

*Summary of Input from NCWRC Public
Black Bear Management Forums
August 2016*



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Constituent support and input into the NCWRC’s bear management process is paramount to a successful bear management program. In an effort to engage our constituents, specifically bear hunters, agency staff conducted public bear management forums during the month of August, 2016 at 7 geographically distributed locations across the State. Citizens were invited to attend these forums to see results from the black bear harvest, learn about efforts to develop distinct biological zones for the Coastal Bear Management Unit and to gauge constituent support of the results of that process. Attendance was as follows:

Venue:	Edenton	New Bern	Bladenboro	Sylva	Morganton	Thomasville	Raleigh
Attendance:	36	39	31	56	46	37	41

Interactive technology (i>clicker[®]) was used during the presentations to allow attendees to comment anonymously on questions. This technology enables the audience to actively participate in the forums by anonymously answering questions that were incorporated into the program. The use of this technology continues to be well received by our constituents and provided us the ability to ascertain the audience’s understanding of some of the material and data presented. It also allowed us to demonstrate where consensus or disagreement occurred between our constituents at the statewide level and by individual district.

Herein, we provide the results of the audience’s participation with answers to specific questions that were asked during the meetings. Because discussions evolved and differing attitudes and concerns were brought up in each meeting, the number of questions evolved as well. Staff asked certain predetermined questions at every forum, however questions were adaptively added as issues arose and the forums progressed. Not all questions were asked at each venue, but once a question was added to the presentation every effort was made to continue to ask that question if possible or relevant to the venues/attendees.

It is important to recognize that the responses to these questions represent the opinions of those individuals that attended the meetings. They are not and should not be interpreted as a statistically valid representations of bear hunters across the state. It may be most appropriate to view these results as a type of focus group evaluation. Many of these questions and answers were influenced by the presentation and the discussion that occurred at each meeting. This information does provide us the opportunity to ascertain our constituent’s ability to receive and interpret our data and some of our analysis. It also outlines for us where we can expect to see a level of consensus or potential disagreement on certain questions/issues if asked in a statistically valid survey. Additionally, it provides some direction for further analysis and an increased understanding of our constituents to improve the design of a more comprehensive approach for extending the discussion of bear management to a broader audience.

To begin each forum, we introduced the audience to the i>clicker[®] technology and asked a few questions just to ensure that everyone was familiar with the use of the technology and to perhaps gain some insight into the audience in attendance each night.

The first question simply asked audience members whether or not they were a hunter. Most, but not all, in attendance indicated that they considered themselves to be a hunter. The Raleigh meeting had the greatest attendance of individuals who did not identify as a hunter. Statewide, 91% of those in attendance considered themselves a hunter. The second question asked them to select their age range and the majority of attendees were found to be between 25 and 70 years of age with the 56-70 age group representing the largest portion (31%).

Question.	Are you a hunter?	
	Yes	No
Edenton	-	-
New Bern	89%	11%
Bladenboro	96%	4%
Sylva	100%	0%
Morganton	97%	3%
Thomasville	93%	7%
Raleigh	73%	28%
Statewide	91%	9%

Question.	Please tell us your age range?				
	24 & Under	25-40	41-55	56-70	71+
Edenton	4%	39%	15%	39%	4%
New Bern	3%	17%	25%	44%	11%
Bladenboro	11%	11%	37%	30%	11%
Sylva	18%	16%	20%	31%	14%
Morganton	11%	11%	41%	24%	14%
Thomasville	13%	42%	13%	29%	3%
Raleigh	0%	34%	37%	24%	5%
Statewide	9%	23%	27%	31%	9%

Next we asked attendees how far they traveled to get to the meeting. Because the meeting locations were chosen to try to provide a venue that would be of reasonable commuting distance to as many individuals with interest as possible, we thought it would be interesting to see how far people traveled to attend each venue. The results below suggest that more than half of those in attendance traveled 25 miles or less to the venue. Of note is that only 11% traveled greater than 50 miles to attend the meeting.

