

Upper Peninsula Deer Advisory Team (UPDAT) Open House Information

Between January 14th and February 6th, 2014 a series of 8 Open Houses were held across the Upper Peninsula (UP). Over two hundred people were able to attend the Open Houses. Based on the success of these Open Houses the DNR hopes to pursue similar Open Houses in the all three hunting zones in the future.

The goal for these Open Houses was to introduce the deer hunting public to the Upper Peninsula Deer Advisory Team (UPDAT). There are a total of three Deer Advisory Teams in Michigan, one for each hunting zone. The UPDAT is composed of ten members representing communities or organizations within the UP. They provide direct input to the DNR and are an excellent liaison for the public. The other topics explored within the Open Houses were the concept of Multiple Year Regulations, the License Package (http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10363_14518_65243---,00.html) and, current and potential buck management regulations for the UP.

Documents shared at Open Houses:

[Power Point Presentation](#)

[Paper: Evaluation of Upper Peninsula Buck Management Options](#)

Interested in commenting on the UP Buck Options? Comment deadline is May 1st. Please use UP Buck Topic as subject line and send to dnr-wildlife@michigan.gov

Have a potential topic for the UPDAT to discuss?

Please send your comments to: dnr-wildlife@michigan.gov with UPDAT in the subject line.

Upper Peninsula Deer Advisory Team Open House



Deer Advisory Teams

- Created as a result of the 2010 Michigan Deer Management Plan
- 3 teams, one for each hunting zone
- CHARGE: Each DAT serves as an advisory group to the Wildlife Division, to provide direct input to Division staff and to aid in communications with the public and key partners and organizations



Deer Advisory Teams

- DATs are composed of members with a direct connection to issues in the corresponding region, either as private individuals affected by deer hunting and management or representatives of organizations with members or constituents in the region



UP Deer Advisory Team

- Started in 2011, meets twice a year
- Members

Name	Organization
Tom Buckingham	Eastern UP Citizen's Advisory Council
Ivan Darling	Hiawatha Sportsmans Club
Kevin Erickson	Local Representative- Luce County
Al Ettenhofer	UP Whitetails Assoc Inc
Jim Hammill	Northwoods Chapter SCI
Dave Johnson	Wildlife Unlimited of Dickinson County
George Lindquist	Western UP Citizens Advisory Council
Rory Mattson	UP Sportsmens Alliance
Paul Szymanski	Local Representative- Delta County
Rick Taylor	Local Representative- Baraga County



UPDAT Topics

- What has been discussed?
 - Buck Management Options
 - Deer Wintering Complex Mapping Project
 - State Forest Certification
 - Concept of Multiple Year Regulations for Deer
 - Deer Crop Damage Issues
 - Factors affecting deer populations and deer hunting in the UP
 - Deer Season Reviews



Contacting the Team

- Email the team: dnr-wildlife@michigan.gov
 - Subject line: UPDAT or Upper Peninsula Deer Advisory Team
- **Ashley Autenrieth, Deer Program Biologist**
Office: 1732 W. M-32, Gaylord, MI 49735
Phone: 989-732-3541 Ext. 5044



How is this Important to YOU?

- UPDAT meetings discuss important issues to UP deer hunters
- The UPDAT provides recommendations and feedback to the DNR Wildlife Division
- Team members need to hear from the public to know what to bring forward
- Interested in becoming a member on the team?



Buck Management Topic

- UPDAT discussed two main themes
 - Advancing more 1.5 year old bucks to the 2.5 year old age class
 - Simplifying deer hunting regulations
- Wildlife Division prepared a paper of options to address the two main themes
 - UPDAT reviewed and submitted recommendations



Buck Management Options

- One Buck Per Year (no antler point restrictions)
- 2 Point Minimum Antler Point Restriction (No Spikes)
- 3 Point Minimum Antler Point Restriction
- Current Hunter's Choice Regulations (No Change)
- Modified Hunter's Choice Regulation
- Pre-2008 Regulations



“One Buck Rule”

- One kill tag valid for all seasons combined
- Buck must have one \geq 3 inch antler
- During archery season, tag could be used on an antlerless deer
- Is this option Currently Feasible? No, since it is Michigan statute that hunters have the option of harvesting 2 bucks



2 Point APR (No Spike Rule)

- Bag limit of two bucks:
 - One with 2 or more antler points on one side (spike horns protected) and
 - One with 4 or more antler points on one side
- During archery season, kill tags could be used for antlerless deer
- Is this option Currently Feasible? Yes, this regulation is within the Natural Resources Commission's authority to enact



3 Point APR

- Bag limit of two bucks:
 - One with 3 or more antler points on one side and
 - One with 4 or more antler points on one side
- During archery season, kill tags could be used for antlerless deer
- Is this option Currently Feasible? Yes, this regulation is within the Natural Resources Commission's authority to enact



Current Hunter's Choice Regulations

Hunters have one of two choices when purchasing deer licenses . . .

- Archery and/or Firearm License
 - ONE buck, no antler point restriction
- Combination License
 - One buck with 3 or more antler points on one side and
 - One buck with 4 or more antler points on one side
- During archery season, kill tags could be used for antlerless deer
- Is this option Currently Feasible? No, the single archery and single firearm license no longer exist under the new license package



Modified Hunter's Choice Regulation

Hunters have one of two choices when purchasing deer licenses . . .

