

QDM Cooperative Forming on the eastern shore of Maryland

The Maryland State Chapter QDMA and approximately 95 lease members of The Forestland Group, LLC (TFG) gathered on October 3rd in Salisbury at the Fountain's Wedding and Convention Center to discuss plans for a QDM Cooperative on the Eastern Shore. Matt Sampson of TFG oversees the management of 500,000 acres of forests in the Northeast Region. Matt also manages a hunt club program for 90 forest tracts totaling 22,000 acres on the Eastern Shore.

Matt began the meeting with an overview of the hunt club program and discussed changes since the last meeting in 2003. He then explained his passion for hunting and the outdoors and the need to pass it on to future generations. He shares the same values and beliefs of the QDMA and would like to give the opportunity for the hunt clubs to participate in a cooperative program which follows QDM guidelines. He stressed that this is a voluntary program and not a requirement for continuation of their leases. Hunt clubs who commit to the program will agree to actively participate in QDM efforts for five years. Standards will be set for each individual club and reviewed by TFG. They will be required to record and maintain harvest and observation data on the property. At the end of the year, an annual report will be completed and sent back to TFG.

A one-year QDMA membership was purchased by TGF to each of the 90 hunt clubs. The first 20 hunt clubs willing to develop management standards and commit their members to following QDM principles will receive a QDMA management kit from TFG. This kit consists of jawbone removal tools, 300#scale, hoist and gambrel, management posters, deer harvest and observation log books, and a QDMA sign. Two additional kits were raffled off at the meeting as well as QDMA and TFG logo hats. For committed clubs who do not receive the management kit, TFG will offer a QDMA property sign and a one-time \$50.00 credit towards the cost of their lease.

EW Grimes opened the QDMA presentation with What is a QDM Cooperative and Why. TFG and their hunters working together to improve the quality of the deer and the hunting experiences on their hunting properties.

Dr. Mark Conner, deer biologist for Dupont's Chesapeake Farm gave a half hour presentation explaining the benefits of a QDM program. The QDM program initiated in 1994 on Chesapeake Farm

with antler-point restrictions, then upgraded to Spread restrictions 1997 while maintaining a strong doe harvest. The presentation explained the importance of record keeping of observation and harvest data. Dr. Conner's presentation and take home message was well received and prompted many questions that lasted until the close of the meeting. The next step in the cooperative is for TFG to send a letter to the hunt clubs requesting participation with the program. Those clubs will hopefully invite adjoining landowners to participate.

We would like to thank Matt Sampson of TFG and Mike Van Buren VP Maryland State Chapter QDMA for establishing TFG-QDM Cooperative of Maryland. The Maryland State Chapter QDMA is looking forward to working with TFG-QDM Co-op and others interested in starting a QDM Cooperative. This is the beginning of what will turn out to be the largest QDM cooperative ever formed in Maryland!

Mike Van Buren
E.W. Grimes
Maryland State Chapter QDMA

