



Surveying for the Future

THE TERMS “INSTANT classic” and “dynasty” are thrown around so often in the sports world these days that their overuse risks losing the perspective of true historical significance.

When it comes to the state of deer hunting in Kentucky, there is no danger of overstating just how good it's been and how far it's come.

“We're in the heyday for the whitetail hunter,” said Gabe Jenkins, Deer and Elk Program Coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

The more than 300,000 people who hunt deer each year in Kentucky raised the bar again during the 2015-16 season by setting a new overall harvest record for the third time in the past four seasons.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife isn't resting on laurels. Instead, it is reaching out to hunters this spring with a new survey tailored to those who hunt deer in the state.

The 55-question survey is the first of its kind since 2002. The public can take the survey and submit comments about Kentucky's deer herd and its management online at fw.ky.gov from June 1-30.

“I think it's a good time to re-evaluate how we do things and investigate if we can make this better than what we've already got – and we've got it pretty darn good,” Jenkins said.

The survey gauges hunter distribution,



KATIE BEARD PHOTO

This year's survey will help shape the deer hunting future for the next generation, including Wildlife Biologist Derek Beard's two sons, Logan (center) and Layton.

Highlights from the survey will be presented to the Deer Advisory Committee, a group of 11 representatives from the Wildlife, Law Enforcement and Information and Education divisions formed by Jenkins last year. The committee brainstorms and critiques ideas about potential changes. Any recommendations must be discussed by Wildlife and other divisions within the department before going to the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission.

One of the main benefits of a hunter attitude survey is its ability to reflect a consensus among a broader audience.

“So many times we hear from one person

or a small group of people that want a big change,” Jenkins said. “If the majority of our hunters support it, or don't support it, it helps us make the right decision when we provide information and recommendations to the commission.”

Any potential changes stemming from the survey results will be carefully considered, Jenkins said. “We're not going to be out to move quickly or do anything fast,” he said. “We're going to take our time and be strategic.” ■

The department selected 2,000 resident and non-resident deer hunters at random earlier this year to gauge their attitudes and establish baseline data. The public will have the opportunity to take the same survey once it's posted online.

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