- **Archery License and Firearm License combined into a single license valid for all seasons**
 - ONE buck, no antler point restriction
- Combination License
 - One buck with 3 or more antler points on one side and
 - One buck with 4 or more antler points on one side
- During archery season, kill tags could be used for antlerless deer
- Is this option Currently Feasible? Yes, this regulation is within the Natural Resources Commission's authority to enact



Pre-2008 Regulation

- Bag limit of two bucks:
 - One with one antler, 3 inches or more in length and
 - One with 4 or more antler points on one side
- During archery season, kill tags could be used for antlerless deer
- These are the current regulations throughout Southern Michigan and areas of the Northern Lower Peninsula
- Is this option Currently Feasible? Yes, this regulation is within the Natural Resources Commission's authority to enact



Important Considerations

- Would regulations be simplified?
- Would hunter days afield be reduced?
- Would it be difficult for hunters to count antler points?
- Is the option easily enforceable?
- Is the option feasible to implement (NRC or legislative action needed)?
- Is the option congruent with the statewide deer regulations?
- What are the potential impacts on revenue for wildlife management?



UPDAT Final Recommendations

UPDAT Buck Management Options Paper Recommendations

Last Name	First Name	Organization	1 (One Buck)	2 (2 Pt APR)	3 (3 Pt APR)	4 (HC as-is)	5 (HC w/ single tag modif)	6 (pre-2008)
Buckingham	Tom	Eastern UPCAC					1st Choice	
Darling	Ivan	Hiawatha Sportsmans Club				1st Choice		
Erickson	Kevin	Luce County					1st Choice	
Ettenhofer	Al	UP Whitetails Assoc Inc				1st Choice		
Hammill	Jim	Northwoods Chapter SCI				2nd Choice		1st Choice
Johnson	Dave	Wildlife Unlimited of Dickinson County				1st Choice		
Lindquist	George	Western UPCAC				1st Choice		
Mattson	Rory	UP Sportsmens Alliance				1st Choice		
Snowdon	James	MI Crossbow Federation				1st Choice		
Szymanski	Paul	Delta County				1st Choice		
Taylor	Richard	Baraga County	2nd Choice					1st Choice

Questions?



Multiple Year Regulations



Multiple Year Regulations

- What are multiple year regulations and what do they mean for deer?
 - Multi Year Regulations are a way to keep regulations consistent for a set period of time
 - Each cycle will be 3 years in length for deer
 - Currently have multi year regs for bear, turkey and furbearer
 - Deer were recently approved to begin a multiple year regulation cycle starting in 2014



Why Have Multiple Year Regulations?

- Potential Impacts of Regulations
 - Keeping a regulation consistent can help the DNR measure whether a regulation has had an impact
 - Gives resource managers the opportunity to study current trends in deer management, both biologically and socially, in order to be prepared to make appropriate recommendations at the beginning of each cycle
- Support for Regulation Changes
 - During each cycle those wishing for regulations to remain the same or change have the time to gather proper facts and a following of fellow hunters
 - Gives time to determine what hunters want



Multiple Year Regulations

- All regulations pertaining to deer will remain the same for at least three years at a time
- Antlerless quotas may be changed in the event of a severe winter
- Regulations for 2014 are intended to remain the same through 2016 (reviewed in 2016)



Questions?



License Package



License Package

- First license fee increase since 1997
- A base license (\$11) is now required of all hunters- includes small game hunting
- In addition to base license, a deer license is required to hunt deer
 - Single Deer License = \$20.00
 - Combination Deer License = \$40.00



License Restructuring

- Elimination of the single archery and single firearm licenses
 - Now, a Single Deer License good for all seasons
 - Combination License remains the same
- Decision of what you intend to harvest (i.e. one or two bucks) must be made at point of sale
 - Hunters may NOT purchase a Single Deer License and then return at a later date for another



License Package

- Support from several organizations including:
 - Michigan United Conservation Club
 - All members of the Conservation Coalition
 - Ducks Unlimited
 - Ruffed Grouse Society
 - UPSA
 - UP Whitetails
 - UPBHA
 - Trapper and Predator Callers
 - QDMA
 - Building and Construction Trades
 - PF



Next Steps & What is Realistic

- We want to hear from you!
- What is important to you?
- Survey
- This is your opportunity to communicate with your local UPDAT representative about what you would like them to bring forward to discuss at future meetings, let them know what you feel are the most important deer related issues in the UP



Thank you!

QUESTIONS?



Evaluation of Upper Peninsula Buck Management Options

Authored by the Upper Peninsula Wildlife Division Staff
December, 2012

Introduction

The Upper Peninsula Deer Advisory Team (UPDAT) met on December 16, 2011 and discussed management options for bucks. They requested Wildlife Division staff prepare a set of options for consideration that would advance a larger proportion of bucks to at least 2.5 years of age and simplify hunting regulations. As a part of this request, Wildlife Division pledged to evaluate the 2008 U.P. antler point restrictions (Hunter's Choice rules). Evaluation of the 2008 regulations will be presented in a separate report, and maintenance of those rules is included as an option in this paper.

The UPDAT is particularly interested in promoting an older age structure among bucks which would enhance antler size. There are several ways to reduce buck mortality so bucks grow older and produce larger antlers, including a lottery system for buck licenses, shifting the firearm season out of the rut, and imposing restrictions on hunting equipment and methods. This paper is not a comprehensive examination of all possible approaches.

