Participant Evaluation of Webinar Series to Support Deer Management in the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate
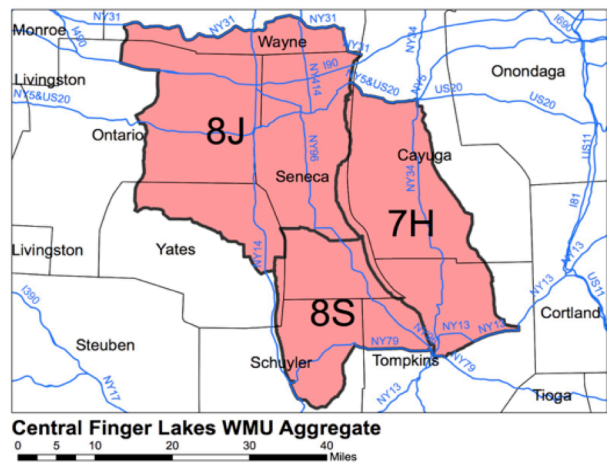

Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) grouped the existing set of wildlife management units (WMUs) used as administrative boundaries for deer management into fewer, larger WMU aggregates for deer management. This clustering was done to allow for better use of management data and improved deer population monitoring. Public input for deer management will now be identified from WMU aggregates rather than within the smaller individual WMUs, as has been the case since 1990.

In 2016, DEC completed a pilot program to obtain public input for decisions about deer management at this larger scale. The area selected for the pilot project was called the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate. It includes a group of three WMUs (7H, 8J, and 8S) that crosses 7 counties.

A key component of the pilot project was a set of two webinars designed to develop public understanding of the DEC's deer management program, share results of a survey of aggregate residents, and convey information to the public regarding deer, deer impacts on people and the environment, and deer management issues and challenges. Staff with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and DEC delivered the webinars on January 20 and 27, 2016. The webinar series was open to any individuals, not only those who resided in the pilot region. Two-hundred twenty-seven individuals registered for the first webinar; 155 of those registrants went on to participate in the first and 98 participated in the second webinar (71 of those who registered for the webinars lived in one of the counties that are partially within the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate).

The purpose of this document is to summarize webinar participants' views of the webinar series, as revealed through a survey (n=66) and interviews (n=26) with webinar participants.

Results indicated that the webinars were most likely to attract stakeholders with hunting-related interests and concerns.

- Many participants became aware of the webinar series through hunter communication networks (e.g., through a hunting forum or organization, through email alerts about hunting and wildlife management sent out by DEC).
- A majority of respondents reported that they hunted deer in their local area (69%) and said they were concerned about health of the local deer herd (75%).
- A majority of respondents (59%) wanted the deer population in their local area to increase over the next 5 years (12% wanted the population to stay about the same, 26% wanted the population to decrease, 3% were not sure of their deer population preference).
- Over 70% of respondents perceived a decline in number of deer harvested by local hunters and over half believed deer hunting opportunity had declined over the last 5 years.
- Most survey respondents said it was very or extremely important to them that DEC address deer hunting opportunities and deer health and wellbeing. A majority said it was very or extremely important that DEC address Lyme disease and problems associated

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with deer hunting. Respondents placed less importance on addressing deer-vehicle collisions and deer damage to gardens and plantings around homes.

Multiple findings suggest that participants' received the webinar series positively.

- Most survey respondents reported that they were satisfied with the series (45% very satisfied; 35% somewhat satisfied).
- A majority of respondents believed that the content generally met their expectations (64%), improved their understanding of deer impacts (69%), and improved their understanding of the DEC's pilot stakeholder engagement process (76%).
- Survey and interview comments suggested that the webinars were perceived by many as well organized and relevant, interesting, informative, and useful.
- Presenters were perceived as knowledgeable on the topics covered. Interviewees said they appreciated learning about the deer management process as well as the pilot public engagement effort.

Although many webinar participants were satisfied with their webinar experience, a minority of participants were dissatisfied.

- Some perceived that selected presentations were too basic to be useful for well-informed participants.
- Some expressed dissatisfaction with the webinars because they arrived with misperceptions about the purpose of the meetings.
- A few were dissatisfied because the webinars left them unclear about how information from the pilot process would be used to make local deer management decisions (i.e., next steps were unclear).

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In 2015, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) grouped the existing set of 92 wildlife management units (WMUs) used as administrative boundaries for deer management into fewer, larger WMU aggregates for deer management. This clustering of WMUs was done to allow for better use of management data and improved deer population monitoring. Public input for deer management will now be identified from WMU aggregates rather than within the smaller individual WMUs, as has been the case since 1990.

DEC has completed a pilot program to obtain public input about deer and deer impacts at this larger WMU aggregate scale. The area selected for the pilot project was called the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate. It includes a group of three WMUs (7H, 8J, and 8S) that encompasses 1,325 square-miles of Seneca County and portions of Ontario, Wayne, Yates, Schuyler, Tompkins and Cayuga counties (Figure 1).
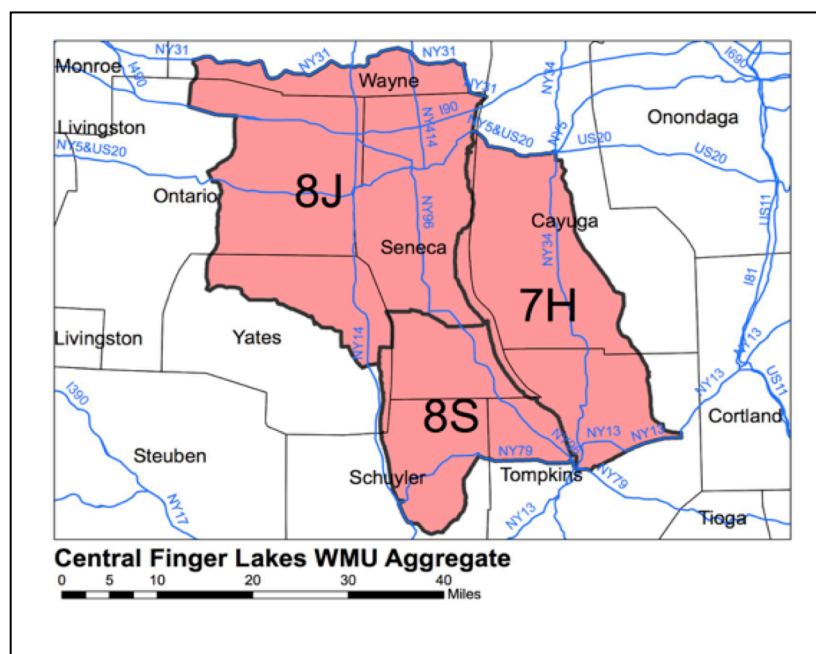
Figure 1. Map showing Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate (i.e., shaded area in middle of map). All findings in this report relate to a stakeholder involvement process piloted in this wildlife management unit aggregate in 2015 and 2016.

The pilot project commenced with a survey of residents in the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate in 2015. The survey collected aggregate-wide information on deer-related experiences, interests, and concerns (Siemer et al. 2015).

A key component of the pilot project was a set of two webinars designed to develop public understanding of the DEC's deer management program, share results of the aggregate-wide

public survey, and convey information to the public regarding deer, deer impacts on people and the environment, and deer management issues and challenges. The webinar series was called "Deer and Deer Management in New York State." Staff with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and DEC delivered the webinars using an online meeting platform (WebEx) on January 20 and 27, 2016. Members of the public could view the webinars online or at any of three physical locations (i.e., Wells College in Aurora, Seneca County CCE office in Waterloo, and the Village of Trumansburg Office).

Following the webinar series, residents of the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate who had participated in the webinar series were invited to apply to participate in a stakeholder input group (SIG) process. The SIG was intended to replace the citizen task forces that had been used by DEC since 1990 for seeking public recommendations on desired deer population levels within individual WMUs. The SIG was designed to address shortcomings of the task force model, which were identified through interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014 with various participants in the former task force approach (Pomeranz et al. 2014).

Here we report findings from an evaluation of webinar series participants' views of the webinar series portion of the pilot project. We summarize findings from a survey completed by 66 webinar participants and personal interviews completed with 26 webinar participants. We also discuss collective efforts to publicize the pilot project and attract participants.

