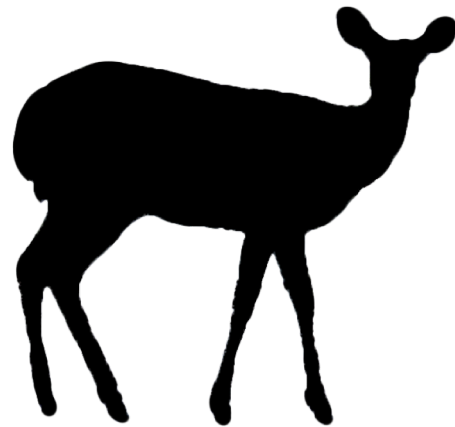


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# **Evaluation of a Pilot Program to Improve Public Input About Deer and Deer Impacts**



**February 2017**

**HDRU Series No 17-02**

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## HUMAN DIMENSIONS RESEARCH UNIT PUBLICATION SERIES

This publication is one of a series of reports resulting from investigations dealing with public issues in environmental and natural resources management. The Human Dimensions Research Unit (HDRU) in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University studies the social and economic aspects of natural resources and the environment and the application of social and economic insights in management planning and policy. A list of HDRU publications may be obtained by accessing our website at: <<http://hdru.dnr.cornell.edu/>>.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) initiated a pilot program to obtain public input about deer and deer impacts at a larger geographic level than was used previously. DEC has grouped the existing 92 wildlife management units (WMUs) used as administrative boundaries for deer management into fewer, larger WMU aggregates to allow for better use of management data and improved deer population monitoring. Public input for deer management will now be gathered from citizens across the WMU aggregates rather than within the smaller individual WMUs. In 2016, the pilot program was completed.

The area selected for the pilot program is the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate, a 1,325 square-mile area of the Finger Lakes region of central New York State. This aggregate encompasses portions of seven different counties and a group of three WMUs (7H, 8J, and 8S).

The pilot program began in 2015 with a survey of 3,000 randomly selected residents of the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate. The survey collected information from residents about values they attribute to deer, their experiences with deer, and their concerns about deer impacts. The pilot also included an educational effort in January 2016. The core of that effort were two webinars designed to help the public understand 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.

Following the webinar series, a small group of interested citizens, referred to as a stakeholder input group (SIG), was convened in March 2016 for the purpose of identifying and prioritizing the benefits and costs associated with deer. The results of the aggregate-wide survey were provided to the SIG group to help inform their deliberation. The SIG was piloted as a replacement for the citizen task forces used previously by the DEC for seeking public recommendations on desired deer population levels within individual WMUs. The citizen task forces were first used in 1990. 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. Following the SIG, a brief report was provided to webinar participants and SIG participants, sharing results of the resident survey, evaluation of the webinar series, and the prioritization of impacts identified by the SIG participants. Finally, in August 2016 a press release regarding the implementation of the pilot was distributed.

*The purpose of this document is to summarize the lessons learned through evaluating the design and implementation of the DEC's pilot program to improve collection of public input about deer and deer impacts.*

Design lessons highlight problems identified with the recruitment method for SIG participants as well as the use of the webinar series by selected SIG participants. However, generally, most design components were positively evaluated.

- The single recruitment method for SIG participants (i.e., post-webinar solicitation of applications) did not sufficiently meet pilot objectives regarding the involvement of stakeholders with diverse interests.

- The pilot model's general design was, however, perceived favorably by SIG participants.
- The webinar series was value-added, but by itself did not sufficiently meet the educational needs of the SIG as it was intended. This was due to the fact that SIG participants think they are sufficiently knowledgeable without the webinars.
- The aggregate-wide resident survey was a value-added design component from the perspective of biologists.
- With respect to developing collaboration between DEC and Cornell Cooperative Extension, the pilot model design was generally effective.

Implementation lessons underscored the importance of having multiple, diverse stakeholder interests reflected in the SIG process as well as the need for enhancing clarity around SIG participants' roles, use of the surveys, and goals of the process.

- Moving forward with a SIG process without having sufficiently diverse representation is not advisable.
- Outreach needs to be more targeted to reach a diverse audience; it may require different messages and direct follow-up with certain organizations.
- The SIG did not use the survey data as intended. This may indicate a need for more education regarding use of survey data to improve perceptions of the value systematic inquiry can provide a deliberative body such as the SIG.
- Generally, more frequent, effective communication regarding goals, roles, and instructions throughout the process is needed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We appreciate the cooperation of people interviewed for this study and citizens who volunteered to serve on the pilot SIG; their participation was crucial to this study. Many staff members within the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Bureau of Wildlife helped during various phases of this research. For their assistance, we express our thanks to DEC staff James Farquhar, Jeremy Hurst, Art Kirsch, Courtney LaMere, and Michael Schiavone. Kristi Sullivan and Paul Curtis (Cornell University) made substantial contributions to development and delivery of informational webinars and the stakeholder input group that were central elements in the pilot project. Averell Bauder (Cornell Cooperative Extension) facilitated meetings of the stakeholder input group; Averell Bauder, Sharon Anderson and Stefan Lutter (Cornell Cooperative Extension) also aided in outreach surrounding the webinar series and hosted viewings of the series. Thank you to Nancy Connelly (Human Dimensions Research Unit) for her consultation on sampling strategy, data weighting, and analysis for the resident survey, and Karlene Smith (Human Dimensions Research Unit) who assisted with survey implementation and data coding. In addition, thank you to Jonathan Russell who assisted in collecting and analyzing data for the evaluation of outreach and communication components of the pilot program.

Our interview guides and request to conduct interview research was reviewed and granted approval by the Cornell University Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (Institutional Review Board for Human Participants Protocol ID# 1006001472).

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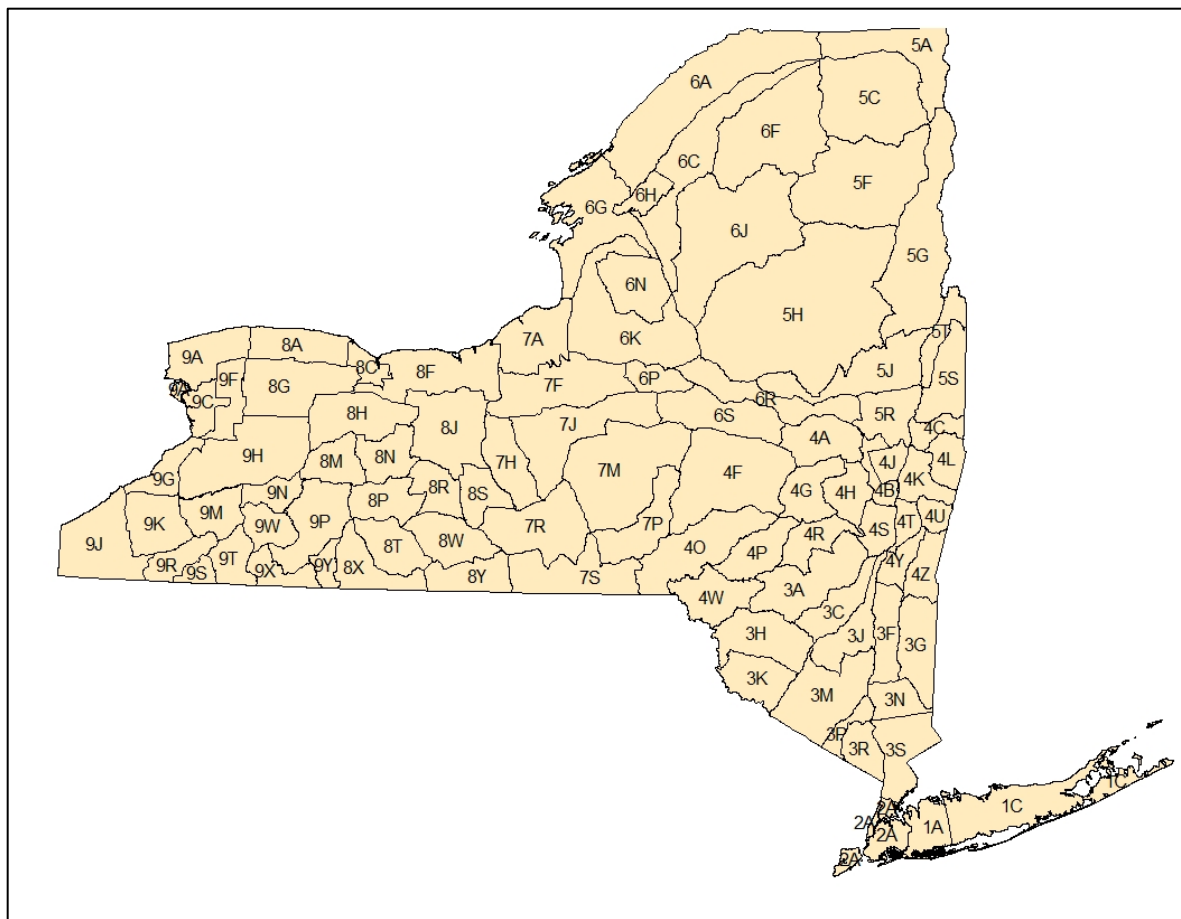
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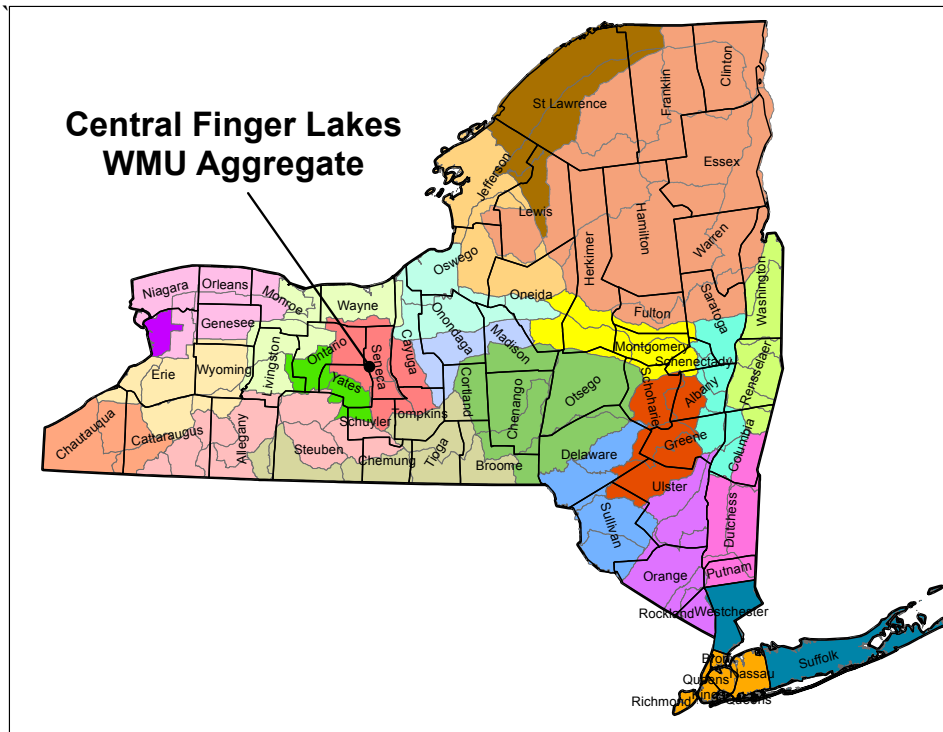