To achieve the goal of growing older bucks with larger antlers, there are tradeoffs for hunters to consider and an element of risk involved. For example, protection of bucks via antler point restrictions necessitate at least one year of reduced hunter success until those small "protected bucks" age into the legal cohort. The period required for a buck to become legal could be even longer than one extra year in locations with low habitat quality and harsh winter weather. The risk involved with protecting a buck age class for an extra year is the increased possibility of death from non-hunting causes, such as malnutrition in winter, predation, vehicle collisions, and illegal harvest. Simply stated, not all small bucks protected from harvest for an additional year will survive until the following hunting season.

Three buck management options were chosen for evaluation based on input received from the UPDAT, deer camp surveys, and the 2010 U.P. Sportsman Alliance deer meetings. Each option was analyzed to estimate the likely success of advancing a proportion of bucks to a larger antler size class. The current U.P. Hunter's Choice rules are presented as a fourth option. The options are:

- 1) One buck per year
- 2) Two point minimum antler point restriction on both the single and Combination Licenses (no spike horn rule)
- 3) Three point minimum antler point restriction on both the single and Combination Licenses
- 4) Current U.P. Hunter's Choice regulations
- 5) Current U.P. Hunter's Choice regulations with modification to single tag (also falls within structure of potential license package)
- 6) Return to regulations prior to 2008 (i.e. one buck with antlers 3 inches or more and the second buck with 4 points or more on a side with either the single licenses or the combination license)

The data used to analyze these options were collected from deer check stations, mail surveys of hunter harvest, the DNR's retail sales system, U.P. deer camp surveys, and snow depth measurements. Descriptions of these data sets are attached in an addendum to this document.

Current Situation

Antler size in deer is correlated to the age of the animal, but not entirely so. In general, bucks produce antlers with more points and greater mass as they get older, but variation exists due to the effects of nutrition and genetics (Fig. 1). For example, bucks in the 1.5-year-old age class grow a preponderance of spike and 3-4 point antlers, but some of these yearlings produce much larger racks. Conversely, 2.5-year-old bucks commonly grow antlers with 7+ points, but some produce only spikes. Although hunters and wildlife managers commonly talk about moving 1.5 year old bucks to an older age class through regulations, we are really talking about moving deer from small to larger antler size classes.

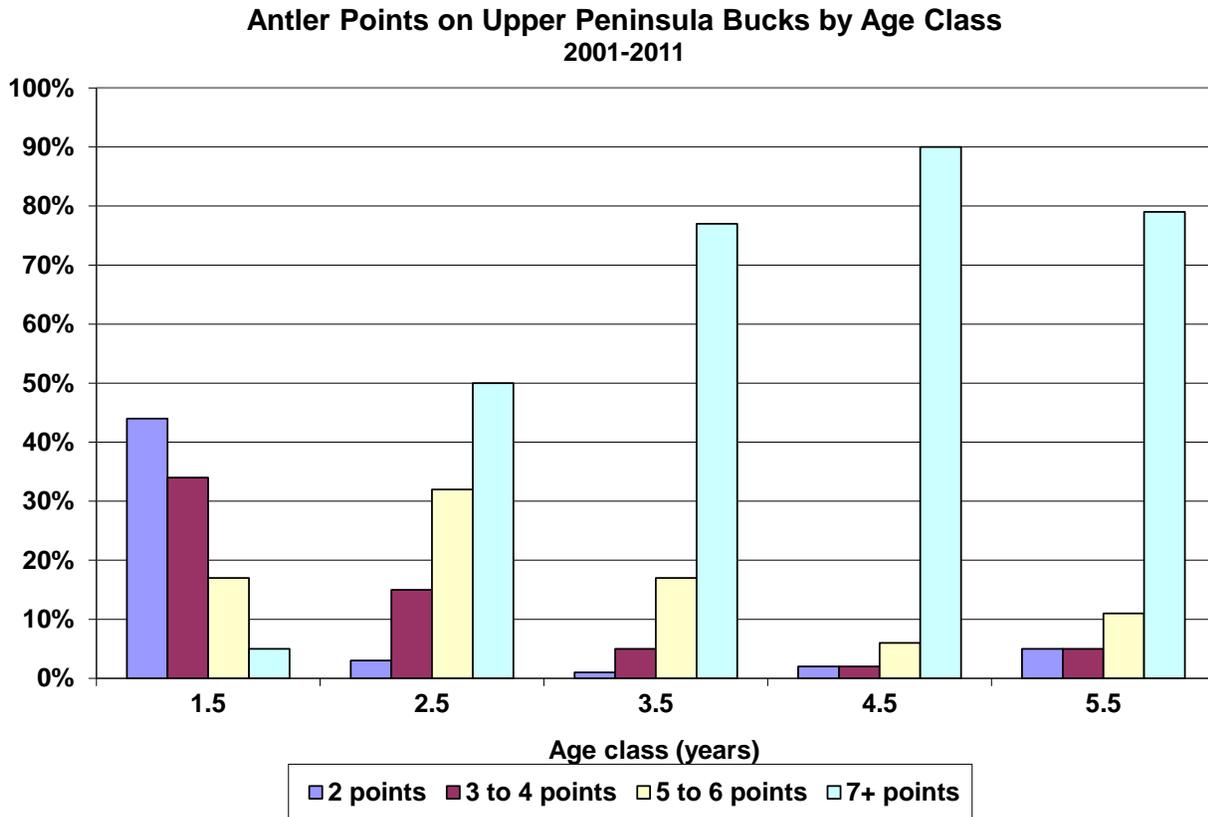


Figure 1. Antler point distribution by age class for bucks harvested in the U.P. and examined at deer check stations during 2001-2011.

