

## Another QDM Cooperative has formed in Maryland

QDM Co-op's have somewhat of a short history here in Maryland. Growing numbers of hunters who practice Quality Deer Management hunt on small properties. Many of these hunters and QDMA members are doing everything they can on their hunting property to improve their hunting success with the inability to manage deer harvest practices on the surrounding properties is often the greatest limitation they face. With deer spending some of their time on adjacent properties that may or may not be practicing QDM makes it nearly impossible to control not only buck age structure, adult sex ratio, deer density but causes crop damage to increase. By the forming of a QDMA cooperative, a group of landowners, farmers, hunters and members of the community are willing to work together to improve the quality of the deer herd, lessen crop damage, ornamental landscape damage while improving the overall hunting experiences.

For an excellent publication that provides a step-by-step approach to forming cooperatives QDMA's booklet *Developing Successful QDM Cooperative*, go to [www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com). Many articles have been written in *Quality Whitetails* of cooperatives that are successful. *Quality Whitetail TV* (this week 11/10-11/16/08) is about small property management and co-ops. While looking at other areas successful programs is helpful, let's look at the co-ops in Maryland.

You don't have to look far; the first known QDM cooperative was formed by Dr. Mark Conner of Kent County at Chesapeake farms over a decade ago. Dr. Mark Conner's article on this site *Successful Quality Deer Management*, after Dr. Conner implemented a QDM program in 1994 on Chesapeake Farms, the Kent County QDM Co-op was started. From that time QDM has grown to other properties. April of 2005 the Maryland State Chapter was started QDMA membership in Maryland was about 800, to date the membership has exploded to nearly 2,000. Not only has the QDMA memberships grown, the co-ops being organized has also increased. Forest Land Group's QDM Co-op (organized Oct, 2007) with 22,000 acres and 90 hunting leases, lease holders are coming onboard. Potomac Fish and Game Club invited their neighbors (Sept, 2008 Washington Co.) to join up to manage the deer in the area, forming the Potomac Fish and Game Co-op. The latest, Chester River QDM Co-op in Queen Anne



County, with 17 members of hunters and land owners which incorporates 24 farms on 7800 acres.

These and other co-ops have been started in the same way with a group getting together with a QDMA seminar and Maryland's Deer Project Leader Brain Eyler and others. The common goal is to manage the density of the local deer herd, crop damage concerns and at

the same time improve the quality of deer hunting. Brian Eyler's input is most important from the deer biology and harvest data that has been collected. The collection of reliable harvest data is essential for making sound management decisions and tracking the progress of any cooperative over time. Working the management goals of the co-op within the Deer Regulation and Bag Limits in fact makes getting a co-op started (in most of the state) very easy. Crop Damage permits have declined from 13,000 before antlerless bag limits were improved to 5,600 last year.

The Nay- Sayers will say; forming co-ops will only work in big farm areas, and can never work in urban areas or public land.

Voluntary Quality Deer Management is a concept worth considering with the bag limits in place to reducing the number of does, voluntarily protecting the harvest of young bucks by using the 15" rule. QDM cooperatives are a collection of landowners, farmers, hunters and members of the community who agree to abide by specified deer management guidelines within state regulation to improve deer management over a larger area.

Any tract of public land, subdivision or even by county can be a future QDM cooperative. Communication is critical for getting a cooperative started, and to the success. Co-ops unite everyone in a common goal and helps develop a sense of accomplishment in your efforts.

Forming a QDM cooperative is a proven program that will enhance the relationship between landowners, farmers, hunters and the public. The landowners will see an improvement in habitat and more economic value. The farmer will no longer see the drastic crop damage losses due to high deer densities. Ultimately we are striving for a healthy balanced deer herd without sacrificing crops, ornamental landscaping and



forestry. The hunter will then enjoy a better hunting experience with more mature bucks than ever before.

Start a QDM cooperative in your area by contacting the Maryland State Chapter QDMA and increase your knowledge by joining QDMA today!

E.W. Grimes, President  
Maryland State Chapter QDMA  
www.marylandqdma.com