## INTRODUCTION

In 2015 the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) initiated a pilot program to obtain public input about deer and deer impacts at a larger geographic level than was used previously. DEC has grouped the existing 92 wildlife management units (WMUs) (Figure 1) used as administrative boundaries for deer management into fewer, larger WMU aggregates (Figure 2) to allow for better use of management data and improved deer population monitoring. As a consequence, public input for deer management will now be gathered from citizens across the WMU aggregates rather than within the smaller individual WMUs. In 2016, the pilot program was completed.

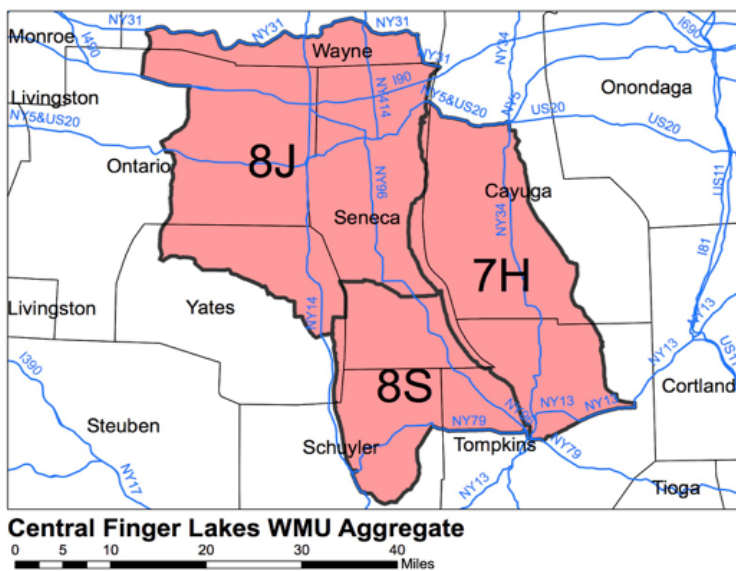


**Figure 1.** Map showing wildlife management units.



**Figure 2.** Map showing wildlife management unit aggregates.

The Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate was selected for the pilot program. 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 3).



**Figure 3.** Map showing the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate.

The pilot was designed to address the functional challenges of the old citizen task force (CTF) model the DEC previously used to collect public input on deer population preferences within WMUs. In addition, the pilot was designed to address the needs incurred in moving from the smaller geographic level of WMUs to that of WMU aggregates for DEC decision making. Therefore, drawing on both the empirical lessons of a preliminary evaluation of the CTFs, logistical concerns of the agency, as well as the empirical and theoretical literature relating to good governance, the revised pilot and stakeholder input group was designed with twelve objectives in mind (See Table 1).

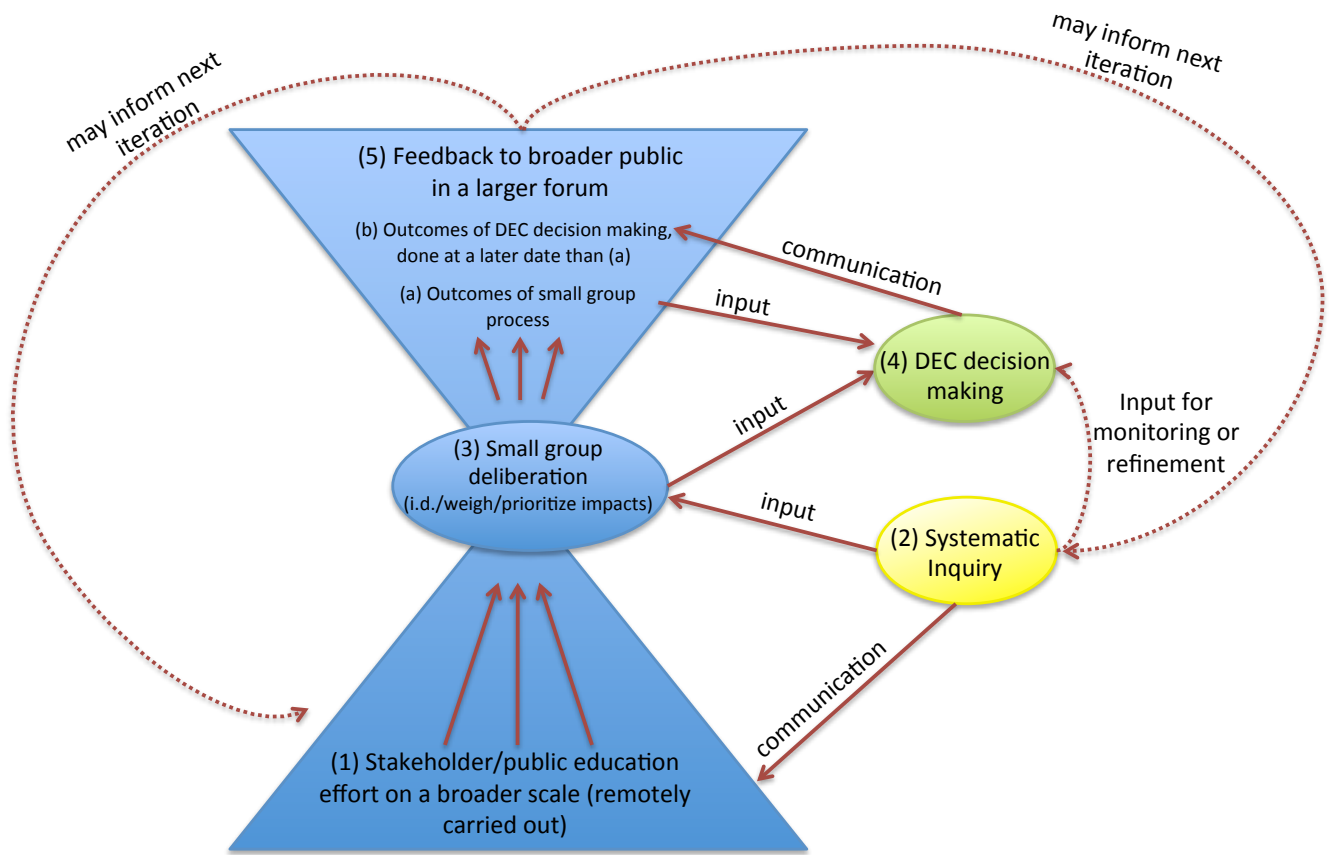
**Table 1.** Pilot program objectives

#	Objective
1	Raise the knowledge of the public and participants regarding deer and deer management
2	Encourage informed decision making
3	Strive to achieve the ideas of good governance and procedural fairness
4	Encourage a smooth and well-functioning participatory process
5	Develop a positive group dynamic
6	Ensure a process that is representative of public interests
7	Reduce participant, facilitator, and agency burdens to participation
8	Ensure a meaningful outcome or recommendation
9	Avoid drawbacks to regional engagement
10	Enhance stakeholder trust in the agency
11	Enhance capacity for future stakeholder engagement and input
12	Develop the collaborative capacity of the agency and partners

Next, a suite of design elements for stakeholder input and involvement were identified that would translate these objectives into a process. Model components reflecting these elements were ultimately selected for the pilot. See Appendix A for the design elements selected.