The age structure of bucks in the U.P. has been changing over time in response to various harvest regulations. Since the 1980's, the proportion of 1.5 year olds in the harvest has declined noticeably while the percentage of 2.5 and 3.5 year old bucks has increased (Fig. 2) suggesting a higher proportion of 1.5 year old bucks reach these older age classes now than in the 1980's. Under current regulations, 1.5 year olds comprise 35% of the buck harvest vs. 65% in the 1980's. Conversely, 2.5 year olds now make up 40% of the kill vs. only 17% in the 80's, and 3.5 year olds make up 21% of the kill vs. 10% in the 1980's.

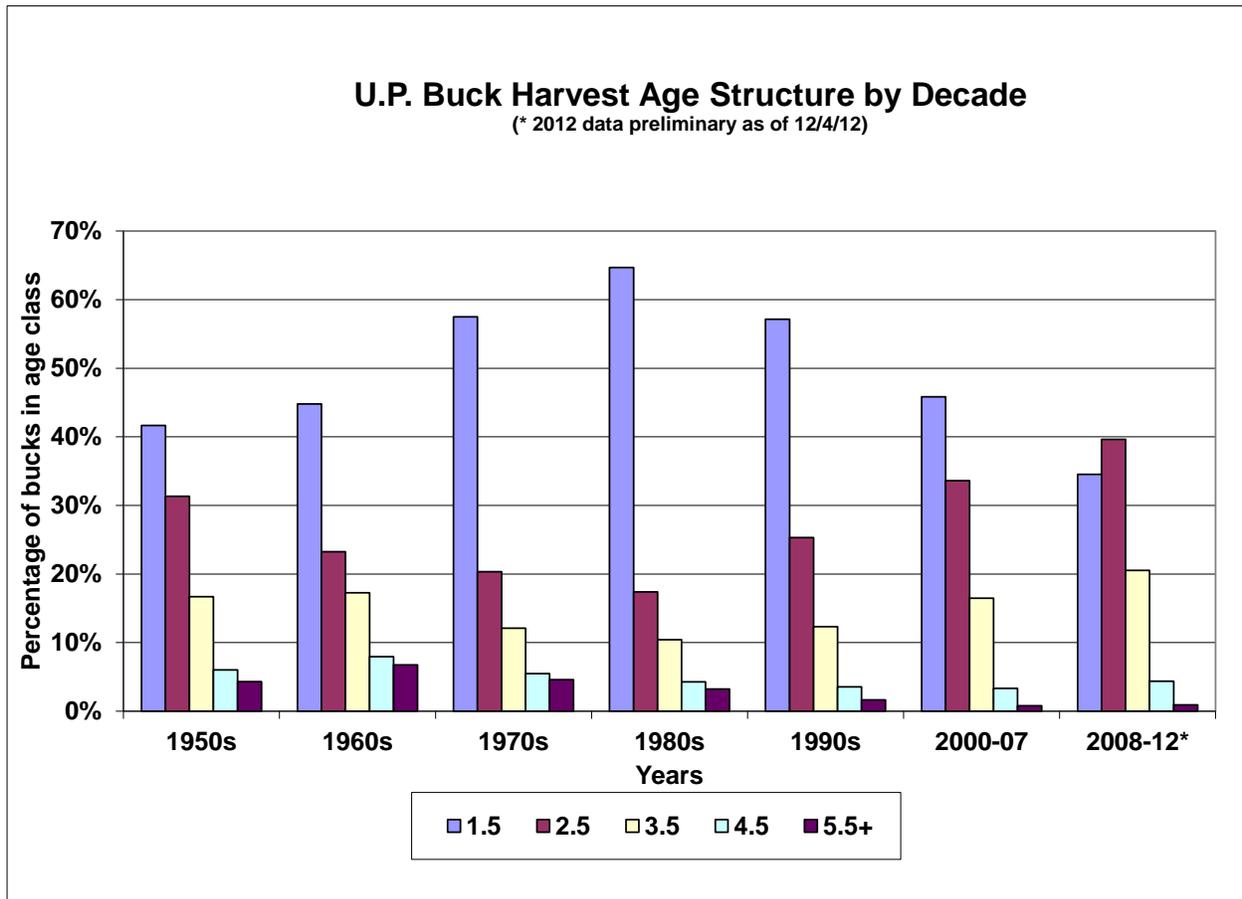


Figure 2. Change in the U.P. buck harvest age structure through the decades from deer check stations. Sample sizes for bucks checked were as follows: 1950s =16,058; 1960s = 7,699; 1970s=11,537; 1980s=20,628; 1990s=36,768; 2000-07=32,457; 2008-12=11,105.

Changes in hunting regulations coupled with voluntary and mandated hunter restraint in harvesting young bucks has clearly shifted the harvest age structure in the U.P. An important question to ponder is whether the current situation is satisfactory or in need of additional improvement? Strikingly, the oldest age classes of bucks, 4.5 and 5.5+ years, are those that have shown the least change over time. Bucks of these ages remain exceedingly uncommon in the U.P.

