

NW12 APR Update

Today I'd like to share with you a quick update regarding the NW12 APR's.

This information comes from the DNR's 2015 Annual Hunter Survey report, which provided us with data from the third full season in which 12 counties in the Northwest lower peninsula have been under mandatory Antler Point Restrictions.

The suggestion has been made that APR's might help to retain hunters and/or increase hunter participation, which in turn could have a positive economic impact on those areas of the NLP which have seen substantial decreases in hunter participation over the last decade. So we decided to take a look at the available data to see if that premise is supported.

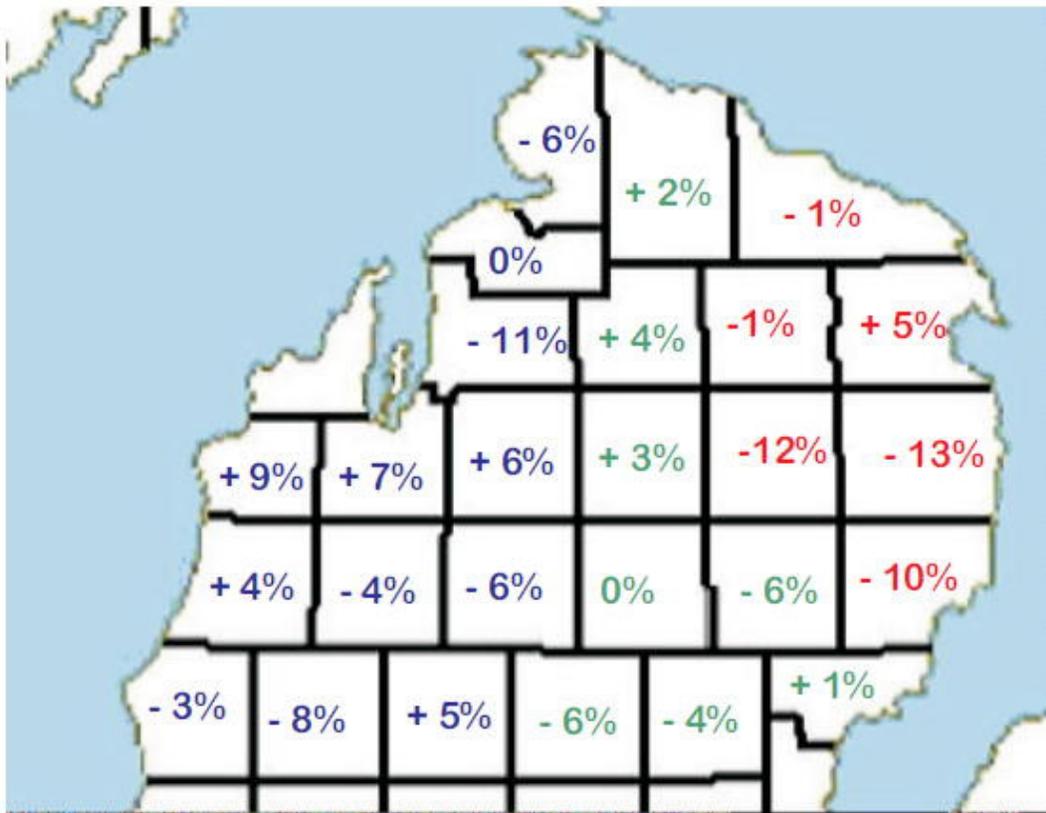
In this update focused on two metrics, hunter participation and antlered buck harvest.

For control purposes, we compared the NW12 counties to two other groups of counties in the NLP, a group of 8 counties which do not have mandatory APR's and a third group, the 6 NELP counties that have Hunters Choice (HC) regulations .

Figure one shows the changes in hunter participation levels that have occurred in the NLP during the period that APR's have been in place in the NW12 counties, when compared to a 3 year pre-APR baseline average.

Figure 1.

