

Appendix 10. Unsolicited comments received from survey respondents, including zone they hunted, number of days hunted, number of trips taken, whether they were successful, and where they were from. Where possible, a reply is presented in response to the comment.

zone	days	trips	succ	city/town	comment	see response #
<u>Miscellaneous comments</u>						
X1	4	1	0	Oregon	Don't fear, Calif. got plenty of my money.	2
X3b	4	1	0	Berkeley	Speeding ticket, by highway patrol officer with too much time on his hands and not enough real work to do.	1
X6a	1	1	1	Fresno	For the question: What were your expenses for access to private lands? The best response was: "Having a mother-in-law."	2
X6a	5	-	0	-	Whoever is responsible for the decision to poison Davis Lake should be shot.	3
X5b	11	-	1	Stockton	(Antelope tag also) \$50,000 motor home accident after antelope hunting.	4
X6b	6	1	0	San Anselmo	Poisoning Davis Lake ruined our trip. Tags wasted.	5
grouse	2	1	0	Ukiah	I avoid spending money in Lassen County because of their anti-DFG attitude.	6
<u>Survey complaints</u>						
-	-	-	-	-	B.S. survey, spend this money on saving deer herds, not this _____. I spend plenty on hunting. Stop the geothermal operations at Medicine Lake.	7
-	-	-	-	Sac area	This has nothing to do with managing our deer herds. Get rid of the lions in the X zones.	8
X5b	6		0	Chico	What is the expense of this survey and why is this money not spent on increasing the pathetic deer herds in NE Calif?	9
X5b	11	10	0	Susanville	Recommend: think in terms of deer herd health, not dollars.	10
X3a	6	2	0	Burney	Why is DFG wasting \$ on surveys. Spend it on habitat and big game.	11
X5c			1	Susanville	Need to ask how many days hunted. How many deer seen.	12
X5c				Livermore	No deer, big joke, time for new biologist, rip off, 4 deer seen. If you were more concerned about deer instead of money, I'd be a little happier. Tell the biologist to get out and quit counting deer on his front lawn.	13
X6a	8	8	0	-	None of your business.	14
X1	14	14	1	Tulelake	You forgot Tionesta. Go back to 3 pt. or better and move season of X1 to equal X2 opening date. No doe hunts! Survey has nothing to do with wildlife mgt. or increasing deer herds. Your last survey resulted in me not being able to draw a local tag near home because most people expressed a pleasure in traveling to a hunting zone. Locals need to be able to draw local zones.	15
<u>Want three point or better hunting</u>						
X3a	10	3	0	Davis	Please bring back three-point or better.	16
X3a	10	3	0	Vina	Take X zones back to 3 point or better	17
X3a	10	3	0	Vina	I would like to see 3 pt. or better back in X zones. We saw lots more bucks then.	18
<u>Want doe, either-sex hunts, special hunts</u>						
M8	6	3	1	Anderson	We want doe hunts- muzzleloader and junior	19