Analysis of Buck Management Options

Currently, the harvest age structure of bucks and the antler point distribution of those animals have been influenced by many years of antler point restrictions and a growing interest in voluntary restraint in the harvest of young bucks. To evaluate the effects of various regulation options, we felt it important to select a baseline period of time in which the buck harvest age structure and antler point distributions more closely reflected the living population of bucks than it does today. We selected the 10-year period 1987-96 as the baseline for analyzing options because antler point restrictions were not in place and the “quality deer management” movement had not yet taken hold in the U.P.

Spike horns made up a much larger percentage of the buck kill from 1987-96 than today, and conversely, bucks with 5 or more antler points currently make up a larger percentage of the buck harvest than 20 years ago (Fig. 3). We recognize some level of hunter selectivity likely occurred even in these earlier years, but it was almost certainly less than today. We believe the factors impacting antler development during 1987-96 are similar to today, and this time frame covered a range of winter conditions.

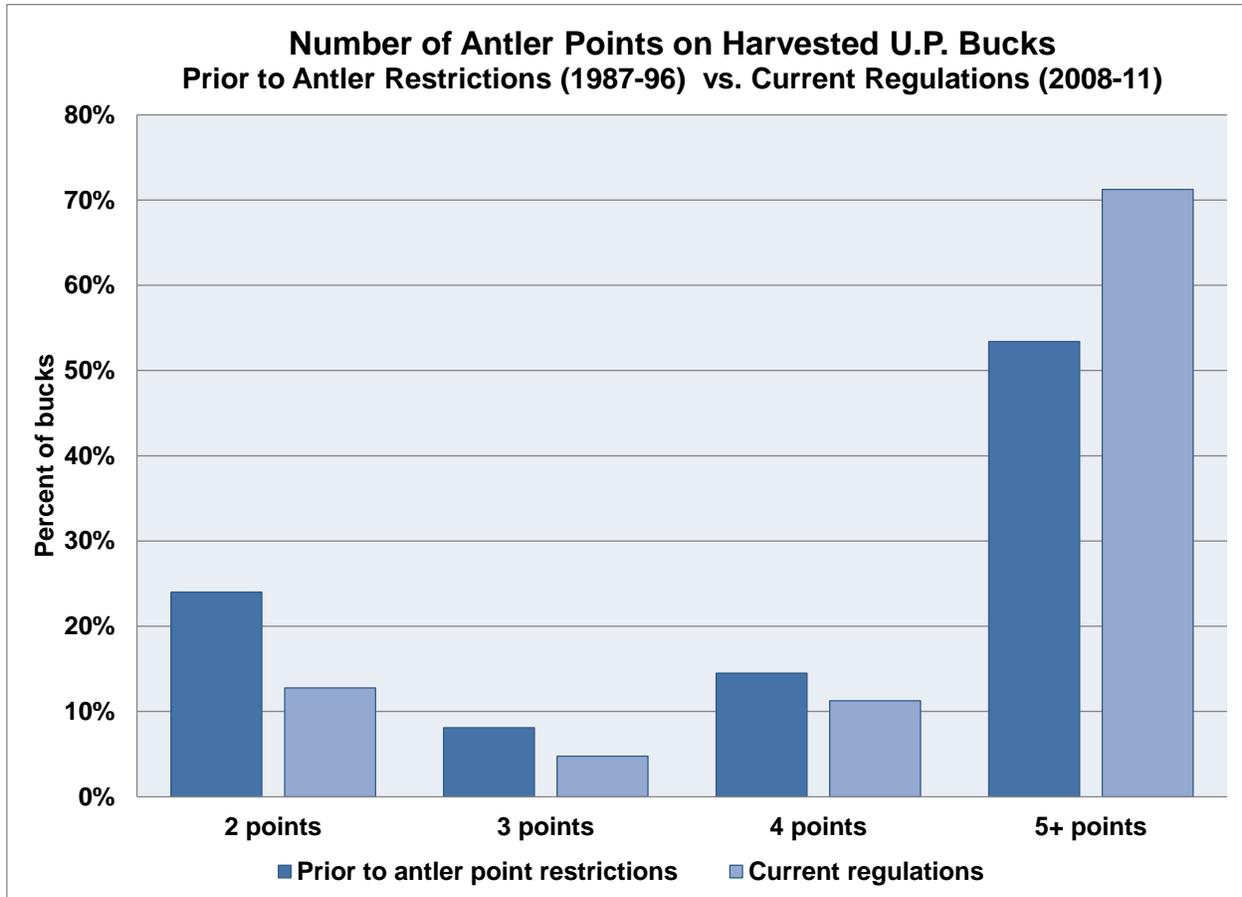


Figure 3. Antler point distribution of bucks harvested in the U.P. during firearm season and examined at deer check stations during 2 different time periods.

The buck management options evaluated in this report are primarily based on antler points, and therefore, we focused our analysis and presentation on antler point distributions rather than age of deer. As discussed earlier, age and antler development are not always directly linked due to the effects of winter weather, birth date, habitat quality, and other factors. We believe the metrics used in our evaluation should match the management options being discussed—antler size rather than buck age.

Option 1: One Buck per Year

Specifications

Under this option, the deer license would include one kill tag valid for all season segments combined. Hunters could take a single buck with one antler at least 3 inches long. An archery season hunter could use the tag for an antlerless deer, rather than a buck. However, that would conclude their deer hunting for the year unless they possess a Private Land or Public Land Antlerless License.

