



April 7, 2008

Mr. Keith Charters, Chair  
Natural Resources Commission  
P.O. Box 30028  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Mr. John Madigan, Chair  
NRC Wildlife Committee

Dear Chairman Charters and Madigan:

On behalf of the Michigan State Chapter of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) we are writing to provide input on the "Hunter's Choice" proposal. The QDMA is an international nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ethical hunting, sound deer management and preservation of the deer-hunting heritage. The QDMA has over 50,000 members nationwide with Michigan ranking fourth in statewide membership. Our membership includes more than 2,500 of the nation's leading wildlife and forestry professionals. As such, QDMA is widely regarded as the most respected whitetail organization in the United States.

The QDMA promotes Quality Deer Management. Quality Deer Management is not about raising "big bucks"; rather it is a management approach where young bucks are protected from harvest, combined with an adequate harvest of female deer to produce healthy deer herds in balance with existing habitat conditions. Quality Deer Management produces healthy deer herds and habitats, and is therefore good for deer, other wildlife species, people and society.

There are several strategies for protecting young bucks. Harvest guidelines can be designed to protect bucks based on the number of antler points, antler spread, age and body characteristics, Boone and Crockett score, or a combination of these methods. Buck harvest limits, quotas and "earn-a-buck" programs can also be used. Each of these aforementioned strategies has biological and social advantages and disadvantages. To be successful, a program must be designed with local data, have an objective monitoring program, and be supported by the majority of hunters and landowners. Hunter and landowner support are crucial for any deer management program. The program must also be supported and able to be implemented by the state wildlife agency. Implementation must occur within the agency's fiscal and personnel capabilities.

We are intrigued by the proposal before you today. If designed with local data, it could be a biologically sound approach to protecting yearling bucks. The DNR has the expertise necessary to objectively monitor the results of such a program. It can appeal to hunters because they have the option to choose what they want to shoot during the season, and it can appeal to the DNR because they aren't mandating that all hunters must pass/protect yearling bucks. Finally, in our current situation of budget restraints and shortfalls, this proposal has the potential of improving

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Michigan's deer herd and our hunting opportunities with minimal implications to hunting license sales.

For these reasons, we support the basis of this proposal. If adopted, we urge you to have the DNR's deer management team develop a specific guideline for the two-buck license that will protect the majority of yearling bucks. If you decline this proposal, we urge you to consider other strategies to protect the majority of yearling bucks from harvest.

We are concerned that the proposal does not protect the majority of yearling bucks in southern lower Michigan. In fact, DNR data shows that the proposal may only protect about one-third of yearling bucks. We believe the DNR Wildlife staff should address this issue.

Education is the key to obtaining program support from Michigan's sportsmen and women. Michigan's state chapter and 14 Branches annually conduct about 30 educational events on deer and habitat management. Combined with over 4,300 QDMA members in Michigan, we stand ready to help provide information and education regarding any new proposal or program to improve our deer herd and hunting opportunities. Thank you for consideration of this matter and for your commitment to Michigan's natural resources.

Respectfully,

Leon E. Hank, president  
Quality Deer Management Association  
Michigan State Chapter  
4649 Crampton Way  
Holt, Michigan 48842  
517-699-2393

Kip Adams  
QDMA  
Northern Director of Education & Outreach  
170 Whitetail Way  
Bogart, Georgia 30622  
800-209-3337

cc: NRC Commissioners  
R. Humphries, DNR Director  
D. Reeves, Acting Wildlife Director  
QDMA State Chapter Board of Directors  
QDMA Branch Presidents