2012 Deer Management Summary

&

2013 Recommendations
Deer in Weston

2008-2010: Commission and Board of Selectmen received a handful of letters regarding too many deer in Weston. Concerns mostly about landscape damage and Lyme Disease.
Deer in Weston

October 2011 – Conservation Commission launched a 9 month public outreach effort to learn about deer issues. Questions to be answered:

– Does Weston have an overpopulation of deer?
– If so, should Weston establish a sustainable level of deer density?
Deer in Weston

October 2011 - Evening presentation: DFW, Dover Board of Health, & Sudbury Conservation Commission

Sudbury - Deer Hunt History

- Parcels
- Applicants
- Permits
- Complaints
- Deer Taken

[Graph showing trends in numbers of Parcels, Applicants, Permits, Complaints, and Deer Taken from 1999 to 2010.]

White-Tailed Deer in Massachusetts

Presented by Patricia Huckery, MA Div. of Fisheries & Wildlife
Deer in Weston

December 2011 – Nature Walk with T. Rawinski to assess deer browse and tag seedlings.
Deer Survey

November 2011 – January 2012

Online Survey: Resident Deer Sightings and Deer Impact Assessment.

Total of 360 reports
1-12 deer per report
Deer in Weston

February 2012 – Evening Presentations

• Brian Donahue, Environmental Historian and Conservation Commission member
• Tom Rawinski, USFS Botanist
• Michele Grzenda, Conservation Agent – Summary of Online Survey

Deer and Forests, and the People Who Love Them

Thomas J. Rawinski
Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry
USDA Forest Service, Durham, NH
(trawinski@fs.fed.us)
Online Survey

• Through an online survey, the Conservation Commission gathered information on deer impacts in Weston on human health and property, including the spread of Lyme disease, deer-vehicle collisions, and damage to landscape plantings and agricultural crops.

• These are the results from 231 survey participants.
Online Survey

Have you or anyone from your family contracted Lyme disease?

Yes (40%)

No

Number of family members affected with Lyme disease:

- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1
Have you experienced landscape damage from deer?

Online Survey

Yes (72%)

No
Have you or anyone in your family hit a deer with your car in Weston?

![Graph showing number of deer incidents per year]

- **2012**: 6 incidents
- **2010**: 7 incidents
- **2008**: 2 incidents
- **2006**: 1 incident
- **2004**: 2 incidents
- **2002**: 1 incident
- **2000**: 0 incidents
Would you be in favor of Weston working towards establishing a sustainable level of deer density?

Yes (73%)

No
Deer Management Program

May 2012 – Con Com Public Meeting

• Discussed possible options to control deer and determined bow hunting was the only viable option
• Voted to recommend bow hunting on Conservation Land
• Published “Deer in Weston” Report
Deer Management Program

- **June 2012**: Board of Selectmen Meeting – voted to support program contingent upon review of hunting regulations
- **July 2012**: Con. Com. Drafted hunting regulations
- **July 2012**: Con. Com. and Selectmen voted to open five Conservation Land parcels to hunting in fall 2012
Deer Management Program

July 2012: hunter application period – 1 week

– Received over 70 applications for 26 slots
– Reviewed applications.
  Preference given to Weston residents & employees

WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

2012 BOWHUNTING APPLICATION

The Hunting Program is limited to bowhunters chosen by the Conservation Commission, based on experience, residency, & willingness to contribute to Weston’s Deer Management Program. Mail to Conservation Dept., P.O. Box 184, Weston, MA 02493, email to Conservation@westonmass.org, or fax to 781-768-0005 by 8/1/12.