The pilot was designed with the following five components (Figure 2): (1) a stakeholder/public education effort aimed at: developing support for the subsequent small group process, providing opportunity to communicate findings from the systematic inquiry, and serving as a broad educational platform regarding deer impacts; (2) a systematic inquiry of citizens in the pilot WMU aggregate to provide input to both DEC directly and to a small-group, deliberative process; if carried out continually, it will also provide assessment of progress toward impact management objectives; (3) a small-group, deliberative effort—called a stakeholder input group or SIG—aimed at identifying, weighing, and prioritizing impacts of management concern in the WMU aggregate; (4) a DEC decision-making process (regarding deer population change and other relevant decisions) that incorporates input from multiple sources, including the resident survey and stakeholder input group; and (5) a feedback effort aimed at communicating (a) results

of the small-group decision-making process and (b) a subsequent communication regarding DEC use of the small-group outcomes at a later date.



**Figure 4.** Pilot program for public input on deer and deer impacts.

The pilot project began 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).

Following the resident survey in the WMU aggregate, the pilot project proceeded with 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 locations in the pilot area (i.e., Wells College, Seneca County CCE office, 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 online 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.

One requirement for anyone invited to participate in the SIG was exposure to the webinar series, either participating in the webinars in real-time or viewing them online afterward. Eligibility was also contingent on an individual residing within the aggregate boundaries and being available for both SIG meeting dates, March 1, 2016 and March 15, 2016. Given the prescribed size limitation of 12 individuals, all 15 applicants could not be invited to participate in the SIG; a committee of seven individuals from Cooperative Extension, the DEC, and Cornell selected a set that it felt best met the objective of creating a diverse, cooperative-minded group of SIG participants. Names of prospective SIG members were withheld during the selection process so as not to influence other potential participants' decision making. In total, 12 individuals were selected for the SIG.

The main task for SIG participants was to identify and prioritize deer impacts (i.e., interests and concerns) within the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate. During the first meeting on March 1 in Ovid, NY participants discussed and identified impacts within the aggregate. During the second meeting on March 15 in Ovid, participants discussed the resident survey and prioritized impacts. Twelve individuals participated in the first meeting; 10 individuals participated in the second meeting (2 were absent due to illness). CCE of Seneca County facilitated the meeting, and two DEC wildlife biologists participated as well. The DEC did not participate in the decision-making portion of the SIG deliberations, but were there to answer questions and act as advisors to the process.

For the prioritization of impacts determined by the SIG, see Appendix B. The SIG results and the resident survey results varied significantly in priority of impacts for DEC deer managers to address. The number one priority for the SIG, deer hunting opportunities, was viewed as least important by surveyed aggregate residents; Lyme disease was identified as the number one management priority by surveyed aggregate residents, yet was identified by the SIG as least important for DEC to address, along with deer vehicle collisions. The results of the survey were intended to inform the SIG deliberations, however the SIG mostly used the survey to expand the list of impacts identified at the first meeting.

As part of a public feedback effort, following the SIG, webinar participants and SIG participants were provided a progress report covering results of the resident survey, evaluation of the webinar series, and the prioritization of impacts identified by the SIG participants. In August 2016 a press release about the pilot effort was distributed with the aid of CCE partners, thus concluding the non-evaluative portion of pilot program.

## METHODS

All major components of the pilot program were evaluated by HDRU, including the webinar series, the SIG process, and the outreach and communication effort. The evaluation methods for each of the components are outlined here.

### Webinar Evaluation

Methods for evaluating the webinar series were two-pronged. One method involved an online questionnaire provided to webinar participants soliciting their evaluation of various components of the webinar series. In addition, interviews were conducted with a sample of webinar participants to gain further insight into their perceptions of the webinar series. A detailed description of the methods for the webinar series evaluation and more complete results than we cover in this report can be found in Siemer et al. (2016).

### Stakeholder Input Group Evaluation

Following the SIG process, semi-structured interviews were conducted with agency personnel, facilitators of the pilot program, and process participants. The interviews focused on uncovering respondent perspectives, attitudes, and opinions about the revised public input process. We designed an interview guide that covered topics such as the respondent's motivation for participation, perceptions of the SIG process, the SIG outcome, and the public's role in deer management broadly (see Appendices C, D, E).

A total of 14 interviews were conducted post-pilot implementation, including 11 interviews with SIG participants (accounts for all but one SIG participant who was unreachable despite multiple attempts), two interviews with the two participating DEC wildlife biologists, and one interview with the CCE educator who facilitated the effort.

These interviews were conducted over a two-month period in April and May 2016. Interviews were conducted in-person and via telephone, and ranged in duration from 15 to 98 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded for emergent themes (i.e., themes or concepts identified by categorizing relevant parts of the interviews). Initial coding was followed by focused coding, which requires the categorization of earlier codes into more conceptual categories to aid in analysis and discarding the less relevant or salient codes (Charmaz, 2001; Lofland & Lofland, 2006). Categories and codes reflected both theoretical and *in vivo* codes (Charmaz, 2001; Weiss, 1994).

In addition to semi-structured interviews, the author employed participant observation (Patton 2002), which allowed us to gain first-hand experience with participants and record information based on real-time observation (Creswell, 2009, p. 179). An HDRU researcher attended both sessions of the SIG deliberation process in order to observe and record through a memoing process.

## **Outreach and Communication Evaluation**

During June through August 2016, potential sources for media reporting were identified for evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation was to identify the various media outlets that have reported on the pilot effort and the extent of the coverage, and evaluate how the pilot effort was framed following the press release. In addition, we sought to explore whether or not the information regarding the webinar series and the pilot process reached the intended recipients. The information sources identified included a (1) an August 2015 DEC press release, (2) a memo regarding the webinar series distributed in December 2015 by DEC to recipients of the 2015 Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate resident survey who expressed interest in learning about the pilot program, and (3) December 2015 and January 2016 communication by CCE educators to local media sources and stakeholder groups. LexisNexis and Google Scholar searches were carried out to find media content released from August 2015 through July 2016 surrounding the three potential sources for media reporting. In addition, HDRU researchers contacted media outlets within the aggregate directly, such as the Ithaca Journal, in order to identify any additional media coverage of the pilot that may not have been identified through the online search.

In addition to the media source search, a list of all stakeholder groups and organizations contacted by DEC, CCE, and HDRU prior to the webinar series was compiled, building off of a deer management webinar promotion list developed by CCE. This list was expanded through contacts with DEC media/communications representatives from DEC Regions 7 and 8 (the regions wherein the study area was located). Following the completion of the outreach list, organizational contacts were contacted by an HDRU researcher, either by email or by telephone. Respondents were asked if the organization passed the information about the webinar series on to their members. If they did not pass along the information, they were asked to elaborate on why they did not. If they did pass along the information to their members, they were asked about the method used for contacting members and/or distributing the information, when the information was passed on, the nature of the message they passed on, and if they communicated any reminder or follow-up messages about the webinar series or pilot program to their members.

For more comprehensive results of the outreach and communication evaluation effort, see Appendix F.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section we outline design and implementation lessons regarding the pilot program learned through our evaluation effort. We are taking a “lessons learned” approach to facilitate synthesis of results. This section is organized in three parts: lessons regarding the pilot’s design, lessons regarding the pilot’s implementation, and remaining theoretical questions. Lessons are supported with data from the webinar evaluation survey and interviews, the SIG evaluation interviews, and the outreach and communication analysis.

### **Design Lessons**

*Design Lesson #1: Relying on a single recruitment method (i.e., solicitation of applications following the webinar series) and self-selection of participants for the SIG was not sufficient to*

*meet the objective of achieving representation of broad public interests in the deliberative process.*

While 227 individuals registered for the webinar series, only 71 lived in one of the counties included in the pilot area, the Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate. Subsequently, only 24 individuals who participated in the webinar series volunteered to participate in the SIG; of those, only 15 lived within the pilot area and were therefore eligible to participate. Out of the 15 eligible applicants, only two were women. These women were also the only two participants without hunting experience. As one SIG participant reported regarding the composition of the SIG:

“I think that where it went wrong was that there weren't a bunch of different stakeholders represented. And I'm guessing that that's because of who applied ... I don't think that they [the DEC] skewed it towards hunters, but I think that other people just didn't apply”—*SIG participant*

*Design Lesson #2: The assumption that individual participants could reflect multiple public interests has limitations. Despite SIG participants holding multiple interests, the preponderance of hunting interest among the group prevailed during their deliberations.*

Efforts to attract volunteers to participate in the SIG focused on creating a group of informed, thoughtful people who could reflect a broad scope of interests. Participants were not explicitly instructed to represent a particular stake or wear a particular “hat” (e.g., “you are sitting at the table to speak for environmental NGOs”), which was intended to allow for more flexibility for participants in their deliberation. Although 10 of 12 participants expressed interest in hunting, many also noted other interests or backgrounds such as owning forestland, being affected by Lyme disease, etc. (see Figure 4 for SIG applicant interests). Nevertheless, hunting interests played a large role in discussions among SIG members, with most SIG participants noting that the composition of the SIG was mostly hunters. As such, although participants, including hunters, had multiple interests, the hunting identity of SIG members who hunted seemed to dominate their opinions. Some SIG members attributed the predominance of hunters to the fact that not enough individuals applied to participate.

“I don't know if [there was enough] visibility for the public to get involved. And maybe it's really hard to get people involved, I don't know. I mean this is a big grape region and not to have a single grape grower?”—*SIG participant*

“We needed to have more people that were definitely farmers.” —*SIG facilitator*

“I don't think there was anyone really with a regular garden, and maybe they needed to throw in someone with some kind of medical background possibly for the ticks.—*SIG participant*

Participants also felt that, given the significance of agriculture within the aggregate, farming interests were particularly lacking.