METHODS

Webinar Participant Survey

Two days after the second webinar was held, all participants were sent an email message encouraging them to complete an online evaluation of the webinar series. A survey link also was provided on the project website, so that participants could access the survey instrument through the link on their personal message or through the project website.

The online questionnaire contained 56 questions that sought information on: deer-related interests, concerns, beliefs, and preferences; level of participation in pilot project activities; evaluative beliefs about the webinar series, level of satisfaction with the webinar series, and respondents' background characteristics (Appendix A). Each webinar participant was provided an electronic link to the survey website, which contained a unique identifying number to track individual responses. We administered and analyzed the survey using Qualtrics software (https://www.qualtrics.com/).

Webinar Participant Interviews

In addition to the online evaluation, we conducted interviews with a sample of webinar viewers to gain further insight into individuals' perceptions of the series. Respondents to the online evaluation survey were asked to provide contact information if they were willing to provide further feedback on their webinar experience. Forty-three survey respondents provided contact information. Ten of those who provided contact information had previously participated in the SIG process and were interviewed about their views on the SIG process (results of those

interviews are described in a separate report). We attempted to interview the remaining 33 respondents who had not previously participated in the SIG process. We completed 26 interviews (a 27th person provided information in an email response, but declined to be interviewed). Respondents were contacted and interviewed between March 15 and April 22, 2016. Interview times ranged from 13 to 47 minutes (mean interview time 27 minutes).

We constructed an interview guide with questions related to several topics, including: deer-related interests, concerns, beliefs, and preferences; evaluative beliefs about the webinar series process and content; reasons for interest/disinterest in participating in stakeholder input group; level of satisfaction with the webinar series; general perspective on public involvement in deer management decision making; and respondents' background characteristics (e.g., how long they had been a resident of pilot project area). The interviewer varied the set of questions to go into greater depth of questioning on topics for which each interviewee could offer the richest information.

All interviews were transcribed and then coded (i.e., themes or concepts identified by categorizing relevant parts of the interviews) using Atlas.ti software. Codes were developed to reflect the line of questioning in the interview schedule and new codes were added to capture comments in unanticipated categories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two-hundred twenty-seven individuals registered for the first webinar; 155 of those registrants went on to participate in the first and 98 participated in the second webinar. Only 71 of those who registered for the webinars lived in one of the counties that are partially within the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate (i.e., Seneca, Ontario, Wayne, Yates, Schuyler, Tompkins and Cayuga counties).

Eighty webinar participants visited the online evaluation site and began filling out a questionnaire and 66 completed a questionnaire. In this section we summarize information provided by those 66 webinar participants.

Traits of Webinar Participants

Most respondents (86%) were male. Average age of respondents was 58 (range 29 to 78 years old). A majority of respondents were rural, describing the area where they live as rural nonfarm (38%), rural-farm (17%) or village or hamlet (18%). Fewer respondents lived in a small city (14%), suburb of a large or very large city (9%), or a very large city (3%).

Results indicated that the webinars were most likely to attract stakeholders with hunting-related interests. A majority of respondents reported that they hunted deer in their local area (69%). Many said they were concerned about health of the local deer herd (75%). A majority of respondents (59%) wanted the deer population in their local area to increase over the next 5 years (12% wanted the population to stay about the same, 26% wanted the population to decrease, 3% were not sure of their deer population preference). Of respondents who hunt in the area, a majority wanted to see an increase in the deer population (73%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Preferences for deer population changes by different respondent characteristics

Respondent interests, concerns and characteristics	Deer Population Preference			
	Increase	Decrease	Stay the same	Unsure
	(%)			
Have ornamental trees or shrubs around home	55	27	14	4
Have flower beds or gardens around home	55	29	12	4
Concerned about health of local deer herd	70	11	15	2
Hunt deer in local area	73	16	11	0
Concerned about effects of deer on forests	49	38	10	3
Spend a lot of time driving in areas with lots of deer	53	29	16	3
Own woodlots, forested land in area	53	31	11	6
Own nonfarm land in local area	60	26	14	0
Self, someone close to me affected by Lyme disease	59	31	7	3
Spend a lot of time photographing local deer	71	14	11	4
Own agricultural land in local area	45	36	18	0

[1]Respondents could apply multiple characteristics to themselves.

Most webinar participants had gardens, trees or shrubs susceptible to deer damage and over half (56%) owned forests or woodlots in their local area. A substantial minority (45%) said they or someone close to them had been affected by Lyme disease (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondent interests, concerns, and deer-related activities.

Respondent interests, concerns and characteristics	Percent (n=64[1])
Have ornamental trees or shrubs around home	78
Have flower beds or gardens around home	78
Concerned about health of local deer herd	75
Hunt deer in local area	69
Concerned about effects of deer on forests	63
Spend a lot of time driving in areas with lots of deer	61
Own woodlots, forested land in area	56
Own nonfarm land in local area	55
Self, someone close to me affected by Lyme disease	45
Spend a lot of time photographing local deer	44
Own agricultural land in local area	17

[1]n is less than 66 because some respondents did not answer every question.

Beliefs about Change in Level of Human-deer Interactions

Findings suggest that many webinar participants believed that the rate of negative human deer interactions in their local area was declining. A majority of respondents (53%) believed that the number of local people getting Lyme disease had increased over the last 5 years, but about 40% believed that deer damage to crops and deer-vehicle collisions had decreased in their local area over the same time period.

Other findings indicate that many webinar participants also perceived a decline in deer-related benefits in their local area. Over 70% of respondents perceived a decline in number of deer harvested by local hunters and over half believed deer hunting opportunity had declined over the last 5 years (Table 3).

Perceived Priorities for Action by DEC

A majority of webinar participants who completed a questionnaire were hunters, and most survey respondents said it was very or extremely important to them that DEC address deer hunting opportunities and deer health and wellbeing. A majority said it was very or extremely important that DEC address Lyme disease. Respondents placed less importance on addressing deer-vehicle collisions and deer damage to gardens and plantings around homes (Table 4).

Perceptions of and Satisfaction with Webinar Series

Nearly all respondents (97%) had viewed the first webinar and most (84%) had viewed the second webinar. Approximately half of respondents reported they were likely to view the

webinar series again (54%), and most were likely to recommend the webinar series to others (79%).

Over half of respondents had never participated in Cornell Cooperative Extension programming before (58%), but most reported they were likely to attend deer-related programs co-hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension and the DEC in the future (88%).

Generally, survey respondents reported that they were satisfied with the webinar series (45% very satisfied; 35% somewhat satisfied). A majority of respondents believed that the content generally met their expectations (64%), improved their understanding of deer impacts (69%), and improved their understanding of the DEC's pilot stakeholder engagement process (76%). However, some viewers believed that the webinar series left questions about deer and deer management unanswered (41%) (Table 5).

Respondents were provided with an open-ended question where they could clarify the reasons underlying their overall level of satisfaction with the webinar series. Many respondents reported that they found the webinars were well done, interesting, informative, useful, or beneficial (Appendix B). Some perceived that selected presentations were too basic to be useful for well-informed participants. Some expressed dissatisfaction with the webinars because they arrived with misperceptions about the purpose of the webinar series. A few were dissatisfied because the webinars left them unclear about how information from the pilot process would be used to make local deer management decisions (Appendix B).

Interview findings: Interviewees were a subset of webinar participants, so it is not surprising that interview data (see Appendix C) echoed the results from the webinar evaluation survey. Generally, interviewees felt that the information presented in the webinars was well organized and relevant, and that presenters were knowledgeable on the topics covered. Interviewees appreciated learning about the deer management process as well as the pilot public engagement effort, but some were unclear about the next steps for the pilot. Interviewees who already had in-depth knowledge about deer and deer impacts felt the information presented in the webinars was more basic than they would have liked, though they generally acknowledged that such basic information was valuable for many residents of the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate .

Table 3. Extent to which respondents believed deer-human interactions had increased, decreased, or stayed the same in their local area over the last 5 years.