zone	days	trips	succ	city/town	comment	see response #
X3b	5		0	Sacramento	I wish you would have either-sex hunts. it would help out the deer herds.	20
<u>Change season opening dates</u>						
-	20	5	0	-	No deer, it was too hot. Season is too early, poor management.	21
M8	4	3	0	Ceres	Season is to early	22
X1	5	2	0	Danville	The X1 season is open a month to early. There are no deer in the area. Why is this?	23
X1	13	-	-	Danville	The X1 season is open to early. Opening in Sept. is a win-win for the Dept. sell the tags and collect the money knowing a handful of deer occupy the area in Sept.	24
<u>Drawing, preference system</u>						
X3a	16	30	0	Termo	I've hunted for 8 years. Usually get drawn for a zone far away. Now that I've been drawn here, no deer. I doubt I will apply next year.	25
X3a	9	3	0	Janesville	I have been an unsuccessful antelope applicant since 1978.	26
A11	24	24	0	Susanville	Something needs to be done with the deer and draw system in CA.	27
X5c	7		0	Palo Cedro	Give up the draw	28
M4	9	1	1	Sutter	I have applied for antelope for 33 years. you should have preference points.	29
<u>PLM- Private Lands Management Program</u>						
X5b	5	1	0	Fresno	The PLM land is too costly to hunt. Only those with money to burn can afford them.	30
X5b	12	2	1	Willows	The BLM 580 program sucks, they've locked people out of 1000s of acres of BLM land, namely McDonald Pk., Observ. Pk. and Express Cyn. area.	31
<u>Cut the quotas</u>						
X1	7	1	0		Did not even see a legal buck please stop selling more tags than need be.	32
X1	10	1	0		Seen no deer. Don't sell more tags than deer please.	33
X3a	4	2	0	Red Bluff	We saw very few deer in X3a, should reduce quota all x-zones.	34
X3b	6	1	0	Napa	You need to stop all hunting for 3-5 years. Help out the deer herds up north.	35
<u>Overall quality of hunt, numbers of deer</u>						
X1	12	12	0	Dorris	No deer- no bucks only deer seen in farm fields/posted land.	36
X1	11	11	0	Shasta Co	We saw over 63 does and many fawns. Only 1 buck. some days we spent 10 hours in the brush and trees.	37
X1	15	10	0	McCloud	There are almost no bucks	38
X1	8	1	0	Pioneer	This represents my share of expenses of a party of 3. No deer left. We quit.	39
X1	10	1	0	Sacramento	No deer- no tracks	40
X1	10	1	0	Sacramento	When is the DFG going to get on the ball and create better hunting and fishing conditions?	41
-	9	2	0	Sac. area	What is happening to our deer herds? Where is our money being spent?	42
X1	9	1	0	Hayward	I am very upset with the state of hunting in Calif., after 25 years, I don't think I'll bother next year unless some drastic changes (which I doubt). I will go out of state where I can count on a quality experience. I hunted X1 for the 3rd straight time, and for the 3rd time it was too damn early!! Other states have seasons that open later so at least you have an opportunity to	43

zone	days	trips	succ	city/town	comment	see response #
					be successful. It's ok with me if you cut back on permits, which you've already done, but at least let me hunt in a timeframe conducive to good hunting. I've applied for antelope for 19 years. Get a bonus pt. system so those of us putting in year-after-year have a better chance of getting drawn than a 1st-timer. I've spent a huge amt. of money over the years and it's about to end. I've got to tell you a lot of hunters feel the same as me. If things don't change we will put a lot of you out of work because our money won't be there for you!	
X2	2	1	0	Sacramento	No kill-- next year?	44
X3b	5	1	0	Santa Barb.	The area we hunted was very poor, hardly any deer population. It was a big letdown.	45
X3b	10	2	0	Redwood V.	No deer!	46
X4	8	1	0	Lakeport	Deer hunting was very poor.	47
X5b	4	1	0	L.A. area	Deer herd is down greatly in the Observation Pk. area.	48
X5b	7	1	0	Hayward	Very poor herd	49
X5b	9	2	0	Sacramento	Hunting was rotten- no deer in area	50
X5b	7	3	0	Redding	No deer- too many hunters	51
X5b	3	1	0	Benecia	Hunting was zero- saw 2 deer/3days.	52
A6	5	1	0	Sacramento	Very few deer (20 does, 1 buck sighted)	53
X5c	9	3	0	Oakland	There are no deer. I feel I was taken. Waste of my time and effort. Very disappointed.	54
X5c	5	1	0	Magalia	No herd, no tracks, worst seen in hunting area in 37 years.	55
X6a	20+	16	0	Portola	Why don't you ask where are all the deer. There are none! 9 deer spotted in 6 weeks. Poor game management!	56
X6a	3	2	-	Galt	DFG is going to lose revenue if hunting is not improved. Deer hunting is poor in CA, herds are at an all time lows from what I've seen.	57
M4	4	1	0		We saw 1 buck, 13 does in 4 days. Very poor hunting.	58
Arch.	8	1	0	Tulare	No deer and no bear.	59
X3a	4	1	0	Pine Grove	I've hunted in Modoc County for 37 years. Since the drawing was initiated, I've been drawn twice for my favorite area. In 1995 I saw 4 does in 4 days. In 1997 I saw none. In the past I would see 50-100 deer in the area of Knox Mt. on opening day. It was disappointing to see this once great deer herd suddenly diminish to practically nothing. My sons grew up hunting with me, it is sad what we see today. I am hopeful that DFG will come up with a program to improve the deer environment. Where are all these vast herds disappeared to? Or are we losing to vast numbers of poachers? Are too many cattle being allowed to graze our national forests. How about the increase in the coyote population? I do sadly miss our ever-loving hunting area of Knox Mt.	60
<u>The problem is mountain lions</u>						
X1	4	2	1		Not your business- Go fix the lion problem instead of wasting time on this.	61
X3a	3	1	1	Wrightwood	Too many predators have weakened the deer population.	62
X3a	16	30	0	Termo	Zone should be closed for 3 yrs. Too many mountain lions.	63
X3a	7	1	1	Santa Rosa	Too expensive to compete with lions. I was 1 of 6	64

