



HURON-CLINTON METROPOLITAN AUTHORITY

To: Board of Commissioners
 From: Paul Muelle, Chief of Natural Resources
 Subject: Metroparks 2010 – 2011 Deer Management Plan Implementation Report
 Date: October 6, 2011

Deer management activities continued in the fall of 2010 and winter of 2011 at five Metroparks: Kensington, Indian Springs, Huron Meadows, Oakwoods, and Lower Huron. A total of 87 deer were removed with minor impact on other park uses during the management operations as compared to 220 deer removed the previous year. Highlights for each of the park operations are as follows:

<u>Park</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>No. of Deer Removed</u>	<u>No. of Days in Field</u>
Kensington	Shooting	27	2
Indian Springs	Controlled Firearms	22	2
Huron Meadows	Controlled Firearms	13	2
Oakwood/Lower Huron	Sharpshooting	25	2
TOTALS		87	8

Volunteers from Safari Club International provided assistance in organizing and conducting the controlled hunts at Huron Meadows and Indian Springs. The culled deer were transported by park staff to a processor, Butcher Boy Meats, and the venison distributed by Sportsmen Against Hunger through the Southeast Michigan Food Bank. Once again this year, Butcher Boy Meats and Sportsmen Against Hunger donated all costs associated with processing the deer. We thank the leaders of these conservation groups and organizations for their support of this management program. Their time, expertise and financial support were critical to the success of this year's operations.

Metropark employees spent a combination of eight days and nights on deer management activities, a decrease of 13 management days from the 2009 – 2010 deer management program. The decrease in management effort is for the most part associated with Stony Creek Metropark. No deer management activity took place at Stony Creek in 2009 – 2010 as compared to 11 days of combined management in 2008 - 2009. Metropark staff from all departments including administration, park operations, maintenance and the police, worked long and unusual hours to accomplish this management task.

The following table indicates the total of deer removed from all parks since the beginning of the program in 1999.

	Totals	2010	2009	2008	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Kensington	807	27	36	62	37	68	44	51	33	110	93	246
Stony Creek	1128	-	105	18	93	128	139	127	82	218	96	122
Hudson Mills	286	-	8	-	-	26	30	24	35	73	58	32
Indian Springs	310	22	33	26	30	29	12	32	37	89		
Huron Meadows	70	13		-	-	2	5	3	47			
Oakwoods	315	24	22	26	18	34	44	56	91			
Willow	119	-	15	4	25	22	6	47				
Lower Huron	16	-	1	15								
Total	3052	87	220	151	203	309	280	340	325	490	247	400

Table 1

We are continuing on the maintenance phase of the deer management program having met or being close to meeting deer density goals in several parks. Estimates for 2011 indicate that in order to maintain a stable population, additional removals may be necessary but the overall number of deer to be removed is greatly reduced when compared to the first several years of the operation.

Aerial surveys by helicopter were conducted in January and February 2011 at Kensington, Hudson Mills, Huron Meadows, Stony Creek, Indian Springs, Oakwoods, Lower Huron, Willow and Lake Erie Metroparks. Magnum Helicopters out of Oakland International Airport provided the flying services and Metropark staff served as counters. An approximate 1-foot snow base provided good conditions for observing the deer from the air.

Results of the surveys are as follows: Kensington – 126 deer, Hudson Mills – 28 deer, Huron Meadows – 11 deer, Stony Creek – 99 deer, Indian Springs – 70 deer, Oakwoods – 55 deer, Lower Huron – 22 deer, Willow – 9 deer and Lake Erie – 27 deer. These aerial surveys along with the bio-data collected each year are used to estimate deer herd size the following season as indicated in Tables two (2) and three (3). Aerial survey inconsistencies are evident at several locations, most notably at Lower Huron, Willow and Lake Erie Metroparks where no management occurred the previous year yet survey populations were significantly lower than the previous year, however, these inconsistencies are generally expected when dealing with variable environmental conditions and a fluid deer population.

The table below indicates the reduction in deer density in select parks from 1999 (green bar) to estimated 2011 population levels (red bar).