Question	n	Mean[1]	Decreased greatly	Decreased slightly	Stayed about the same (%)	Increased slightly	Increased greatly
Number of people getting Lyme disease locally	36	3.5	3	8	36	42	11
Amount of deer damage to natural plants and forests in your local area	57	3.0	12	14	47	14	12
Amount of deer damage to plants around your home	64	2.9	16	16	48	8	13
Number of deer-vehicle collisions locally	49	2.8	10	31	33	23	4
Amount of deer damage to farm crops locally	37	2.6	27	14	38	14	8
Number of deer you see around your home	65	2.5	28	26	22	19	6
Number of deer you see in your local area	66	2.5	32	21	23	17	8
Deer hunting opportunity locally	61	2.3	23	31	34	12	0.0
Number of deer harvested by hunters locally	56	2.0	36	36	20	9	0.0

[1] 1=decreased greatly, 2=decreased slightly, 3=stayed about the same, 4=increased slightly, 5=increased greatly.

Table 4. Importance respondents placed on NYS DEC deer managers addressing human-deer related interactions in their local area.

Question	n	Mean[1]	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
					(%)		
Deer health and well being	66	4.1	12	3	17	39	39
Deer hunting opportunities	66	4.0	5	5	20	27	44
Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses	66	3.7	0	11	29	41	20
Deer damage to natural plants and forests	66	3.5	2	18	32	27	21
Deer damage to farm crops	66	3.1	5	20	42	24	9
Deer viewing opportunities	66	3.0	14	27	20	23	17
Deer-vehicle collisions	66	2.7	14	24	44	12	6
Deer damage to gardens and plantings around the home	66	2.5	26	29	26	14	6

[1] 1=not at all important, 2=slightly important, 3=moderately important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important.

Table 5. Level of webinar participant agreement with statements about characteristics of the webinar series.

Question	n	Mean[1]	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
					(%)		
The registration process for the webinar series was easy to complete	65	1.6	51	46	0	2	2
The online process for viewing the webinar series was easy to use	58	1.8	47	35	16	4	0
The pace of delivery of content was appropriate	66	2.0	20	67	9	3	2
There was an adequate opportunity to ask questions of presenters	64	2.1	34	39	11	13	3
The webinar series improved my understanding of deer management in central New York	65	2.2	25	40	26	8	2
The webinar series improved my understanding of deer impacts in central New York	65	2.2	19	51	22	8	2
The webinar series provided adequate information on the DEC's deer management pilot process	66	2.2	9	67	17	6	12
The content provided met my expectations	66	2.3	23	41	23	11	3
There was an adequate opportunity to provide additional information to presenters (e.g., your experiences with deer impacts)	62	2.7	16	33	26	21	5
The webinar series left many questions about deer and deer management unanswered	66	2.9	6	35	29	26	45

[1] 1=strongly agree, 2=slightly agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Effort to Attract Diverse Stakeholders to Webinar

The webinar series was advertised on the DEC website, local radio news channels, and in relevant local newsletters and newspapers. Of the 227 individuals who registered for the webinar series, only 71 (31%) were from within the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate counties. Survey data (Table 6) and interview data suggest that many participants became aware of the webinar series through hunter communication networks (e.g., through a hunting forum or organization, through email alerts about hunting and wildlife management sent out by DEC).

<div align="center">NEXT STEPS</div>

Moving forward, the DEC will be considering the contribution of the webinar series to increasing public knowledge of deer and deer management.

Table 6. How respondents became aware of the webinar series.

Source	n	%
Direct email from DEC	14	23
Email (source not noted)	9	15
Hunter organization	6	10
Cornell Cooperative Extension	6	10
Newspaper article	6	10
Don't recall	1	2
From a friend or family member	5	8
Forest owner publication	3	5
Master Naturalist program	3	5
New York Outdoors newspaper	2	3
NYS Sportsman educator	1	2
Social media	1	2
WMU aggregate survey	2	3
Community deer committee	1	2
Conservation Council	1	2
"Personal interest"	1	2
Total	62	104[a]

[a]Total exceeds 100% due to rounding.

LITERATURE CITED

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Siemer, W. F., E. F. Pomeranz, D. J. Decker, and R. C. Stedman. 2015. Residents' attitudes about deer and deer management in the Central Finger Lakes Management Unit. Human Dimensions Research Unit Publication Series 15–10. Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. 38pp.

Public Input for Deer Management in NYS: Supplemental Survey

Q1 Thank you for participating in the webinar series, "Deer and Deer Management in New York State" and for your interest in the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation pilot program for deer management. The following questionnaire will be used to help evaluate the webinar series so we can improve upon it in the future. In addition, the information that you and others provide in this survey will be used by a small group of citizens, called a Stakeholder Input Group (SIG), for the purpose of identifying deer impacts (positive and negative) in the Central Finger Lakes Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) Aggregate and prioritizing those impacts for management attention. While the SIG group will be prioritizing impacts for the entire aggregate, when answering the following questions please consider deer in your local area only.

Q2

Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate

Q3 Please indicate the extent to which you believe the following events have increased, decreased, or stayed the same in your local area over the last 5 years. (Select one response option for each item.)

	Decreased greatly	Decreased slightly	Stayed about the same	Increased slightly	Increased greatly	Don't know
(1) Number of deer you see around your home	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(2) Number of deer you see in your local area	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(3) Amount of deer damage to plants around your home	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(4) Amount of deer damage to farm crops locally	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(5) Deer hunting opportunity locally	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(6) Amount of deer damage to natural plants and forests in your local area	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(7) Number of people getting Lyme disease locally	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(8) Number of deer-vehicle collisions locally	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(9) Number of deer harvested by hunters locally	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(10) Other (please specify):	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q4 How important is it to you that NYS DEC deer managers address each of the following deer-related concerns in your local area? (Select one response option for each item.)

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
(1) Deer-vehicle collisions	○	○	○	○	○
(2) Deer damage to farm crops	○	○	○	○	○
(3) Deer damage to gardens and plantings around the home	○	○	○	○	○
(4) Deer damage to natural plants and forests	○	○	○	○	○
(5) Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses	○	○	○	○	○
(6) Deer health and well being	○	○	○	○	○
(7) Deer viewing opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
(8) Deer hunting opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
(9) Problems associated with hunting of deer	○	○	○	○	○
(10) Other (please specify):	○	○	○	○	○

Q5 How would you like to see the number of deer in your local area change in the next 5 years? (Please select one response.)
- ○ Increase greatly
- ○ Increase somewhat
- ○ Stay the same
- ○ Decrease somewhat
- ○ Decrease greatly
- ○ Not sure

Q6 Did you receive and complete the questionnaire, Deer and Deer Management in Central New York, distributed in the spring of 2015? (Note: only a randomly selected sample of residents in central New York received this survey). (Please select one response).
- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure

Q7 Did you submit a form indicating interest in participating in the deer management Stakeholder Input Group (SIG)? (Please select one response.)

❍ Yes
❍ No, and I do not intend to submit the form
❍ No, but I intend to submit the form

Q8 Did you attend or view remotely the January 20th and January 27th webinar series, "Deer and Deer Management in New York State"? (Please select one response for each date.)

	Yes	No	I plan to view the webinar online in the future
January 20th (1)	❍	❍	❍
January 27th (2)	❍	❍	❍

Q9 Generally, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the webinar series? (Please select one response.)

