White-tailed Deer Management

Employee Survey Results and Path Forward

Community Advisory Council

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BROOKHAVEN
NATIONAL LABORATORY

a passion for discovery

Office of Science
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Quick History

- Mid-1980s – Onsite hunting suspended
- 1997 – Deer population estimated at ~700 animals
- 1999 – Initial discussions for population management
- 2001 – Routine population surveys begin
- 2003 – Management discussions seek "Regional Approach" to deer management
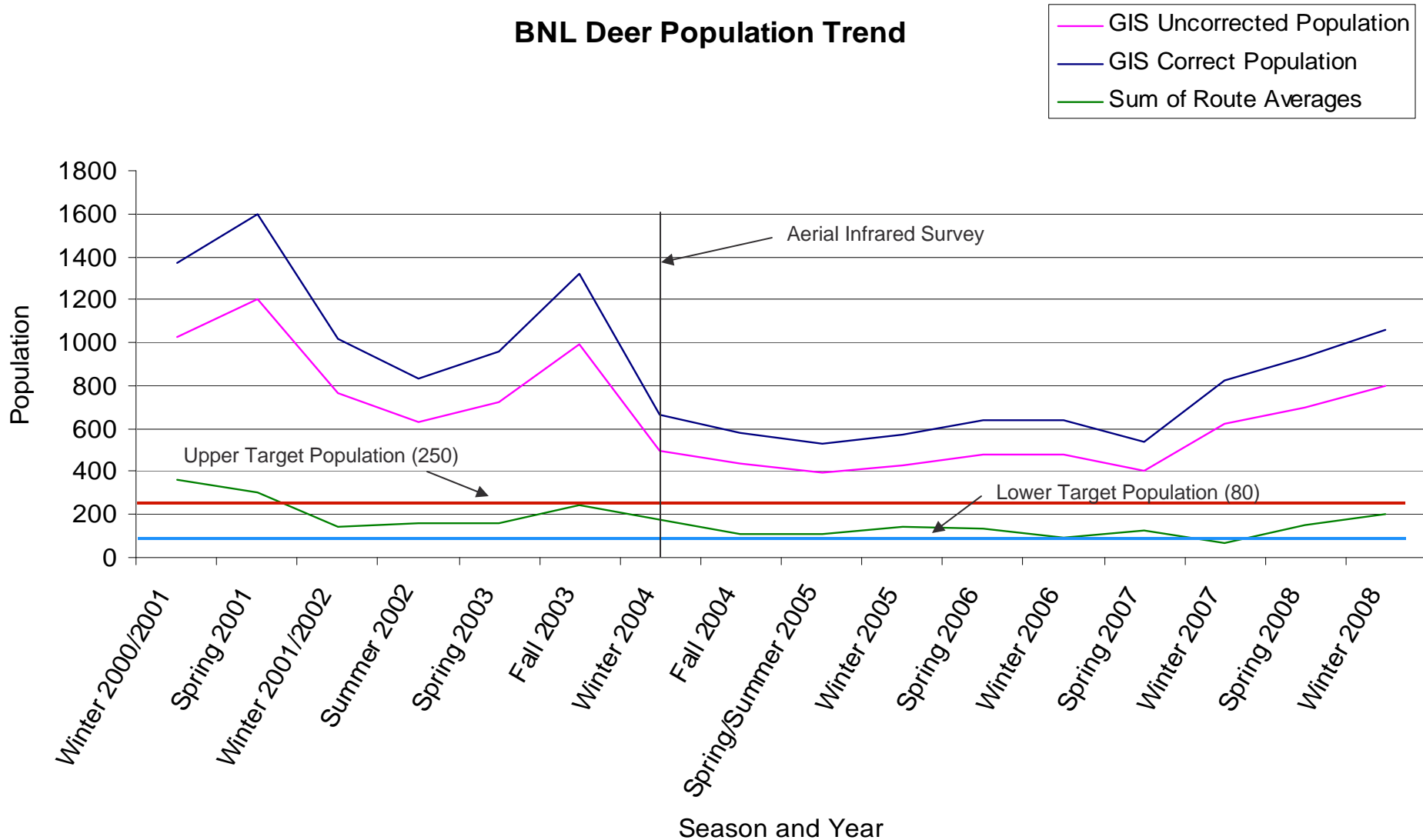- 2007 – Issue and Decision Paper written to compare onsite management options

Deer Management
Basis for Recommendation

- Population

  - Current estimate ~800 animals

  - Peak population ~1,200 in 2001

  - Optimal population 80 – 250 animals

- Effects on ecosystem

  - Loss of rare plants

  - Lack of forest regeneration (seedlings –> no saplings)