*Design Lesson #3: The model, as designed, was perceived as a fair process by participants, although the lack of diversity of the SIG qualified this perception.*

The process was perceived as fair because it was open to everyone. DEC biologists, however, were more equivocal than the participants in judging the fairness of the process, particularly due to the lack of diversity of the SIG. The fact that the process was generally deemed a fair one perhaps indicates there were only minor implementation and minor design issues, rather than major design flaws. Clearly though, moving forward with underrepresentation of certain stakes would be problematic. Despite any shortcomings associated with the process, all SIG participants indicated that, if asked, they would participate again.

“It was fair for that being the first one. As for the entire aggregate, I don't think it was 100% fair because of the aspect of so many hunters”—*SIG participant*

“It was a fair process, I think but not representative.”—*SIG participant*

“No, it should be a fair process but it wasn't a fair outcome... [it] just seems to be difficult [for participants] to put aside personal feelings”—*DEC biologist*

“I think the [nonhunters] probably walked away feeling like they wished they had been heard more. Or maybe said more.”—*DEC biologist*

*Design Lesson #4: The webinar series was a value-added design component. As a method of remote education intended to reach a large and diverse audience, those who participated viewed it positively.*

Most survey respondents were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied the webinar (xx% and YY%, respectively). A majority of respondents believed that content met their expectations (64%), improved their understanding of deer impacts (69%), and improved their understanding of pilot stakeholder process (76%) (Siemer et al., 2016). In general, the webinars were perceived by many as well organized and relevant, interesting, informative, and useful. Presenters were perceived as knowledgeable on the topics covered, and respondents appreciated learning about the deer management process as well as the pilot public engagement effort (Siemer et al., 2016).

*Design Lesson #5: The webinar series alone did not function sufficiently to raise knowledge of SIG participants.*

Many of the SIG participants felt that the webinars were too basic for them and did not provide added education benefit about deer and deer impacts. Ultimately, many relied on their own knowledge for SIG decision making. The forest impacts presentation was an exception. SIG participants valued the new information provided in this presentation, which was, reinforced by having a forester on the SIG, and evidenced by forest impacts emerging as a top concern in SIG prioritization (see Appendix B).

“The programs were very basic...I mean most people that are there already know all that, so people came for the meat and potatoes. They wanted to see how this program was going to be run, they wanted to have more knowledge of what was going to take place.”—*SIG participant*

“I used pretty much my own experience [for decision making], and the experience of my peers, the sportsmen.”—*SIG participant*

“...how much forestry damage that [deer were] doing. That surprised me, I just didn't realize they would decimate trees that bad, and how fast.”—*SIG participant*

“I wasn't as schooled on the problem of regeneration of forestry or lack thereof...I didn't believe that there was that big a problem.”—*SIG participant*

*Design Lesson #6: The Central Finger Lakes WMU Aggregate resident survey was a value-added design component. From the perspective of DEC biologists, the survey was important for capturing public perceptions of deer and deer management.*

The 2015 survey of residents of the aggregate yielded a response rate of 50.8%. It provided information on residents' deer-related interests and concerns, human-deer interaction levels that residents perceive as important to address, attitudes towards deer, and costs/benefits of deer presence (Siemer et al., 2015).

“They [the SIG participants] just probably had experience in their own little corner of it [the aggregate]...that was where that survey information would have come in handy is that it did represent the broader aggregate...[but] they didn't look at that survey information”—*DEC biologist*

*Design Lesson #7: Using a Cornell Cooperative Extension facilitator was evaluated positively by participants. In particular, participants appreciated his neutrality.*

“... I thought the facilitator...did a commendable job... I think he was very personable, very cordial. You could tell that he didn't show any bias towards any particular segment of the group”—*SIG participant*

“I think [the facilitator] did a great job...he was basically a person that could keep things running smoothly, keep the meeting moving along and I think that's important in [this] situation.”—*SIG participant*

“I thought it was great, [the facilitator] did a great job. I'm always impressed at how CCE folks can do that, how good they are at moderating meetings and facilitating discussions.”—*DEC biologist*

*Design Lesson #8: Securing the services of campus and county Cornell Cooperative Extension educators for outreach and facilitation was generally an effective approach.*

The SIG facilitator found value in pilot involvement and would participate again if asked to do so.

“I’m having fun doing this. It’s cool to be in on a process.”—*SIG facilitator*

“I think, being included from the start was, was just really helpful... Being seen as an equal partner because it would have been real easy for everybody to say ‘oh this is just the guy that’s going to be there to make sure nobody kills each other and somehow know how to get a process flowing’, so being included was huge.” —*SIG facilitator*

## **Implementation Lessons**

*Implementation Lesson #1: Moving forward with a process without addressing underrepresentation of certain stakes is not advisable.*

The overrepresentation of hunters had a pervasive impact on participants’ perceptions of the process and evaluation of the pilot’s design and implementation. For instance, some issues regarding the pilot are difficult to attribute to a design or implementation flaw when accounting for representation problems (e.g., would the survey have been a more effective tool in the event of a more diverse SIG?). The predominance of hunters and lack of diversity of the group strongly influenced participants’, the facilitator’s, and biologists’ perceptions of the entire process.

“Well it was doomed from the beginning because of the selection of the people.”—*SIG participant*

“It seemed like the majority of the group didn't have personal experience with, or they weren't concerned about things like, Lyme Disease, deer-vehicle collisions, property damage you know... they tried to entertain the idea, and they were civil about it, but I just don't think it was in the end, important, or something that they thought deer managers should be concerned with.”—*DEC biologist*

*Implementation Lesson #2: Generally, the approach for weighing and prioritizing impacts, where individuals are given multiple votes to allocate as they wish, is not effective when one interest is heavily over-represented.*

The facilitator utilized a weighing technique where participants are given multiple votes to distribute as they wish with respect to which impacts they would like to prioritize. Overall, participants did not feel the process worked effectively or as intended, due to the predominance of one interest group—hunters. With such an abundance of hunter participants, even if each hunter only placed one of their five allocated votes on an impact related to hunting, that impact

would receive a profusion of votes. Therefore nonhunters felt they had to vote strategically, overweighing certain interests that they wouldn't have if the group had been more diverse. This reinforces the inadvisability of moving forward without addressing fundamental issue of SIG representation.

“I put all my votes on one [impact]... ‘cause that was the only way it was going to... be seen”—*SIG participant*

“Again if the pool of people was different, I think the outcome probably would have been different. But being that it was a majority of hunters that were doing it, that impacted the vote”—*SIG participant, hunter*

*Implementation Lesson #3: The outreach effort may need to be more targeted to population segments to ensure a sufficiently diverse audience is reached and recruited for the webinar series.*

Many webinar series participants became aware of the webinar series through hunter communication networks, and a majority of respondents to the webinar evaluation survey reported that they hunted deer in their local area (69%) (Siemer et al., 2016). In addition, of the 79 organizations contacted as part of DEC and CCE's outreach effort to publicize the webinar series, only 19 passed along information about the series to their members. Of those 19, 10 were hunting organizations, eight were public or community organizations, and one was a forest landowner organization.

*Implementation Lesson #4: Expectations regarding the use of the survey were not met. The survey was not used as intended nor was its implementation fully understood by participants. However, it was useful for expanding SIG participants' initial set of impacts.*

This may reflect a need for more education and direction surrounding the use of the survey. The underutilization of the survey was a point of concern for both the facilitator and the wildlife biologists.

“A lot of the people ... in that survey probably weren't even involved with whitetail management, they were just residents”—*SIG participant*

“And I don't know where or how they got the people that put information into this survey. I think they just sent questionnaires around and, you know about half [of the] people did send it back”—*SIG participant*

“I don't think they [SIG participants] looked through the survey very carefully, not that I expected them to read through the entire report, but there were a lot of questions I remember at the second meeting like, “maybe people who live in cities are being over represented in the respondents to the survey.” But we had that information available to them, how many people lived in small cities, how many people you know lived on rural

properties you know. I think they had some questions that if they had looked through that information, they could have been answered”—*DEC biologist*

*Implementation Lesson #5: If the SIGs do not use the survey data as intended, then including both the interest group and the survey in the input process can lead to a decision-making conundrum.*

In part because the survey data was not used, the differences in top priorities of the SIG are different from the survey (See Appendix B). Participants and biologists were therefore uncertain about how to use either outcome.

“I don't know. I don't know how they're going to...be able to make any type of changes”—*SIG participant*

*Implementation Lesson #6: More time may have been needed on communication around goals, roles, and instructions throughout the pilot effort, especially the SIG.*

This lesson is evidenced by a lack of clarity with respect to how participants understood their roles, how participants thought survey data were intended to be used, and how they understood the goal of the entire effort. The result was a lack of consensus on whether or not goals of the SIG effort were achieved.

“[If the] DEC is just going to do what the survey says then why bother with the SIG?”—*SIG participant*

“Well the goal was to come to a reasonable [population] number for management to satisfy all”—*SIG participant*

“To be honest with you when I walked into the meeting, I didn't know what the goals were”—*SIG participant*

“I don't know if [the recommendation] will be used, I don't know if that question was ever answered”—*SIG participant*

*Implementation Lesson #7: Logistical lessons include: the time of day and location were good choices; a larger meeting space (as used for the second meeting) is preferable, and two meetings do not provide enough time to discuss all that was needed.*

While it may have been better to schedule a third meeting from the outset, given that the two meeting model was not enough to get through all of the necessary discussion and decision making desired, we do not know if participants would agree to that level of time commitment.