❍ Very satisfied
❍ Somewhat satisfied
❍ Neutral
❍ Somewhat dissatisfied
❍ Very dissatisfied

Q10 Please briefly explain your rating:

Q11 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the webinar series. (Select one response option for each statement.)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
(1) The registration process for the webinar series was easy to complete	○	○	○	○	○	○
(2) The online process for viewing the webinar series was easy to use	○	○	○	○	○	○
(3) The content provided met my expectations	○	○	○	○	○	○
(4) The pace of delivery of content was appropriate	○	○	○	○	○	○
(5) The webinar series improved my understanding of deer impacts in central New York	○	○	○	○	○	○
(6) The webinar series improved my understanding of deer management in central New York	○	○	○	○	○	○
(7) The webinar series left many questions about deer and deer management unanswered	○	○	○	○	○	○
(8) The webinar series provided adequate information on the DEC's deer management pilot process	○	○	○	○	○	○
(9) There was an adequate opportunity to ask questions of presenters	○	○	○	○	○	○
(10) There was an adequate opportunity to provide additional information to presenters (e.g., your experiences with deer impacts)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q12 The webinar series was recorded to allow participants to view it again at their leisure. How likely are you to review the recording again? (Please select one response.)
- ❍ Very Unlikely
- ❍ Somewhat Unlikely
- ❍ Unsure
- ❍ Somewhat Likely
- ❍ Very Likely

Q13 How likely are you to recommend the webinar series to others? (Please select one response.)
- ❍ Very Unlikely
- ❍ Somewhat Unlikely
- ❍ Unsure
- ❍ Somewhat Likely
- ❍ Very Likely

Q14 How likely are you attend deer-related programs hosted by the Department of Environmental Conservation and Cornell Cooperative Extension in the future? (Please select one response.)
- ❍ Very Unlikely
- ❍ Somewhat Unlikely
- ❍ Unsure
- ❍ Somewhat Likely
- ❍ Very Likely

Q15 Have you participated in any Cooperative Extension programs, other than the "Deer and Deer Management in New York State" webinar series? (Please select one response.)
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Q16 Are you male or female? (Please select one response.)
- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female
- ❍ I prefer not to respond

Q17 In what year were you born? (Please fill in the blank.)

Q18 Which category best describes the area where you live for most of the year? (Please select one response.)

❍ Rural--live on a farm
❍ Rural--do not live on a farm
❍ Village or hamlet (less than 10,000 people)
❍ Small city (10,000 to 50,000 people)
❍ Large city (over 50,000 but less than 200,000
❍ Very large city (over 200,000 people)
❍ Suburb of a large or very large city

Q19 What is your current place of residence? (Please indicate the name of the city, village, or town, as well as the zip code where you live.)

    City, Village, or Town
    Zip code

Q20 Which characteristics listed below apply to you personally? (Check all that apply to you.)

❑ I hunt deer in my local area
❑ I own land in a rural area, but not a farm
❑ I own agricultural land in my local area for farming or livestock production
❑ I own land with woodlots or forests in my local area
❑ I have flower beds or vegetable gardens around my home
❑ I have ornamental trees or shrubs around my home
❑ I am concerned about changes in forest conditions caused by deer
❑ I am concerned about the health of our local deer herd
❑ I spend a lot of time photographing or viewing deer in my local area
❑ I spend a lot of time driving in areas with lots of deer
❑ I or someone close to me has been affected by Lyme disease

Q21 How did you learn about the webinar series? (Please write in the space provided.)

Q22 **This is the end of the survey**This webinar series is part of the DEC's pilot program for deer management. In order to thoroughly evaluate the webinar series, we would like to speak with some participants further regarding their experience with this program. **If you are interested in providing further feedback on this program, please provide your name, email address, and a telephone number where you can be reached.**

    Name:

    Email address:

    Telephone number:

APPENDIX B: OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS ON SATISFACTION WITH WEBINARS

Table B1. Open-ended survey comments offered by survey respondents to clarify their overall level of satisfaction with the webinar series.

Presentations were well done, interesting, informative, useful
- Topics were interesting and informative. I reside just outside the SIG so the portion of the webinar specific to that SIG area did not apply. It did, however, give insight as to how future deer management will be accomplished with stakeholder input.
- Enjoyed the variety of discussion and educational content.
- Everything was explained in plain English you did not need a degree in wildlife biology to understand the information provided
- Excellent way to disseminate expert information on an interesting topic that effects [sic] many people in the state. Watched at a group site and had excellent discussion.
- Informative and easy to follow. Well presented
- Interesting and informative
- Learned a few things that I hadn't known before.
- Professional presenters were very thorough and competent.
- Speakers were very knowledgeable on the topics, the webinar was well organized, and the information was relevant
- This is all very new to me, so the information is very interesting, and has provided quite a different perspective for me.
- This provided information that was not generally available to the public in a confined format. As a hunter ed. instructor and hunter myself, this was useful and well presented.
- Thought the webinar was very informative, great information.
- Very comprehensive, and the staff/presenters went the extra yard in giving detailed answers to questions.
- Very impressed with the presentation and thoughtfulness about managing the deer.
- Well organized; very knowledgeable presenters; informative from a variety of perspectives regarding impacts and issues.
- Very informational on topics that the regular hunters wouldn't have access to.
- A wider range of topics didn't apply to me. But I enjoyed the webinar overall and found it educational. The speakers were very good in their respective fields.

Presentations improved my understanding of deer, deer management, and public involvement:
- Great coverage of deer biology and the issues around managing the herd. Also nice description of the new public input process. I would like to see the SIG approach come to my area of the state (City of Buffalo).
- Greatly increased my understanding of how this issue is being managed. Helped me understand the managerial aspects of the DEC which I never had been exposed to before.
- I thought it was very good explaining the old ways the DEC managed and what they are going to change. A lot of people I spoke to through the years had wild ideas on how the DEC managed the data, complaints and thought the car insurance companies and the timber companies called the shots at the DEC.

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Table B1. (continued)

Comments on perceived beneficial outcomes of the webinars:
- By attending the webinar at the Seneca County CCE, there was a great deal of interaction between attendees discussing the webinar information.
- Hearing about different aspects of deer management may help me w/my garden.
- I am glad to see the DEC reach out to people that live in the local WMU aggregate they want to manage.
- I like the ability to feel like I'm involved in the process. It also helps to know what the DEC plans to do instead of rumors flying around. I think more public involvement or information available to the public would be a good idea.
- I live just east of WMU 8J in area 8H. I would like to see this same study done for an aggregate including WMU 8H. I would enjoy being a SIG participant here in the Lima/Honeoye Falls area.
- I watched the seminars to learn of the latest attempt at formulating deer management strategies by the DEC.
- It was a good overview of the pros and cons of deer management and the various studies done on deer related issues involving the environment. I would like to see a continuation of this series to resolve issues that arise and help in examining different strategies relevant to different WMUs.

Presentations were too basic for informed participants:
- For me and most of the other people in the room at Wells [College] the first webinar was pretty basic the second was better but I think most felt they didn't learn a lot of new information on deer and management. The crowd was mostly serious deer hunters & a couple landowner/arm reps but one was one of the biggest in 7H.For the most part the crowd showed because of the low hunting opportunities they had this year. I think Mother Nature had a greater effect last year on herd management than we have had since the last citizen task force seven years ago that voted for a 40% reduction.
- I knew most of what was said. I am 72 and I am an avid hunter.
- I'm a forester so everything that was presented in the webinars was common knowledge in my profession.
- Information was very broad and basic.
- Very basic information.

Table B1. (continued)

Participants were concerned about use of data in the process:
- The webinars did a good job of explaining what impacts the deer herd and how the herd size impacts people/plants, etc. What I'm not completely clear on is whether or not additional surveys will be conducted for the focus groups to use. I could have missed that part.
- Great webinar, but I'm not sure there is enough of a difference from the old task force method as opposed to the new group.
- Too much of the webinar was geared towards someone who knows nothing about the white tailed deer. Also research used was from other states much different than NY and it was old research.
- I thought that most of the presentations were excellent and highly informative and that collectively they covered the right breadth and detail of this issue. However, it seemed that some of the details about how the SIG will function and what data will be available to the SIG were not provided and might not be known.

Critiques and viewpoints related to webinar content and presentations:
- I found the Jan 20 session more interesting than the Jan 27 one. Also, I'm sure there were lots of unanswered questions that the attendees would like to see the questions and replies. Will that be forthcoming?
- Developing a plan to manage deer is a complex issue with many factors affecting its outcome. It's very difficult to provide adequate information in two one-hour presentations.
- Hunting and farming are important and a way of life for the residents in upstate NY. More focus should be placed on that rather than pacifying the politicians and insurance companies.
- I would have liked to hear more on how deer harvest numbers are calculated. Not all deer that are killed are reported so the harvest report has to be an estimate.
- Information was good but would like to have more info for the Ontario plains farm land areas.
- It's difficult to satisfy such a diverse group of participants.
- Not enough focus on animal health and/or target goals.
- Somewhat informative. Much information I was already aware of. Slideshows seemed to drone on for too long.
- The information about deer, deer habitat and deer management was useful and informative. The information about how the survey was conducted was neither. The explanation for why the aggregate was introduced was interesting but a little too long.
- The presentation was a bit long winded in some of the more basic topics.
- A number of studies that were mentioned were 5-10+ years old...and from out of state. Survey's were based on a small % of participants that could influence the coming years of deer management in NYS.

