

DMU 487

Northern Multi-County Deer Management Unit

Area Description

Deer Management Unit (DMU) 487 is a multi-county DMU created to address bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in the Northern Lower Peninsula Region (NLP). This DMU incorporates Alcona, Alpena, Iosco, Montmorency, Oscoda, and Presque Isle Counties (Figure 4). These are the counties that surround DMU 452 which is the core bTB area. DMU 487 is approximately 3,035 square miles in size, about 37% of which is public land. The remainder of land is in private ownership. Topography varies from rolling hills to areas that are relatively flat. Soils range from sandy types that are well drained to poorly drained muck. The landscape consists primarily of large private hunt clubs managed for deer hunting with interspersed agricultural lands and blocks of public land, primarily in the southern and western part of the unit. The large hunt clubs are dominated by forest land and provide excellent habitat for deer. Some forested habitat has been negatively impacted by high deer numbers and historic use for cattle pasture. The agricultural lands are used for pasture and row crops.

Management Guidance

One goal guides deer management in this DMU: bTB eradication. Tuberculosis surveillance in deer continues to be an important activity in this unit, with most animals tested coming voluntarily from hunter harvested deer. DMU 487 is the core bTB area where over 97% of the bTB positive deer in Michigan have been found (Figure 1). In recent years, with a ten-year trend of 1.7% and a three-year trend of 1.8% apparent prevalence, there has been little change within the bTB core area (Figure 2). Maintaining a management program that keeps deer numbers low minimizes bTB transmission and aligns with the goal of eradication. Increased antlerless harvest reduces the risk of transmission by lowering deer populations and densities. Other tools aimed at increasing deer harvest include an early and late antlerless deer season as well as liberal Disease Control Permits, Deer Damage Permits and Deer Management Assistance Permits available to landowners in the DMU. In addition, enforcement of the current bans on baiting and feeding should continue, as high deer concentrations caused by these activities increase bTB transmission.

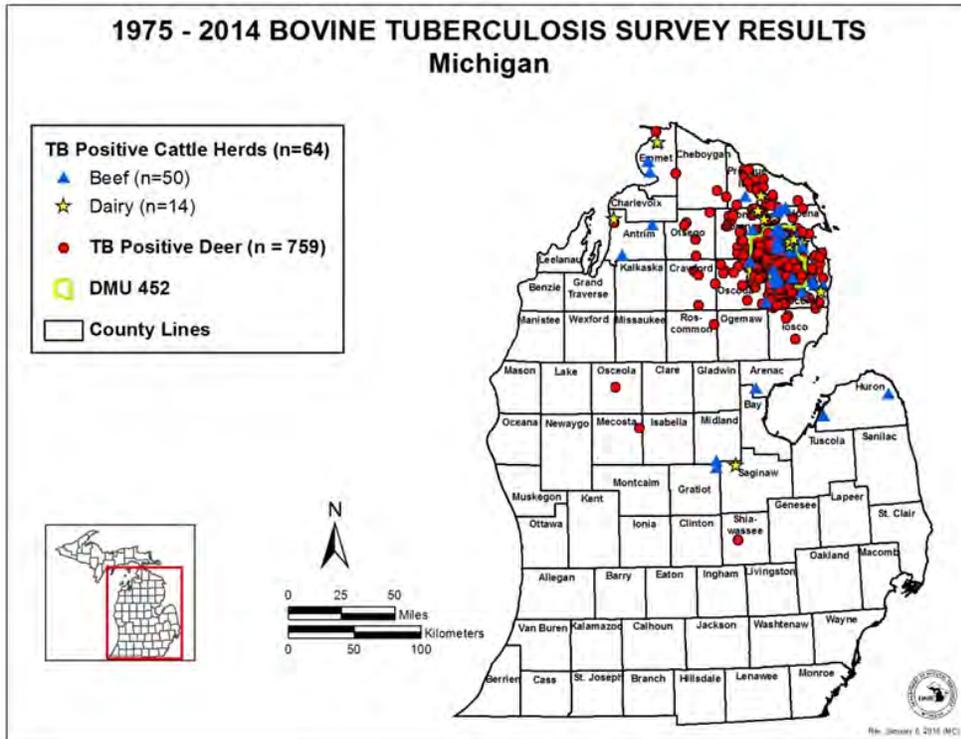


Figure 1 Bovine Tuberculosis survey results in Michigan.

