

## Deer Progress Report

March 7, 2011

Compiled by Sandy Ritchie with input from Lee Kantar, John Pratte  
and the Wildlife Management Section

### Accomplishments for Week of February 27 – March 5

**Deer Plan** – The Department completed its *Plan to Increase Maine's Northern, Eastern, and Western Deer Herd*; Sandy Ritchie will provide a brief overview of the Plan before the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife on March 7 and will post it on our website on Thursday, March 17 following a press conference tentatively planned for that day.

**Monitoring Winter Severity** – Staff monitored winter conditions [temperature, snow depths, deer sinking depths, and snow profile characteristics] at 26 individual monitoring stations throughout the state to estimate the impact of winter conditions on deer mortality.

#### **Aerial DWA Surveys**

- Several weather events and high winds most of the week forced most regions to suspend scheduled flights.
- Region F managed to fly 2-3 towns.
- The Bureau of Parks and Lands biologist flew BP&L's downeast parcels.

**Ground DWA Surveys** – Region E conducted ground surveys and mapped areas of winter deer use in Sebec, Bowerbank, Barnard, and Big Moose Townships.

#### **DWA Harvest Plans**

- Region D conducted 2 site visits with landowners/land managers to review planned harvests in Magalloway and Lexington Townships.
- Region G met to discuss all-weather road construction in a zoned DWA in T12 R12 WELS.
- Region G also met to review 3 harvest plans in a cooperatively managed DWA.

#### **Cooperative DWA Management**

- Region F met with Huber foresters to review ongoing development of a cooperative DWA management agreement. Regional staff is working with the Department's Habitat Group to



digitize current and historical DWAs in the region and digitized maps for Gardner Land Company's Habitat Management Agreement plans.

- BP&L obtained forest stand typing for the Seboomook Habitat Management Area.

### **Deer Research, Surveys, and Data Collections**

- Lee Kantar, MDIF&W's Deer and Moose Biologist, is currently summarizing and analyzing deer biological data and harvest data. This involves putting together multiple data sets that include information on annual harvest by Wildlife Management District [WMD], sex and age composition of the harvest, estimates of productivity, summaries of antler beam diameter, yearling frequencies, fawn and yearling weights, and lactation status by WMD. Information on hunter effort and participation is summarized to analyze annual changes in the deer harvest. All harvest and biological data is placed into a data set that includes the last 7 years of information for each WMD. Winter severity indices and mortality rates are calculated as well to estimate winter losses. This information is also applied to the overall summary of the 2010 harvest to guide the any deer permit allocation process. The process of assimilating, analyzing, and summarizing this data involves a minimum of 4 weeks of work as a preliminary step in looking at the annual deer harvest.
- As received, staff continues to examine and collect road-killed does and the number of fetuses per female to derive an index to female productivity and to provide information on breeding chronology. Region E extracted fetuses from road-killed does from Dover-Foxcroft and Sebec.

### **Information and Outreach**

- Region C met with a student from the College of the Atlantic developing a senior thesis on the Machias River and discussed a riparian-based strategy for landscape habitat recovery as it concerns white-tailed deer and other wildlife.
- Region E conducted a winter tracking seminar in a DWA near Greenville and corresponded with a consulting forester regards a forestry management plan for a DWA in Parkman. In addition, regional staff met with a reporter from Yankee Magazine in a DWA complex in Beaver Cove / Lily Bay to discuss the ecology of wintering deer, deer wintering area management, and the advantages and disadvantages of feeding deer during winter.
- Region G staff drafted an article for the Department's newsletter / magazine on DWA aerial surveys and responded to numerous inquiries on DWAs / management.
- John Pratte [Wildlife Management Section Supervisor] and Deb Turcotte [Public Relations Representative] attended the Large Animal Collision Work Group meeting at the Maine Department of Transportation's Augusta office on February 28. The group is comprised of representatives from MDOT, MDIF&W, and Federal Highway and meet 2-3 times a year to discuss trends, research, issues of concern, priority areas, and new technologies in road design to help minimize collision events. In particular, the group discussed road-killed does/fetus collection efforts, high collision areas from winter feeding of deer, installation of signs at high collision areas, and working together on media outreach. For more information go to <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/safety/mcd.htm>.

- BP&L's biologist Joe Wiley finalized a deer presentation for the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine.
- The Department finalized 3 *Living on the Edge* articles: *How Deer Survive Winter*, *An Overview of Deer Management in Maine*, and *Winter Feeding of Deer What You Should Know*.