Table B1. (continued).

Some participants had misperceptions about the purpose and focus of the webinars:
- I misunderstood the purpose of the seminar. It seemingly was 'sold' differently.
- I think there was a major misconception about what the seminars were going to be. I attended the live meeting in Aurora. There was a great deal of discontent after it. People first of all thought it was going to be a live meeting and secondly that there was going to be content addressing the consensus feeling that the deer herd has greatly diminished in our area. Believe me tensions were high.
- Most of the people there were upset about overuse of nuisance permits and the poor hunting this last season. Once they started talking I could not hear the questions and answers. Most of the info was far too base level. Some people lost interest as a result.
- The second webinar was much better than the first. The first webinar was not what I expected about deer management.
- I believe it was not well viewed (not highly publicized). Information was good, would have liked to heard more questions asked by hunting community due to hunters not being successful and deer take being down substantially in parts of 7H).

Participants left with unresolved questions about next steps in the process:
- Waiting to see what happens next.
- There was still a lot of gray area on what the study was trying to accomplish and in what way it would be implemented state wide.
- Was hoping for more specific information regarding DEC management techniques, information gathering, and decision making processes.
- I gained some further insight into the issues, but the situation still feels murky and unsolvable to me somehow, perhaps because of all the controversies and my own mixed feelings about killing living things, even while I think the damage to forest understories is of critical concern.

D1 Most useful or interesting presentation

Deer natural history

P 4: The one that I found the most interesting was, that I didn't know a whole lot about, was that deer browse during the winter months, stuff like that I guess I didn't really think too much about it 'cause I always knew that they browse you know your shrubs and whatnot. Young trees and such, you know like the buds and that, but that was, I guess I hadn't really thought about it at that point in time, until after they had brought it up. That was, I found that one pretty interesting. Then, like I said before, how they estimated the deer numbers.

P 6: Oh I liked the stuff about the history of the deer...That's very interesting. There are a lot of people don't know, you know anything about the history of the, you know, how they were almost eliminated and then they bounced back.

P 8:

R: I like to listen to the biologists speak.

I: So the presentation on, on deer natural history?   R: Yeah.

P10: I don't really remember all of it that well, so I can't give an honest answer. But the part I do remember … was showing, you know the 2 deer turn into 4 deer then turn into 20 deer, that turn into you know over a period of 5 years I think is what it was. I found that to be kind of interesting.

P15:

R: I particularly appreciated the, I forgot what you call it. The deer sort of lifecycle.

I: Natural history, right.

R: Natural history, I picked up a couple of things I didn't know, I'm scratching my brain for what they were, but I know I added to my personal knowledge bank.

Findings from resident survey

P 7: I think the feedback from the residents [survey] was probably the most interesting, and useful. I think looking at the aggregate units, and understanding that. I guess I mentioned earlier you know, going forward how, how they're viewing …the management situation. From a useful standpoint I think that was good. But I did find quite interesting to see what people believe about deer and what they were saying.

P12:

I: Which of those did you find most useful or most interesting.

R: Probably the, the survey of the residents.

P25: I think I kind of like, probably the most interesting I found was the survey results. That and I would, the survey results to me, that type of thing it just fascinates me you know. And I would like to see, in there, maybe expand a little bit. The one that I had, I've met Art Kirsch before and he's a good guy, great guy, and is just dedicated. But I thought his, his was just, you could have shortened it up. So.

Deer management options

P14:

I: Yeah, and then did they talk about the deer management actions in the deer webinar you watched?

R: Yes they did, I thought that was good.

I: Okay, and did you learn any new information from that one or…?

R: I learned that there's not a one size fits all. And that there are many things that you can do that work, and that probably if there is an issue with too many deer that you need to use pieces of a lot of different, a lot of different ideas. I would never ever shoot a deer unless I were convinced there was no other way. I'm coming to believe based on some of the information I saw in here, that you know where 50% of the deer. One deer turns into 64 deer every year, and all these overpopulations, that's the thing that they showed. The piece of knowledge that is lacking for me is the damage that deer cause to the forest. I hear people say that but I don't know that to be true. So maybe the second webinar talked about that.

P22: No they're all very interesting, the information regarding the population control was, I guess more enlightening than anything. Certainly the different methods that we all take for granted I think, or that we hear discussed and this is going to be kind of a slander to people that just don't understand. Population control specifically with wild animals is that simply putting birth control for one animal is not going to affect it unless you have 100% control. And you know I just think there's so many uneducated people on that topic that, that it kind of overwhelms the rest of common sense that should be put forth and understanding the topics.

P24:

I: So of those things which of those did you find most useful or most interesting?

R: … the different management options and what survey results were, I guess. I felt that it would be important, most of the information on the webinars to get across to the public as a whole, and wish there was more participation. At least people learning about the deer herd and

the natural history, and, and what has to be looked into when you try to manage a herd. So overall I thought the entire presentation was quite interesting to me.

Overview of outreach initiative

P19: I definitely learned more about the methodology the DEC uses in their management.

P21: The first section I thought was really helpful in understanding how you look at the different [deer] populations, or how you break it up across the state and set the goals. 2) the change in citizen involvement I thought that was much more representative, I thought that was great. And the different ways to control population, that was really interesting when I was thinking about the hunting and about you know birth control doesn't work all that well.

…It was very thoughtful, it was very logical and it tracked in a way that you know some webinars you just, you lose interest in. And I found, you know I wanted to hear the second one, and I wanted to be part of it. So I really, you know held my interest throughout.

D2 Least useful or interesting presentation

Deer natural history

P25:

I: You mean the stuff on natural history or the stuff on...

R: Yes, the natural history isn't very, you know, we just don't need the...

Overview of outreach initiative

P13: I guess … it wasn't as interesting to me to know what you had done in the past, and so it's like okay, well what, I think you could say, well we tried this in the past and this information is available if you're interested in it. But this is what, you know this is what we learned, and this is, from this we're going forward with it. So the methods that you did in the past was not of interest to me really. And so it's like, okay what we, what we learned is a new way of doing it and this is our new approach, based on what we learned. So...but I think it's important … to be able to document what you're doing, or just have evidence to say that this is the scientific reason for going forward. But I don't know that we had to learn all the details about it.

P14:

R: I tend to be more of a pragmatic kind of person. Like just, tell me what you know and don't make me guess it. I found the, the first segment and I jotted that down. I found the first system where it talked about the, (10:00) the first segment where it talked about the old system.

To be, to be somewhat redundant. I mean I don't really, I didn't care what the old system was. I

do care what you have in place now.

So I thought you might have been able to save some time, in terms of that, that explanation. Now, that's me. And I'm new, I'm new to the process, and I'm lacking in information. Maybe other more sophisticated people would find that interesting.

[the information] was clear to me, I just thought that instead of saying this is what the old system did, I thought it could have been substantially shortened by saying, maybe in the old days we used to do that if you want to even give it. Now this, now this is...

I felt like it was, like the old system was maybe moving away from it was some kind of political thing that somebody should have done, …so you had to explain why you moved away from it and went into this new system. But for somebody like me who's looking for information on deer, that didn't matter.

D3 Presentations were well done, interesting, useful

P 1: It covered it very well, I thought that was done really well on the webinar. …I thought they were engaging, and you know, really, I thought they were done very well. …I think the, the presenters were very generous with how much time they spent.

P 3: …useful. … I think it overall was very beneficial and useful, sure.

P 5: I thought they were all you know, right on target for you know people who, who maybe weren't as well versed in some of those things. … I always enjoy a refresher course in that stuff anyway you know too because, it's not like that's my full time job so I appreciate it, and thought they were very well done on all of those.