Analysis

The West U.P. and East U.P. Deer Camp Surveys consistently show that 1-2% of participating hunters take 2 bucks during firearm season. Even when all seasons are combined (archery, firearm, and muzzleloader), the statewide mail survey suggests just 2% of U.P. hunters, on average, kill a second buck (Fig. 4). The majority of U.P. hunters (70%) harvest no buck each year, and 28% take one buck. According to mail survey estimates, second bucks taken by hunters have accounted for 7% of the annual U.P. harvest, or about 2,200 bucks per year during 2001-2011.

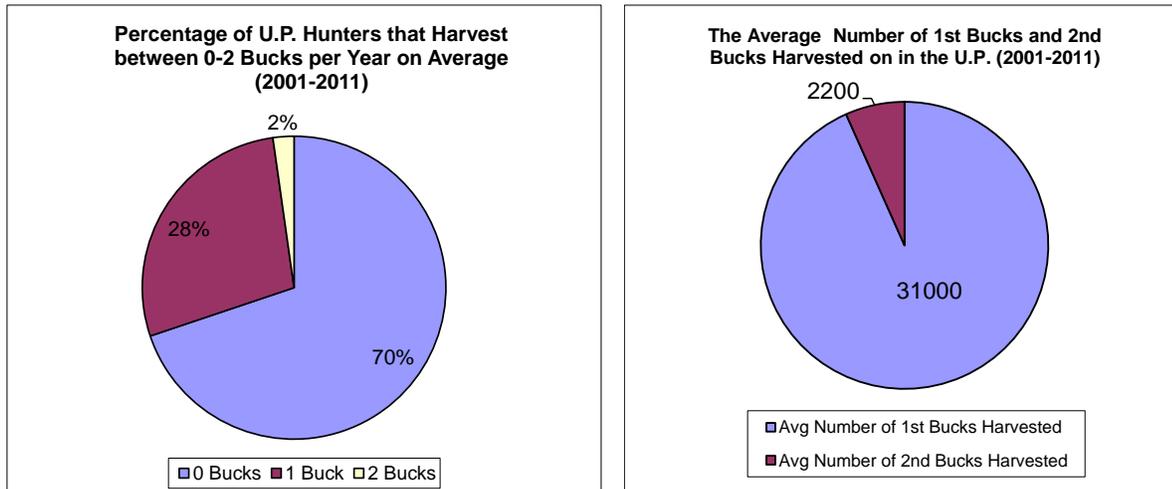


Figure 4. Percentage of U.P. hunters harvesting 0, 1, or 2 bucks per year, and number of first and second bucks harvested, on average, during 2001-2011.

Although a one buck rule could reduce the harvest by eliminating the take of second bucks (7% of the harvest), this harvest reduction could be offset by removal of the antler point restrictions currently associated with the Combination License. In order to analyze this possibility, we referred back to baseline antler class data from 1987-96.

During the period 1987-96, there were no antler point restrictions in place and hunters likely showed lesser selectivity for older bucks than today. We feel the antler size distribution of the harvest more closely reflected that of the living buck population. During that 10-year period, 24% of bucks killed were spike horns. Currently, spike horns are protected from harvest for

hunters who possess a Combination License, and thus, spikes comprise only 13% of the present-day harvest (Fig. 3).

If the Combination License is abolished under a one buck rule, an additional 11% of bucks would potentially become vulnerable to harvest as spike horns (24%-13%=11%). The same situation holds true for bucks with 3 and 4 point antlers. Those bucks which currently are not available to holders of a Combination License would become legal targets under a one buck rule. This would potentially add another 7% of bucks to the harvest (3% from 3 pointers and 4% from 4 pointers— see table below) for a total possible increase in harvest of 18%. To reiterate--this potential increase would occur due to abolishment of the antler restrictions tied to the Combination License.

Year	No. of antler points (% of deer checked)			
	2	3	4	5+
Prior to antler restrictions (1987-1996)	24%	8%	15%	53%
Current regulations (2008-2011)	13%	5%	11%	71%
Difference	11%	3%	4%	

Assuming an average annual buck kill of 33,300 per year (2001-2011 average), elimination of the Combination License and replacement with a one buck rule has the potential to result in the harvest of an additional 6,000 spikes, 3 points, and 4 points per year. This would be balanced against the estimated 2,200 bucks that would be saved due to the elimination of second buck opportunities.

Some proponents of a one buck rule believe hunters would be more likely to pass on smaller bucks, especially early in the season, with hopes of observing something larger. They further believe that many of these same hunters would ultimately be unsuccessful in filling their tag, whether by choice or lack of additional opportunity. We acknowledge these viewpoints, but we cannot numerically evaluate this potential behavioral change on the part of hunters.

Thus, the potential net result of a one buck rule compared to current regulations ranges from a decrease in annual buck harvest of 2,200 (7% decrease) to an increase in buck harvest of 3,800 (11% increase).

License Implications

Ideally, the license system would be revamped if this option was adopted so regulations would be easier to understand and law enforcement would be aided. For maximum simplicity and enforcement, it might be necessary to rescind the Combination, Archery, and Firearm Licenses and replace them with a new deer hunting license with one kill tag.

This option might be relatively easy to adopt as a statewide change, but it could be highly problematical if Lower Michigan areas are content with the current license structure. Many U.P. hunters reside in Lower Michigan or out-of-state and hunt in both peninsulas. To enforce a one buck rule, a U.P.-specific deer hunting license might be needed. Otherwise, hunters who possess

the Combination License with 2 kill tags (transient hunters from Lower Michigan), would be on an “honor system” if they hunted in the U.P.

