will be needed to select hunters at random from the pool of individuals who purchased deer tags in 2010.

Budget:

- \$45,000 -- Contract for survey design and analysis with Cornell University
- \$15,000 Survey mailings
- \$5,000 -- Scientific aide support

Issues to be Resolved

None