

Deer Goals and Status

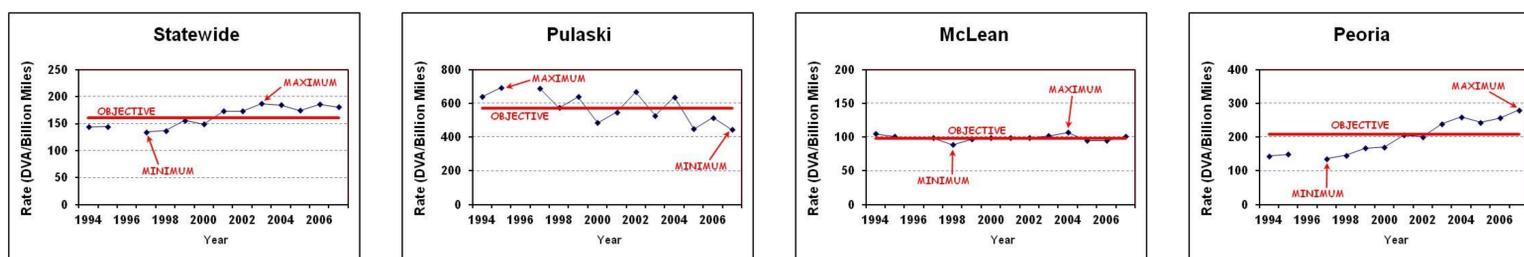
Background

In 2007 the Illinois General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 65, which created the Joint Task Force (JTF) on Deer Population Control. The General Assembly's concern was that (*in their words*) "deer overpopulation is rampant in some counties in Illinois." The Task Force was charged "to examine and make recommendations on ways to manage the Illinois deer population." The Task Force consisted of 15 members, of which 8 were members of the General Assembly (or their appointee). The JTF met 4 times between April and October 2008, and conducted a series of 6 public meetings around the state to seek public comment about changes that were being considered.

The JTF recommended that the Late-Winter Deer Season be lengthened, and that permits for that season be made available over-the-counter. Most significantly, they recommended that the rate of deer/vehicle accidents be used as the objective by which to judge the success or failure of deer management programs. The specific target rate (both statewide and at the county level) was set at halfway between the minimum and maximum rates measured during the period 1994-2007. This rate corresponded to a decrease of 14% in the accident rate from the statewide peak observed during 2003, and an 11% reduction from 2007 levels. The Department has been using these objectives since that time, although modifications were made to accommodate the five central Illinois counties formerly in the "Restricted Archery Zone".

Examples

Below are some examples demonstrating how deer/vehicle accident objectives were set.



Current Status

The Illinois Department of Transportation is still compiling accident figures for 2012, but significant strides had been made through 2011 in achieving statewide DVA objectives (see graph). As counties reach population objectives, they are removed from the Late-Winter Season and permit quotas are adjusted as necessary to relieve harvest pressure and stabilize populations. The number of counties open to the Late-Winter Antlerless Season during the 2012 hunting season was 55, compared to 76 in 2008 (a few counties have been moved into the Special CWD Season). Biologists are examining the existing county-specific goals, as the original goal-setting methodology may have called for greater reductions in certain counties than needed.

