



HURON-CLINTON METROPOLITAN AUTHORITY

To: Board of Commissioners
 From: Paul Muelle, Chief of Natural Resources
 Subject: Report – 2011/2012 Deer Management Plan Implementation
 Date: September 6, 2012

Deer management activities continued in the fall of 2011 and winter of 2012 at four Metroparks: Kensington, Indian Springs, Stony Creek, and Oakwoods. A total of 87 deer were removed with minor impact on other park uses during the management operations, the same number as 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	Sharpshooting	21	2
Indian Springs	Controlled Firearms	25	2
Stony Creek	Controlled Firearms	21	2
Oakwoods	Sharpshooting	20	2
TOTALS		87	8

Volunteers provided assistance in organizing and conducting the controlled hunts at Stony Creek and Indian Springs. The culled deer were transported by park staff to the 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. Staff thanks 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 either assisting volunteers or participating in deer management activities. This represents the same number of management days spent during the 2010-2011 program and a decrease of five management days from the 2009 – 2010 deer management program. 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.

Summary of Deer Removed by Park

	Total	2011	2010	2009	2008	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Kensington	828	21	27	36	62	37	68	44	51	33	110	93	246
Stony Creek	1149	21	-	105	18	93	128	139	127	82	218	96	122
Hudson Mills	286		-	8	-	-	26	30	24	35	73	58	32
Indian Springs	335	25	22	33	26	30	29	12	32	37	89		
Huron Meadows	70		13		-	-	2	5	3	47			
Oakwoods	335	20	24	22	26	18	34	44	56	91			
Willow	119		-	15	4	25	22	6	47				
Lower Huron	16		-	1	15								
Total	3139	87	87	220	151	203	309	280	340	325	490	247	400

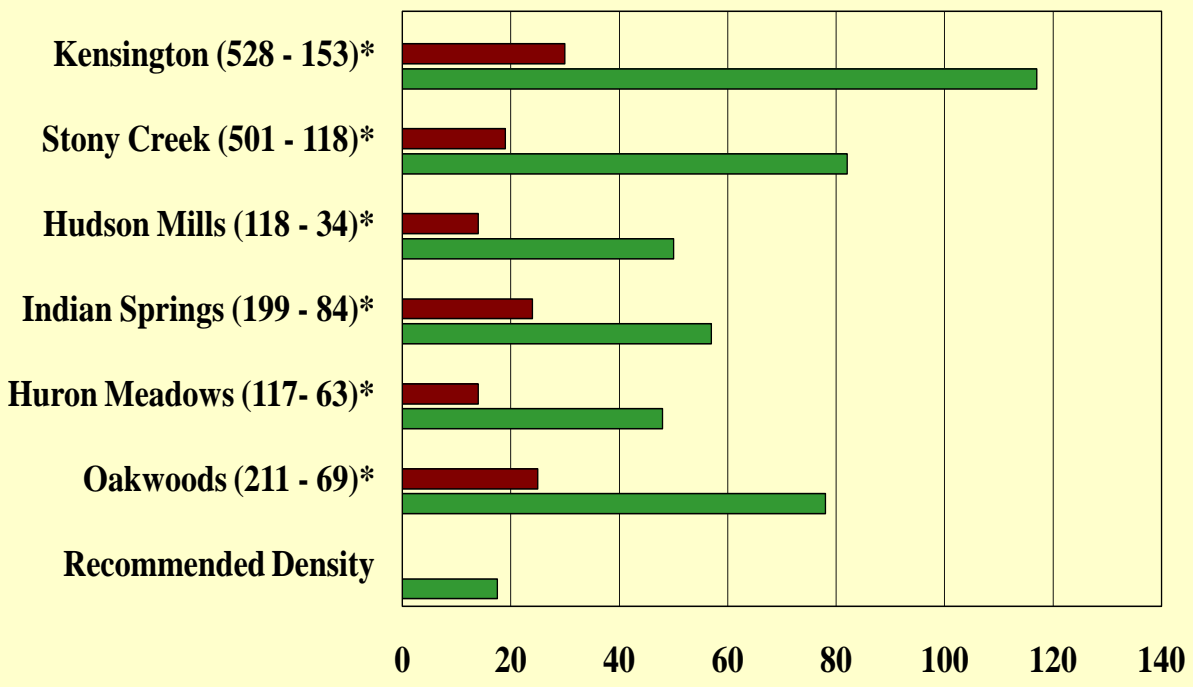
Table 1

Staff continues on the maintenance phase of the deer management program having met or being close to meeting deer density goals in several parks. 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.

Due to unfavorable weather conditions, no aerial surveys were conducted last winter. Results of previous aerial surveys along with the bio-data collected each year are used to estimate deer herd size and subsequent management goals. Table 2 below indicates the reduction in deer density in select parks from 1999 (green bar) to estimated 2011 population levels (red bar).

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 (MDNR). The MDNR did not test for Chronic Wasting Disease in 2012. 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.

Deer density (estimated) per square mile



*Estimated Population
 1999 - 2011

Deer per square mile

Table 2

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.

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.