1. Name: ______________________________
2. Address: ______________________________
3. Home Phone: ______________________________ 4. Work Phone: ______________________________
5. Cell Phone: ______________________________ 6. Email: ______________________________
7. Date of Birth: ______________________________ Social Security Number: ______________________________
   (This information will be kept confidential and will only be used in our background checks – see below)
8. No. of years spent bow hunting: ______________
9. No. of deer taken with bow in the last 3 yrs: ______=
   Antlers: ______= Buck: ______=
10. Bow Hunter safety course (if applicable): Date: ______________ Instructor: ______________________________
11. Have you ever been issued a violation from the Massachusetts Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife? (Please note that this information shall be verified.) o Yes o No (please check one)
12. Please list past volunteer work - in order if you have one (Ophir, Jersey, Dogtown Field, Blinny, Aquifer, Birds, Land)
13. Are you willing to contribute up to two hours of volunteer work for the Conservation Comm? ______

- I am aware that I am seeking to participate in a program to control deer population to prevent habitat destruction on Weston Conservation Lands and will first and foremost be providing a land management service for the Town of Weston.
- I agree to submit to a proficiency test established by the Weston Conservation Commission.
- I authorize the Town of Weston and the Environmental Police to run a background check and verify whether I have had any Fish and Game violations which would make me unsuitable for the program, and a background check by the Environmental Police.
- If I receive a permit, I will be required to and will:
  (1) Abide by the Weston Conservation Commission hunting regulations.
  (2) Invest significant hunting time throughout the archery season to maximize the likelihood of success.
  (3) Keep and submit weekly logs (these will be done electronically).
- I am aware that the Commission may cancel bow hunting on its lands and revoke my permit at any time, without cause.
Deer Management Program

- **August/September 2012**
  Worked with GIS Dept. on hunter maps showing 500’ buffer from structures.
Deer Management Program

September 2012

— Held Proficiency tests
— Ran Background checks
— Distributed hunter packets & access permits
Deer Management Program

October 2012

- Posted “Hunting is Open” signs at trail entrances
- Published FAQ on web and local paper (handout)
- First day of hunting was 10/15
- In Defense of Animals (IDA) sent out mass email to their members
- Selectmen received 300+ emails from IDA members
- IDA ran unsettling advertisement in local paper
Deer Management Program

October 2012, Cont.

- Brandeis Students met with T. Rawinski to discuss impacts of deer on forest understory
- Brian Donahue & students installed 2 deer exclosures
Deer Management Program

November and December

- Brandeis students continued vegetation monitoring
- Articles and letters (pro and con) in local paper
- Brandeis students installed 3rd deer exclosure
- Hunting season ended December 31, 2012
2012 Deer Hunting Results

- Ogilvie Forest - 4 deer
- Jericho Forest - 9 deer
- Sears Land - 1 deer
- Dickson Fields - 3 deer
- Blaney Aquifer - 1 deer

Deer Harvest: 18 deer
10 does, 8 bucks
Who are Weston’s Hunters?

– 5 Weston residents
– 5 Weston employees, former town employees, and municipal personnel from nearby towns (police, fire, & conservation)
– 5 who perform work for Weston residents (wetland scientists, landscapers, animal control experts)
– 10 who have years of hunting experience on public land with mixed uses, relatives of local police and fire personnel
– 1 female hunter

Occupations: doctor, college professors, police officers, firefighters, animal control agents
How much time did hunters spend in Weston?

- Hunting Effort: 25 hunters reported 306 hunting days
- Community Service: 47 hours of land management work
  - clearing trails
  - removing signs
  - cleaning debris from pond spillways
  - looking for illegal deer stands (3 found & removed)
Was the kill humane?

- 9 died in less than 1 minute
- 1 died within 5 minutes
- 4 died within 30 minutes
- 3 died within 1 hour
- 1 died within 5 hours
How far did the deer travel after being hit?

- < 50 Meters: 9
- < 100 Meters: 6
- < 200 Meters: 1

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How far did the arrow travel?
Hunter-Resident interactions during hunting season

8 hunters reported no interactions

Others reported positive conversations, such as the following:

• “I have had at least 20 conversations with individuals ranging from wanting to check out my equipment, how tree stands work, when do I do most of my hunting and so forth. Everyone has been very polite and receptive.”

• “One gentleman thanked me. He’d had Lyme disease and felt it was a good thing to harvest deer.”
Conservation Commission
Recommendation

The Commission deems that the program, including preparation, implementation, and follow-up, was successful. Eighteen deer were harvested on town conservation land.

On January 22, 2013, the Commission unanimously voted to request that the Selectmen allow the bow-hunting program to continue in 2013 at the same five properties.