zone	days	trips	succ	city/town	comment	see response #
					who got lucky. Start managing wildlife, open a season on mountain lions.	
X3b	5	1	0	-	Area has major problems with mountain lions.	65
X3b	-	-	0	Tehachapi	37 mountain lions- not 1 buck.	66
X3b	7	1	0	Cazadero	Three couples took our horses and went for 7 days. Trip was fun but disappointing when you see more lion sign than deer. We saw maybe 2-3 does per day, only 1 buck and two spikes. We saw lion tracks in fresh snow twice and found a lion killed doe. I am sure this letter is just going to be thrown away because nobody gives a _____, but we feel the signs we saw proves there is a problem. Maybe Wildlife Management should start figuring out what is really extinct- deer or lions? It's going to get worse before people open their eyes. I don't mean to sound rude, but we've had sheep killed at my barn right across from the house. The day before I had 5 little kids playing right there. I have my eyes open now.	67
X3b			0	Orangevale	The deer situation near Likely is depressing. The size of the herd is about 1/3 of normal and hunters seem to be taking forked-horn deer instead of mature deer. The locals and game warden admit that mountain lions are probably responsible for the lack of deer. There is plenty of forage and water; what deer are taken appear healthy but not fat. In 16 years, this is the worst I have ever seen. The deer are smaller in size and their habitat not as widespread. We suppose winter kill from lack of proper diet and overcrowding of their winter range from other species has a lot to do with it. What is the DFG doing about the poor condition of the deer herds? What are you spending the money on if there is no results in the field? It is obvious the mountain lion situation is out of hand and it will not be long before hunters and ranchers will take it upon themselves to eliminate the lion problem. I saw six coyotes, this may be part of the problem. I think the sportsmen deserve a good explanation of what is wrong and what is being done about it.	68
X3b		2	1	McKinleyv.	Lots of lion tracks-not many deer. Herds seem smaller than 2 years ago. Please take action soon. Lions kill a deer a week. Make your stand, like Davis Lake!	69
X5a	10	3	0	Herlong	There is no deer, You need to seek legislation to control the predators.	70
X5a	2	2	1	Westwood	If DFG doesn't do something about mountain lions, there won't be any NE deer left. I saw two and found a covered kill.	71
X5a	7		0	Santa Rosa	Need to do something about mountain lions!!	72
X6a	10	10	0	Susanville	The cougar have killed all the deer. A sad hunter wishing I lived where the DFG main concern was wildlife, instead of what a hunter spends.	73
X6a	5	1	0	Santa Rosa	The locals say bad hunting due to many cats. I won't be back for many a year-- heading out of state.	74
<u>Conditions on public lands</u>						
X4	12	12	0	Westwood	Between the BLM and USFS and the cattlemen, they have ruined the deer hunting in NE Calif. Sage hen, chukar, quail, everythings gone.	75
X5b	10		1	Vacaville	The land management is no good. It takes our BLM	76

zone	days	trips	succ	city/town	comment	see response #
X5b	14	1	1	Vacaville	land and does injustice to the deer in the late season. The land mgt. in this area is for the birds. No good. Some changes should be made. I am writing F&G.	77
X6a	12	12	0	Susanville	Very few deer! I'm losing my interest. It's to the point I'd rather watch a sporting event. Decrease the deer tags or close some zones. Your going to lose the interest of young hunters in this state unless you improve the quality of hunting on BLM and national forest land.	78
X6a	14	12	0	-	No deer on BLM and forest land. Lousy job DFG. Lousy hunt unless you are willing to pay to hunt private land. Close the X zones, there is no quality hunting in these zones period. Create quality hunting for fathers and sons who don't own land or have big bucks to hunt private property.	79

