

# WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
**FROM:** WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** 2016 DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY  
**DATE:** 4/26/2017

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Weston Conservation Commission completed the fifth 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.

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 Club, lady slipper abundance was assessed at several conservation lands. A total of ten deer exclosures are being monitored by Brandeis University students and Harvard Forest. Two high school teachers are utilizing a deer exclosure by the Middle School to study, with their students, the effects of deer on vegetation.

Below, please find the summary from the 2016 hunting season, and our recommendations for 2017.

### Results based on Hunter Log Database

- The following nine properties were open to regulated hunting: Blaney Aquifer, Coburn Meadows, College Pond Conservation Area (new this year), Dickson Fields, Doublet Hill, Highland Forest, Ogilvie Town Forest, Jericho Town Forest, and Sears Land.
- A total of 32 deer were harvested from 34 hunters – 14 does and 18 bucks.
- A total of 374 hunting days were reported from 34 hunters (a hunter day reflects a hunting event entered into the electronic hunter log database). On average, each of the hunters participated in 11 hunting days during the season.
- Hunters donated a total of 72 hours of land management work clearing trails, installing and removing temporary hunting signage, looking for illegal deer stands, and picking up trash/litter.
- Several hunters observed deer being chased by unleashed dogs. Other wildlife observed by hunters included red-tailed hawk, fisher, owl, coyotes, red fox, turkey, chipmunks, and squirrels.
- Hunter/resident interaction – Hunters reported many positive interactions with residents.



### Other 2016 Deer Population Impacts

- 22 deer-car collisions were reported to the Weston Police Dept.
- According to the MA Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife, 19 additional deer were harvested on private land in Weston.

| Cause of Deer Morality in Weston    | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Deer/car collisions <sup>i</sup>    | 28   | 26   | 24   | 23   | 34   | 28   | 22   |
| Deer harvested on conservation land | N/A  | N/A  | 18   | 20   | 25   | 26   | 32   |
| Deer harvested on private land      | 18   | 12   | 18   | 22   | 19   | 14   | 19   |
| <b>Total</b>                        | 46   | 38   | 60   | 65   | 78   | 68   | 73   |

| Conservation Land              | Huntable acres | # hunters | # deer harvested |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|
| Blaney Aquifer                 | 23             | 3         | 5                |
| Coburn Meadows                 | 5              | 1         | 0                |
| College Pond Conservation Area | 20             | 2         | 1                |
| Dickson Fields                 | 23             | 3         | 2                |
| Doublet Hill                   | 24             | 2         | 0                |
| Highland Forest                | 203            | 4         | 4                |
| Jericho Town Forest            | 572            | 12        | 13               |
| Ogilvie Town Forest            | 197            | 5         | 6                |
| Sears Land                     | 87             | 2         | 1                |
| <b>Total</b>                   | 1,154          | 34        | 32               |

### Conservation Commission Recommendation

The Commission deems that the program, including preparation, implementation, and follow-up, was successful. Over the course of five years, 121 deer have been harvested on town conservation land (and an additional 92 on private land).

In addition to continuing the regulated deer hunting at the nine properties discussed above, on April 25, 2017, the Commission unanimously voted to expand the program as follows:

- Open a portion of Old Road Conservation Area to limited hunting in 2017.
- Begin discussions with MWRA to determine their interest in opening Norumbega Reservoir to hunting.
- Assess various options the town can pursue regarding major deer damage experienced by Land's Sake Inc. at 40-acre field and other fields they farm in town.

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

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<sup>i</sup> Only collisions reported to the Weston Police Dept. are noted here. In general, car insurance companies don't require a police report to be filed and therefore, many deer-car collisions are not reported to the Police Dept.