Question. How far did you travel to get to this meeting?					
	<10 miles	10-25 miles	26-50 miles	51-100 miles	>100 miles
Edenton	7%	30%	50%	7%	7%
New Bern	13%	50%	24%	8%	5%
Bladenboro	19%	37%	37%	7%	0%
Sylva	20%	37%	29%	12%	2%
Morganton	19%	41%	38%	3%	0%
Thomasville	26%	61%	3%	10%	0%
Raleigh	34%	34%	22%	5%	5%
Statewide	20%	41%	28%	8%	3%

Having established what percentage of the audience considered themselves hunters, we then asked them if they considered themselves to be a bear hunter. What may be of greater interest is the percent of individuals in attendance that did not consider themselves a bear hunter. Both the Bladenboro and Raleigh locations had more individuals in attendance that did not consider themselves a bear hunter (56% & 57%, respectively), and statewide 28% of those in attendance did not consider themselves bear hunters.

Question. Do you consider yourself a bear hunter?		
	Yes	No
Edenton	93%	7%
New Bern	82%	18%
Bladenboro	44%	56%
Sylva	81%	19%
Morganton	88%	12%
Thomasville	65%	35%
Raleigh	43%	57%
Statewide	72%	28%

We next got more specific regarding hunting and asked them whether they hunted species other than bear or they only hunted bears. As expected, the vast majority (90%) indicated they did hunt other species, but it is interesting to note that statewide 10% of the hunters in attendance indicated they only hunted bears. Perhaps even more interesting is that 21% of those that identified as a bear hunter at the Sylva meeting stated that they only hunt bears.

Question. If you are a bear hunter, do you hunt species other than bear?		
	No, I just hunt bears	Yes, I hunt bears and other species
Edenton	8%	92%
New Bern	3%	97%
Bladenboro	5%	95%
Sylva	21%	79%
Morganton	11%	89%
Thomasville	4%	96%
Raleigh	6%	94%
Statewide	10%	90%

Finally, we asked “If you bear hunt, on average, how many days do you hunt bear each year?” This question advised staff of how avid the bear hunting group was and demonstrated to the attendees how they compared to bear hunters in general that had responded to our statewide surveys. The results suggest a far more avid group of hunters in attendance than our statewide survey averages (included in chart below).

Question. If you bear hunt, on average, how many days do you hunt bear each year?				
	1-5	6-10	11-20	More than 20
Edenton	14%	11%	18%	57%
New Bern	34%	25%	19%	22%
Bladenboro	50%	22%	17%	11%
Sylva	11%	11%	15%	63%
Morganton	14%	6%	28%	53%
Thomasville	57%	13%	13%	17%
Raleigh	56%	39%	6%	0%
Statewide	28%	16%	17%	38%
2015 e-Stamp Survey Results	59%	21%	13%	7%

Within the presentation, we included several general questions to determine the audience's knowledge of different components of bear management and NC's black bear harvest. The first question asked what they thought the statewide bear harvest was for 2015. These groups, made up of avid bear hunters, actually underestimated the statewide harvest, frequently by more than 1,000 bears. The statewide harvest of black bears in NC for the 2015 season was 3,118 and only 10% of attendees statewide correctly answered this question. Surprisingly, the statewide bear harvest has not been below 1,000 bears since 1994, yet a full 45% of attendees guessed that the 2015 harvest was less than 1,000 bears.

Question. What do you think the statewide bear harvest was in 2015?					
	<500	500-1000	1000-2000	2000-3000	>3000
Edenton	16%	23%	35%	19%	6%
New Bern	29%	27%	30%	11%	3%
Bladenboro	43%	25%	25%	7%	0%
Sylva	0%	30%	34%	25%	11%
Morganton	15%	29%	27%	20%	10%
Thomasville	26%	36%	19%	16%	3%
Raleigh	12%	20%	32%	7%	29%
Statewide	18%	27%	29%	16%	10%

Next we questioned the audience as to whether or not they harvested a bear during the 2015 season. North Carolina's statewide individual hunter success is around 16% based on several different survey methods used. The results from the forum suggested that individuals who attended were twice as successful as the average bear hunters statewide with 34% of those in attendance stating they harvested a bear in 2015. This again demonstrates the avidity of the forum attendees.