No more hunting in California

A6	6	1	0	Rohnert Pk.	I have seen a steady decline in the deer population in X3b. It has become a poor hunting experience. Drastic measures are necessary to bring this herd back. I will not be hunting in Calif. for some time.	80
X3a	3	1	0	Yuba City	Deer have been managed into extinction. Last deer hunt in Calif. Next year, MT or CO.	81
X5	15	4	0	Susanville	No deer in Lassen Co. Next yr., out of state. No more CA money.	82
X5b	6	6	0	Susanville	Next year-out of state hunting. My opinion, stop playing politics and manage the game	83
X5b	4	1	0	Manteca	Deer herd down- will not hunt CA any longer. Will go out of state.	84
X5c	10		0	Vina	Had lots of bad weather, snow, but there are no deer left. Will go out-of-state next year.	85
X5c	9		0	Santa Rosa	Saw 3 doe, hiked 4 days. Won't hunt Calif. again, going out-of-state I'll pay \$500 more, but at least I'll see deer. Hunted for 30 yrs. Deer in worst shape I've seen--Good job F&G!	86

They weren't all mad

X3a	5	1	0	San Leandro	This took me 5 years to be drawn for. I hope to be drawn again next year.	87
X3a	10	2	0	Tulare	Took 5 shots. I hope we get same zone next year.	88
X3a	4	1	1	San Jose	I've been hunting/fishing in Modoc Co. for 58 yrs. We have watched the deer herd decline in quantity and health. When X zones were put in place, we felt left out and were upset at not drawing a tag every year. However, in the last several years, we have noticed a great change in population of deer and especially quality. After totally disagreeing with the X zone limitations, I must say that it seems to be a good improvement from the past. We will never see what we used to, but I now agree with the steps you have taken, and hope you continue this success. I got a 4x3 27" after seeing many healthy forked and 3pt deer.	89
X3b	5	2	0	Willows	I enjoyed hunting & fishing NE Calif. very much. Thank you.	90
X3b	1	1	1	Winters	Got a 5x5 deer.	91
X3b	3	1	0	Redding	I passed up 2 forked horn bucks.	92
X4	15	1	0	Yuba City	Great trip. saw 230-250 deer, 1 bear-3 cubs. Super!	93
X5a	8	3	1	Janesville	Thank you for finally drawing me for X5a = 6x6 31" spread.	94

zone	days	trips	succ	city/town	comment	see response #
X5a	1	1	1	Cotati	3x3 buck thanks!	95
X5b	7	6	0	Chico	Was a pleasure to hunt in this zone- keep up the good work.	96
X6a	1	2	1	Milford	By the way, we had a lot of fun	97
M8	7	7	1	Janesville	I live here, and drew M8!!	98

Responses to Survey Comments (refer to numbered list at the right margin of comments)

Note: the following responses should not necessarily be construed as an official department response or position on the comment received. Here's a place where separating science from providing the public information and department policy is difficult. The intent of printing the comments and responses was to increase the exchange of information between the public and the department. While the printed responses are based on the authors knowledge and experience along with input from Department colleagues, the Department should be contacted if the reader would like to verify whether the stated response accurately represents an official department position.

1. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS. Sorry you got a ticket. It appears you violated the law. At least two other survey respondents got a traffic ticket, or got a citation from DFG. These costs were not counted in the survey.
2. Good one.
3. We hope you are not serious. We also hope that people do not place non-native species in our waterways to compete with what is left of our native stocks. There were alternatives to the Lake Davis area for deer hunting.
4. Sorry to hear this. This was the single largest expense claimed in the survey. It was not counted. There were two major vehicle accidents reported in the survey.
5. see response 3.
6. Lassen County government does have its differences with DFGs hunting proposals on many occasions. It is interesting to see that you hold the county accountable for their actions.
- 7-11. SURVEY COMPLAINTS. On the surface, you may ask "what's this got to do with improving deer herds?" Here's what: Approximately 43,000 square miles of deer habitat is administered by the Forest Service and BLM. These agencies must evaluate environmental and economic consequences of their proposed actions such as livestock grazing, timber harvest, reforestation, etc. Traditionally, wildlife have been regarded as not having a real, or quantifiable dollar value, or a value as a consumptive use (initially, this was the primary reason for the survey). This survey provides a minimum estimate of the economic contribution of hunting these three species alone. Add to this value, other hunted species, fishing value, wildlife viewing, and so on, to arrive at a true value of wildlife in these rural counties. Land management decisions are made annually by the USFS and BLM that can negatively or positively affect these wildlife values over much of northeastern California. That is why the survey was conducted. The Department has spent millions of deer hunter tag dollars on habitat improvement efforts. While these efforts have improved conditions, they are generally of such small size that they do not have a significant effect on improving deer habitat. Influencing decisions about long-term land management is needed and economic data on hunting contributes to illustrating the value of wildlife. Additionally, private lands, subject to local and county government planning commissions, would benefit from a greater understanding of the economic benefit to maintaining wildland. The hunting opportunities described here generate income for the local communities. The results of this study provides additional information that can be used in the decision-making process

about whether to develop wildlands.

9. Survey expense- The author entered all the tag data at home during evenings occasionally with his son's help (during Seinfeld reruns), hence there was little additional cost to department. Mailing 5,000 survey cards probably cost about \$4,000 for printing and mailing effort (to and from mailing of survey cards). Author's time for analysis and write-up while at work probably cost about \$5,000-9,000 (additionally, about 40% of the effort was done at home, largely independent of the work day). Was the cost worth the effort to try and get greater accommodation of wildlife value on millions of acres of northeastern California? Can't answer that, time will tell. One benefit we see in the deer program around the state is improved understanding of hunter attitudes and desires. We don't like to see hunters paying \$100s per trip and coming home unsuccessful and frustrated either. DFG wins nothing that way.
12. There were a few questions we came up with after the surveys came back. The most important would have been: "How much effort did you put into the hunt (did you road hunt, hike a 1/4 mile, 1/2 mile, or less from roads, or hike a mile or more from roads)?" A lot of unsuccessful respondents either spent a short time hunting, or spent a lot of time driving as evidenced by their vehicle costs. However, effort would be difficult to quantify.
13. You should look at the graph in Figure 7. If we (CDFG) were more concerned about the money, the number of tags wouldn't be reduced as much as they are; also read the response to 7-11 above to see why the economic information is important. Why can't biologists count deer on their front lawn (that information is not used in setting regulations)?
14. I suppose many hunters said "none of your business," however, having that information provides good arguments to improve and maintain high quality deer habitats in California. If hunters were more open on this issue (and a lot were judging by the survey response), and realized they can influence land management decisions as users of the resource, then conditions could improve (see response 7-11 above).
15. Tionesta was included, we did not mention every town on the survey card and assumed hunters would tell us the other towns where they spent money. See response 16 for three-point issue. See response 19-20 for doe hunts. See response 7-11 for relevance to wildlife management/deer herds. Unfortunately for locals, every hunter has equal opportunity to be drawn for the X zone hunts. There are more hunters from elsewhere in the state, but very few from southern California travel to your area, and when they do, they bring money and generally go home empty-handed! It is too bad that we don't have a system that allows us to maintain better local hunter support in deer management and still be fair to hunters statewide (hint: we are open to new ideas). See response 25-29 on preference points.
- 16-18. WANT THREE-POINT BUCK HUNTS. You folks saw a lot more bucks when there were three-point or better hunting because there was a lot more deer! There are still about the same proportion of three-point or better deer in the population, but because the overall numbers are lower, you don't see them very often. Three-point or better was tried in the past, and resulted in many illegally killed animals (forked horn) being left in the field to waste; and it resulted in greater hunting pressure on large-antlered bucks. If you want more bucks, we recommend that hunters advocate improving habitat conditions on public and private wildlands. see response 80-86 for antler-size classes.
- 19-20. ANTLERLESS/DOE HUNTS. The department considers antlerless (doe) hunts an integral component of total deer population management and strives to propose them where they are appropriate. However, all county fish and game commissions in northeastern California (*check out: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wmd/veto.html>*) have the capability to stop a department proposal for antlerless deer hunts. Because of this, there are times when the department does not propose doe hunts, knowing that the likely backlash of such a proposal would result in greater harm to department credibility and local relations, than the proposed hunt would provide benefit to the deer population or the public. As most other states in the country realize, using doe hunts increases hunter opportunity, results in

