

Landowner and Hound Runner Communication Meeting #2

March 9, 2018 – Laddonia, MO

Summary Report



Purpose

On March 9, 2018, The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) hosted a second Landowner and Hound Runner Communication Meeting at the Community R-VI School in Laddonia, MO. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate better communication between impacted landowners and select hound runners, and to promote mutual respect for landowner property rights and the tradition of hound running in Missouri.

Issues

As recreational and commercial land uses continue to change in Missouri, we are seeing an increase in conflicts between impacted landowners and select hound runners regarding unwelcome hounds on private property. Conservation agents and Deputy Sheriffs are often called in to try and mitigate, with limited options available to resolve the issue. Landowners and hound runners are both negatively impacted by these incidents. From a law enforcement perspective the issues include:

- Landowners who are clearly frustrated with unwelcome hounds running through their property, the lack of respect for their private property rights, negative impacts (real or perceived) to wildlife and their own outdoor recreational activities, and the potential for hounds causing problems with livestock – especially during calving season.
- Sporting dog enthusiasts are generally concerned about the future of their hunting tradition, avoiding properties where dogs are not welcome, dogs getting shot, threats of

assault from irate landowners, and the potential for additional regulations on their sporting activity.

Invitations

In an effort to address some of these issues, MDC worked with local conservation partners to bring all sides together for a meaningful discussion while minimizing risk for an unproductive shouting match. MDC sent an invitation letter to approximately 50 local landowners and sporting dog enthusiasts in northeast and central Missouri based on recommendations from conservation agents. In addition, MDC worked with the Missouri Sporting Dog Association to invite additional sporting dog enthusiasts interested in a productive dialogue. Throughout this process, MDC made it clear that no one would be turned away if they wished to attend. The meeting was also advertised on area radio stations and in local newspapers.

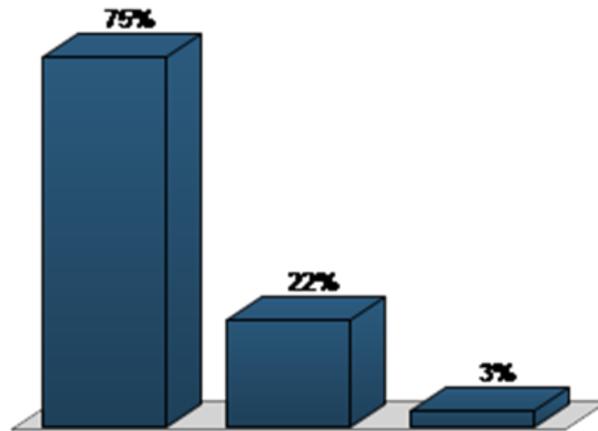
Attendance

A total of 78 sporting dog enthusiasts and landowners attended, with over 75% of the responding attendees driving less than 50 miles to participate (see Table 1). MDC staff included seven conservation agents and supervisors. Presentations were given by MDC Protection Regional Supervisor Tom Strother, Furbearer Biologist Laura Conlee, and Public Involvement Coordinator Michele Baumer. Audrain County Sheriff Matt Oller was also in attendance.

Table 1 - distance traveled

1.) How Far Did You Travel Today?

	Percent	Count
0-50 miles		
51-100 miles	21.88%	14
Over 100 miles		
Totals		

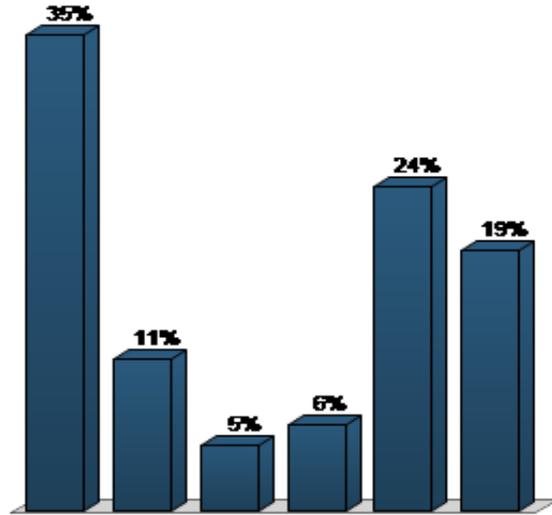


Meeting participants included a diverse mix of coyote hound runners, raccoon hunters, and rabbit hunters, along with recreational and agriculture production landowners (see Table 2).

Table 2. – Participant Affiliation

3.) What Best Describes Your Affiliation?

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Sporting Dog-Hunt Coyotes	34.92%	22
Sporting Dog-Hunt Raccoon	11.11%	7
Sporting Dog-Hunt Rabbits	4.76%	3
Landowner-Ag Producer	6.35%	4
Landowner- Recreation/Hunting	23.81%	15
Landowner-Both, Ag and Recreation	19.05%	12
Totals	100%	63



Presentations

MDC Protection Field Chief Randy Doman welcomed participants and provided an overview of the evening's agenda. Michele Baumer then conducted a short Turning Point survey before turning the meeting over to Regional Supervisor Tom Strother and Furbearer Biologist Laura Conlee.

Supervisor Strother gave a presentation on the changing land-use patterns in Central Missouri along with a summary of the issues conservation agents are faced with when trying to resolve these conflicts. He also discussed the consequences for failure to act and provided a course of action in order to minimize conflicts and promote mutual respect for landowners and sporting dog enthusiasts. He also covered existing *Wildlife Code* regulations and emphasized that additional regulation and/or statutes may not be in anyone's best interest.