Question. If you bear hunted last season, did <u>you</u> kill a bear?		
	Yes, I did	No, I did not
Edenton	45%	55%
New Bern	62%	38%
Bladenboro	14%	86%
Sylva	40%	60%
Morganton	24%	76%
Thomasville	25%	75%
Raleigh	12%	88%
Statewide	34%	66%

The next question asked those in attendance, “If you bear hunted last season, could you have killed a bear but chose not to shoot it?” We wanted to gain a perspective as to whether harvest was limited by opportunity or choice. The results were interesting with 65% of those that hunted bears in 2015 indicating that they did pass up at least one bear. Only 35% of those that hunted stated they did not harvest a bear because they didn’t have an opportunity.

Question. If you bear hunted last season, could you have killed a bear but chose not to shoot it?		
	Yes, I could have	No, I did not have the opportunity
Edenton	68%	32%
New Bern	62%	38%
Bladenboro	40%	60%
Sylva	78%	22%
Morganton	75%	25%
Thomasville	57%	43%
Raleigh	47%	53%
Statewide	65%	35%

To better understand why they chose not to shoot we gave them several options as to why, including an “other reasons” category. The results below indicate that for the majority of those in attendance the most likely response was a combination of the options given or “other reason.” Of interest, at three venues, >20% indicated they were waiting for a larger bear and for two locations >20% indicated they let a youth hunter shoot the bear.

Question. If you chose not to shoot, why?					
	I was waiting for a larger bear (saving my “tag”)	I let another adult shoot it	I let a youth hunter shoot it	Several of these apply to me	Other Reasons
Edenton	4%	7%	21%	54%	14%
New Bern	28%	4%	8%	24%	36%
Bladenboro	13%	0%	6%	25%	56%
Sylva	10%	2%	24%	38%	26%
Morganton	19%	0%	10%	45%	26%
Thomasville	24%	0%	6%	29%	41%
Raleigh	23%	0%	8%	31%	39%
Statewide	16%	2%	14%	37%	31%

An increased bear bag limit has been discussed as a way of increasing the harvest so we asked those in attendance if their bear bag limit had been two, would they have chosen to shoot a bear? While 46% of those in attendance suggested that they probably would have, 41% said the bag limit didn't matter and 13% were not sure.

Question.	If your bag limit had been two bears, would you have chosen to shoot a bear?		
	Yes, probably	No, the bag limit did not matter	Maybe, I'm not sure.
Edenton	54%	32%	14%
New Bern	48%	48%	3%
Bladenboro	33%	57%	10%
Sylva	50%	41%	9%
Morganton	44%	32%	24%
Thomasville	46%	43%	11%
Raleigh	42%	33%	25%
Statewide	46%	41%	13%

The next question asked of attendees was if they participated in a bear hunt using dogs during the last season. Sixty-four percent of those in attendance indicated that they did. This is a far greater percent than the statewide average from our 2015 e-Stamp survey (36%). Some interesting differences in the response to this question were noticed between venues. New Bern was evenly split 50/50 between those that participated in a hunt using dogs and those that did not, and at the Bladenboro, Thomasville and Raleigh locations, more than 50% of those in attendance did not participate in a hunt using dogs.

Question.	Last season, did you participate in a bear hunt using dogs?	
	Yes	No
Edenton	79%	21%
New Bern	50%	50%
Bladenboro	42%	58%
Sylva	89%	11%
Morganton	76%	24%
Thomasville	49%	51%
Raleigh	43%	57%
Statewide	64%	36%
2015 e-Stamp Survey Results	36%	64%

The following questions were simply informative questions where the audience was asked to guess the answer and then shown the actual answer from our harvest information. The majority of those in attendance correctly guessed the answers to these two questions. Actual statewide harvest by hunters using dogs in 2015 was actually 68% and the three-year average statewide percent female bears in the harvest was 40%.

