

## Deer and Forest Health Improved for 2005

Deer abundance reached the goal level in 2005, due to a combination of hunter harvest with DMAP and antlerless tags and higher than normal winter-kill. Less deer in 2005 resulted in much more forage to go around, so does did better reproductively and more fawns survived through spring and fall.

Hunters will see fewer deer in the woods for the 2005 hunt, but there will be more branch-antlered bucks (about 15% more) than in 2003 and 2004. Additionally, these bucks should weigh more and antlers may be larger and heavier with more forage to grow bigger antlers.

Reduced deer abundance in 2005 resulted in a large improvement in quantity of forage. However, most of the increase was in deer-resistant species – striped maple and beech - which are not high in nutrition. The more preferred and more nutritious seedlings, like red maple, hemlock, sugar maple, and birches were still very scarce. If future deer abundance can be kept at the goal level, there will be more of the highly preferred and highly nutritious seedlings in the coming years. Wildlife habitat should also improve with greater diversity of seedlings, shrubs, and wildflowers.

Fall 2005 was also a better mast-producing year with acorns in great abundance. With improved forage this fall, and more winter forage, the deer herd should do even better in 2006. We will expect better doe reproduction, better fawn survival, smaller winter starvation losses, larger and healthier deer, and perhaps a slight increase in deer abundance.

As before, there were two areas in 2005 on the KQDC where deer abundance is still too high for the habitat and good deer condition. These two areas are circled in red on the map. Densities in other areas (circled in blue) are lower. Because the red areas are somewhat remote, and harder to get to, hunters going there should see more deer and more bucks.

There will be three check stations on the KQDC area in 2005 – the same ones as in 2004. Check stations are at the Warehouse Restaurant, Willows Restaurant, and Westline Inn (locations shown on map). Hours of operation are 10 am to 7 pm. All check stations are open the first two days of the hunt (November 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>) and the first Saturday (December 3<sup>rd</sup>). The Warehouse and Willows check stations will also be open the last Saturday of the hunt (December 10<sup>th</sup>). Hunters harvesting deer on the KQDC area are encouraged to bring their deer to the checking stations so we can assess herd health and antler characteristics.

Hunters bringing legal bucks to the check stations will get one raffle ticket: hunters bringing antlerless deer will receive two raffle tickets. Successful hunters will be invited to the hunter appreciation banquet February 18<sup>th</sup> 2006 at the Willows Restaurant. In addition to a great meal and a panel of speakers there will be a raffle that will include black powder rifles and other hunting gear.