### **Deer Feeding Complaints / Discussions**

- Regional staff provided input to proposed winter feeding legislation.
- Region E met with a landowner in Dover-Foxcroft to discuss feeding deer in winter.

**Areas of High Road Mortality** - Region G's aerial surveys indicate deer are slightly more widespread than normal, and using peripheral areas around DWA's. They are also seeing very few deer on major roads and adjacent unimproved roads. Deer collision reports to the regional office are presently down this winter when compared to prior winters.

**Predation Issues / Incidences** - All regions monitor and direct response as predation incidences are reported.

- Region C reported 3 documented predation incidents that a local coyote hunter is working: Marshfield, Jacksonville, and East Machias.
- Region D has not seen any evidence of predation while conducting DWA aerial surveys this winter. Foresters and loggers at active timber harvests in DWAs reported no predation in Lexington and 2 dead deer in Magalloway all winter. The Magalloway operation covers several hundred acres and has a high concentration of deer.
- Region E investigated reports of predation in Parkman and Sangerville.
- Region F conducted a site visit to a DWA in Burlington to investigate a report of predation.
- No predation incidences were reported this week in Regions D, E, and G. Region G reports very low incidence of predation thus far this winter. They observed one dead deer during 6 hours of aerial surveys but were not sure if the carcass was the result of predation or a road-killed deer that was being used as bait to attract coyotes for hunting.

### **Other Successes, Partnerships, Issues, and Events**

- Region C consulted with the Passamaquoddy Wildlife staff on aerial survey findings for Indian Township and other fee lands, as well as the status of ongoing predator control efforts on tribal lands. In addition, staff continued to consult with Downeast Lakes Land Trust [DLLT] on their convening a working group of stakeholders to manage riparian-based wintering habitat and travel corridors between the Machias River watershed and the St. Croix River. The Department and DLLT discussed obtaining large scale base maps for group work session and discussion as well a focus area boundaries and support for habitat initiatives..

- Region F conducted a site visit to an active timber harvest adjacent to good winter shelter. Numerous deer trails and deer were observed taking advantage of a temporary food source created by the timber harvest.
- Region G continued to investigate a harvest violation in a zoned DWA.
- Region G met with Southern Aroostook Natural Resources Conservation Service to discuss deer management opportunities in southern Aroostook County. They evaluated and prioritized 12 applications and discussed areas of concern with the District Conservationist. Regional staff will be evaluating applicants' properties in May. EQUIP and WHIP funds will be used for herbaceous seedings and tree plantings along riparian corridors to improve connectivity.
- Region G met with Irving concerning the Portage DWA harvest.

### **Planned Activities for Week of March 6**

**Deer Plan** – Sandy Ritchie will present the Department's *Plan to Increase Deer in Northern, Eastern, and Western Maine* to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife on Monday, March 7.

**Monitoring Winter Severity** – Staff will continue monitoring winter conditions [temperature, snow depths, deer sinking depths, and snow profile characteristics] at 26 individual monitoring stations throughout the state to estimate the impact of winter conditions on deer mortality.

**Aerial DWA Surveys** – As weather, pilots, and aircraft availability permit, regions will continue conducting DWA aerial surveys.

- Region E plans to fly 4-6 towns in the Rockwood and Jackman areas.
- Region G plans to fly 10-12 towns.

**DWA Ground Surveys** – Region E will continue ground surveys in a large DWA complex [9,000 acres] north of Moosehead Lake.

### **DWA Harvest Plans**

- As opportunities arise, regional staff will review plans for timber harvesting in DWAs.
- If weather prevents aerial surveys, Region G will meet with LandVest to inspect and review the Harrow Brook timber harvest.

**Cooperative DWA Management** – Staff continue to work with landowners on cooperative DWA management. This work will intensify once aerial surveys are completed this winter and DWAs digitized.

**Deer Research, Surveys, and Data Collections** – As received, staff will continue examining and collecting road-killed does and the number of fetuses per female to derive an index to female productivity and to provide information on breeding chronology.