Question. What percent of the statewide harvest is by hunters using dogs?				
	0-25%	25-50%	50-75%	75-100%
Edenton	0%	7%	77%	17%
New Bern	8%	72%	17%	3%
Bladenboro	11%	29%	50%	11%
Sylva	0%	20%	51%	29%
Morganton	13%	30%	45%	13%
Thomasville	11%	31%	49%	9%
Raleigh	7%	44%	34%	15%
Statewide	7%	33%	45%	15%

Question. What percent of the statewide harvest is female bears (sows)?				
	0-20%	20-40%	41-60%	60+%
Edenton	3%	73%	23%	0%
New Bern	8%	72%	17%	3%
Bladenboro	23%	42%	23%	13%
Sylva	2%	69%	29%	0%
Morganton	5%	72%	23%	0%
Thomasville	9%	74%	11%	6%
Raleigh	7%	59%	29%	5%
Statewide	7%	66%	23%	3%

While discussing data from the current regional bear management units, we asked those in attendance in which bear management unit(s) they hunted. The results below give some insight as to where hunters go to bear hunt. Answers to the question suggests that hunters in the mountains are far more likely to hunt both the mountains and coast than hunters from the coastal unit. Hunters in attendance at the two piedmont locations seemed more likely to hunt the coastal unit than any other.

Question. Which Bear Unit(s) do you hunt in?					
	Mountain	Piedmont	Coastal	Coastal & Mountain	Different Combinations
Edenton	0%	0%	90%	10%	0%
New Bern	3%	2%	88%	0%	3%
Bladenboro	0%	0%	93%	4%	3%
Sylva	30%	0%	0%	36%	4%
Morganton	17%	8%	5%	37%	5%
Thomasville	5%	11%	41%	15%	15%
Raleigh	0%	11%	72%	17%	0%
Statewide	24%	4%	48%	19%	4%

After explaining the development of zones in the coastal bear management unit (CBMU), we asked if the zones appeared to be reasonable bear management zones for the CBMU. Seventy-six percent of those in attendance felt the zones were reasonable, 21% were not sure, and only 3% said they did not agree with the zones.

Question. Do you think these zones look like reasonable bear management zones for our coastal unit?			
	Yes	No	I'm Not Sure
Edenton	80%	3%	17%
New Bern	79%	0%	21%
Bladenboro	68%	11%	21%
Sylva	69%	4%	27%
Morganton	69%	3%	28%
Thomasville	85%	3%	12%
Raleigh	81%	0%	19%
Statewide	76%	3%	21%

We next asked if the coastal bear seasons should be aligned with the new CBMU zones. In general, almost two-thirds (61%) of those in attendance felt that seasons should be aligned with the zones. Only 20% desired to keep the seasons as they are and the other 19% were not sure. The greatest opposition to the concept occurred in Sylva (46%).

Question. Should Coastal Bear Seasons be aligned with the new Zones?			
	Yes, we should change at least some of the seasons.	No, keep the seasons the same.	I'm not sure, let's talk about it some more.
Edenton	72%	9%	19%
New Bern	67%	17%	17%
Bladenboro	66%	31%	4%
Sylva	45%	45%	10%
Morganton	53%	15%	32%
Thomasville	62%	10%	28%
Raleigh	65%	12%	24%
Statewide	61%	20%	19%

There was less agreement about whether we should examine the Mountain Unit for biological zones. While half of those in attendance agreed that we should look at it, nearly a third thought that we should not, and specifically at the Sylva and Morganton meetings greater than 50% did not support the idea. It should be noted that biological zones would not necessarily equate to different seasons which seemed to be the greatest concern at these meetings. Some hunters indicated that creating different seasons might lead to greater pressure due to hunters traveling to different zones to hunt if seasons were not open in all mountain zones.

Question. Should we examine the mountain unit for biological Zones?			
	Yes	No	I'm not sure, let's think about it some more.
Edenton	53%	28%	22%
New Bern	37%	27%	37%
Bladenboro	48%	17%	35%
Sylva	39%	57%	4%
Morganton	40%	53%	8%
Thomasville	62%	10%	28%
Raleigh	79%	12%	9%
Statewide	50%	31%	18%

We asked hunters that hunted in the CBMU, which zone they mostly hunted in. Results were predictable by location to some extent, however it was interesting that very few hunters traveled to Zone 4 (northeastern) to hunt. In fact, only hunters from Edenton and 7% of those from Raleigh indicated that hunted in Zone 4 at all. This perhaps lends further support to establishing this group of counties as an individual CBMU management zone. Statewide 54% of those in attendance indicated they mostly hunted in CBMU management zone 2.

