

NOTES ON THE GREAT LAKES DEER GROUP MEETING

Grand Rapids, Minnesota

September 1975

HABITAT DISCUSSIONS, ETC.

Minnesota - Bob Chesness: Emphasis has been on "summer range" management -- aspen and openings work, with some special scheduling of timber sales in deer yards. Aspen shearing (not all is post-sale) costs \$25-30/Ac. Aspen crushing jobs cost more and resulted in poorer aspen reproduction, which is not necessarily poor game management as they view it. Jack Mooty indicated that crushed areas had less debris and a better forb resource than sheared areas which tended to "close-in" in about 2 yr.

Openings maintenance in Itasca County has required about 6 pounds of TORDON 10 K per acre. About 160 acres were treated in 1974.

Continuation of the habitat program in Minnesota is in doubt. No funds have been appropriated.

Michigan - Dave Arnold: About \$1.2MM is available for habitat work and about 30,000 acres were treated last year. Less emphasis has been placed on shearing and increasing effort has gone toward openings construction. Prospects are for an additional shift in emphasis toward more land acquisition.

Carl Bennett indicated that his research has shown that the public, including adjacent landowners, has an amazing tolerance to forest disturbance. In two test areas 75% of the woods were clearcut. Questionnaires indicated that hunters believed cuttings would favor deer.

Superior National Forest - Carl Siderits: He has developed an elaborate procedure for planning timber sales that will accomplish "diversity management". This scheme is not aimed at a particular species but hopes to foster diverse fauna. He also discussed snag management (See Also: J. Forestry 83(7):414-417). Snags (dead standing trees) have been systematically eliminated by management. Now they are marking them to leave.

Ontario - John Ludwig: They have been spending about \$180,000 per year on habitat work, but now \$100,000 from ARDA is in extreme jeopardy. Virtually all has been spent on winter range with no demonstrable increases in deer populations. (Note: Throughout the conference one could sense a lack of faith by all present in what was actually being accomplished through "yard management". This may be a subject for a future panel.)

Deer Feeding Study - Bennett for Ozoga: Specially formulated pellets (16% Protein) are being fed year-around ad libidum to deer in the Cusino enclosure. Pellets cost \$160 per ton. Up to 769 pounds of pellets per deer per year have been consumed. Big differences in daily intake are evident between seasons. Pellet consumption triples following snowfall and has cost \$34/deer per winter. Significant gains in production, survival, and weight have been documented, but no improvement in yearling antler development. One hog-type feeder per 40 deer is filled twice weekly. Studies employing herb enclosures within the pen showed no measurable removals of herbage during summers with 78 deer per square mile present.

Blood Studies - Drs. Mike McMillan and Ulley Seal: Studies of the reproductive endocrinology of male and female deer were described. Studies of blood parameters (hormones, sugars, proteins, etc.) have been related to range conditions and may have application to setting hunting seasons. No evidence of density-stress on reproductive mechanisms has yet been documented. However, they are working with quantities measured in picograms!

Forage Note - Karns: Assays of summer and fall deer forage show that crude protein may vary greatly from year to year thereby affecting winter survival.

Wolves in BWCA - Dave Mech: Interesting territorial relationships are being documented. Territories and social behavior appear to be upset by food scarcity. Severe winters have reduced deer in portions of the Superior National Forest to wintering groups of 4 to 6 deer. Wolves have apparently systematically wiped out these groups over a large portion of the major wolf range in Minn. One of the major concerns is to increase deer numbers so that wolves might fare better.

HUNTING SEASONS

Minnesota - LeRoy Rutske: Hunters distributed themselves very well throughout their first 30-day deer season. However, they have since tended to bunch-up closer to the opening. A quota on antlerless deer was established for 1975 in the southern quarter of the state. A bucks-only season will again be held in the northeast quarter of the state. Any-deer hunts will be held elsewhere.

After encountering some "bugs" in their early efforts of compulsory registration, they will count kills by having the successful hunter present his license (not necessarily his deer) to a "registration station" to be stamped, thereby authorizing him to possess his deer beyond the close of the hunting season. One of the "bugs" was getting rural residents to bring in their deer after it was hung in the shed.

Michigan - Dave Arnold: They are trying to accommodate 700,000 deer hunters in a 16-day hunt. In 1975, they will attempt to spread pressure some by delaying by one week quota-deer hunting in the central Lower Peninsula. They have a special license and muzzle-loader hunt (Dec. 5-14) for bucks-only statewide after the regular gun deer season. Hunting hours year-around for upland game are from 6 AM to 7 PM EST except during the regular gun deer season when it is 7 AM to 6PM EST.

This has not caused any significant safety problems. Their only purpose for having any hours is to regulate illegal use of lights.

Ontario - John Ludwig: Their season framework has been subject to much political meddling, especially this year which is an election-year. Politicians from township-to provincial-level have interferred with biological recommendations. (Note: John was not in the best of spirits.)

OTHER NOTES

Representatives from both Minnesota and Michigan emphasized the importance to their respective programs of having regularly scheduled statewide meetings for wildlife managers.

Michigan managers think they may already have 1,000,000 deer. Some are celebrating and boasting of the impact of their habitat programs. Others fear that winter will come and throw both the habitat and harvest (extremely modest quotas) programs out the window.

Spring pellet group surveys are being conducted by all three states and Ontario. Wisconsin's system appears to be the most efficient (time and cost). Accuracy and precision of estimates by the various agencies seem similar. Perhaps we could help them streamline their systems at a future meeting.