

Column by Rep. Steve Doyle

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The state recently spent \$125,000 for James Kroll, the "Deer Czar" from Texas, to tell us how to best manage the deer population and hunting in Wisconsin. His 136-page report makes some reasonable recommendations, but I share some of the concerns expressed by both hunters and conservationists.

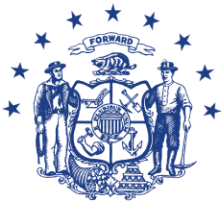
One of his main recommendations was that the Department of Natural Resources should listen to hunters and landowners. This isn't a new idea and we didn't need to pay someone to tell us what we already know. And with the tremendous number of hunters, conservationists, biologists and wildlife experts we have in Wisconsin, was there no one already in our state who could give us this advice with more credibility and less cost?

I agree that we should involve hunters and landowners in deer herd management. However, while advocating for more input on one level, Mr. Kroll then criticized hunters for supporting higher deer populations. Dismissing their opinions at the outset is unfortunate. If we don't respect the input of the people who own the land and walk the woods, we lose their expertise and insight.

There are two areas of Mr. Kroll's report that give me great concern. First is his recommendation that the DNR provide more assistance to private landowners for deer management. While that is important for issues such as crop damage, if it is also a prelude to "Texas-style" deer hunting, that is the wrong direction for Wisconsin. In Texas, due in large part to Mr. Kroll's advocacy, deer hunting has shifted from public lands to privately owned hunting preserves. If that became the norm in Wisconsin many hunters of modest incomes would be denied the opportunity to hunt and to pass down this tradition to their children.

The other concern I have is the recommendation relating to chronic wasting disease. George Meyer, the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, has warned that Kroll's proposed "passive approach" of simply monitoring the disease would be a mistake. If the public loses confidence in the health of our deer population - and the safety of eating venison - the consequences to Wisconsin's tradition of hunting would be devastating.

I do support many aspects of the report. In particular, the proposal that the DNR move away from quotas and instead utilize more general local goals for the size of deer herds is a good one. I especially like his recommendations that the DNR work with local hunters and landowners to look at hunter success, deer-vehicle collisions, agricultural damage and forest regeneration to establish local goals.



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Deer hunting is an important tradition in Wisconsin. While I would have preferred to hire a native Wisconsinite to deal with this topic, I hope we can use this report as a step toward greater harmony among many diverse interests. We owe it to future generations to get it right.

If you would like to read the Deer Czar's report or make any comments, please contact me at 608-266-0631 or email me at [Rep.Doyle@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.Doyle@legis.wisconsin.gov) or mail your thoughts to me at Room 126 North, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53708. It is important that as many voices as possible be heard.