Question. Which CBMU Zone do you hunt most in?					
	Mostly Zone 1	Mostly Zone 2	Mostly Zone 3	Mostly Zone 4	Equally in more than 1 Zone
Edenton	33%	30%	3%	30%	3%
New Bern	0%	86%	14%	0%	0%
Bladenboro	7%	82%	11%	0%	0%
Sylva	55%	30%	5%	0%	10%
Morganton	6%	53%	24%	0%	18%
Thomasville	43%	48%	5%	0%	5%
Raleigh	40%	33%	13%	7%	7%
Statewide	25%	54%	10%	6%	5%

The next group of questions focused on perception and opinion about population levels, desires, and value choices related to hunting. The initial question asked their perception of the bear population in the place they hunt the most. Statewide, 59% thought the bear population was increasing. Only 8% statewide perceived a decrease. The Edenton venue appeared to be an outlier where 31% felt the bear population was decreasing.

Question. Where you hunt the most....				
	The bear population is Increasing	The bear population is Decreasing	The bear population is Stable	I'm Not Sure
Edenton	38%	31%	4%	31%
New Bern	54%	4%	39%	4%
Bladenboro	96%	0%	0%	4%
Sylva	58%	9%	28%	5%
Morganton	47%	3%	47%	3%
Thomasville	56%	6%	22%	16%
Raleigh	73%	3%	9%	15%
Statewide	59%	8%	22%	11%

Next we attempted to explore the hunter’s desires or expectations for a successful bear hunt. What we wanted to know from hunters was which of the following statements was more important to them in terms of a bear hunt. It is important to note that these two attributes are not mutually exclusive from a bear population management perspective, but asking hunters to select which is most important to them personally does provide some insight to the bear hunter’s desire. Results from the question were interesting, hunters were split on which attribute was more important with slightly more favoring chasing or seeing lots of bears. Some significant differences did appear by location with hunters in Sylva and Morganton far more inclined to choose chasing/seeing lots of bears over the quality of the bear they harvest as their most important attribute. When given the choice about time to hunt versus numbers of bears, something in the middle was the overwhelming response, followed very distantly by more time to hunt.

Question. Which is more important to you?		
	The size and quality of the bear I harvest	Chasing and/or seeing a lot of bears
Edenton	56%	44%
New Bern	45%	55%
Bladenboro	59%	41%
Sylva	19%	81%
Morganton	25%	75%
Thomasville	64%	36%
Raleigh	38%	63%
Statewide	42%	58%

Question. Which is more important to you?			
	More time to hunt but fewer bears	Less time to hunt but more bears	Something in the middle
Edenton	19%	3%	78%
New Bern	28%	13%	59%
Bladenboro	29%	19%	52%
Sylva	39%	10%	51%
Morganton	12%	12%	76%
Thomasville	29%	35%	35%
Raleigh	10%	24%	66%
Statewide	24%	16%	60%

Later in the presentation we asked their opinion about the management direction for the bear population. Statewide, 44% believed the bear population should be “left as is”, in other words no significant change from the status quo. However, 28% of those in attendance thought the population should be increased, with almost half of the Sylva audience (48%) indicating a desire for increase. Twenty-two percent felt the population should be decreased, with half (50%) of the Bladenboro audience indicating a desire to decrease. It is important to note that 56% of those attending the Bladenboro meeting did consider themselves to be a bear hunter. This might suggest that hunters pursuing species other than bears are far less interested in a growing bear population than those that identify as a bear hunter.

