

**WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON FORESTRY**  
**Position Paper on**  
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WHITE-TAILED DEER MANAGEMENT AND**  
**WISCONSIN FORESTS**  
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White-tailed deer are broadly recognized as a keystone wildlife species in Wisconsin. The intertwined relationship between healthy deer populations, hunter experience, and forest management is complicated. The Wisconsin Council on Forestry recognizes the following:

- Deer hunting and wildlife viewing are both economically and culturally important in Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin's forest products industry is the second largest industry in our state, contributing \$24 billion annually to Wisconsin's economy.
- Proper forest management sustains our forest products industry and at the same time improves access, ecosystem diversity, and wildlife habitat for a wide variety of species, including white-tailed deer.
- Providing desirable habitat at landscape levels encourages broader distribution of species.

Healthy, managed forests can contribute significantly to healthy, abundant wildlife populations. Successful tree regeneration is a critical component of sustainable forest management. Healthy tree regeneration has the potential to attract and concentrate white-tailed deer populations leading to excessive browsing and regeneration failure. Finding the balance between white-tailed deer numbers and successful forest regeneration is critical to the future of our forests and the forest products industry in Wisconsin.

Ecological impacts to Wisconsin's forests in areas of heavy browsing are well documented. However, the true economic impact to Wisconsin's forest products industry is unknown at this time, as is the ability of the forest to recover from heavy browsing.

Low deer populations can result in undesirable hunting experiences and decreased wildlife viewing opportunities. Contributions to Wisconsin's economy from hunting of white-tailed deer and wildlife viewing are important and deserve consideration.

In recent years, changes have occurred regarding the management of Wisconsin's white-tailed deer populations. Development of County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) has empowered deer hunters and foresters, as well as tourism, transportation, tribal interests, urban interests, and agriculture with a role in regulating deer populations within their respective county. It is important to note that having a seat at the table on a CDAC comes with a responsibility to consider all of the related issues and science of deer management. Including the relationship between deer and sustainable forest management.

Wisconsin's Council on Forestry believes it is time to work toward better understanding of how white-tailed deer hunters' expectations and professional foresters' goals for sustainable forest management can complement each other to realize societies' need for renewable forest resources. Decisions related to county deer population levels must consider impacts of disproportionate deer densities that contribute to poor hunter experience in some areas and significant impacts on forests from deer browse in other areas.

Because of the intertwined relationship, Wisconsin's Council on Forestry encourages CDAC members and all Wisconsin deer hunters to value the voice of professional foresters and the role of sustainable forest management in deer management decisions. Healthy forests are important to the citizens of Wisconsin and to all wildlife populations. Prolonging a disproportionate balance between deer numbers and healthy forests will, in the long run, do a great disservice to our natural resources, Wisconsin's forest products industry, and all aspects of outdoor recreation.