NLP Hunter participation trends



Change in hunter numbers since
APR's were enacted in the NW12

Counties in Blue - APRs

Counties in Green - Non -APR

Counties in Red - HC APR's

NW12 Counties - Average loss/gain = -1%

Non-APR Counties Average loss/gain = -1%

HC APR Counties - Average loss/gain = -5%

Comparison of average of NW12 APR period to 3 year pre-APR baseline.

Data compiled from MDNR annual hunter survey reports 2010 - 2015.

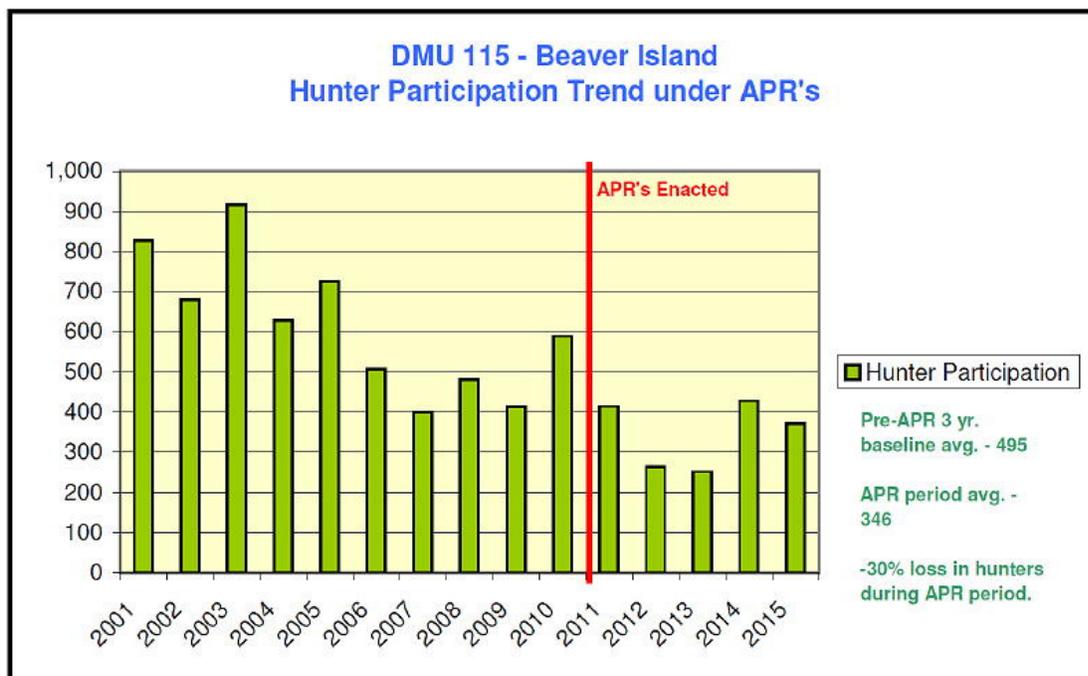
As you can see, 6 counties in the NW12 experienced a decrease in hunter participation, 1 saw no change and 5 showed an increase in hunter participation during the three years while mandatory APR's have been in effect.

In the non-APR group of counties 3 counties experienced a decrease in hunter participation, 1 county remained unchanged and 4 counties showed an increase in hunter participation. In the group of counties which had HC APR's in place, 5 counties saw a decrease and only 1 county had an increase in hunter participation, during that time period.

Based on is data, there does not appear to be any distinct pattern or clear correlation between mandatory APR's and hunter retention and/or recruitment in the NW12 and the suggestion that mandatory APR's could be a solution to the problem of hunter loss in the NLP is unsupported, at this time.

Some additional insight regarding the potential impact of APR's and hunter participation comes from DMU 115. Mandatory APR's were implemented in DMU 115 (Beaver Island), in 2010. The 2015 season concludes 5 full years of data under APR's in that DMU.

Figure 2.



