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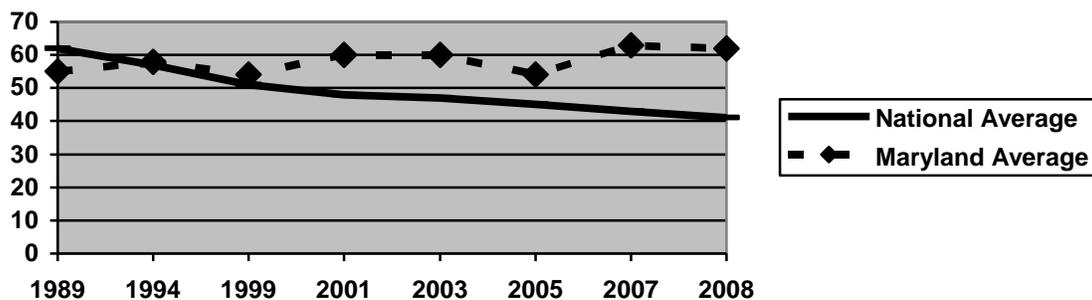
On behalf of the Maryland state chapter of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) we thank you for the opportunity to provide input on Maryland's 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 white-tailed deer regulations and bag limits. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat, and our hunting heritage. Among QDMA's 50,000 members are 2,000 Maryland members and more than 2,500 wildlife biologists, foresters and natural resource professionals. As such, QDMA is widely regarded as the most respected whitetail organization in the U.S.

We would like to commend the Department on many facets of your deer management program. Maryland deer seasons provide abundant recreational opportunities and our liberal bag limits provide abundant antlerless harvest opportunities. These opportunities enable hunters to spend additional time afield and are necessary to balance deer herds with their habitats and maximize youth hunter recruitment and retention.

To add to a successful deer management program, we offer the following suggestions:

- Establish regulations to protect the majority of yearling bucks in each county in the state. The percentage of yearling bucks in the antlered harvest has steadily declined from a national average of 62 percent in 1989 to 41 percent in 2008 (see graph below). Unfortunately, the average percentage of yearling bucks in the antlered harvest has increased in Maryland since 1989. Yearling buck harvest has been especially high in Allegany (71-78%) and Garrett (77-82%) counties during 2006 to 2008.

**Percent Yearling Bucks in the Antlered Harvest**



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Yearling bucks can be protected through antler point or spread restrictions, earn-a-buck programs, or by numerous other techniques. With regard to antler restrictions, we prefer antler spread restrictions as they are generally more biologically sound than point restrictions at separating yearling from 2.5 years and older bucks. Also, they are currently used by at least three state wildlife agencies including neighboring Delaware. Regardless of the strategy, the Maryland State Chapter and Branches lend our support to help the Department promote the benefits, to hunters and the deer herd, of protecting the majority of yearling bucks.

- Continue pursuing avenues to harvest additional antlerless deer in areas where deer density is negatively impacting native habitat. These avenues may be additional days (longer seasons and/or additional Sundays), seasons or other innovative measures.
- Encourage hunters to donate deer to venison coalitions such as Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry. Less than 1/3 of Maryland's successful hunters take more than one deer. Therefore, many hunters could spend more time afield, take additional antlerless deer, and provide much needed meat to food pantries at no cost.
- Encourage hunters and the general public to participate in educational events to increase their knowledge on deer biology and deer and habitat management. Topics such as harvesting bucks based on age or a combination of age/antler spread are advantageous to creating more knowledgeable hunters and better stewards of our natural resources. The Maryland QDMA State Chapter and Branches will conduct numerous educational seminars, workshops and field days on an annual basis.

We appreciate the good working relationship we have with the Department and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 deer regulations and bag limits. We look forward to discussing our suggestions with you and working on future deer issues.

Respectfully,

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