



MDC Resource Science

Quick Draw Program Evaluation: Focus Group Results

Science Notes



Quick Draw Program Evaluation: Focus Group Results



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Information Need and Methods

In January 2013, four focus groups were held at the request of Wildlife Division as a part of the evaluation of several potential changes to the Quick Draw program. The evaluation also included administrative considerations and input received through hunter comments via social media and the internet, e-mail, an opinion poll, and personal contacts. As is most often the case with focus groups, there was a predetermined set of questions for focus group participants to discuss. In order to make the discussion as useful as possible, the majority of the time was spent discussing the three items that were under consideration for changes: the percentage of positions allocated to Quick Draw, number of times a hunter can be selected for Quick Draw, and possible changes to the registration/enrollment schedule. In addition, we wanted to provide an opportunity for hunters to voice other concerns or make additional suggestions.

In an effort to recruit participants, sign-up flyers were placed in draw rooms, an e-mail was sent out, and in some areas hunters were approached by area managers to see if they were interested in participating. A total of 32 participants, all male, participated in the focus group discussions, which were held in Kirkwood, Columbia, Sedalia, and Cape Girardeau. It was hoped there would be a diversity of opinion about Quick Draw, and possible changes to the registration/enrollment schedule. In addition we wanted to provide an opportunity for hunters to voice other concerns or make additional suggestions.

Results

Opinions on Quick Draw seemed to be sharply divided geographically, with those who lived close to Quick Draw areas perceiving it as a detriment to them and hunters with longer drives tending to feel more positively about Quick Draw. Several participants who lived in close proximity to Quick Draw areas felt that they as locals should get preference over people from far away, and that Quick Draw gave an unfair advantage to people from St. Louis and other urban areas. It was also hinted that serious hunters would not object to taking their chances on the poor line, and that Quick Draw catered to people who weren't serious about hunting. Countering this assumption were some people who mentioned that hunter recruitment, for example, fathers bringing young sons, would be encouraged by Quick Draw. The 50/50 split idea was certainly not unanimously favored, but appealed to more people because it was perceived as more "fair" than the current 80/20. The idea of "half for me and half for them" or meeting in the middle seemed easy to

understand and justify for a wider range of waterfowl hunters.

Interestingly, both those in favor of Quick Draw and those who disliked it suggested increasing the number of Quick Draw areas, or making it statewide. This suggestion was often tied to a change in the percentage of Quick Draw positions, and in some cases 100 percent Quick Draw was recommended. There were different reasons for this preference. Those who did not feel positively toward Quick Draw thought that by increasing the number of areas it would improve their chances (Quick Draw or poor line) at their local areas. Those who have enjoyed Quick Draw wanted the guaranteed spot at more locations. There were also some requests to stop pre-assigning pill numbers for Quick Draw in order to decrease the number of no-shows.

Given the nature of the topic at hand, and of the focus group process, it is essential to remember that this was not a statistically representative group of hunters, nor was it expected to be. Because people self-selected to participate, those who felt most strongly, and usually in a negative way, about Quick Draw, were the most likely to volunteer. Some people had to drive long distances, which would limit participation by those who are ambivalent about the topic.

Management Implications

These Quick Draw focus groups clearly illustrate that we cannot "please all of the people all of the time" with our management decisions. There are, however, several take-away messages that may be valuable to the decision-making process.

- Participants were unclear as to the goals of Quick Draw and felt that those should be more clearly explained by MDC. As future decisions regarding Quick Draw are made, transparency and information transfer will go a long way toward increasing public support.
- It was recognized by participants that it will be difficult to design a system that is liked by all waterfowl hunters. Encouragingly, many of the suggestions offered were given with the aim of doing the best possible for the most people, and trended toward the middle ground. Changing the percentage of positions to 50/50 or 40/60 on the current Quick Draw areas, or increasing lead time, but only to a week, were not unanimously offered but seemed to be slightly more favored overall.

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