

# WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
**FROM:** WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** 2013 DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY  
**DATE:** 2/20/2014

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Weston Conservation Commission completed the second year of its Deer Management Program. This multifaceted program includes studying the effects of deer on Weston's forests, educating residents on Lyme disease and deer tick prevention, and reducing the deer population to ecologically appropriate levels.

As the result of a town meeting warrant article submitted by a group of concerned residents who wanted to ban hunting on all town land, the Commission organized several outreach and educational events. In April 2013, the Commission held a nature walk at the Sears Conservation Land where U.S. Forest Service Botanist Thomas Rawinski showed participants how to identify and monitor the extent of deer browse in a forest.



Later that month, The Commission held a Deer Management Forum. Dr. Sam Telford of Tufts University gave a talk entitled, "Lyme, Ticks, Deer, and Mice: What are the Connections?" Dr. Allen Rutberg from the Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine spoke on "The Complex Relationship Between Tick-Borne Illness, Ticks, Their Hosts, and What Practical Approaches Communities Can Take to Reduce the Incidence of These Diseases." Dr John McDonald, Assistant Professor at Westfield State University, gave a talk on "Deer Biology and Management Options."

The Conservation Commission has established several vegetation monitoring programs to assess the long-term effects of deer browse on Weston's forests. With help from the Weston Garden Clubs, lady slipper abundance was assessed at several conservation lands. The Commission continues its assessment on seedling growth along transects established at the Sears Land. In addition, four deer exclosures are being monitored by Brandeis University students.

At May Town meeting, after a lengthy discussion, residents voted in overwhelming support of the Commission's Deer Management Program by not banning hunting on town land.

Below, please find the summary from the 2013 hunting season, and the recommendations for 2014.

### **Results based on Hunter Log Database**

- The following five properties were open to regulated hunting: Sears Land, Blaney Aquifer, Ogilvie Town Forest, Jericho Town Forest and Dickson Fields.
- A total of 20 deer were harvested from 26 hunters – 13 does and 7 bucks.
- A total of 348 hunting days were reported from 26 hunters (a hunter day reflects a hunting event entered into the electronic hunter log database). On average, each of the hunters participated in 13 hunting days during the season.
- Hunters donated a total of 63 hours of land management work clearing trails, removing signage, looking for illegal deer stands, and picking up trash/litter.
- Hunters discovered three illegal deer stands. These were removed from Weston Conservation land.
- Several hunters observed deer being chased by unleashed dogs.
- Other wildlife observed by hunters included red-tailed hawk, fisher, owl, coyotes, red fox, turkey, raccoon, chipmunks, squirrels.
- Hunter/resident interaction – Hunters reported many positive interactions with residents.
- No hunting complaints from Weston residents were reported to the Police Department, the Conservation Commission or the Massachusetts Environmental Police.



### **Other 2013 Deer Population Impacts**

- 23 deer-car collisions were reported to the Weston Police Dept.
- According to the MA Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife, 22 additional deer were harvested on private land in Weston.

### **Conservation Commission Recommendation**

The Commission deems that the program, including preparation, implementation, and follow-up, was successful. Over the course of two years, 38 deer have been harvested on town conservation land (and an additional 40 on private land). No conflicts between hunters and other recreational users of the land have been reported.

In addition to continuing the regulated deer hunting at the five properties discussed above, on February 18, 2014, the Commission unanimously voted to expand the program and open Highland Forest to limited hunting in 2014.

The Commission is available to meet with the Selectmen to discuss this summary and recommendation.