  - Browse lines

  - Potential affects on forest nesting birds

  - Overall health of the deer herd
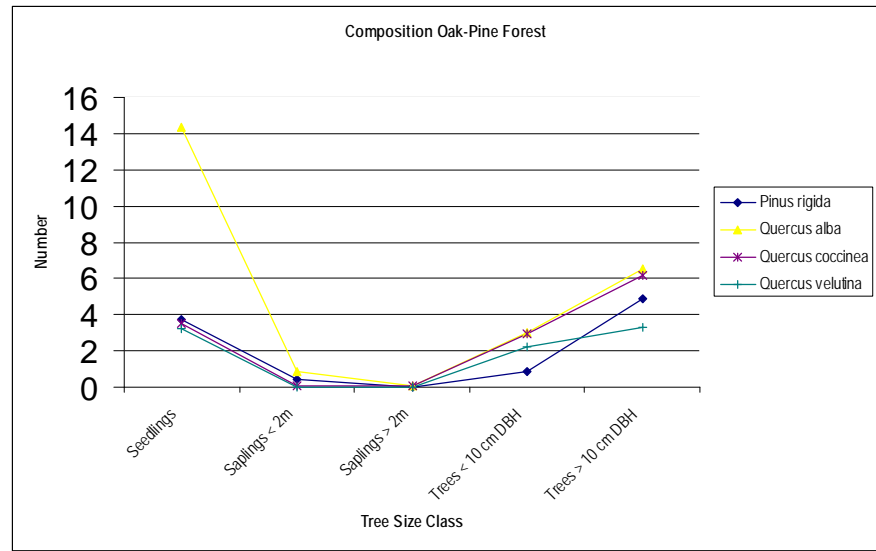
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Deer Population Trend

BNL Deer Population Trend

Browse line caused by deer.

Alteration of forest structure, due to deer?

Deer damage to ornamental plantings.

Winter mortality due to high population and poor physical condition.

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Employee Input

- BNL Policy Council requested involvement of employees and stakeholders
- Two brown bag presentations on management alternatives were held
  - Employees recommended that an all hands survey be conducted.
    - Survey Developed - ~ 2800 surveys distributed in Oct. 2008
    - 828 responses
    - Results were shared with employees through a Monday Memo article

Survey Results

- **Statement 1** – The Lab should have a program to manage the deer population on the BNL property.

  78% of respondents agreed

  13% of the respondents disagreed

  4% weren't sure of the need

  4% either didn't mark the question or marked "other"

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Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 2** – I think the Lab should take No Action with regard to deer management.

  18% of respondents agreed

  75% of respondents disagreed

  7% of respondents did not mark a response

Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 3** – Attitudes toward deer – 698 responses

  12% of respondents indicated enjoyment of deer without worry

  84% of respondents indicated enjoyment of deer, but worry about issues associated with deer

  4% of respondents don't enjoy deer

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Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 4** – I think the Lab should use contracted professionals to quickly reduce (cull) the deer population – 634 responses

  41% of respondents agree

  46% of respondents disagree

  13% of respondents marked "don't know"

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Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 5** – I think the Lab should use licensed archers to control the deer population through a managed hunting program – 627 responses

  55% of respondents agree

  35% of respondents disagree

  10% of respondents marked "don't know"

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Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 6** – I think the Lab should conduct both a cull (using professionals) and use licensed archers to control the deer population – 649 responses

  33% of respondents agree

  51% of respondents disagree

  16% of respondents marked "don't know"

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Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 7** – What is your preference for managing deer? Please rank in priority order 1-3 with 1 being highest priority – 545 responses

  #1 Archery

  #2 Combination of Culling and Archery

  #3 Culling

Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 8** – Are you a hunter? – 675 responses

  87% of respondents are non-hunters
  13% of respondents are hunters

Survey Results (cont.)

- **Statement 9** – Would you be willing to serve on a committee to work on wildlife management issues?

  145 individuals said yes and provided contact information

Results Summary

- Approximately 75% of employees think deer management is needed

- A high percentage of respondents don't hunt

- No clear cut method of control was identified

Path Forward

- In order to develop a plan we will maintain open communications and continue to gather input
  - Hold information sessions on all alternatives
  - Develop a website to make information available
- Develop a plan toward implementation
  - Establish a management planning committee
    - Will include internal and external stakeholders
      - Internal – Environmental, Safety, Security,
      - Community Relations, DOE, etc.
      - External – NYSDEC, USDA-Wildlife Services, etc.
  - Conduct NEPA assessment; have comment period available to public
  - Determine preferred method(s)
  - Implement