greater efficiency of use of the deer population, and helps keep buck:doe numbers in a more desirable, if not stable, balance. Department surveys and questionnaires have indicated that the majority of deer hunters support doe hunts when biologically appropriate, but a vocal minority who is dead-set against them fight antlerless hunt proposals every year. For those familiar with livestock ranching- think about whether you would ever need to remove some cows from a herd in a fixed size pasture. There's only room for so many animals, and removing only some of the bulls each year wouldn't work- because there are both male and female animals born. Soon there would be a lot of cows, and not much room for bulls. Same works for deer. It's interesting to Department biologists that our pronghorn antelope program is held in such high regard in California and is so successful in part because it is a program that fully uses doe hunting when it is appropriate. Similarly, some of our best deer hunts are on military lands that allow doe hunting. Yet some California deer hunters continue to fight total deer population management.

21-24. SEASON IS OPEN TO EARLY. Season dates are set to consider herd conditions, terrain, weather patterns, probable hunter success and other factors. Opening adjacent zones on the same dates is done where feasible, but not where it would be inconsistent with deer her plans and population objectives. That's the bureaucratic response to this frequent complaint. Unfortunately for us in the Department, this issue is almost a "damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-don't" problem, particularly when we are in long-term declines in deer numbers. Sure, no one wants to be out there when it is hot and dusty, and the deer haven't arrived in great numbers. But modifying season-opening dates is one of the means to manipulate hunter harvest of migratory deer herds. An allowable buck harvest (ABH) is established each year. Factors such as season-length, season dates, historical success rates, and weather patterns are considered. We do not want to exceed ABH, hence are generally conservative in season-dates, quotas, or both. As most deer hunters in California want a "chance" to go hunting (more so than the desire to actually kill a deer), we typically favor modifying opening dates as opposed to reducing quotas to control harvest. The alternative to early season dates is to open the season later when hunting conditions are excellent. This would result in far fewer tags being issued and higher hunter success. At this point, we probably need to revisit what the hunting public wants. Of course, if habitat conditions were on the increase, we could have later seasons and have higher quotas. Some in the Department believe it would be better to keep season dates consistent, so that hunting conditions are reasonably good from year-to-year, and modify the quota to achieve ABH. Others believe adjusting the opening/closing dates to help control harvest and only minimally changing quotas is preferred. One argues for hunting quality over opportunity, the other argues for hunting opportunity over quality. One generates less revenue than the other.

25-29. DRAWING & PREFERENCE SYSTEMS. Many hunters are frustrated about not getting drawn for X zone deer and antelope. The Department has been conducting an in-depth review and analysis of various preference drawing systems currently employed in other western states. A Department Big Game Draw Working Group (BGDWG) is currently preparing a report on various approaches to a preference system for Directorate and Fish and Game Commission (Commission) review and approval. Here is a synopsis of what they are currently evaluating: The BGDWG found that many western states were disappointed in the performance and operation of their preference draw system. Operational problems that were unexpected have occurred due to various statistical realities and hunt selection behavior of hunters. Some preference systems are not adequately accomplishing the goal of allocating tags to those hunters who have applied multiple years and have not successfully drawn a tag. This is due in part to the limitations of the approaches themselves as well as the high applicant per available tag ratios existing in many states. Regardless of the problems found in other states, the BGDWG committee is currently evaluating the following preference systems and how they might perform in California:

- 1) Equal Probability Drawing (our current system)
- 2) Straight Preference point system
- 3) Bonus Point System
- 4) Modified Preference System (e.g., tags for each hunt & zone split between an Equal Probability and Preference Draw)

These systems are being evaluated in the context of the following Department goals for a preference draw system: 1) To improve the odds of a hunter receiving a premium tag who has been vigilant in the draw (e.g., a hunter who has applied each year, but hasn't drawn a tag); 2) To encourage new hunters to participate in big game hunting; 3) a system that is easily trackable; and 4) a system that is easy to understand. The BGDWG goal is to have a preference proposal available for review by the Commission in fall of 1998. No preference system is expected to be in place before the year 2000-2001 hunting season.

