

Deer Population Goals: Southeast Minnesota 2014

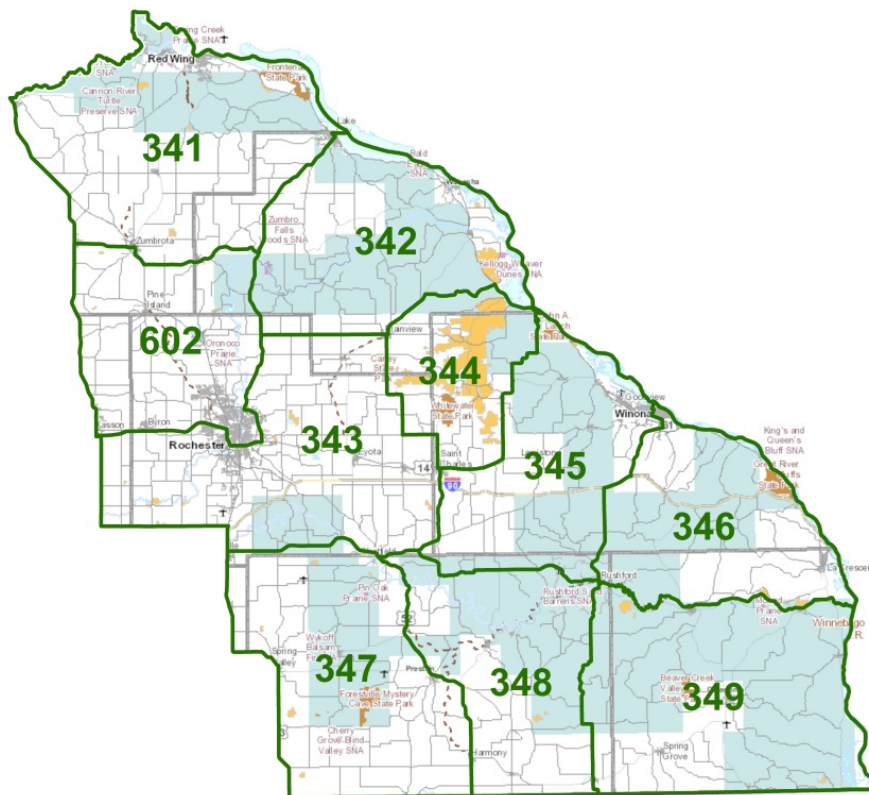
Southeast Goal Setting

Brief background of public input and advisory team

Between 2005 and 2007, Minnesota DNR engaged the public to determine population goals for deer permit areas (DPAs) across the state. Goals for portions of the state were revisited in 2012.

In 2013, Minnesota DNR initiated a public process to revisit deer population goals in Southeast Minnesota (Fig. 1). The new process emphasized collection of public input (mail surveys, online questionnaires and public meetings) prior to convening stakeholder advisory teams selected to represent the diversity of perspectives related to deer management. The Southeast advisory team was selected through an open nomination process (Nov. – Dec. 2013) and announced publically on the DNR website in February 2014. The advisory team consisted of 21 individuals representing archery, firearm and muzzleloader hunters as well as nonhunters; area residents and landowners; farmers; orchard owners and operators; land managers; local government staff and appointed officials; local business owners; and members of hunting, conservation and agricultural organizations.

Figure 1. Deer Permit Areas in Southeast Minnesota.



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Team members were required to attend at least one public meeting (February 19 or 25) and two team meetings (March 13 and 27). The team reviewed the Goal Setting Packet, University of Minnesota reports documenting the results of hunter and landowner surveys, brief summaries of public meetings, results from questionnaires completed at public meetings and online, public comments submitted by mail and email, and an informational packet documenting harvest statistics and population estimates 1997-2013 for each deer permit area.

Between the first and second advisory team meetings, members reviewed the previously mentioned materials, spoke with members in their community and completed an initial recommendation for each permit area. Team members were also asked to explain factors influencing their decision regarding the population goal. At the final team meeting, members reviewed the population goal options and were asked to provide an initial preference regarding goals for each deer permit area. This initial poll was followed by a group discussion by permit area. After approximately 15 minutes of discussion, the meeting facilitator called for consensus on a deer population goal recommendation for the permit area under discussion. The rule of decision was consensus; to forward a recommendation to the DNR, the team had to achieve a supermajority of 80% of members indicating either “support” or “ok”, with no more than 1 team member abstaining (Table 1.). If supermajority could not be achieved, team members would have been asked to individually provide a brief statement on the permit area to the DNR for review.

Team Recommendation Fundamentals

Table 1. Vote tallies required to meet a supermajority

	Support/OK	No	Abstain
Supermajority (80%)	17	4	0
Supermajority (80%)	16	4	1

Level of Consensus:

Support- I support the option

OK- I am ok with the option

No- I do not support the option.