“I think a third meeting would have been really good... the first meeting we could talk about what your experiences [with deer] were. The second meeting we could really talk

about the survey. The third meeting would be, how do these things blend?”—*SIG facilitator*

## **Theoretical Questions**

*Theoretical Question #1: Can citizen stakeholders participate effectively at the WMU aggregate level in a task-force style engagement process?*

While SIG participants felt they had the capacity to make decisions at the aggregate level, and felt confident in the breadth of their experiences and familiarity with the region, they relied on their own previous knowledge and not intended aids (e.g., the survey).

“I’ve lived here a long time, and I was raised by deer hunters. And I work for a veterinarian, and I’m a hiker and so I have sort of a broad range of understanding about what deer are doing in the area.”—*SIG participant*

Despite participants’ confidence in their knowledge of deer and deer impacts in the region, the stark differences between SIG priorities and survey priorities may reflect a lack of capacity to “scale up” their knowledge (see Appendix B). It is possible that the confidence of participants, who were predominantly hunters, derived from their familiarity or comfort with WMU-level decision making, given the permitting process for deer hunting. As we received so few applicants interested in the SIG, we do not know why those individuals chose not to apply, and whether or not it was related to a discomfort or lack of familiarity with deer impacts over a region as large as the pilot aggregate, in contrast with SIG participants.

In designing the pilot we knew it was somewhat contrary to various typologies in the literature as the issue addressed by the decision-making effort is regional in nature, yet the type of stakeholders sought for participation tends to reflect what would be typical for more local-level forms of engagement. We considered this and attempted to address it through elements like the webinar series and the broad resident survey. However, given the difficulties in recruiting participants we might conclude that representatives of organized interest groups rather than a group of individuals may be better tasked with making decisions at this geographic level, as is more common with regional-level decision making.

## **Summary of Lessons**

Design lessons highlight issues identified with the recruitment method for SIG participants as well as the use of the webinar series by selected SIG participants. However, generally, most design components were positively evaluated.

- The single recruitment method for SIG participants (i.e., post-webinar solicitation of applications) did not sufficiently meet pilot objectives regarding the involvement of stakeholders with diverse interests.
- The general pilot model design, however, was perceived favorably by SIG participants.

- The webinar series was value-added, but by itself did not sufficiently meet the educational needs of the SIG as it was intended due to the fact that SIG participants think they are sufficiently knowledgeable without the webinars.
- The aggregate-wide resident survey was a value-added design component from the perspective of biologists.
- With respect to developing collaboration between DEC and Cornell Cooperative Extension, the pilot model design was generally effective.

Implementation lessons underscored the importance of having multiple, diverse stakeholder interests reflected in the SIG process as well as the need for enhancing clarity around SIG participants' roles, use of the surveys, and goals of the process.

- Moving forward with a process without having sufficiently diverse representation is not advisable.
- Outreach needs to be more targeted to reach a diverse audience; it may require different messages and direct follow-up with certain organizations.
- The SIG did not use the survey data as intended; this may indicate a need for more education regarding use of survey data to improve perceptions of the value systematic inquiry can provide a deliberative body such as the SIG.
- Generally, more frequent, effective communication regarding goals, roles, and instructions throughout the process is needed.

Theoretical Questions:

- Questions remain regarding whether citizen stakeholders can participate effectively at the WMU aggregate level in a task-force style engagement process.

### EVALUATIVE INSIGHTS

While the components of the pilot engagement process designed to improve stakeholder capacity to participate in a regional engagement process at the WMU-aggregate level proved insufficient to address all objectives for the process, important insights regarding design and implementation were learned throughout its execution and subsequent evaluation. Four are reiterated below.

*Finding diverse stakeholders to participate in these task-force-style processes is a challenging task, even with considerable attention given to this purpose.* Despite a concerted outreach effort to reach a broad public, and a webinar series intended to address baseline knowledge about deer and deer impacts to encourage participation in the process, we struggled to find a large pool of interested individuals who reflected diverse public interests in deer and deer management, *and who were willing to participate in the SIG.* Continuing to find ways to maximize the involvement of a broad suite of stakeholders remains an important research question and program planning task.

*Asking citizens to incorporate systematic inquiry data with personal experiences and perspectives to work towards a meaningful decision is a difficult request and perhaps unrealistic expectation.* While the survey data were intended to enhance knowledge about deer and deer impacts across a large region, the availability of such data seemed to confound rather than clarify

decision making for SIG participants. If merging of two types of input is going to be carried out in a meaningful way, expectations and directions need to be clarified at the outset of program planning. Perhaps more fundamentally, the ability of stakeholders to participate in this approach needs further assessment. Professional wildlife managers do such synthesis of multiple forms of input, including empirical data and personal observations, but this may not be realistic to expect of lay people.

*Partnerships are beneficial for carrying out and coordinating a public education and stakeholder engagement program with multiple components.* The partnership between DEC, CCE, and HDRU was effective because each partner's strengths could be leveraged to implement various components of the pilot. For instance, CCE's strength in education and outreach was valuable for implementing a high-quality webinar series. Finding ways to ensure that these kinds of partnerships can succeed should be a principal consideration for future program planning.

*There should be a balance when implementing a program between retaining fidelity to a designed model and addressing concerns with the model as they arise.* While this effort was designed as a pilot program and therefore maintaining fidelity to the design seemed logical at times, treating it as an experiment with sacrosanct treatments when obvious flaws arose during implementation may be inadvisable. It would have perhaps been more prudent to address obvious issues as they arose. For instance, if not enough diverse stakeholders seemed to be reached in order to solicit a sufficient set of applicants for SIG consideration, it may have been worthwhile to address that problem immediately, as it had a significant impact for the SIG decision-making process.

## CONCLUSION

The DEC's pilot program to obtain public input about deer and deer impacts at the WMU aggregate level was designed with attention to concerns that had been identified with the old task force model as well as considerations for a change in the geographic level of decision making. Evaluative findings discussed in this report highlight a number of lessons learned throughout the design and implementation of the pilot program.

Addressing these concerns while continuing to meet the important objectives identified at the outset of the pilot effort may serve to enhance the quality of public input solicited by the agency and thereby support deer management decision making. Identifying ways to mitigate weaknesses while maintaining recognized strengths of the current methods for involving the public in deer management decision making may help to meet the needs of the agency and the expectations of the public with respect to deer and deer impacts.



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## APPENDIX A: DESIGN ELEMENTS MATRIX

Design Element Matrix												
Design Elements	3 <sup>rd</sup> party facilitators	Method for weighing/prioritizing impacts	Face-to-face format	Educational component	Multiple methods for participation	Assess need for next iteration of process	Systematic inquiry	Sustained outreach effort	Engage multiple organization/agency collaborators	Process follow-up	Translate stakeholder engagement outcomes into actions that address impacts	Hotspot Approach
Options/ additional elements	Cooperative Extension (one trained facilitator)	SIG group deliberation	SIG group deliberation	SIG public issues education	SIG group participation	Ongoing data collection (systematic inquiry)	Routinely periodic collection of data	Process follow-up in larger public forum	Working group model	SIG group follow-up	SIG small group discussion	DMFA plus stakeholder engagement
	Cooperative Extension (multiple regional facilitators)	Systematic Inquiry	SIG group process follow-up	Systematic Inquiry	Systematic Inquiry	Process follow-up (refer to column for options)	Ongoing data collection (systematic inquiry)	Involvement of Cooperative Extension	Co-convenor of SIG	Larger public forum	Engage multiple organization/agency collaborators	
	Hiring of external professional facilitators			Broad public issues education effort [webinar]	Virtual engagement for education effort [webinar]			Involvement at hotspot level	Invited to process follow-up	Multiple agency collaborators invited to process follow-up	Hotspot approach	18

Additional recommended design elements:

1. Choose a neutral location
2. Allow participants to reflect multiple stakes
3. Provision of participant incentives or compensation
4. Share findings and build connections with other organizations to achieve outcomes NYSDEC cannot achieve alone
5. Provide support for facilitators to ensure their involvement
6. Facilitative and issues training

# PILOT MODEL: DESIGN PLANNING

*Note: asterisks indicate box no longer highlighted. Teal indicates new highlight. Lighter colors indicate optional, yet to be determined element.*

**APPENDIX B: SIG vs. SURVEY IMPACTS PRIORITIZATION**

<b>SIG Prioritization of Impacts</b>	<b>Management Priorities from 2015 Resident Survey</b>
(1) Deer hunting opportunities	(1) Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses
(2) Lack of deer	(2) Deer health and wellbeing
(3) Effects of deer on forests and woodlots	(3) Deer vehicle collisions
(4) Deer herd health	(4) Deer damage to farm crops
(5) Deer damage to crops and agriculture	(5) Deer damage to natural plants and forests
(6) Deer viewing opportunities	(6) Deer damage to gardens and plantings around homes
(7) Deer damage to landscaping and gardens	(7) Problems with deer hunters
(8) Human-deer health concerns (Lyme disease and deer vehicle collisions)	(8) Deer viewing opportunities
	(9) Deer hunting opportunities

## APPENDIX C: SIG PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Interview Schedule: Evaluation of DEC Deer Management Pilot Stakeholder Input Group

#### A) Introduction

Hello. My name is Emily Pomeranz. I'm a researcher in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University. I am part of a team evaluating the Department of Environmental Conservation's pilot program to improve collection and use of public input about deer and deer impacts. You may recall that I sat in on the stakeholder input group (SIG). A part of the pilot program includes the stakeholder input group, and I am interested in speaking with you because of your participation in the SIG.