30-31. PLM PRIVATE LANDS HUNTS. PLM did not create fee hunting as landowners have always had that right. Sure the PLM landowners can charge money for hunting on their lands, but the PLM program is the one means we have to significantly manage wildlife at no cost to hunters or taxpayers- it is self-supporting. PLM operators can charge what they desire for hunting opportunity, or they can give tags away to family members, or donate them for fund-raising events. The point is, a landowner ought to be allowed to gain some benefit for helping maintain and improve wildlife habitats in California. In 1997, an estimated 31,700 bucks were estimated to have been killed on public lands. PLM lands killed only 420, of which 82 were 4-pt. or better. Public land hunters killed 4,438 4-pt. or better deer. PLM kill is nonsignificant, but PLM lands provide valuable habitat managed for wildlife. Many of those deer raised on PLM ranches are likely killed each year on public lands. The program has nothing to do with the BLM or BLM lands which are public, and only has to do with private lands. Landowners can either allow or exclude hunters from hunting on their land. Express Canyon is in Nevada.

32-35. REDUCE QUOTAS. We have cut the quotas dramatically since 1987 (see Figure 7 graph), and continue to do so as dictated by deer population data. The thinking that hunting is responsible for the poor deer numbers is incorrect. Again, we generally hunt bucks only, with insignificant doe hunts. Does have fawns, bucks do not, and about 1/2 of the fawns are bucks. If habitat conditions are not suitable, the population will not increase. The Forest Service and BLM manage most of the deer habitat in northeastern California. They have not been working to improve conditions for deer very much. Stopping hunting for a period would increase the proportion of bucks in the population, but would not increase the population. When hunting is resumed, expect higher hunter success for a few years, then back to the same conditions as before. It is not a long-term solution to the problems faced by deer populations. Nearly all hunting in northeastern California is "bucks-only" hunting. Bucks comprise only 10-15 percent of the deer population in most herds, hence the death of a small number of deer (30-80 percent of the buck population and about 6 percent of the total deer population) has little if any effect on the total population. Fawns are recruited to replace lost bucks. Closing a buck-only season would not likely increase a deer population, but it would increase the buck ratio. But this can also be done by modifying the quotas and seasons.

36-60. OVERALL POOR DEER HUNTING CONDITIONS. We know there have been poor conditions out there. We recently (February 1998) completed a statewide assessment in cooperation with the USFS and BLM to evaluate deer habitat and populations (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wmd/rept.html>). Northeastern California was identified as being in the worst shape in terms of deer decline, and identified as the highest priority to try and fix things. This economic survey is part of the overall interest in northeastern California-- to illustrate the deer hunting value up and determine whether it is competitive with other uses such as livestock grazing that continue to degrade valuable deer habitat in many areas. One

of the interesting perceptions we got from this survey was that hunters who got drawn for these X-zone hunts may have thought they would have a "slam-dunk" easy hunt. Perhaps that is based on the historical perception that these are "premier" and "trophy" zones with deer all over the place. That clearly is not the case now, if it ever was. Those hunters who work hard for their deer, and get away from the roads and populated areas are more likely to be successful. X2 had the highest success and lowest hunter density. We could increase hunter success in the X zones by offering fewer tags, such as cutting them in half, but we do not know what the best tradeoff in opportunity versus success is for deer hunting. Still, we are attempting to provide the desired opportunity to hunt, constrained by what the deer population can take, as best we can.