I appreciated that some of the alternative management approaches were presented, honestly I think that there are a lot of people, and I run into them all the time who really think for example: birth control is the future. 'Cause they just don't want to have to, they don't want anybody killing deer, and I'd, I did appreciate the fact that I think those things were presented pretty straight, in a straightforward way. And that you know there are some drawbacks to those approaches, they're not proven to be effective. They basically don't work unless you have a small closed population, and then they take time for the population to decrease from current, because of the long lifespan of the animals. So I appreciated that, I thought that was good that nobody was sort of soft peddling around some of that stuff.

P 6: It was nice, I like to see stuff like that. Anything you can get out there and give some knowledge to the people is a good thing. Because there's so many misconceptions.

P15:

I: Well what about the content, did the content meet your expectations, was it kind of what you expected or were there things that weren't there...?

R: I guess it did. It was informative enough even though it wasn't in our [geographic] area, but it was relevant enough that, you know we could think about the same issues.

I don't think there was any less on any of them, each one [each presentation] had its own pluses. I can't think of any negatives, I mean I, again it wasn't just agriculture it was about deer management and histories of it and things like that.

And the other thing that I picked up that I wasn't quite focused on was, actually the nature of the Cornell Co-op [Cornell Cooperative Extension], its history and how it fits in. I know we went to a function at our Cornell Co-op here, and I was struck by all the government connections, I said 'oh my God all the local politicians are here'. And I started I guess then to sort of focus on where the Cornell Co-op comes from and what it does. But this webinar really put it into focus for us.

P16: Well I think I had a basic understanding already, but it, it was definitely good to hear again, some stuff I haven't read in you know 10-15 years.

P17:

I've been to the website that you guys have of deer and deer management for, I guess it's your blog for Cornell University C.E.R.P. Conservation Education Research Program, and I went through all the different presentations you have on there, those are nice.

P19: I think the one about, and I think it was one of the very first ones talking about the history of deer or whatever, that was really educational. The, in terms of the others, I think they are all as important as each other, I didn't see anything that was more striking than one of the others. My wife was listening in the background to it, I don't know if she noticed anything more striking, she's shaking her head no but, again it was more of an educational experience, listen to it, we watched like the programs on public television for like the ones that, the Vermont Fish and Game put on.

Again I came in with an open mind and just wanted to listen, and I thought it was done very well. I think it provided plenty of ability for me to ask questions if I had any, it was, the only thing was I spot was it was more associated, and I went in it with knowing that, that it was going to more associated to the Ithaca area, and how that program works down in that area. Totally different than up here.

P20: I kind of knew what was covered, and but I could see where it was very beneficial so, I want to say yes it helped me, because I know it would help many other people. Because I happened to do some research prior to it and see some of the same information prior to it, did it actually help me, not really? But it embedded it better, and I think it's important to embed it.

P22: I really didn't have a whole lot of expectation as to you know topics being covered, you know I read over the agenda of topics to be covered and I was more along for the ride. You know I had nothing to do on a Wednesday evening and there I was for an hour and a half listening.

I know how much effort it takes to put one of these webinars together. And you know to have a multitude of presenters is difficult, especially with the hand off phase. But I think it was very well executed, and I you know from a critical eye I couldn't suggest anything that would make it better or more informative for the topics that were covered. I thought it was well done.

P23: I found the whole thing useful. You know certainly you, looking, I heard a couple things. And I can't just say one or the other [presentation] was better, I liked the overview so you knew where it was going, what was going on. I liked what the DEC the connection that they, they were using a new model, and that impressed me. And then how you went over the conflicting, and Kristi's was great. How you went over the, you know what the survey results were, so wow there's some conflicting issues here, but there's also some agreements. So it was I'm recalling that there was some conflict but there was also a tension you could say rather than conflict but most people coming around recognizing that too many deer create a problem. I think that's a good summary of, and you know I guess where we have to manage, you know we created a problem we have to manage it.

D4 Presentations improved my understanding of deer, mgt PI

Improved understanding of stakeholder perceptions

P 2: That was, that was interesting and I learned a little more than I knew. …Yeah, the results, the results of the stakeholders' surveys I think was a, of interest, my higher interest.

Improved understanding of the way deer are impacting people

P 6:

I: so do you feel like the webinar series improved your understanding about the way deer are impacting people, in that area?

R: Yes, yes I did. Yeah because there was some concerns I know we have down here with the Lyme Disease, and the vehicle collisions and stuff like that.

P25:

I: Do you feel like …watching those webinars improved your understanding of, of impacts that people have in Central New York?

R: Yes.

Improved understanding of the way DEC makes deer management decisions

P 7:

I: You thought the content met your expectations?

R: Yeah, I mean it, really trying to understand what the process was going to be, you know what what's going on. You know 'cause I think it was reviewed even during one of the webinars, you know previously [in the old CTF process], you know state and you know, I can't remember Cornell helped or whatever. But people went out you know, did a few phone surveys, and okay here comes your new deer management direction. Whereas now they're looking to get a little better input, you know not sure what's going to happen with the management zones, if there's any changes or anything like that or, if there's going to be any negative impact from kind of treating it as a Finger Lakes Region or whatever it's called, as opposed to. So there's certainly still some things to be seen there yet, but understanding what they're trying to do, and what's trying to occur I think was my biggest expectation, and that certainly was, was fulfilled.

P 7:

I: Okay so you, you're saying you, you thought they provided an adequate overview of what the, kind of the approach is going to be like?

R: Yeah, I believe so.

P17:

I: did it improve your understanding of deer management in Central New York?

R: As far as how the, how the state is working yeah I think it did help that. My understanding of that.

P21:

R: I was a little bit intimidated because the level of, and when I say intimidated I put that in quotes, the questions from people who were asking them were professionals and people who are in the field, and they are at a completely different level, you know I was trying to grasp the basics. That's fine with me you know this is not area of expertise, but it seems, I mean I felt boy this is really working for the people that sort of the primary target or anything but for somebody like me who's much more of a lay person it was working for me too.

I: well in terms of the content then, did it meet your expectations?

R: You know it's interesting, I don't know what expectations I really had, because again from me the whole world of understanding DNR and Cornell, but studying for me this is the first time I've been studying the things I love but in a more structured formal academic way so I didn't quite know what to expect, but what I found is I really enjoyed it because right from the start the way

I'm going to say you, the team said this is how we look at the state, this is how we break it up. This is how we put it into segments, this is how we make our observations, like the whole scientific method and the whole data analysis and how you're setting goals, and understanding the state of where we are and where we're trying to get to. To me it was like management practices brought to a completely set of different set of issues. Here I am thinking about you know, mutual funds and investing, and it's the same kind of discipline and rigor and measurement applied to something completely different. So I really like that you know, I just learned a lot and then as you talked about different methods of control and the different issues, it all made perfect sense to me and I was just really was interested. And one of the things that really, I've heard this said before but I never really connected with it on a, you know sometimes you say now I get it now I understand it. You know I've heard, forever, hunting is an aspect of population management for certain animals and you always think about, oh how could you shoot these deer, how can you shoot these whatever. And I'm not a hunter but after listening I really understood where hunting fits into an array of programs towards population control management, and you know deer management. It's like I got it, I really got it!

I said you know I actually understand it; I can actually see going out and doing that. You know with someone who, you know was really experienced, just to have the experience. I wouldn't have that same horrible feeling of how can I shoot a deer I understand where it fits in. And that's okay when it's controlled by the state with you know, all these parameters around it.

And so what I came away with was from a, you know here I am from a suburban perspective telling you about, you know, tulips and driving. But it was a much, much more profound impact on the health of the forest because of, you know because of their impact. So in seriousness of the issue is much, much greater from a forest management perspective. So that's what my big take away is. This is a really big issue.

P24:

I: did you feel like it improved your understanding of the impacts that deer have on people in Central New York?

R: Yes it clarified it, or to me and kind of explained the complexities of dealing with a deer herd.

I: Right. What about, did it change your understanding of deer management in the area, did it improve it in any way?

R: Just that there was more information and it showed how it was done, and the things that had to be considered in dealing with the population, both with the people that are pro deer, and also you have groups that don't want a high population also, 'cause of the conflicts that happen on property or vehicles.