#### B) Personal background and perceptions of deer and deer impacts

First, please tell me a bit about yourself.

1. How long have you lived in the area [Central Finger Lakes Aggregate]?
2. How do you feel about the deer in your local area?
  - a. What are your experiences with deer? Concerns?
  - b. How have your experiences with deer changed over time?
  - c. What deer-related benefits and costs of having deer in your local area are you most concerned that managers address?
    - i. Why?
3. How would you weigh the benefits and costs of having deer in your local area? (net evaluation & does a particular impact "tip the balance")
4. Have you previously been involved in the deer management efforts in your local area? In what way? [e.g., attend public meetings, submit comments to papers, applied for DMAP permits, hunting deer, etc.]
  - a. If so, why did you decide to participate?
  - b. If not, why not?

#### C) Interest in the Stakeholder Input Group

1. Were you aware of the Stakeholder Input Group (SIG) prior to the presentation about the pilot effort during the webinar series?
  - a. **IF YES**→ How did you hear about the SIG?

2. Why did you decide to apply to participate in the SIG?
  - a. What factors or information did you consider in making the decision to apply for participation in the SIG?
  - b. Did the webinar series influence your decision to apply to participate in the SIG?
    - i. In what way?

**D) First SIG meeting**

1. How would you describe the goal of the first SIG meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
2. What was your role as a participant in the SIG?
  - a. Role of CCE?
  - b. Role of DEC?
  - c. Do you think these were the helpful roles for DEC, CCE, and SIG participants with respect to deer management decision making for the aggregate?
3. Do you recall the ground rules set at the first meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the rules were abided by throughout both meetings?
    - i. **IF NOT**→ Which rules were ignored?
4. Did you believe that you were able to share the relevant information that you wanted to share?
  - a. Why or why not?
5. Please describe the discussion at the first meeting.
  - a. Were there any critical moments?
  - b. General group dynamic? (Prompts→ Open conversation? Collaborative mindset? Community interests a priority?)
6. Were there any conflicts at this meeting? Nature of the conflict?
  - a. How did you respond to those conflicts?
  - b. How did DEC staff respond?

- c. How did CCE respond?
7. Were there any major agreements at this meeting? Nature of the agreement?

**E) Second SIG meeting**

1. How would you describe the goal of the second meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
2. Did you believe that you were able to share the relevant information that you wanted to share?
  - a. Why or why not?
3. Please describe the discussion at the second meeting. (Prompts→ Open conversation? Collaborative mindset? Community issues a priority?)
  - a. Were there any critical moments?
4. Were there any conflicts at this meeting? Nature of the conflict?
  - a. How did you respond to those conflicts?
  - b. How did DEC staff respond?
  - c. How did CCE?
5. Were there any consensus agreements at this meeting? Nature of the agreement?

**F) Deliberative Process**

1. What process was used to weigh and prioritize impacts?
  - a. Do you believe this worked effectively?
    - i. **IF YES**→ How so?
    - ii. **IF NO**→ Why was it ineffective?
      1. What would you have done differently?
2. What type of information was used to make decisions about weighing and prioritizing impacts?
  - a. Do you believe this was the right kind of information for making decisions? Why or why not?
  - b. Did you use the general population survey?

- i. **IF YES**→ In what way?
  - 1. How important to the SIG decision-making process was the survey?
  - 2. What do you see as the value of the general population survey? (Prompt→size of the aggregate? Generalizability?)
- ii. **IF NO**→ Why not?
- c. Did you rely on the DEC staff's expertise for any input at any point in the decision-making process?
  - i. **IF YES**→ When and in what way?
  - ii. **IF NO**→ Why not?
- d. Did you feel confident in making decisions at the aggregate level?
  - i. **IF NO**→ Why not?
- 3. Did all participants have the opportunity to provide input?
  - a. **IF NO**→ Who didn't provide input?
- 4. Do you believe this was a fair process?
  - a. **IF YES**→ What made it fair?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Why not?
- 5. Did you find the presence of a CCE facilitator helpful? (Prompt→neutrality, trust, keeping the group on task)
  - a. **IF YES**→ What contributed to his effectiveness?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Why not?

### **G) Deliberative Outcome**

- 1. Were you satisfied with the outcome of the process?
  - a. Why or why not?
- 2. Who, if anyone, benefits from the outcome? In what way?
- 3. Who, if anyone, incurs some cost? In what way?

4. Does this distribution of benefits and costs associated with the presence of deer seem fair to you? Why or why not?
5. How do you believe the outcome of this process will be used?
  - a. How do you believe the outcome of this process *should* be used?

## **H) SIG Participant Composition/Representation**

1. Did the SIG participants represent the diversity of the population in the aggregate?
  - a. Were any deer management interests of importance (stakeholders) left out or missing from the process?
    - i. **IF YES**→ Which interests?
      1. What do you believe is the impact of not having included this interest in the process?
  - b. Was anyone missing from the process? (prompt→ geography, age, gender, diversity concerns)
    - i. **IF YES**→ Who?
    - ii. What do you believe is the impact of not having included people reflecting these traits in the process?
2. Do you believe that all public interests in deer and deer management were given consideration by SIG participants?
  - a. **IF YES**→ Can you elaborate?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Which views were not considered?
    - i. What do you believe is the impact of not considering these views?

## **I) Preparation & Logistical Considerations**

1. Did you feel prepared to participate in the SIG?
  - a. **IF YES**→ Please elaborate. (e.g., In what way?)
  - b. **IF NO**→ Why not? How might you have been better prepared?
  - c. Was the webinar series helpful in preparing you to participate in the SIG?
    - i. Why or why not?
2. Was the location convenient?



- a. **IF NO**→ Given the need to choose a central location for all participants, what can be done to address this concern?
3. Was the timing convenient? (time of year, week, day)
  - a. **IF NO**→ What alternate times would be better?
4. Any additional logistical concerns?

**J) General evaluation of the effort**

1. What do you believe was a critical moment in the decision making process?
  - a. Turning point or breakthrough?
2. What was the biggest surprise to you while working on this effort?
  - a. Why was this surprising?
3. What are the strengths of the SIG process?
  - a. What does it do well?
4. What are the weaknesses of the SIG process?
  - a. What are the needs? How can they be met?

**K) General perspective on public involvement in deer management decision making**

1. With respect to deer management decision making, what is your opinion about the role of the public in deer management?
2. In your opinion, what should be the role for:
  - a. State agencies such as the DEC in addressing deer management needs?
  - b. Municipal leaders?
  - c. Cornell Cooperative Extension?
  - d. Citizens?

**L) Conclusion**

1. Overall, how satisfied were you with the SIG process?
2. Would you participate in a similar process again in the future?
  - a. Why or why not?

- b. Would you recommend encourage others to participate in the SIG when it comes to other aggregate units?
    - i. Why or why not?
- 3. What are your hopes and concerns for the future of deer management in your local area?
- 4. Is there anything about the SIG or the pilot program in general that I have not asked you that you would like to share with me so it can be considered in our evaluation of the program?

## APPENDIX D: FACILITATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Interview Schedule: Evaluation of DEC Deer Management Pilot Stakeholder Input Group (Facilitator Version)

#### A) Introduction

Hi, and thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'd like to speak with you today about your perceptions of the SIG process as a facilitator, as part of our broader evaluation of the DEC's pilot process.

#### B) Personal background and perceptions of deer and deer impacts

First, please tell me a bit about yourself.

5. How long have you lived in the area [Central Finger Lakes Aggregate]?
6. How do you feel about the deer in your local area?
  - a. What are your experiences with deer? Concerns?
  - b. How have your experiences with deer changed over time?
  - c. What deer-related benefits and costs of having deer in your local area are you most concerned that managers address?
    - i. Why?
7. How would you weigh the benefits and costs of having deer in your local area? (net evaluation & does a particular impact "tip the balance")
8. Have you previously been involved in the deer management efforts in your local area? In what way? [e.g., attend public meetings, submit comments to newspapers, involvement in educational programs about deer, hunting deer, etc.]
  - a. If so, why did you decide to participate?
  - b. If not, why not?
9. What is your role at Cooperative Extension?
10. Have you facilitated public processes in the past?
  - a. **IF YES**→ What kinds of processes, generally?
  - b. Do you have a particular style of facilitation you employ?
    - i. Methods for resolving conflicts? Threats? Confusion?

ii. Training involved in facilitation?

**C) Involvement in the Stakeholder Input Group**

3. Have you worked with the DEC previously in any capacity?
  - a. **IF YES**→ Elaborate, please.
4. Why did you decide to facilitate the SIG process?
  - c. What factors or information did you consider in making the decision to facilitate the SIG process?

**D) First SIG meeting**

8. How would you describe the goal of the first SIG meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
9. How would you describe your role in the SIG process?
  - a. Role of participants?
    - i. How did you think the SIG participants perceived their role?
  - b. Role of DEC?
  - c. Do you think these were the helpful roles for DEC, CCE, and SIG participants with respect to deer management decision making for the aggregate?
10. Do you recall the ground rules set at the first meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the rules were abided by throughout both meetings?
    - i. **IF NOT**→ Which rules were ignored?
11. Do you believe that participants were able share the relevant information that they wanted to share?
  - a. Why or why not?
12. How would you describe the discussion and communication among participants at the first meeting?
  - a. Were there any critical moments?
  - b. General group dynamic? (Prompts→ Open conversation? Collaborative mindset? Community interests a priority?)