A new license with single kill tag could have a large impact on license income because Combination License purchases would be reduced by 50% (only one tag would be purchased per hunter rather than 2) and revenue would be lost from hunters who currently purchase both the single Archery License and the single Firearm License.

Recreation Implications

A one buck license would reduce recreational opportunities for many hunters. Although few hunters harvest a second buck, Combination Licenses have accounted for an average of 42% of deer hunting licenses sold in the U.P. since 2003. The Combination License allows hunters to continue hunting after they take a buck, which is important for those who seek additional recreational opportunity.

Feasibility to Implement the Option

This proposal would likely require legislative action. Michigan law currently states “*The department shall issue a combination deer license that authorizes an individual to hunt deer both during the firearm deer seasons and the bow and arrow seasons, ... A combination deer license shall authorize the holder to take 2 deer in compliance with orders issued under part 401 (MCL 324.43525a(1)).*”

Option 2: Two Point Minimum Antler Point Restriction (No Spike Rule)

Under this option, hunters would be able to harvest one buck with 2 or more antler points on one side (spike horns protected) and a second buck with 4 or more points on one side. If used for archery season, the Archery and Combination kill tags would be valid for antlerless deer or antlered bucks.

- Combination License
 - Regular tag - one buck with 2 or more antler points on one side AND
 - Restricted tag - one buck with 4 or more antler points on one side

OR

- Single Archery and Firearm Licenses
 - One buck with 2 or more antler points on one side AND
 - One buck with 4 or more antler points on one side

Analysis

Baseline antler point data from 1987-96 suggest spike horns comprised 24% of the harvest on average without antler point restrictions in place. Under current rules, spikes make up 13% of the annual buck harvest. Under Option 2, spike horns would be completely protected.

However, the Combination License would no longer protect 3 and 4 point bucks. During 1987-96, 3 and 4 point bucks made up about 23% of the annual harvest. Under current regulations, these 2 antler size classes make up about 16% of the kill. The difference (7%) would now be available for harvest under this option (see table below). We acknowledge some hunters would continue to pass on 3 and 4 point bucks, even with the restriction rescinded, but we cannot evaluate this possibility numerically.

Year	No. of antler points (% of deer checked)			
	2	3	4	5+
Prior to antler restrictions (1987-1996)	24%	8%	15%	53%
Current regulations (2008-2011)	13%	5%	11%	71%

In summary, compared to current regulations, Option 2 would reduce total harvest by 13% due to the protection of additional spike horns. On the other side of the equation, the harvest could increase by an additional 7% because 3 and 4 point bucks would no longer be protected by the current Combination License antler restriction which requires at least 3 points on one side. Three pointers could potentially increase from 5% of the harvest (currently) to historical levels of 8% (3% gain), and 4 pointers could increase from 11% of the harvest (currently) to 15% (4% gain). The net result, which depends on the proportion of 3 and 4 pointers passed by hunters, is to advance 6% to 13% of the buck population to a larger antler size class.

License Implications

Since this option would apply to both the single licenses and the Combination License, it should have little impact on the license a person chooses to purchase. Thus, a revenue difference is not expected.

Recreation Implications

An important aspect of hunter success and satisfaction is the ability of hunters to distinguish whether the buck is legal to harvest under hunting conditions in the field. Under this “no spike horn rule,” hunters would need to distinguish whether a buck had a forked antler. Many hunters feel this is relatively easy to accomplish regardless of hunting technique.

The availability of a second buck license would provide additional recreational opportunity while constraining extra harvest due to the 4 point on one side antler restriction.

Law Enforcement Implications

This option may present a challenge regarding enforcement of the bag limit on single Archery and Firearm Licenses. These license holders would be allowed 2 bucks, one with a bow and one with a gun, but the kill tags would by necessity be worded generically. Unlike the Combination License kill tags, in which the restricted tag mandates 4 or more points on one side, the Archery and Firearm tags would need to contain general language so they could be used for either a first or second buck.

Feasibility to Implement the Option

Implementation of an antler point restriction falls within the Natural Resources Commission's authority. It would require a change in the Wildlife Conservation Order but would not require legislative action.

Option 3: Three Point Minimum Antler Point Restriction

Under this option, hunters would be able to harvest one buck with 3 or more antler points on one side and a second buck with 4 or more points on one side. If used for archery season, the Archery and Combination kill tags would be valid for antlerless deer or antlered bucks.

- Combination License
 - Regular tag - one buck with 3 or more antler points on one side AND
 - Restricted tag - one buck with 4 or more antler points on one side

OR

- Single Archery and Firearm Licenses
 - One buck with 3 or more antler points on one side AND
 - One buck with 4 or more antler points on one side

Analysis

Baseline antler point information from 1987-96 suggests that Option 3 would protect 47% of the bucks from harvest each year because they would have less than 3 points on one side. Under current regulations, 29% of bucks possess 2-4 antler points, and these bucks would be protected to potentially advance to a larger antler size class.

Year	No. of antler points (% of deer checked)			
	2	3	4	5+
Prior to antler restrictions (1987-1996)	24%	8%	15%	53%
Current regulations (2008-2011)	13%	5%	11%	71%

License Implications

Since this restriction would apply to both the single licenses and the Combination License, there would be little impact on which license a person chooses to purchase. There should not be a substantial difference in revenue generated.

