

2009 ANNUAL WHITE-TAILED DEER HUNT PROGRAM
National Conservation Training Center
January 27, 2009

This plan is an annual step-down plan from the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) White-tailed Deer Management Environmental Assessment and the NCTC White-tailed Deer Hunt Management Plan (2003). Its purpose is to define the process, guidelines, and special regulations for the 2009 hunt and other deer population control measures planned for 2009 and the winter of 2009-2010. Please refer to the above mentioned documents for further and more in-depth discussion on white-tailed deer management at the NCTC.

Professional Removal/Sharpshooting

The method used to control the deer population at NCTC during the last five years has been a managed hunt focused primarily on antlerless deer during the regular hunting season. While beneficial, this hunt has not been harvesting enough deer to achieve a population level in balance with the available habitat. Based on the spotlight survey a minimum of 44 antlerless deer should be harvested just to keep the population from increasing further. Twenty six antlerless deer were harvested during the regular managed hunt. Therefore a minimum of 18 more antlerless deer should be harvested, with a planned maximum of 30. Reducing the deer herd this winter is especially important since there was not an acorn crop this fall and the deer have eaten most of the palatable woody plants within their reach. At this time the deer are surviving mostly on grass, most of the palatable grass has been eaten, and snow could easily cover what is left. In the winter of 2009-2010 a new herd reduction target will be determined, depending on the results of the regular-season hunt, the remaining population and the habitat conditions.

After considering various possibilities it was determined the best option for addressing the immediate problem is to use skilled marksmen to remove deer from the herd, and the venison provided to local food banks, homeless shelters, and others in need via the Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH) , a well-regarded non-profit organization. This would be done in the following manner:

The NCTC Land Manager will obtain a permit from WV Division of Natural Resources and will meet at NCTC with the FHFH coordinator for the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia to provide an orientation and plan the hunt.

The hunt will be conducted on a weekend or weekends during the period of 4:30 PM Friday to 11:59 PM on Saturday, or other times when there are no guests at NCTC. The designated marksmen hunters will be oriented by the NCTC Land Manager and harvest only antlerless deer under the supervision of the NCTC Land Manager or his designee. In similar situations these marksmen have shown an ability to dispatch deer quickly and humanely. To the best of the marksmen's ability to discern, button bucks will be avoided.

The FHFH-affiliated marksmen will clean the deer in a designated area and transport them to a Dept. of Agriculture-approved butcher for processing. The meat will be provided to food banks, homeless shelters and others in need in the Western Panhandle of WV. In order to reduce expenses to FHFH, NCTC may cover all or a portion of the cost of processing the meat.

In addition to the FHFH marksmen, designated NCTC or WV DNR employees may harvest deer – within the stipulations of a DNR-issued permit or as an approved function of the job – to provide deer carcasses for educational purposes or eliminate deer that are injured or in obviously unhealthy condition. As appropriate these deer may be used for necropsy, sent off for disease sampling, buried, or donated to a non-profit organization such as FHFH. No NCTC employee may keep any portion of any deer harvested under a WV DNR permit other than a biological specimen for educational purposes at NCTC.

After the initial herd reduction an evaluation will be carried out and it will be decided if further reduction is needed. Also, plans are being made to increase hunting opportunities at NCTC in the fall of 2009 and beyond, so that a greater number of does are taken during the regular managed hunt. Following the regular-season hunts in the fall of 2009, an evaluation of the remaining deer population will be made and another permit sought if appropriate.

Archery Hunting

Plans are being discussed for archery hunting for deer in the fall of 2009. This plan will be revised prior to the hunt when dates are determined and rules are developed.

Shotgun and Muzzleloader Hunting

White-tailed deer hunting on the NCTC will be held in the fall of 2009 in a manner similar to 2008 and previous years. Effort will be made to allow additional hunting or otherwise increase the success rate. This plan will be revised prior to the hunt when dates are determined and revised rules are developed.