Improved understanding of deer natural history

P22: But there was a lot of interesting information that was presented in that webinar that was, is

very useful, as a hunter and an instructor that's the other reason I listened in. That there was just shocking like 2 deer in a 6 year timeframe turns into 64, that was a big eye opener for me

The other thing about the deer digestive system needing 3 days to get turned around from you know after changing food sources, that was something else that was just astounding. That I never thought of in the past, so. You know, there was all a lot of interesting information that was presented.

D5 Perceived beneficial outcomes of the webinars

P 2: A few things were new to me and that's life. Learning, learning and adding.

P18:

I: Yeah. And so was there any new information in there? Did you feel like that was useful to include or not?

R: Yes I thought it was a good background envelope. …A lot of people think they know the background of something or reasons why, and at times they're not, they're in error or they don't have all the info. So my guess a good quick background every time they put some, they throw something together. …a quick background every time is probably a good way to lead into something, because those who think they know something maybe it will teach them something, add more to their knowledge. Correct some of things they thought they knew.

P20: I can't say I expected what the content was [would be]. I kind of realized up front they might not cover what I just talked about in my peak of interest. But it did help answer some questions and it was a research aspect of what I'm doing, so. Yes, I was pleased with it; I can't say that it absolutely answered my questions but I got what I expected out of it.

P24:

I: so overall do you feel satisfied with the webinar series?

R: Yes I do.

P25: Yes, I would say overall yes, I think it really gave me a better understanding of, of the future. It was, I feel, I feel confident that I'm on the deer management [the new input process], of what's that's going to gather in New York State. You know I think anybody that's interested in white tails, and if they're really interested they should be able to, they should plug into it.

D6 Some material presented was too basic for informed participants

P 2: The second was interesting but not useful. …Interesting but I knew that.

P 4:

I: it looks like you had some reservations about when we ask a question, did it improve your understanding of deer management in Central New York? You disagreed with that one, did you already just have a lot of information about deer management and...?

R: Yeah there really wasn't that much different then what I've learned in the past.

P 5:

I: we asked whether folks thought that the webinar had increased their understanding of deer impacts or deer management in Central New York. And you answered neutral there.

R: Yeah, I think that's, that's not a poor reflection on the webinar, it's mostly that you know, I've, … I was aware of most of the things that were covered.

P 7:

I: Right. Well what about the things you found least, least useful or least interesting as they go forward thinking about what kind of information is going to be of value to residents?

R: Maybe the history, which I'm not saying it wasn't interesting it was probably because I also because you know, I've, have seen and lived quite a bit of that, you know even, even a while back you know like into Pennsylvania when deer were stocked from Michigan, and stuff like that. But you know personally that was probably the least for myself.

P 8:

I: Yeah, yeah. Did you feel like it improved your understanding of the way that deer affect or impact people?

R: Somewhat yes, slightly somewhat. It wasn't only a few things in there that I went wow I didn't know that.

P11: I mean I knew quite a bit about that already, both from, you know both from working with the DEC and also from a lot of the, a lot of the publications that I get about deer.

P11:

I: Did you feel like this webinar series improved your understanding of how deer impact people in, in that Central New York aggregate?

R: Not really, no.

P12:

I: did the content that you found when you watched those [presentations], did that meet your expectations, is it what you thought you were going to see?

R: Yeah I think that this is the content of is good, for the general public is, I mean you know I been studying deer and going to seminars for, for literally decades, you know. (chuckle) So you know it was good to learn about what they're doing as far as the actual information about deer, I didn't gain anything that was new from there. But it's a, there's a lot of, there's a lot of people that, lot of people around that don't really understand deer, they see them. In this area where I live there's a lot more people that they hunt deer, you know look at it as a resource, in the freezer from where I lived before in Monroe County. Up there there's, you know, a lot of people that they just see deer far East up near there around Eastman Park and hit with their cars and stuff. (chuckle)

P13: So I mean it seems to, it seems to drag a little bit, and maybe that was just you personally but I don't mean to offend you at all, but it just seemed to, some of the stuff I kind of already knew. But maybe it was beneficial to the folks that didn't, hadn't done, hadn't learned what I had learned. It just seemed to take a little; it [the first presentation] seemed to drag a little bit that's all.

P17: For me personally it probably could have been a little bit faster. I think on that first presentation I ended up having to leave before it ended. But I mean the content was good, you know I think someone else, you know a different person might have been just right for them.

It was the early part, where they went to through the history of how they gathered information that was new information to me. And so I was interested to learn that. The, I guess the stuff on the natural history and management and impacts was stuff I kind of already knew a lot about. So that wasn't really new information, I still think it's useful I wouldn't eliminate it from the presentation.

P25: Yes, I thought you know from my perspective… there's a lot of the historical stuff, and I knew it all and it was spot on. And maybe it was good for some people who don't really understand the...
...history of white tail deer management. And some stuff I thought was a little, you know I been down that path. …if you don't mind me saying so, that's dumbed down a little bit.

…That's the only thing I thought. Could have been a little shorter. You know, time wise I think for the essence of it, it could have been a little shorter, didn't have to be that long.

D7 Purpose of involvement process was well explained

P 1:

R: Yes, I think it could have, I, I understood it. So I would say it was adequately explained.

P 4:

I: …did the webinar series provide adequate information on the DEC management pilot process, did you feel...?

R: Yeah I think that was very clear, I think that was clear. I think that was clear on what they wanted to establish and what they wanted to do. I guess how they, I guess if you were to, my only thought was that like collecting information, I thought it was, would have been better to use smaller areas.

P21:

I: Well did you feel like the rationale for the public involvement process they were piloting was that explained well enough?

R: Yeah, my understanding was that, you know there's a much greater, there's much greater outreach from the outset, I may not state this right but this is a hypothesis generation, or issue identification is going to be much more thorough from the outset because a greater number of people will be involved. Am I getting that right?

E1 participants left with unresolved questions about next steps in the process

P13: Yeah I guess it wasn't clear, I guess I was hoping okay, well this is a program that we're working on to address the deer problem, and it was more talking about, well we need to really figure out if there really is a problem. And I was like, well okay so I guess I was thinking that, **I was hoping that there would be more of a, an admission that there really is an issue of deer overpopulation.** And it turns out that there's, I guess there was still some question about that.

I guess the other thing that, my other concern although I have never hit a deer with a vehicle, that to me is a safety issue, and so that, to me is a big problem for, I mean I have drive more carefully because of that. I mean it's not a bad thing, but I think that, that is, I know of people that have had accidents with deer, not just in New York State, other places but. So because of the overpopulation of deer that is a safety risk. Oh and Lyme Disease, there's another thing, I mean these are, these are things to me that are just so obvious that, that when the study came out, I'd say okay well we're going to look and see is there really an issue with, and looking at the results, you know so many people thought that, oh there's not a problem. You know it's like, so that I guess was my frustration, is that the, that most didn't seem like there was a consensus that there, there was an overpopulation of deer and something needed to be done about it. It was more like, well we're kind of look and see if everybody believes this. You know as, I was like well how about doing some more education to let people know that there's an issue, but again that's just my personal opinion. Maybe I'm off base there.

P14: The other thing I seemed to notice is that great care is taken to not, you're trying really hard not to tell people what to do. You're trying really hard I think to weigh out information, and to let people draw some conclusions. And I'm sure that's intentional. It's probably a hot potato. This, this deer thing.

P23:

I: Did you have any expectations of it that weren't met, or did it kind of check off all of the things that you expected to hear or see?

R: I'm pretty sure that, I was impressed you know. I was, I think I asked a question about you know how the information is used and who was involved. And I recall getting a very good answer, it clarified it and they said "oh we might want to do that". (chuckle) So I liked the range of, the interactions were not dismissive of the public, 'cause in the past the DEC, State Officials are known as dismissing people, concerns or you know yeah I'll leave it at that.

E2 Participants were concerned about use of data in the process

P 2: I was actually hoping for some supplemental information. I realize you can't go over all the facts and figures to, to the degree I personally would like, and I might be an outlier in something like that. Numbers were my life, and I would have liked to have seen, I did a lot of surveys for the gun clubs, and things too, a lot of record keeping. I went overseas a lot and dealt with millions of records so, your numbers don't bother me, I would have loved to have seen some of the raw data.