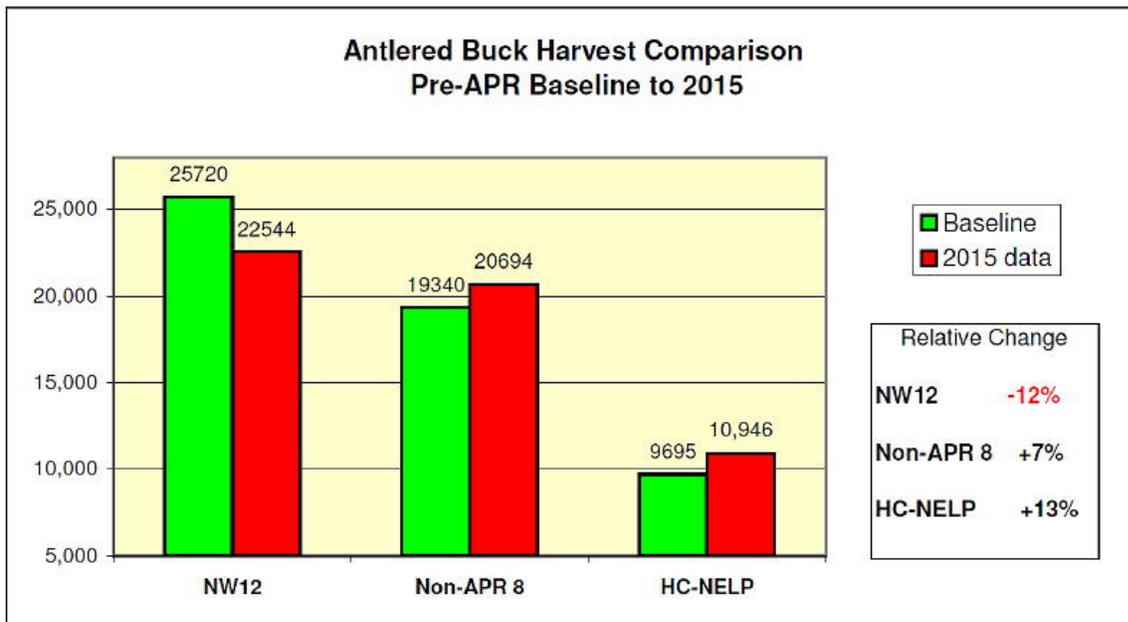
During the 5 years that APR's have been in effect in DMU 115, hunter participation has decreased by 30%, as shown in Figure 2. These results also seem to contradict the premise that APR's may facilitate hunter retention & recruitment.

The other metric that we looked at was changes that have occurred during the APR period to antlered buck harvest.

It was anticipated that antlered harvest would drop during the first year of mandatory APR's in the NW12 counties but it was suggested that the antlered harvest would rapidly rebound and that within several years would be back to pre-APR levels.

That prediction has not come to pass in most of the NW12 counties, the predicted "rebound" of the antlered harvest to pre-APR levels after a couple of years, has not occurred.

Figure 3.



As figure 3 indicates, the 2015 antlered buck harvest in the NW12 counties shows a 12% reduction in antlered harvest compared to the baseline average.

The same comparison for the Non-APR counties in the NLP indicates a 7% increase in antlered harvest and in the HC-NELP counties the 2015 data indicates that there was a 13% increase in antlered harvest, when compared to the baseline average.

In conclusion, hunter participation comparisons based on 3 years of APR data gathered in the NW12, as well as the 5 years of data from DMU 115, suggest that there is no clear correlation between mandatory APR's and hunter retention/recruitment. The 2015 antlered harvest in the NW12 was substantially lower than the pre-APR baseline and the anticipated "rebound" under APR's has not occurred. During the same time period, both the non-APR counties and the HC-NELP counties experienced an increase in antlered harvest.

One other data point worth noting, the 2015 Harvest Survey indicated that there was no substantive difference in the overall level of hunter satisfaction, between the APR and non-APR portions of the NLP.

Thank You,

Jim Sweeney

The Concerned Sportsmen of Michigan