Recreation Implications

A potential negative aspect of Option 3 is the difficulty associated with counting antler points under hunting conditions. Whereas it may be relatively simple for hunters to determine whether a buck has antlers greater than 3 inches, or has a forked antler, it can be more challenging to

determine whether a buck has 3 points on one side--especially if the animal is obstructed by cover, is moving, or only offers a quick look to the hunter.

The availability of a second buck license would provide additional recreational opportunity while constraining extra harvest due to the 4 point on one side antler restriction.

Law Enforcement Implications

This option may present a challenge regarding enforcement of the bag limit on single Archery and Firearm Licenses. These license holders would be allowed 2 bucks, one with a bow and one with a gun, but the kill tags would by necessity be worded generically. Unlike the Combination License kill tags, in which the restricted tag mandates 4 or more points on one side, the Archery and Firearm tags would need to contain general language so they could be used for either a first or second buck.

Feasibility to Implement the Option

Implementation of an antler point restriction falls within the Natural Resources Commission's authority. It would require a change in the Wildlife Conservation Order but would not require legislative action.

Option 4: Current Hunter's Choice Regulations

Under this option a hunter must choose whether they wish to pursue one buck or 2 during the year. Those that plan to harvest 2 bucks can purchase a Combination License with 2 kill tags, but both tags carry antler point restrictions. One buck must have at least 3 antler points on one side and the other 4 antler points on one side. Hunters who are content to harvest one buck during the year may opt for an Archery and/or Firearm License. One buck with a 3 inch long antler is legal. The Archery tag and both Combination tags can be used on antlerless deer during archery season.

This regulation has been in effect since the 2008 hunting season. It is being evaluated as part of this buck options analysis, and results of that evaluation will be presented at the January 2013 UPDAT meeting.

Option 5: Current Hunter's Choice Regulations with Modification to Single License

This option would mimic option 4 with the exception that the single license would be modified from the current structure that offers one single license for the archery season and one single license for the firearm season to one single license for all seasons combined. This may reduce confusion that has been expressed with the current hunter's choice regulations.

This license structure change may be implemented regardless if the new license structure that has been proposed by the legislature is enacted. If so, it will be the responsibility of the Department to determine if the current regulations in place will need to be modified in order to be compatible with the new structure.

Option 6: Return to Prior 2008 Buck Regulations

While this option does not select for older bucks it was brought up at the January 19th, 2013 UPDAT meeting as a desired option and was therefore added. This would return buck regulations to the following:

- Combination License
 - Regular tag - one buck with at least one antler 3” or longer AND
 - Restricted tag - one buck with 4 or more antler points on one side

OR

- Single Archery and Firearm Licenses
 - One buck with at least one antler 3” or longer AND
 - One buck with 4 or more antler points on one side

This regulation is currently in place in parts of hunting zone 2 and all of hunting zone 3.

Summary

Option 1: One buck per year – Compared to current harvest, annual buck kill ranges from 7% lower to 11% higher.

Option 2: Two point minimum antler point restriction (no spikes) – Compared to current harvest, 6-13% of bucks are protected to potentially advance to a larger antler size class.

Option 3: Three point minimum antler point restriction – Compared to current harvest, 29% of bucks are protected to potentially advance to a larger antler size class.

Addendum – Information Analyzed

Deer Check Stations – Harvested deer are examined at DNR offices and several other locations each fall, and hunters are provided with a successful deer hunter's patch. The information collected from each hunter includes where the animal was harvested (public or private land, county, township), season, date of harvest, age of animal (determined by examining the teeth of the deer), number of antler points, and antler beam diameters. Typically, the number of deer brought to check stations is about 7-8% of the total harvest.

Hunter Harvest Surveys - Mail survey questionnaires have been sent to randomly-selected sample of hunters beginning in 1952. During recent years, between 45,000 and 55,000 individuals receive a survey. Two reminder mailings are made to obtain the best response rate possible. Typically, over 50% are returned. Using this information in conjunction with license sales, estimates are generated for the number of hunters who participated in the deer season and the number of deer harvested. Harvest estimates are broken down based upon seasons and regions and compared with the previous year.

Retail Sales System – This is the current system that tracks all license sales in Michigan. Information can be obtained on how many licenses were purchased, the types of licenses, and where they were purchased. It is important to note that while the system is very useful to track where licenses are sold, it is not necessarily indicative of where that person may be hunting. For this reason, license sales may not correlate with estimated hunter numbers or estimated harvest for a particular region but they should correlate with statewide estimates.

U.P. Deer Camp Surveys - This cooperated survey is conducted each firearm season in both the West U.P. and East U.P. The survey began in the Central U.P. in 1994 and since 2005 the survey has expanded to the entire peninsula. The survey is used to monitor deer sightings, deer harvest, and hunter opinions during the 16-day firearm season. It provides hunters and DNR biologists with feedback on the status of the deer herd and hunting satisfaction soon after the season ends.

Total Accumulated Snow Depth - The U.P. region collects snow depth measurements throughout the winter to track its severity. Snow depth has been found to be a major predictor of over winter loss and other potential population impacts to the U.P. deer herd. Currently, snow depth is measured at 7 locations in the Western U.P. and 8 locations in the Eastern U.P. with all locations at least 25 miles apart.