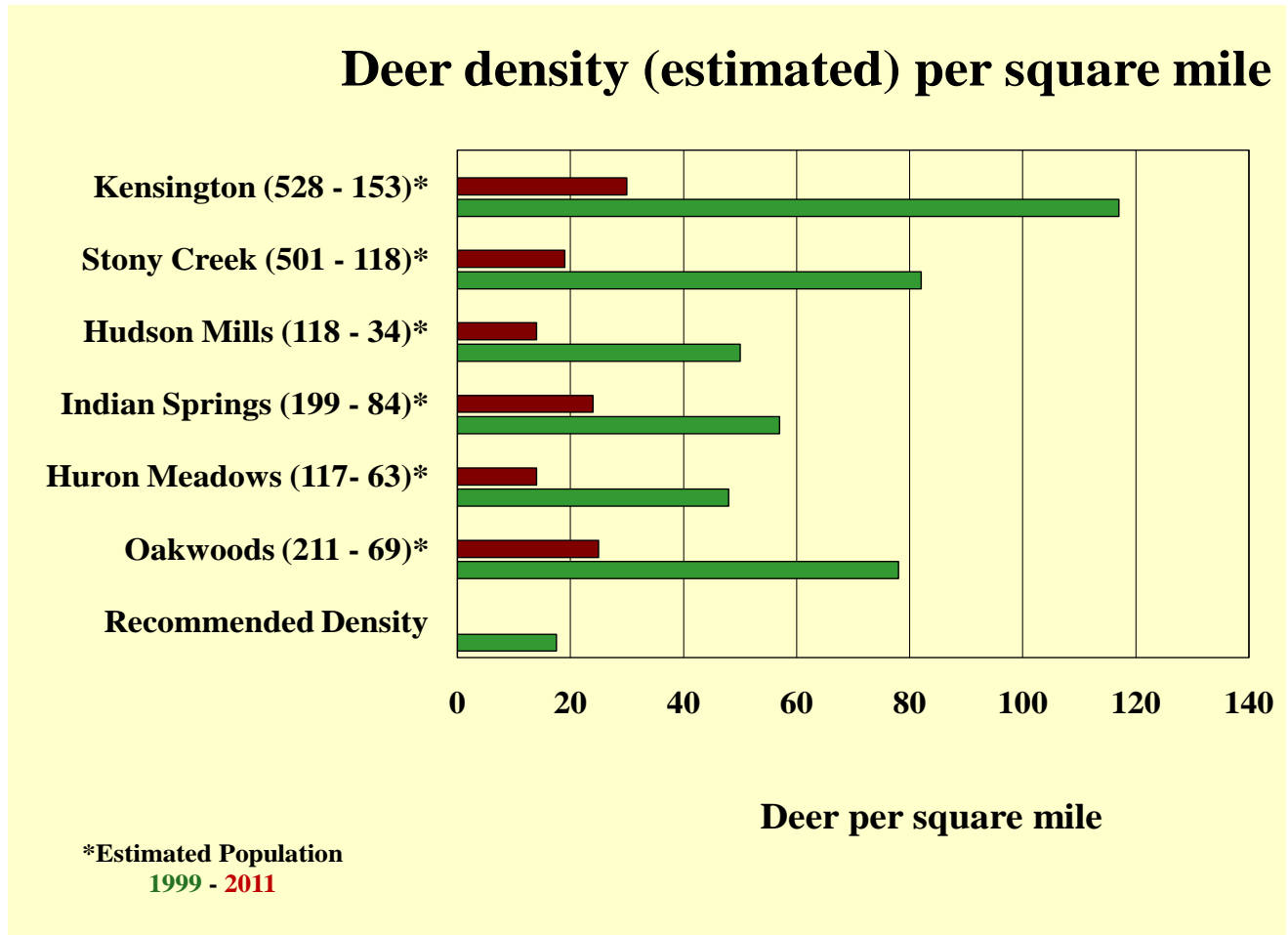


Table 2

Biological data on the culled deer continues to be gathered and compiled each year as required and supplied to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE). The MDNRE did not test for Chronic Wasting Disease in 2011. Data gathered on the deer culled this season indicate the deer populations health parameters continue to remain good in most parks and show a definite improvement when compared to the programs beginning.

Vegetative monitoring by Metroparks Interpretive staff continues to indicate the numbers of plants for specific indicator species, as well as the numbers of plant species, either remained stable over the past year or continue to increase in number, however, heavy browsing is still evident on certain plant species in several of the parks.



“This year, 2010, was the first time since 1993 that (Trout Lily and) Michigan Lily were observed in blossom. Deer seem to have a special affinity for members of the lily family, and this plant is no exception. We have been anticipating the return of this species ever since the deer culls began in 1999.” (Stony Creek Deer Photomonitoring Report 2010)

It is the consensus of natural area managers that controlling excessive deer populations is critical to the long term health and viability of the native ecosystems that these animals are a component of. The management efforts the Metroparks established has had a direct impact on insuring that the parks’ high quality natural areas remain intact for future generations to enjoy.



The following table indicates the estimated populations in each managed park for 2011 and 2012 along with the proposed herd reduction for those areas.

	Area Size (sq. mile)	Population Estimate 2009/10	Population Estimate 2010/11	Population Estimate 2011/12	Ideal Population (15/sq.mi.)	Deer Removed In 2010 / 2011	Deer To Be Removed In 2011 / 2012	Deer Per Sq. Mile Estimate
Stony Creek	6.2	243	97	118	93	0	25	19
Kensington	5.1	168	102	153	77	27	77	30
Oakwoods	2.7	121	63	69	41	24	29	25
Willow	2.4	51	25	9	36	0	0	4
Lower Huron	2	35	85	28	30	1	0	14
Indian Springs	3.5	114	84	84	53	22	31	24
Hudson Mills	2.4	51	51	34	36	0	0	14
Huron Meadows	2.4	50	63	13	36	13	0	5
Lake Erie	2.5	62	73	33	38	0	0	13

Table 3

Recommendation: That the Board of Commissioners receive and file the Metroparks 2010-2011 Deer Management Plan Implementation Report as recommended by Chief of Natural Resources Paul Muelle and staff.