…some things were nature driven, and I would have liked to have seen a little more in the cross section of the numbers.

…Speaking about numbers can be very boring, you can lose somebody, so I understand why it, why it's not there. I just would have appreciated the opportunity to peak under the covers, if you will.

…I mean you have a lot of different stakeholders, and you know personally I thought, well if I focused on you know significant land landowners, I would have liked to have seen what, what their responses were, vis-à-vis, let's say the hunters, vis-à-vis any of the other groups.

…I'd like to know, you know how many of those people were landowners, how many of those people were hunters, how many of those people were just bio-life observers, and so on.

P 5:

I: And did it, did you feel like the webinar series left any questions unanswered, or did you have any expectations about content that weren't quite met?

R: I thought there was only the one area where, you know it's been, actually it was the thing that I was most interested in. I, well let me circle back to that question, I liked the new process for the most part, with the small groups, small groups and backing away from the expectation that members are representing the one stake. And having them be prepared to think more broadly about the issue, I liked all of that. I liked the fact that there was a more systematic approach to

gathering public opinion data, to feed that group as part of their group for their discussions. I think that will improve the quality of the opinion data. And I, don't get me wrong, it's I understand that managing deer for the people of New York, a lot of that depends on meeting the expectations of the people of New York, a lot of that depends on meeting the expectations of the of New York. I like the fact that I think the, the data gathering process is going to be more representative of all the people in New York, not just those who are, you know more directly impacted in hunting or something like that. So I think that was all good. Where I felt there was a little bit still question about you know, how this would work was specifically related to how will the harder and more empirical data come in as far as data about impacts on forest health and on forest regeneration, impacts on the wildlife and plant, plant diversity. I didn't see where that was going to come in, and maybe it's not. But it seems like the small groups need to be aware of that, and those data need to be as high of quality as the opinion data appear to be now. And that, that was still not clear to me, how that information would factor into the process. I have spoken with Jeremy Hurst, and I believe if I'm recalling correctly what he told me was, at the time of the webinars they actually weren't quite sure how that would factor in. If they'd try give that information to the small groups or, they would not really ask the small group to consider that type of, of information and DEC would add that as a subsequent sort of filter to the decisions being made by the small groups. And I don't know where that landed yet, but that was one part that just wasn't clear after the webinars.

…and I'm not even sure the data exists, ...

I: Yeah that was going to be my next question for you because you're a person who has some, some awareness of that, what kinds of data could be brought to bear at a local level on forest impacts, for instance.

R: I think Cornell Natural Resources and SUNY ESF were collaborating on the development of the forest impact index. And I believe that, that the vision, I think that's actually called for in the current version of the deer management plan for New York, and that the vision is to create and implement this, this index so that those data are available for this process. And I just don't think that's done yet so...Maybe this pilot aggregate group process, you know just isn't, some of the stuff just isn't ready yet.

I: …I don't know if you recall, I think Kristi did share a, share a map showing kind of forest impact across the state and...

R: Yeah, she did.

I: ...it was white blank spot for this area unfortunately (chuckle).

R: Yeah, so that map was based on FIA data, which is collected by the U.S. Forest service, at regular intervals. And it was analyzed by the Nature Conservancy, that map actually appears in the current version of the New York State deer plan. And it's basically, they tried to create from FIA data, a picture of valuable timber species regeneration and whether or not it was adequate or not. That's basically what that is, that's probably as good a surrogate as anything for the impacts of deer, but it's not quite you know maybe, what we would ultimately want, or maybe it's not

sensitive enough. Yeah, so the fact that it's based on FIA data which is really you know in forested landscapes, that's probably why there's so much white in that map.

I: Yeah, so there's a real need for some sort of metrics on what those impacts are.

R There is, and I'm encouraged by some of the talk I've heard about progress, but I, I think we need to, you know really need to sort of get to it. I think it's a critical piece of information, and there, there are changes happening with bird populations that increasingly become, start looking like you know deer maybe were the culprit, but the changes they, they create in the forest habitat structure, and I just think we need to get, we need to get a handle on this stuff. Try to make people aware of it (deer impacts on forests), as well as figure out how to bring it in to the process of setting population objectives.

E4 Critiques and viewpoints related to webinar content and presentations

P 4:

I: But you had some concerns it sounds like maybe about the content, did the content of the webinars meet your expectations? Or were you expecting to see other information that wasn't provided?

R: It was, some of the information that I kind of, like when they were going over the population efforts stuff like that, I just...it almost sounded like a, like they came up with like a magical number to multiply it by, to get their deviation, if that's what you want to call it. That was the only thing that I found.

E5 Concerns about WMU aggregates (e.g., how defined, why used, whether WMU consolidation makes sense)

P 3:

I: So it sounds like the rationale behind how those units are designated still might be a little unclear?

R: Yes, those are not clear to me.

P 5:

I'm trying to recall, I think there was some questions asked about, you know if, it felt like DEC was going to retain the ability to make WMU specific recommendations, and there was, … I think the answer given during the webinar for, okay now why are you aggregating them? My, my recollection is that …the answer wasn't quite as crisp as it could have been. And my understanding is that it's, there are two main reasons, one is it's just logistically impossible to manage small group forces, taskforce processes for all the WMU's and repeat them in a timely

manner so that, because things change, and you really need to do them relatively regularly. And so that was one of the issues, but I thought the other issue had more to do with trying to figure out how to have high quality data in coming into the process as far as survey opinions and other things, and it may actually extend to the indices of the index of forest health and development. They need larger areas for the samples sizes to be big enough for those, those data to be accurate.

I: Yeah I think specifically Art was saying that the, the data that they have on deer harvest is, the sample sizes get so low at the individual WMU level that it makes more sense to aggregate given the numbers they have on deer. And your, so your sense about the other kinds of data would probably apply too, but I think first of all they're feeling like the information they have on deer harvest is better at a little bit larger scale.

R: Yeah, and I guess what I'm trying to say is, whatever that real answer is, whether or not...

I: It wasn't clear.

R: Yeah, I think it just, try to figure out how to hone that response... I believe the decision to aggregate was not made lightly so I think probably the reasons for it are sound, I just think, don't think those came across quite...

P 7:

I: Did you feel like the, the rationale for the, for the program was clearly communicated in the webinars?

R: The rationale, yes. You know the reason I was asking about the output of the group meetings was to understand really, or start to understand how things are going to look in the future because, you know I think that large of an aggregate group in you know in that large of an area, certainly has its good reasons for looking at it as an aggregate. But there still needs to be some fairly fine differences in management by regions, somewhere to what there is today, at least I think so. Maybe the regions aren't perfectly correct today but, you certainly couldn't manage that entire zone as one management zone.

P10: I definitely think the more local you can do something, the better the, each areas going to have its own little advantages and disadvantages. Like the population for people might be down in one area, you know compared to Tompkins County where there's a large population of people, so you're going to have higher you know, car collisions less hunters, less this less that, or more of this or more of that, so I think that the more refined you make it the better it will be for everyone.

P25:

I: Well when the, when Art talked about the rationale for aggregating the units and the rationale for changing the way they do public involvement, was that information clear to you, or?

R: Yes, there, and I, I disagree with that because I think the DMU's even though I understand and all the, you know all the budget crisis' and that would be a lot simpler if there were fewer DMU's. Instead of the 90 plus, and if you could reduce it down to a third of that it would be a big savings, I know the manpower alone. But I, Art come back to when we, we first set it up, and I think that the finer, in an ideal world, believe me having been in the newspaper business for 30 years, I understand budgets. And that you know there's you know what has to be done to make financial sense. But in an ideal world we should have, I think at least 90 some DMU's across New York State, … I was there [working in DEC] at the beginning we set it up primarily on deer range. You know that range varies so much from one, I mean one area might be you know, full of farms. The other might be fairly deep woods, the other area might be suburban subdivision, and each one of these, you know if anything they should be changing boundaries, the boundaries should change. I don't like the amalgamation theory. I don't, I disagree with it, I don't think you can manage it well, you're going to water everything down if you do that. That's just, just my take on it. But I understand it's financial.