13. Were there any conflicts at this meeting? Nature of the conflict? Would you describe the meeting as contentious or not?
  - a. How did you respond to those conflicts?
  - b. How did DEC staff respond?
  - c. How did participants respond?
14. Were there any major agreements at this meeting? Nature of the agreement?

#### **E) Second SIG meeting**

6. How would you describe the goal of the second meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
7. Do you believe that participants were able to share the relevant information that they wanted to share?
  - a. Why or why not?
8. How would you describe the discussion and communication among participants at the second meeting? (Prompts→ Open conversation? Collaborative mindset? Community issues a priority?)
  - a. Were there any critical moments?
9. Were there any conflicts at this meeting? Nature of the conflict? Would you describe the meeting as contentious or not?
  - a. How did you respond to those conflicts?
  - b. How did DEC staff respond?
  - c. How did participants respond?
10. Were there any consensus agreements at this meeting? Nature of the agreement?

#### **F) Deliberative Process**

6. Could you describe the process you selected for participants to weigh and prioritize impacts?
  - a. Why did you select this method?
  - b. Do you believe this worked effectively?
    - i. **IF YES**→ How so?

- ii. **IF NO**→ Why was it ineffective?
      - 1. What would you have done differently?
- 7. What type of information do you believe participants used to make decisions about weighing and prioritizing impacts?
  - a. Do you believe this was the right kind of information for making decisions? Why or why not?
  - b. Did participants use the general population survey?
    - i. **IF YES**→ In what way?
      - 1. How important to the SIG decision-making process was the survey?
      - 2. What do you see as the value of the general population survey? (Prompt→size of the aggregate? Generalizability?)
    - ii. **IF NO**→ Why not?
  - c. Did you rely on the DEC staff's expertise for any input at any point in the decision-making process? Did participants?
    - i. **IF YES**→ When and in what way?
    - ii. **IF NO**→ Why not?
  - d. Do you believe participants were confident in making decisions at the aggregate level?
    - i. **IF NO**→ Why not?
- 8. Do you believe that all participants have the opportunity to provide input?
  - a. **IF NO**→ Who didn't provide input?
- 9. Do you believe this was a fair process?
  - a. **IF YES**→ What made it fair?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Why not?

### **G) Deliberative Outcome**

- 6. Were you satisfied with the outcome of the process?
  - a. Why or why not?

7. Who, if anyone, benefits from the outcome? In what way?
8. Who, if anyone, incurs some cost? In what way?
9. Does this distribution of benefits and costs associated with the presence of deer seem fair to you? Why or why not?
10. How do you believe the outcome of this process will be used?
  - a. How do you believe the outcome of this process *should* be used?

#### **H) SIG Participant Composition/Representation**

3. Did the SIG participants represent the diversity of the population in the aggregate?
  - a. Were any deer management interests of importance (stakeholders) left out or missing from the process?
    - i. **IF YES**→ Which interests?
      1. What do you believe is the impact of not having included this interest in the process?
  - b. Was anyone missing from the process? (prompt→ geography, age, gender, diversity concerns)
    - i. **IF YES**→ Who?
    - ii. What do you believe is the impact of not having included people reflecting these traits in the process?
4. Do you believe that all public interests in deer and deer management were given consideration by SIG participants?
  - a. **IF YES**→ Can you elaborate?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Which views were not considered?
    - i. What do you believe is the impact of not considering these views?
5. Did you perceive stakeholders representing multiple stakes? Examples?
  - a. **IF YES**→ How did this manifest?

#### **I) Preparation & Logistical Considerations**

5. Did you feel prepared to facilitate the SIG process?
  - a. **IF YES**→ Please elaborate. (e.g., In what way?)

- b. **IF NO**→ Why not? How might you have been better prepared?
  - c. Was the webinar series helpful in preparing you to facilitate the SIG?
    - i. Why or why not?
6. Any additional logistical or planning concerns? Things you might do differently next time? (location, timing, etc.)

**J) General evaluation of the effort**

- 5. What do you believe was a critical moment in the decision making process?
  - a. Turning point or breakthrough?
- 6. What was the biggest surprise to you while working on this effort?
  - a. Why was this surprising?
- 7. What are the strengths of the SIG process?
  - a. What does it do well?
- 8. What are the weaknesses of the SIG process?
  - a. What are the needs? How can they be met?
- 9. Was this process burdensome to facilitate? Why or why not?
  - a. How would you describe CCE's capacity for facilitation, generally?
    - i. Strengths? Weaknesses? Barriers? Needs?
- 10. How would describe your collaboration with DEC?
  - a. Practices that facilitated successful collaboration? Practices that hindered successful collaboration?
- 11. How would you describe your collaboration with Cornell?
  - a. Practices that facilitated successful collaboration? Practices that hindered successful collaboration?

**K) General perspective on public involvement in deer management decision making**

- 5. With respect to deer management decision making, what is your opinion about the role of the public in deer management?
- 6. In your opinion, what should be the role for:



- a. State agencies such as the DEC in addressing deer management needs?
- b. Municipal leaders?
- c. Cornell Cooperative Extension?
- d. Citizens?

**L) Conclusion**

- 3. Overall, how satisfied were your involvement in the SIG process?
- 4. Would you facilitate a similar process again in the future?
  - c. Why or why not?
- 7. What are your hopes and concerns for the future of deer management in your local area?
- 8. Is there anything about the SIG or the pilot program in general that I have not asked you that you would like to share with me so it can be considered in our evaluation of the program?

## APPENDIX E: WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Interview Schedule: Evaluation of DEC Deer Management Pilot Stakeholder Input Group (DEC Version)

#### A) Introduction

Hi, and thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'd like to speak with you about your perceptions of the SIG process specifically, as part of our broader evaluation of the pilot process.

#### B) Personal background and perceptions of deer and deer impacts

First, please tell me a bit about yourself.

11. How long have you worked in the area [Central Finger Lakes Aggregate]?
  - a. Lived in the area?
12. How would you weigh the benefits and costs of having deer in your local area? (net evaluation & does a particular impact "tip the balance")
13. Have you previously been involved in the other citizen engagement efforts related to deer management, other than the SIG and the CTFs? In what way?
14. What is your role at the DEC?
  - a. How did you become involved in the CTF redesign effort?

#### C) First SIG meeting

15. How would you describe the goal of the first SIG meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
16. What was your role in the SIG process?
  - a. Role of participants?
    - i. How did you think the SIG participants perceived their role?
  - b. Role of CCE?
  - c. Do you think these were the helpful roles for DEC, CCE, and SIG participants with respect to deer management decision making for the aggregate?
17. Do you recall the ground rules set at the first meeting?
  - a. Do you believe the rules were abided by throughout both meetings?

- i. **IF NOT**→ Which rules were ignored?
18. Do you believe that participants were able to share the relevant information that they wanted to share?
- a. Why or why not?
19. How would you describe the discussion at the first meeting?
- a. Were there any critical moments?
  - b. General group dynamic? (Prompts→ Open conversation? Collaborative mindset? Community interests a priority?)
20. Were there any conflicts at this meeting? Nature of the conflict? Would you describe the meeting as contentious or not?
- a. How did you respond to those conflicts?
  - b. How did participants respond?
  - c. How did the facilitator respond?
21. Were there any major agreements at this meeting? Nature of the agreement?

**D) Second SIG meeting**

22. How would you describe the goal of the second meeting?
- a. Do you believe the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
23. Do you believe that participants were able to share the relevant information that they wanted to share?
- b. Why or why not?
24. How would you describe the discussion at the second meeting? (Prompts→ Open conversation? Collaborative mindset? Community issues a priority?)
- c. Were there any critical moments?
25. Were there any conflicts at this meeting? Nature of the conflict? Would you describe the meeting as contentious or not?
- d. How did you respond to those conflicts?
  - e. How did participants respond?
  - f. How did the facilitator?

26. Were there any consensus agreements at this meeting? Nature of the agreement?

### **E) Deliberative Process**

10. How would you describe the process used to weigh and prioritize impacts?

- a. Do you believe this worked effectively?
  - i. **IF YES**→ How so?
  - ii. **IF NO**→ Why was it ineffective?
    - 1. What would you have done differently?

11. What type of information was used by participants to make decisions about weighing and prioritizing impacts?

- a. Do you believe this was the right kind of information for making decisions? Why or why not?
- b. Did participants use the general population survey?
  - i. **IF YES**→ In what way?
    - 1. How important to the SIG decision-making process was the survey?
    - 2. What do you see as the value of the general population survey? (Prompt→size of the aggregate? Generalizability?)
  - ii. **IF NO**→ Why not?
- c. Did participants rely on the DEC staff's expertise for any input at any point in the decision-making process? Did the facilitator?
  - i. **IF YES**→ When and in what way?
  - ii. **IF NO**→ Why not?
- d. Did you believe participants were confident in making decisions at the aggregate level?
  - i. **IF NO**→ Why not?

12. Did all participants have the opportunity to provide input?

- a. **IF NO**→ Who didn't provide input?

