**Baraga Wildlife Biologist E (9/10/P11)**

**August 2024**

**Attached Writing Assignment Exercise**

**Along with your application, resume and cover letter, please provide a required, written response to the following. Please limit response to less than 2,000 words (if possible) and title it “Baraga Wildlife Biologist Written Response – Your Name Here”:**

Cornerstone species like whitetail deer can draw extremely high interest and polarized input from the public and political interests. Opinions on any aspect of deer management can be quite polarizing and consensus is rarely reached. Public attitudes can often be heavily influenced by anecdotal individual observations, misinformation, and misperceptions. Public understanding and acceptance of the biological and social sciences is often poor and fluctuates over time. Public desires are often not congruent with biological potential or reality. As professional wildlife managers we face intense public scrutiny and declining support with many management strategies associated with public trust resources. Deer are a timely example of this phenomenon.

The fall 2023 Michigan deer harvest season drew intense public criticism of past deer management decisions. Hunter perceptions were that deer numbers across the UP region had declined precipitously through a combination of poor past management decisions, predation, winter severity, and other factors. This has mobilized hunters, sporting groups, and others to demand change to harvest regulations and statewide deer herd management strategy.

Wildlife managers are continuously challenged with developing species management recommendations based on biological and social sciences while trying to balance that with the needs and desires of society. Navigating these complex aspects of public trust management can be extremely challenging. In Michigan the Wildlife Division makes species management recommendations to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC). The NRC is the appointed political body that has final decision space and oversight of species harvest methods. As the Baraga Biologist you will be responsible for developing species management recommendations that will be decided by the NRC.

* How will you approach development of regulations recommendations for the Baraga five county unit (Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, Ontonagon, and Gogebic Counties) that ensure long-term sustainability of the species such as deer while attempting to balance short term societal desires?
* What are examples of factors would you consider and how would you weigh competing interests in the development of your recommendations?
* How would you approach public engagement to gather input and who or which audiences would you speak with?
* How would you respond to individuals or groups who may be unhappy with your recommendations?