

# **Landowner and Hound Runner Communication Meeting**

December 19, 2017 – Macon, MO

## **Summary Report**



### **Purpose**

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) hosted a Landowner and Hound Runner Communication Meeting at the Macon Expo Center on Tuesday, December 19, 2017. 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 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 ten landowners and 16 sporting dog enthusiasts in north Missouri based on recommendations from local 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. MDC Supervisors also made personal visits to the Adair and Macon County Sheriff’s inviting them to participate as well.

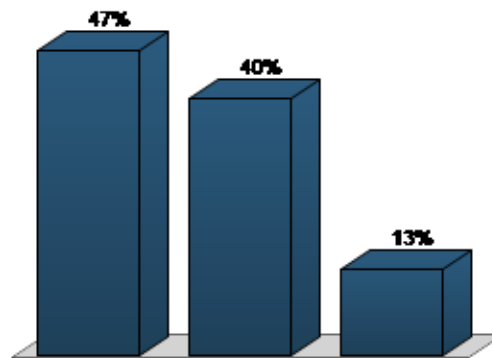
### Attendance

A total of 53 sporting dog enthusiasts and landowners attended, with over half of the attendees driving over 50 miles to participate (see Table 1). MDC staff included six conservation agents and supervisors, along with Division Chief Larry Yamnitz and Deputy Director Tom Draper. Presentations were given by MDC Protection Regional Supervisor Benny Pryor, Furbearer Biologist Laura Conlee, and Public Involvement Coordinator Michele Baumer. A representative from the Adair County Sheriff’s Office was also in attendance.

**Table 1 - distance traveled**

**1.) How Far Did You Travel Today?**

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
0-50 miles	47.17%	25
51-100 miles	39.62%	21
Over 100 miles	13.21%	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>53</b>

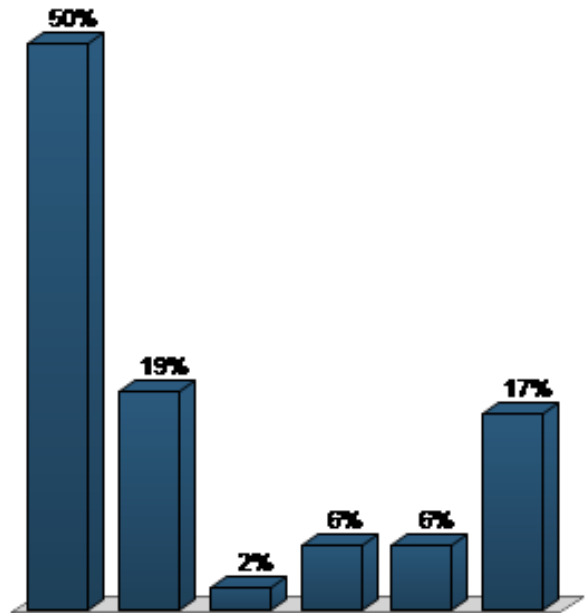


Meeting participants included a diverse mix of coyote hound runners, raccoon hunters, and rabbit hunters, along with recreational and agriculture production landowners (see Table 2).

**Table 2. – Participant Affiliation**

**3.) What Best Describes Your Affiliation?**

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Sporting Dog-Hunt Coyotes	50%	26
Sporting Dog-Hunt Raccoon	19.23%	10
Sporting Dog-Hunt Rabbits	1.92%	1
Landowner-Ag Producer	5.77%	3
Landowner- Recreation/Hunting	5.77%	3
Landowner-Both, Ag and Recreation	17.31%	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>



## **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 Benny Pryor and Furbearer Biologist Laura Conlee.

Supervisor Pryor gave a presentation on the changing land-use patterns in North 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**

- Landowner property rights not being respected with repeated, unwelcome hound running on their property
- Frustration resulting from poor communication between hound runners and landowners
- Running deer with 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

## Proposed Solutions

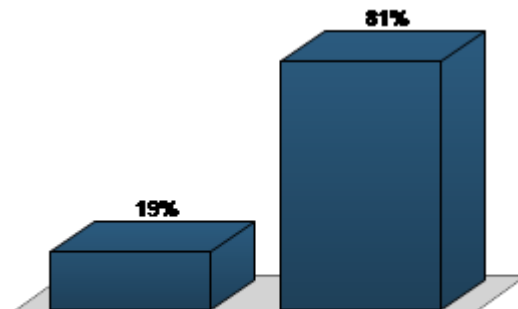
- Self-policing within the sporting dog community – especially with problem hound runners tarnishing the reputation of the group
- Hound runners should meet with each other to communicate issues and implement solutions
- Discontinue allowing dogs to roam freely as a form of “training” for extended periods
- 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 (this was a major point of contention with one landowner who reported zero contacts from hound runners in 20 years of dogs running through his property)
- 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

## Conclusion

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

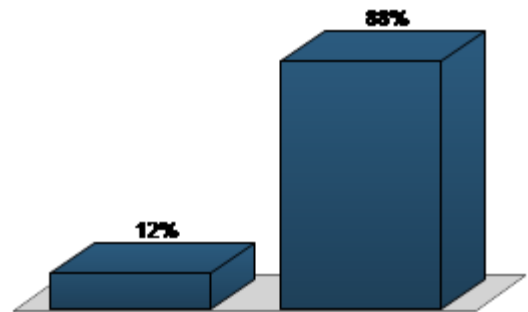
### 4.) Do You Feel Your Comments Were Heard?

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
No	18.75%	9
Yes	81.25%	39
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>



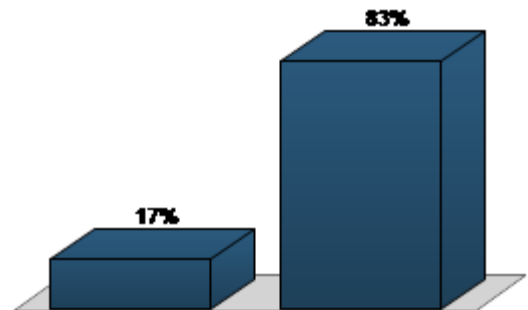
**5.) Did You Find This Meeting Beneficial?**

	Percent	Count
No		
Yes	87.5%	42
<b>Totals</b>		



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

	Percent	Count
No		
Yes	82.98%	39
<b>Totals</b>		



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.