42. Most of the deer hunter dollars are spent in support of Department positions for collecting deer population data, working on habitat issues, and developing hunting proposals and regulations. Previously, approximately \$1 million was spent each year on habitat improvement projects, most going to the USFS and BLM as burning projects. Because of limited success of these projects (primarily because they were too small in scale), we have modified how we allocate deer program funds. Of highest priority is large-scale projects that are funded by multiple agencies, but these are few and far between because available lands are either private or owned by BLM/USFS. A report to the legislature detailing where deer program funds go is prepared every other year if interested.
43. See also response 21-24. If we cut back on permits, you might not get drawn. see response 25-29 on preference system. If the hunters quit deer hunting in California, the employees in the deer program around the state would be funded to do other work under another program in the department or go elsewhere. If the deer problem were easy to fix, we'd have done it by now. We don't understand why do some hunters think the Department has reduced deer herds.
60. See previous responses and recommend you get a copy of our deer habitat and population assessment report which is on-line at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wmd/rept.html>. You are correct in that several factors are impacting deer habitat and populations at the same time.
- 61-74. Predators don't weaken deer populations, but poor habitat conditions do. Look at the discussion in the report on predators. Lions are an easy blame for poor deer numbers, however, deer in many herds are generally in poor body condition (does more so than bucks because they are attempting to raise 1-2 fawns each year). That is habitat-related not predator-related, although predators will take advantage of such a situation. Lions are fully protected in California now as a result of Proposition 117 passed in June of 1991. Lions had been "protected" since the early 1970's anyway. Sure lions kill deer, but so what, they always have and always will. If habitat conditions on California deer ranges were "good to excellent" instead of "poor to fair" lions would largely be irrelevant. Think about whether the increase in observations of mountain lions may be a consequence of low deer numbers influencing lions to be active more during the day in their search for food, and out of necessity, being in closer contact with humans. A statewide survey done in the late 1940s indicated that nearly all of California's deer ranges were in poor-fair condition, not much has improved, except in localized areas as a consequence of large fires or other disturbance to the habitat. Some of us may have never seen excellent deer range in California on a large-scale!
66. You wrote thirty-seven mt. lions? This is hard to believe.No, it is unbelievable. Is that what you meant to write?
73. Please read response 7-11 for why we are interested in what you spend.
- 75-79. **CONDITIONS ON PUBLIC LANDS.** Suggest you folks get the deer habitat assessment report mentioned previously. Contact the author to get a copy or from the DFG website. We believe the greatest opportunity for deer in California is to better accomodate deer habitat needs on public lands. This would benefit deer, as well as hundreds of other species requiring similar habitats. If you have problems with land management, write to the land management agency who administers that land. Improving the "quality of

hunting" on BLM and USFS land requires the BLM and USFS (not CDFG) to improve the quality of the deer habitat-- tell them. We have been for decades. As an example, the USFS is right now (summer 1998) initiating a new effort on 10 national forests encompassing the Sierra Nevada (www.r5.fs.fed.us/sncf/index.html). So far, this effort hardly mentions deer as an issue or a priority. Nor do we believe the current direction they outline will benefit the habitats on which deer and possibly hundreds of other species, likely depend. Public comment and involvement are invited by the USFS from now until next May when they plan to issue their final document.

79. We have failed to get the land management agencies and private landowners to focus on deer as their top priority. Of course, deer are not their top priority, nor are deer the Department's top priority. However, they, and more importantly, the habitats that deer represent, are very important and deserve better accommodation in land management planning than they are getting. We are working on that, this survey is one means to accomplish it.

80-86. NO MORE HUNTING IN CALIFORNIA. Sorry the experience for you folks in 1997 was so bad. Some of these comments seem overly dramatic. There are deer left. There may not be as many deer as we desire, and they may not be as easy to hunt as expected, but they are there. The final results for X1-X6b deer hunting in 1997 was:

Zone	Estimated Kill	Percent success
X1	635	21
X2	36	45
X3a	223	50
X3b	354	29
X4	130	26
X5a	46	27
X5b	170	32
X5c	56	16
X6a	145	26
X6b	86	23

1997 reported kill by county:

	Does	Antler points				Total
		2-pt	3-pt	4-pt	>4-pt	
Lassen	0	214	221	157	32	625
Modoc	0	242	190	104	17	555
Plumas	16	185	114	52	6	373

(Reported are those tags returned to the Department. Many successful hunters do not return tags. Includes all but PLM hunts.)

87-98. THEY WEREN'T ALL MAD. Congratulations to you successful hunters. Good work.