13. Do you believe this was a fair process?

- a. **IF YES**→ What made it fair?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Why not?
14. Was the presence of a CCE facilitator helpful? (Prompt→neutrality, trust, keeping the group on task)
- a. **IF YES**→ What contributed to his effectiveness?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Why not?

**F) Deliberative Outcome**

11. Were you satisfied with the outcome of the process?
- a. Why or why not?
  - b. Alignment with DEC goals?
12. Who, if anyone, benefits from the outcome? In what way?
13. Who, if anyone, incurs some cost? In what way?
14. Does this distribution of benefits and costs associated with the presence of deer seem fair to you? Why or why not?
15. How do you believe the outcome of this process should be used?

**G) SIG Participant Composition/Representation**

6. Did the SIG participants represent the diversity of the population in the aggregate?
- a. Were any deer management interests of importance (stakeholders) left out or missing from the process?
    - i. **IF YES**→ Which interests?
      - 1. What do you believe is the impact of not having included this interest in the process?
  - b. Was anyone missing from the process? (prompt→ geography, age, gender, diversity concerns)
    - i. **IF YES**→ Who?
    - ii. What do you believe is the impact of not having included people reflecting these traits in the process?

7. Do you believe that all public interests in deer and deer management were given consideration by SIG participants?
  - a. **IF YES**→ Can you elaborate?
  - b. **IF NO**→ Which views were not considered?
    - i. What do you believe is the impact of not considering these views?
8. Did you perceive stakeholders representing multiple stakes? Examples?
  - a. **IF YES**→ How did this manifest?

#### **H) Preparation & Logistical Considerations**

7. Did you feel prepared to participate in the SIG process?
  - a. **IF YES**→ Please elaborate. (e.g., In what way?)
  - b. **IF NO**→ Why not? How might you have been better prepared?
8. Was the location convenient?
  - a. **IF NO**→ Given the need to choose a central location for all participants, what can be done to address this concern?
9. Was the timing convenient? (time of year, week, day)
  - a. **IF NO**→ What alternate times would be better?
10. Any additional logistical concerns?

#### **I) General evaluation of the effort**

12. What was the biggest surprise to you while working on this effort?
  - a. Why was this surprising?
13. What are the strengths of the SIG process?
  - a. What does it do well?
14. What are the weaknesses of the SIG process?
  - a. What are the needs? How can they be met?
15. Was this process burdensome to be engaged in? Why or why not? Compared to CTFs?

16. How would describe your collaboration with CCE?
- a. Practices that facilitated successful collaboration? Practices that hindered successful collaboration?
  - b. How would you compare collaboration with CCE in this SIG effort with prior CTF processes?
17. How would you describe your collaboration with Cornell?
- a. Practices that facilitated successful collaboration? Practices that hindered successful collaboration?
18. How would you evaluate the SIG in comparison to the old CTF model?
- a. Process?
  - b. Outcome?
  - c. SIG member selection method?
  - d. Deliberation method?
  - e. Your role?
  - f. Logistics?
  - g. Participants?
    - i. Representation?
    - ii. Communication?
  - h. Facilitation?

**J) General perspective on public involvement in deer management decision making**

9. With respect to deer management decision making, what is your opinion about the role of the public in deer management?
10. In your opinion, what should be the role for:
- a. State agencies such as the DEC in addressing deer management needs?
  - b. Municipal leaders?
  - c. Cornell Cooperative Extension?
  - d. Citizens?

## **K) Conclusion**

5. Overall, how satisfied were you with the SIG process?
11. What are your hopes and concerns for the future of deer management in the aggregate?
12. Is there anything about the SIG or the pilot program in general that I have not asked you that you would like to share with me so it can be considered in our evaluation of the program?



## APPENDIX F: EVALUATION OF OUTREACH EFFORT MEMO

### Background

Outreach and communication surrounding the pilot program involved two major efforts. In August 2015, the DEC distributed a press release specifying the rationale for implementing a pilot program to enhance collection of public input around deer and deer impacts, as well as details regarding the launching of the pilot. In addition, in advance of the webinar series, CCE, DEC, and HDRU engaged in outreach and communication beginning in December 2015 with relevant stakeholder organizations and media outlets in order to publicize the webinar series. The evaluation of this two-pronged communication effort had two goals:

1. Identify the various media outlets that have reported on the pilot effort and the extent of the coverage, and evaluate how the pilot effort was framed following the press release.
2. Follow up with the organizations and stakeholder groups, as well as media outlets, contacted by DEC, CCE, and HDRU as part of the webinar promotion effort to explore whether or not the information regarding the webinar series and the pilot process reached the intended recipients.

### Methods

#### *Methods for Goal 1*

During June through August 2016, potential sources for media reporting were identified for evaluation, including the (1) 8/25/15 DEC press release, (2) a memo regarding the webinar series distributed in December 2015 by DEC to recipients of the 2015 Central Finger Lakes Aggregate resident survey who expressed interest in learning about the pilot program, and (3) Decemebr 2015 and January 2016 communication by CCE educators to local media sources and stakeholder groups. LexisNexis and Google Scholar searches were carried out to find media content released from August 2015 through July 2016 surrounding the 3 potential sources for media reporting. In addition, HDRU researchers contacted media outlets within the aggregate directly, such as the Ithaca Journal, in order to identify any additional media coverage of the pilot that may not have been identified through the online search.

#### *Methods for Goal 2*

A list of all stakeholder groups and organizations contacted by DEC, CCE, and HDRU prior to the webinar series was compiled, buildling off of a primary deer promotion webinar list composed by CCE. This list was expanded through contacts with DEC media/communications representatives from DEC Regions 7 and 8. Following the completion of the outreach list, organizational contacts were followed up with by an HDRU researcher, either by email or by telephone. They were asked the folllowing evaluative questions:

1. Did the organization or outlet contacted by one of our implementation partners pass the information on to their members? If no, why not?
  - a. If yes, what method was used for contacting members or distributing the information?

- b. When was the information passed on?
- c. Were any follow ups attempted?
- d. What was the message or nature of the message?

## **Findings**

### *Findings for Goal 1*

In general, we found a dearth of articles or media sources regarding the pilot. In total, 9 media reports on the pilot were found. The coverage was generally not editorial in nature, but rather provided details regarding scheduling of the webinar series and language directly from the August 2015 press release. News outlets which reported on the pilot included the Syracuse Post Standard, The Daily News (serving Genessee, Wyoming, and Orleans counties), The Citizen, and The Finger Lakes Daily News. Articles in the New York Forest Owner's Magazine and Ag Alert! were published by CCE partners. In addition, one blog post on a hunting website detailing the webinar series and pilot program was found.

### *Findings for Goal 2*

Overall, HDRU researchers found it challenging to connect with points of contact within the organizations that received DEC, CCE, or HDRU communications. When individuals were reached, they often lacked recall regarding the messages they received or passed along to their members. Of the 79 organizations contacted through the evaluation process who we know to have received some purposeful outreach by CCE, DEC, or HDRU (as reported by CCE, DEC, and HDRU):

- 19 passed along information about the pilot program or webinar series to their members
  - 8 were public or community organizations
  - 10 were hunting organizations
  - 1 was a forest landowner organization
- 26 did not pass along information about the pilot program or webinar series to their members
- 34 were unsure about whether or not pilot or webinar information was passed along to their members

# DEC schedules 'webinars' on deer management in Central Finger Lakes area



Deer look for food under a blanket of snow. (AP photo)



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on January 13, 2016 at 10:05 AM, updated January 13, 2016 at 1:07 PM

A pair of "webinars" have been scheduled for this month by the state Department of Environmental Conservation to give hunters and others a chance to learn more about, and ask questions about white-tailed deer management issues in the Central Finger Lakes area – and beyond.

The online meetings, **part of a DEC pilot program**, have been set up to target citizens who live in wildlife management areas 7H, 8S and 8J, located in parts of Cayuga, Tompkins, Seneca, Ontario, Wayne, Yates and Schuyler counties – an area of 1,325 square miles. However, these meetings will also include "important information (about deer) that is generic across the state" and will be open all interested citizens.

The DEC is teaming up with Cornell Cooperative Extension to hold the webinars from 7 to 8:15 p.m. Jan. 20 and Jan. 27.

The public can participate in both meetings from the comfort of one's home or in person at one of the following five locations:

- **Cayuga County:** Aurora, Wells College, Room 212 Zabriskie Hall
- **Cortland County:** Cortland, DEC Cortland office, 1285 Fisher Avenue, Lower Level Conference Room
- **Onondaga County:** Syracuse, DEC Syracuse office, 615 Erie Blvd. West, 2nd Floor, DEC Hearing Room

**Figure 1.** Example media publication on webinar

## Conclusions

Findings indicate that the communication surrounding the pilot program was not well covered by media sources within the aggregate. In addition, we can only definitively say that approximately 24% of organizations contacted as part of the outreach effort passed along information regarding the webinar series to its members. These findings suggest that it may be helpful to follow up with relevant stakeholder organizations multiple times prior to the implementation of a program in order to better insure that information reaches the intended audience. In addition, it would have been prudent to have a more purposeful outreach plan prior to its implementation. For example, starting by (1) identifying the kinds of stakeholder interest groups that should be contacted, and

(2) compiling a list of organizations that meet these stakeholder interests. Finally, as HDRU researchers had a difficult time determining which individuals within these organizations were originally contacted by DEC, HDRU, and CCE, it is advisable to keep a detailed list or spreadsheet throughout the outreach process.