Laura Conlee discussed the furbearer species in Missouri, along with the cycles in furbearer populations and the potential impacts that unchecked populations can have on other wildlife species including whitetail deer, turkeys, quail, and rabbits.

Breakout Discussions

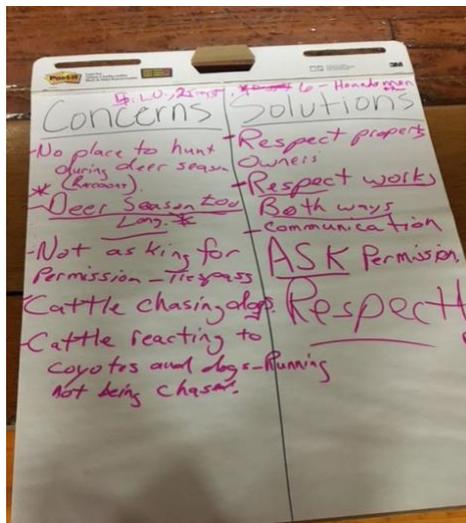


After answering questions, participants were asked to break into smaller groups with landowners and sporting dog enthusiasts at each table. Their goal was to discuss concerns and formulate potential solutions. Upon completion of this exercise, MDC staff presented a summary of concerns and solutions at the end of the meeting.

Summary of Concerns

- Harassment by repeated unwelcome hound running on concerned landowner properties
- Interference with landowner hunting and ranching operations
- Frustration resulting from poor communication between hound runners and landowners
- Running deer with hounds
- Livestock disruption from hounds

- Dogs being shot
- Threats of violence towards hound runners and/or dogs
- Losing hound running traditions with changing land-use patterns
- Additional regulations limiting or prohibiting sporting dog activities
- Lack of regulations or statutes for problem hound runners unwilling to listen/compromise
- Problem hound runners ruining the tradition for all sporting dog enthusiasts
- Problem landowners unwilling to listen, compromise, and who threaten violence as a solution
- Trespass issues
- Road hunting
- Changing landscape and land owner philosophies



Proposed Solutions

- Self-policing within the sporting dog community – especially with problem hound runners tarnishing the reputation of the group
- Hound runners should meet with each other to communicate issues and implement solutions
- Hounds should be penned up when not actively training or hunting
- Develop a relationship with landowners and ask permission prior to entering the property
- Develop a relationship with landowners and ask permission to retrieve a dog if they get on property where they're not welcome
- Avoid properties altogether where dogs are not welcome
- Landowners communicating respectfully with hound runners and considering peaceful retrieval of dogs that unintentionally cross onto their property

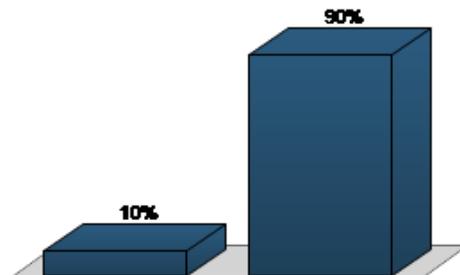
- Smaller, localized meetings between impacted landowners and specific hound runners, facilitated by MDC
- Better communication with agriculture production landowners and avoiding specific areas when calving season is underway
- Working together to compromise
- Change laws to allow for the retrieval of hounds
- MDC create a map of landowners who do not want hounds running on their property

Conclusion

Upon conclusion of the meeting, participants were asked three final questions using the Turning Point Technology:

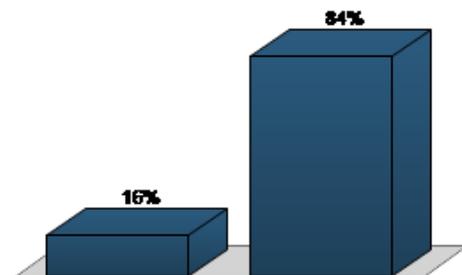
4.) Do You Feel Your Comments Were Heard?

	Percent	Count
No		
Yes	89.83%	53
Totals		



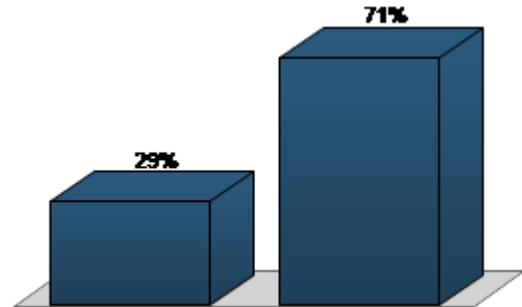
5.) Did You Find This Meeting Beneficial?

	Percent	Count
No		
Yes	84.48%	49
Totals		



6.) Do You Feel We Should Have Another Meeting Like This?

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
No	29.31%	17
Yes	70.69%	41
Totals	100%	58



While not everyone was satisfied with the results, the Turning Point response indicates the meeting was beneficial to a majority of the participants. What MDC heard was the clear need for continued dialogue between impacted landowners and sporting dog enthusiasts. It is understandable that some landowners are frustrated with multiple, ongoing incidents of hounds running through their property. Sporting dog enthusiasts should be proactive in reaching out to impacted landowners to mitigate these situations and make an effort to build a relationship when possible. Conflicts can be minimized with better communication, mutual respect, and a concerted effort to be responsible with sporting dogs. Conversely, the tradition of hound running is very important to many Missourians and all wildlife populations’ benefit from effective predator control.

MDC will continue working with all stakeholders on these issues and we encourage both sides to continue the dialogue, work together, and implement the proposed solutions where possible.