

# WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
**FROM:** WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** 2017 DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY  
**DATE:** APRIL 6, 2018

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Weston Conservation Commission has completed the sixth 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 located near the Middle School to study, with their students, the effects of deer browse on vegetation.

In addition, Tom Rawinski, Botanist for the US Forest Service, recently re-surveyed stem growth from several tagged Sugar Maple saplings at the Sears land. Changes between 2013 and 2017 stem height suggest that the monitored saplings grew taller over the past four years, experiencing a mean increase of 7 inches of height. While this is only the first period of growth measurement, this healthy level of growth suggests that the Sears land is experiencing minimal deer browse pressure. Little evidence of recent browse damage to the branches was observed.

Below, please find the summary from the 2017 hunting season, and our recommendations for 2018.

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

- The following nine properties were open to regulated hunting: Blaney Aquifer, Coburn Meadows, College Pond Conservation Area, Dickson Fields, Doublet Hill, Highland Forest, Ogilvie Town Forest, Jericho Town Forest, Old Road (new this year), and the Sears Land.
- A total of 29 deer were harvested from 38 hunters – 18 does and 11 bucks.
- A total of 385 hunting/scouting days were reported from 31 hunters (a hunter day reflects a hunting event entered into the electronic hunter log database). On average, each of the hunters participated in 12 hunting days during the season.
- Hunters donated a total of 88 hours of land management work clearing trails, installing and removing temporary hunting signage, looking for illegal deer stands, picking up trash and litter, and repainting the Dickson riding ring and the speed humps along the Melone House driveway.



- Hunters observed dogs running in the woods unattended.
- Other wildlife observed by hunters included red-tailed hawk, fisher, owl, coyotes, red fox, turkey, chipmunks, and squirrels.
- Hunter/resident interaction – Hunters reported numerous positive interactions with residents.

**Other 2017 Deer Population Impacts**

- 20 deer-car collisions were reported to the Weston Police Dept. Unfortunately, one of these resulted in a human fatality.
- According to the MA Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife, 19 additional deer were harvested on private land in Weston.

<b>Cause of Deer Morality in Weston</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>Deer/car collisions<sup>i</sup></b>	28	26	24	23	34	28	22	20
<b>Deer harvested on conservation land</b>	N/A	N/A	18	20	25	26	32	29
<b>Deer harvested on private land</b>	18	12	18	22	19	14	19	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>71</b>

<b>Conservation Land</b>	<b>Huntable acres</b>	<b># hunters</b>	<b># deer harvested in 2017</b>
<b>Blaney Aquifer</b>	23	3	4
<b>Coburn Meadows</b>	5	1	3
<b>College Pond Conservation Area</b>	20	2	0
<b>Dickson Fields</b>	23	3	2
<b>Doublet Hill</b>	24	2	0
<b>Highland Forest</b>	203	5	3
<b>Jericho Town Forest</b>	572	14	9
<b>Ogilvie Town Forest</b>	197	5	5
<b>Old Road</b>	5	1	0
<b>Sears Land</b>	87	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,159</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>29</b>

**Conservation Commission Recommendation**

The Commission deems that the program, including preparation, implementation, and follow-up, continues to be successful. Over the course of six years, 150 deer have been harvested on town conservation land (and an additional 114 on private land).

In addition to continuing the regulated deer hunting at the nine properties discussed above, on April 3, 2018, the Commission unanimously voted to expand the program as follows:

- Open Trailside Conservation Area to limited hunting
- Continue discussions with MWRA to consider 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.