

OCTOBER, 2011 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (NRC) MEETING

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The Park Advisory Committee reviewed the status of the recreation passport program. The ability to purchase a passport at the park offices will continue and the additional \$5.00 fee for doing so has been postponed one year. The legislation allows the DNR to increase the passport cost, if purchased at a park, by two \$5.00 increases. Meaning, eventually, the cost will be \$20.00 or double that of doing it with your annual registration. In addition the enforcement will start next year. If your vehicle is in a park without a passport you could be fined \$100.00.

There will be no changes to the 2012 turkey regulations.

Wolf management has been impacted by federal budget cuts. Response time on predation complaints will be slow or not at all. This means the wolves causing the problem may not be caught up with and the investigation may not identify the cause as being wolves. As a result, predation on domestic animals may increase (once wolves see how easy it is they will pursue the food source) and reimbursement for damage may not be possible.

Since the reestablishment of elk their range had expanded beyond the area originally intended. This, of course, has caused crop damage and a deterioration of some public lands. The intent is to keep the elk at a manageable population and within the range most suitable for them. Hunting is the primary management tool to be used.

A number of years ago the DNR established a process by which antler point restrictions could be required in

certain areas. This process is labor intensive as it requires both the hunters and land owners to be notified and to fill out a questionnaire on the issue. I sat on a group who reviewed the rules and we came to the conclusion the original process was still the best way to handle these requests. We did suggest clarification changes to the questionnaire. The primary thought process was, voluntarily restricting the number of antler points is the best way of handling the issue. Forcing hunters into not taking spikes, beyond the second deer regulations already in effect, is detrimental to the future of deer hunting and in many areas has little effect on the production of large racks. Deer in the southern half of the Lower often develop fair size racks in their first year. A larger problem is the impact on the DNR budget which sorely needs to shed efforts which do not contribute to sound scientific natural resource management.

The USDA changed the bovine TB status of some of the counties in what we call the TB area, which opened up more area as TB free. This in turn changed the no baiting area. If you hunt this area you will need to get the latest restrictions.

The cost of removing unwanted geese is going up and the tolerance for geese is going down. Private companies will remove geese from your property for a, rather stiff, fee. The DNR will relocate some of the geese with the balance going to soup kitchens. This is another never ending drain on the DNR budget which should be eliminated.

Jim De Clerck