Deer Population Goal Options

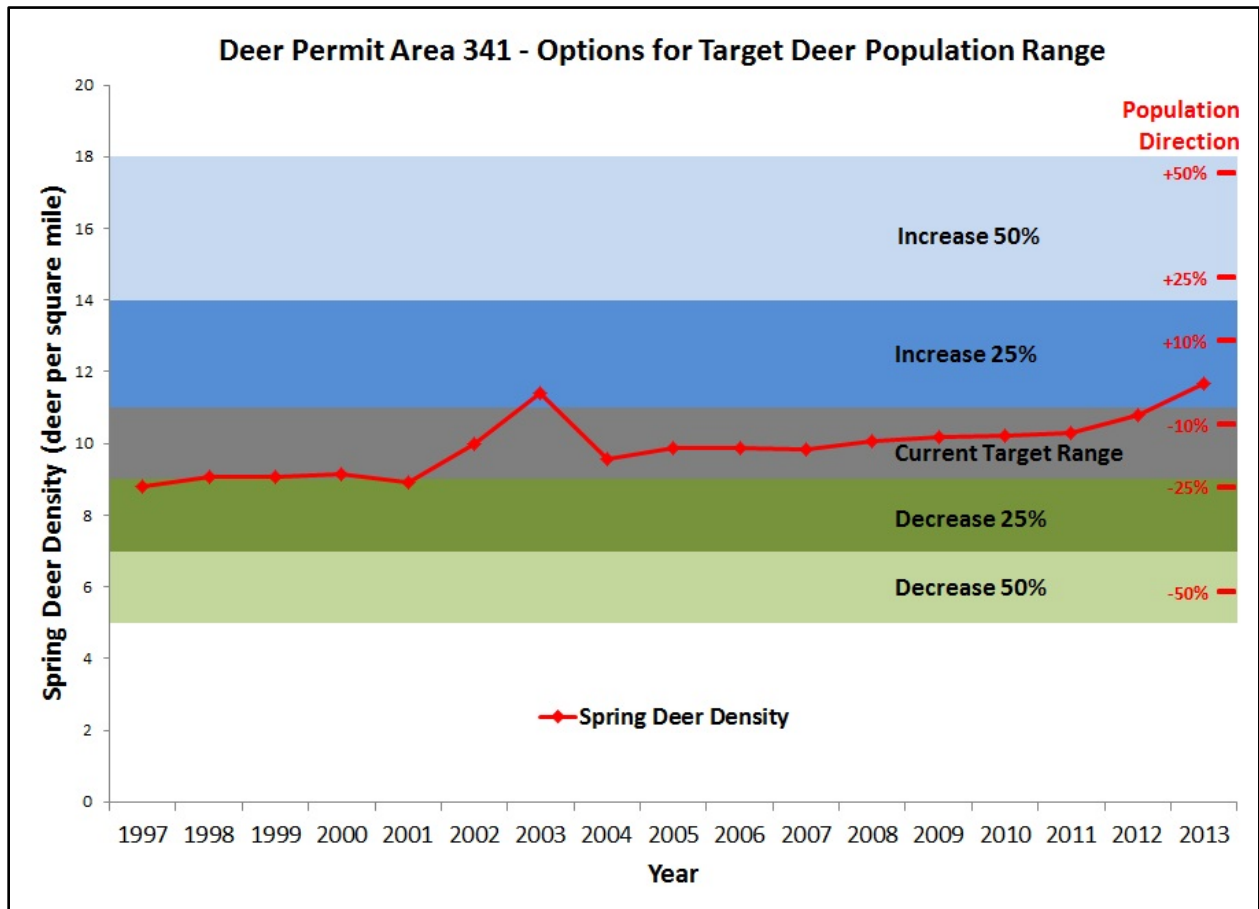
Previous population goals (2005-2007, 2012) were articulated as a trend in the population, as well as the magnitude of desired change (-50%, -25%, -10%, 0, +10%, +25%, +50%) from the density at the time of goal setting (i.e., increase, decrease or remain the same). To improve communication of

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population trends/goals, Minnesota DNR has chosen to articulate the new deer population goals as an adjustment from the current range (e.g., Decrease 50%, Decrease 25%, No Change, Increase 25%, Increase 50%). This approach results in contiguous density goal ranges as evident in the graphic below (Fig. 2) and a target deer density range that will not change based on population model recalibration (e.g., 11-14 deer per square mile). Information regarding the direction of change relative to the 2013 estimated density is reflected in the scale on the right-hand side of the graphic.

It is important to note that these population goals reflect pre-fawn, spring deer densities (i.e. the lowest densities of the year) for the total area within a DPA. Depending upon land cover in the permit area, densities per square mile of deer habitat would be somewhat-to-considerably higher.

Figure 2. Example of contiguous target deer density range options considered during goal setting.



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Final Goals

Stakeholder teams provided a recommendation for deer population goals in each permit area and Minnesota DNR accepted public comment on the permit area recommendations from April 8-April 20, 2014.

A very low number of comments (3-14 per permit area) were collected during the latter public input period. As a result, public comments pertaining to the team recommendations did not result in revision of the recommendations.

Based on the final review, DNR established 8 of the 9 goals as suggested by the team (Table 1). From the start of the process, DNR staff indicated that the intent was to accept the team recommendations unless we believed there was a compelling reason to revise those recommendations. However, a slight revision to the goal for permit area 342 was made to prevent a population increase of nearly 50 percent, which would have established a deer goal density range identical to that of permit area 346 even though the available habitat is not similarly comparable. In addition, only 3 percent of surveyed hunters desired such an increase and a number of team members suggested they would have preferred an intermediate level of increase. The revised density range still exceeds the level suggested by most (77%) survey respondents but better reflects desires identified from more recent public comment and advisory team discussion.

Table 1. Deer Population Goals for Southeast Minnesota

Permit Area	Deer per sq. mi within the permit area (pre-fawning)			Anticipated Impact on Population (from 2013 est.)
	2005 Target Density	2014 Team Goal	2014 Final Goal	
341	9-11	11-14	11-14	Increase (~10%)
342	10-14	14-18	12-16	Increase (~25%)
343	9-11	9-11	9-11	Decrease (~10%)
344	NA	406-496 legal buck harvest	406-496 legal buck harvest	Maintain
345	8-10	10-13	10-13	Increase (~10-25%)
346	14-18	14-18	14-18	Decrease (~50%)
347	9-11	11-14	11-14	Increase (~50%)
348	11-15	15-19	15-19	Increase (~25%)
349	15-19	15-19	15-19	Decrease (~50%)

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Note: More detail related to population goals for each permit area will be posted online during summer 2014.