## **Information and Outreach**

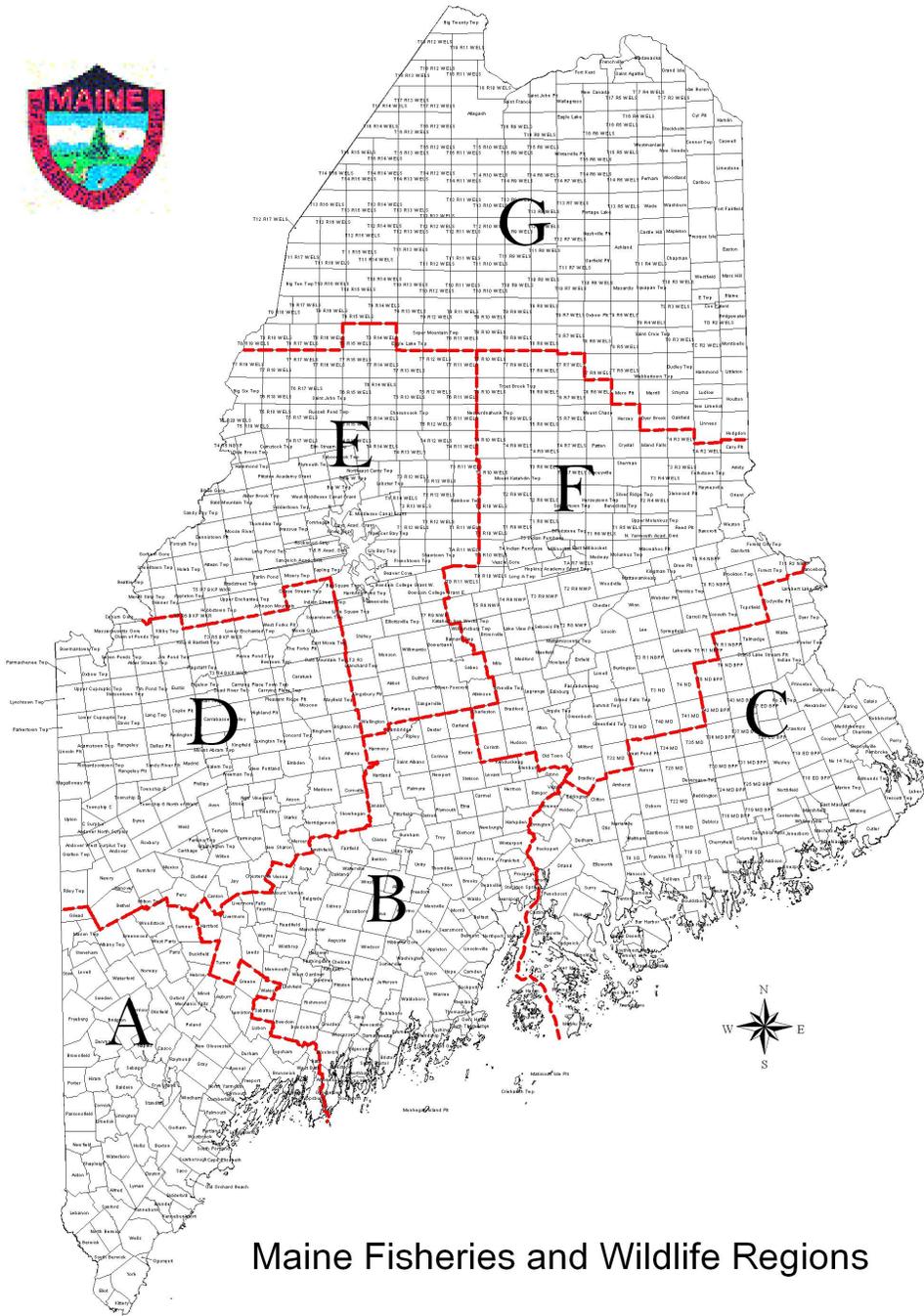
- Region G will attend selectman and planning board meetings in Portage to discuss the DWA harvest.
- Region G will also attend the Fish and Game Club meeting at Sportsman Inc. in Stockholm on March 7.
- Bureau of Parks and Lands Biologist Joe Wiley will present “How Wildlife Survives the Winter” at the Androscoggin Riverlands State Park in Turner on Saturday, March 12.

**Deer Feeding Complaints / Discussions** – All regions will continue to respond to issues as they arise. Department publication *Winter Feeding of Deer: What You Should Know* will be distributed to staff, stakeholders, etc. and posted on MDIFW’s website on March 17.

**Predation Issues / Incidences** - All regions will continue monitoring and directing response as predation incidences are reported.

## **Other Successes, Partnerships, Issues, and Events**

- Region C will continue discussions with Downeast Lakes Land Trust on their convening a Downeast Deer Habitat Management meeting and region participation along with other stakeholders and landowners.



Maine Fisheries and Wildlife Regions