Question. Where you hunt the most....				
	The bear population should be INCREASED	The bear population should be DECREASED	The bear population should be left AS IS	I'm NOT SURE
Edenton	22%	28%	50%	0%
New Bern	19%	22%	50%	9%
Bladenboro	11%	50%	25%	14%
Sylva	48%	15%	29%	8%
Morganton	34%	8%	58%	0%
Thomasville	35%	13%	52%	0%
Raleigh	17%	27%	50%	7%
Statewide	28%	22%	44%	5%

Next we asked members of the audience their perspective on different potential options for increasing the bear harvest if it was determined to be necessary. Little agreement existed across the State on what the audience felt would be the “best way” to do this. The two most often selected options were increase the bag limit to 2 bears with no additional cost or increase the season length. Some location variation did occur. Increasing the bag limit received the most support at the Sylva meeting (60%) and increasing the season length was most supported at the Bladenboro and Edenton meetings (52% and 48%, respectively).

Question. If necessary, what do you think would be the best way to increase the bear harvest?					
	Increase the limit to 2 bears (no charge)	Purchase another opportunity after you harvest the first bear	Increase the limit only in certain areas	Increase the season length	Something else
Edenton	21%	12%	9%	48%	9%
New Bern	22%	34%	13%	28%	3%
Bladenboro	19%	6%	16%	52%	6%
Sylva	60%	9%	13%	13%	4%
Morganton	26%	20%	31%	17%	6%
Thomasville	26%	32%	10%	29%	3%
Raleigh	30%	20%	23%	20%	7%
Statewide	31%	19%	16%	29%	5%

When asked about the use of a quota system to regulate bear harvest in certain areas those in attendance generally did not support the concept of quotas. While quotas are commonly used in other states, they have never been a part of NC’s management strategy thus hunters’ unfamiliarity likely resulted in them being skeptical or uncomfortable with the concept.

Question. If a specific zone was allotted a “quota” of bears, would you prefer:			
	Establish harvest quotas for specific zones & require hunters to check total reported harvest online before hunting and then stop hunting when quota is met	Require the issuance (sale) of a certain # of authorizations per area/zone	I don’t like the idea of quotas at all
Edenton	3%	0%	97%
New Bern	13%	19%	69%
Bladenboro	6%	19%	74%
Sylva	8%	4%	88%
Morganton	8%	16%	76%
Thomasville	16%	3%	81%
Raleigh	22%	6%	72%
Statewide	11%	9%	80%

We proposed a unique “validation/reporting concept” to bear hunters across the state to determine their level of support. This concept would allow any appropriately licensed hunter that is actively participating in a hunt to validate and report the harvest of a bear shot by any other appropriately licensed hunter participating in the same hunt (applies to both dog and still/stand hunts). There was overwhelming support for this concept statewide, however, there was some level of opposition. While the idea would require both statutory and regulatory change before it could be implemented, it does appear to have support of the individuals that attended these forums.

Would you support this idea? <i>Allow any appropriately licensed hunter that is actively participating in a hunt to validate and report the harvest of a bear shot by any other appropriately licensed hunter participating in the same hunt (applies to both dog and still/stand hunts).</i>			
Question.	Yes	No	I don't know
Edenton	88%	13%	0%
New Bern	65%	32%	3%
Bladenboro	61%	30%	9%
Sylva	88%	8%	4%
Morganton	78%	19%	3%
Thomasville	78%	19%	3%
Raleigh	55%	42%	3%
Statewide	74%	22%	4%

Beginning with the New Bern meeting we asked those in attendance if they hunted in a group, what was the average number of hunters in your group. Most hunters indicated their hunting group consisted of 20 or less hunters with a group size of 6-10 being the most common.

Question. If you hunt with a group, what is the average # of hunters in your group?					
	<5	6-10	11-20	21-30	>30
Edenton	-	-	-	-	-
New Bern	46%	33%	21%	0%	0%
Bladenboro	28%	36%	32%	4%	0%
Sylva	27%	48%	21%	0%	1%
Morganton	21%	35%	32%	12%	0%
Thomasville	22%	35%	30%	4%	2%
Raleigh	47%	37%	11%	0%	0%
Statewide	30%	39%	25%	4%	2%

Beginning with the first mountain meeting we asked attendees their perspective regarding hunting on bear sanctuaries and found the perspective to be somewhat divided. Mountain hunters still remain cautious as it relates to hunting in sanctuaries, however the mountain landscape has more designated sanctuary per unit area than either of the other units.

