

# PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR WHITE-TAILED DEER MANAGEMENT IN MAINE

Prepared by: Gerald Lavigne  
January 2000

The following list describes broad-scale problems that have been identified during the drafting of the assessment, or during discussions with the working group. The potential list of problems that need to be overcome to attain deer objectives may be incomplete. Thoughtful review by the working group of problem statements and potential strategies to overcome identified problems will help ensure success of this strategic planning effort. Note that the finer details of setting doe harvest quotas are already accomplished using the Deer Population Management System.

**Problem 1:** Area of wintering habitat used by deer is not fully quantified.

Strategy 1.1: Standardize methods used to inventory DWAs among all regions.

Strategy 1.2: Refine and maintain a deer wintering habitat database to track progress toward attaining long-term DWA objectives.

**Problem 2:** Proportion of the landbase in functioning wintering habitat in most WMDs is below long-term objective.

Strategy 2.1: Develop a comprehensive habitat initiative to increase the deer wintering area resource.

**Problem 3:** We need unambiguous indices describing relationship of deer to their winter carrying capacity.

Strategy 3.1: Conduct research to identify which indices are most useful/affordable in monitoring deer density relative to winter carrying capacity.

Strategy 3.2: Implement a monitoring program designed to ensure deer remain in balance with wintering habitat.

**Problem 4:** Fifteen years of bucks-only hunting has failed to achieve significant increases in some Downeast WMDs. Deer are to be increased to 50 to 60% of winter carrying capacity.

## *White-tailed Deer Problems and Strategies*

Strategy 4.1: Conduct the research necessary to identify and prioritize those factors limiting deer recovery in downeast WMDs.

Strategy 4.2: Implement a deer population recovery program Downeast.

**Problem 5:** Hunter demographics may be changing, thereby impeding attainment of deer harvest prescriptions.

Strategy 5.1: Intensify surveys designed to monitor deer hunting participation among WMDs, on a yearly basis.

Strategy 5.2: Develop initiatives to increase deer hunting participation among younger residents of Maine and/or non-residents.

Strategy 5.3: Develop initiatives to better distribute hunter effort where needed to accomplish necessary harvest levels, or to minimize conflicts with landowners.

**Problem 6:** Human tolerance to negative impacts of deer varies in time and place.

Strategy 6.1: Periodically survey landowner attitudes toward deer population and its impacts.

Strategy 6.2: Implement a program designed to monitor deer roadkill trends and landowner complaints of deer browsing damage.

**Problem 7:** The relationship between deer density and human risk of Lyme disease is not completely understood.

Strategy 7.1: Conduct research needed to determine relationship between deer density and human risk of Lyme disease.

Strategy 7.2: Re-evaluate deer population objectives in light of research findings.

**Problem 8:** Access restrictions limit our ability to regulate deer populations.

Strategy 8.1: Conduct landscape-level research to determine land ownership/deer hunter access patterns in central and southern WMDs.

Strategy 8.2: Implement a program designed to increase deer hunting access on privately owned land.

## *White-tailed Deer Problems and Strategies*

Strategy 8.3: Implement a program designed to increase town government support of deer hunting programs where deer are above population objectives.

Strategy 8.4: Use legislative and rule-making authorities to open towns and individual sanctuaries currently closed to deer hunting.

Strategy 8.5: Address Warden Service concerns that some landowners are misusing deer depredation permits.

Strategy 8.6: Develop a Departmental policy clarifying the conditions under which non-traditional methods of deer control will be permitted.

**Problem 9**: Lack of funding and staffing to address research (data gathering) and management needs.

Strategy 9.1: Actively seek support for sufficient additional staff and financial resources to address research (data gathering) and management needs. Reallocating existing staff and financial resources is not feasible, as it would prevent achieving management goals and objectives for other species.