Question. Do you support the idea of opening bear sanctuaries to hunting?			
	Yes	No	I'm not sure
Edenton	-	-	-
New Bern	-	-	-
Bladenboro	-	-	-
Sylva	36%	64%	0%
Morganton	46%	51%	3%
Thomasville	65%	26%	10%
Raleigh	71%	18%	12%
Statewide	53%	42%	6%

If we did open sanctuaries, we asked those in attendance their preference for how it should be done. Currently sanctuaries open for hunting are basically opened to permit hunting and remain open annually unless the Commission decides to stop a particular permit hunt. Some hunters have proposed that we perhaps should not be hunting a sanctuary every year or that we should rotate permit hunts between multiple sanctuaries. When posed the question at the mountain and piedmont meetings there was no overwhelming opinion either way with the rotational opening being slightly more favored.

Question. If we opened selected sanctuaries would you prefer:		
	Open up the sanctuary to permit hunts indefinitely	Rotate permit hunt opportunities on different sanctuaries every couple of years
Edenton	-	-
New Bern	-	-
Bladenboro	-	-
Sylva	13%	87%
Morganton	36%	64%
Thomasville	60%	40%
Raleigh	52%	48%
Statewide	45%	55%

Finally, we asked all those in attendance if they believed the forums were helpful and if they would like to see more forums or something similar. Responses were overwhelming positive.

Question. Is this type of forum helpful?			
	Yes	No	Not Sure
Edenton	88%	0%	12%
New Bern	92%	0%	8%
Bladenboro	100%	0%	0%
Sylva	80%	5%	15%
Morganton	95%	0%	5%
Thomasville	97%	3%	0%
Raleigh	97%	0%	3%
Statewide	92%	1%	7%

Question. Would you like to see more forums or something similar?			
	Yes	No	Not Sure
Edenton	88%	9%	3%
New Bern	92%	4%	4%
Bladenboro	97%	0%	3%
Sylva	83%	2%	15%
Morganton	98%	0%	3%
Thomasville	96%	0%	4%
Raleigh	100%	0%	0%
Statewide	93%	2%	5%

Summary

The interactive nature of these public forums provides a unique opportunity to examine our constituents' perspective about numerous issues. While not a statistically valid survey mechanism, the presence of significant numbers of avid hunters at these meeting is important. These individuals likely hold the strongest and often most vocal opinions on some of the topics discussed which provides us a certain level of insight towards the acceptance and/or disagreement with some of the concepts addressed by the questions.

Of greatest importance is that we believe the attendees understood the development of the CBMU biological zones and they supported the concept of the proposed zones. The majority also believed that we should examine the potential of aligning our bear hunting seasons with these zones in the CBMU. In addition, results from several of the questions suggested that combining the northeastern counties to create Zone 4 was the appropriate step to take. The bear hunting community in that area is somewhat exclusive and is likely to have direct bearing on management possibilities in that zone.

When asked about their perception of the current bear population where they hunt, while most attendees indicated that they believed the population was increasing, they were most likely to support the idea of keeping the population at current levels. They were divided on what they believe the best option to increase harvest would be if an increase in harvest was deemed necessary. What was clear is that the concept of using quotas to increase or regulate harvest in particular zones was not supported.

It is worth mentioning several other findings/observations from the responses gleaned from these meetings. The majority (65%) of those in attendance who bear hunted last season indicated that they could have killed a bear had they chosen to, with only 35% of the hunters stating a lack of opportunity for the reason they didn't kill a bear. While there may remain some legal questions in implementing the unique tagging option presented, these groups of avid hunters overwhelming supported the concept.

The use of the i-Clicker technology provides a positive and productive method to interact with constituents about concepts and ideas that are often contentious or polarizing. Overall our perception, as well as the responses to the final two questions, suggests that participants enjoyed the meeting content, the presentation style and the interactive nature of these types of meetings. The responses to the distant traveled questions (most traveled < 25 miles from home) might suggest that we be conscious of where we hold meetings and perhaps consider increasing the number of meetings to provide greater opportunity for constituent participation.