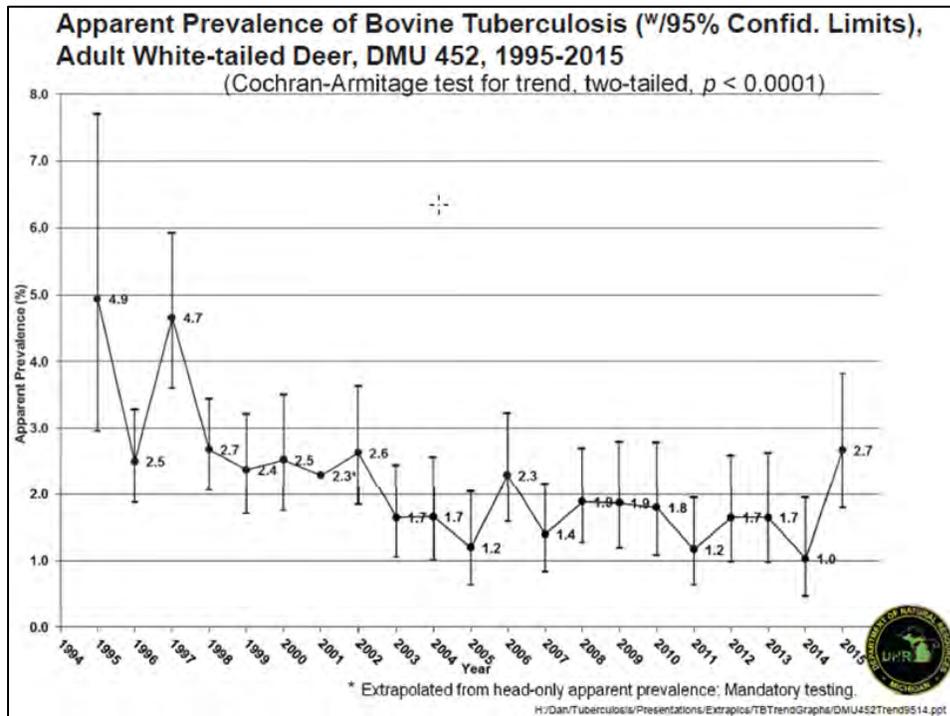


Figure 2: Bovine Tuberculosis prevalence in in deer within DMU 452.

Population Assessment Factors

Deer Harvest Analysis

From 2008-2014, antlerless harvest trended alongside buck harvest. In 2015, antlerless harvest dropped below antlered harvest. This decrease in antlerless harvest should be monitored and addressed if it continues. Antlerless deer have been legal to take on any kill tag in the DMU since 2010, but it is not clear whether this effected the ratio of bucks to does harvested. Over 80% of the unit is private land and there is reluctance from some hunters to take more antlerless deer on their own property. Regardless, liberal antlerless license availability increases opportunities for hunters and fits our management goals. As discussed above, increased antlerless harvest reduces deer populations and densities, thereby reducing the potential for bTB transmission.

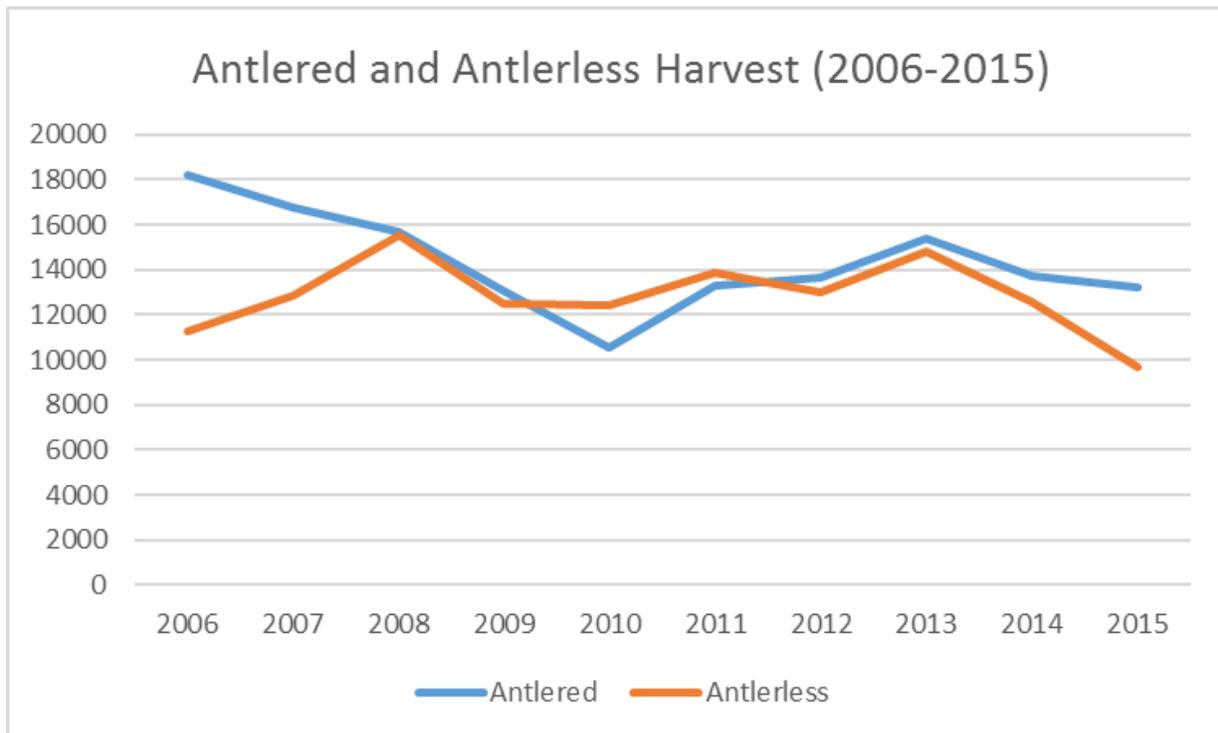


Figure 3: Recreational antlerless and antlered deer harvest in DMU 487.

Disease Control Permits

Participation in the Disease Control Permit program has varied. Regardless of availability, the number of deer taken on DCPs has remained at a low level, never exceeding 5% of harvest with an average of 2% between 2001-2015. When compared to the number of antlerless deer killed by hunting, it has little to no lasting impact on the size of the overall herd. The success in this program is that individual cattle farmers are provided with a tool to address deer coming in with cattle or cattle feed sources, reducing their risk of bTB transmission. It also furthers our deer management objective of increased harvest in DMU 487. This program should continue to be available to farmers that desire to protect their cattle in this manner.

Deer Management Recommendations

In the ongoing effort to control bTB in deer, and given that DMU 487 is a multi-county DMU created to address bTB in the NLP, it is recommended that public and private land antlerless availability remain liberal in this DMU. Increasing the harvest of deer in this unit is essential for bTB management. Offering effectively unlimited antlerless licenses, maintaining the current feeding and baiting bans, offering DCPs to those willing to use them, and maintaining late and early antlerless seasons on private land are all needed to increase the harvest of deer in this unit.

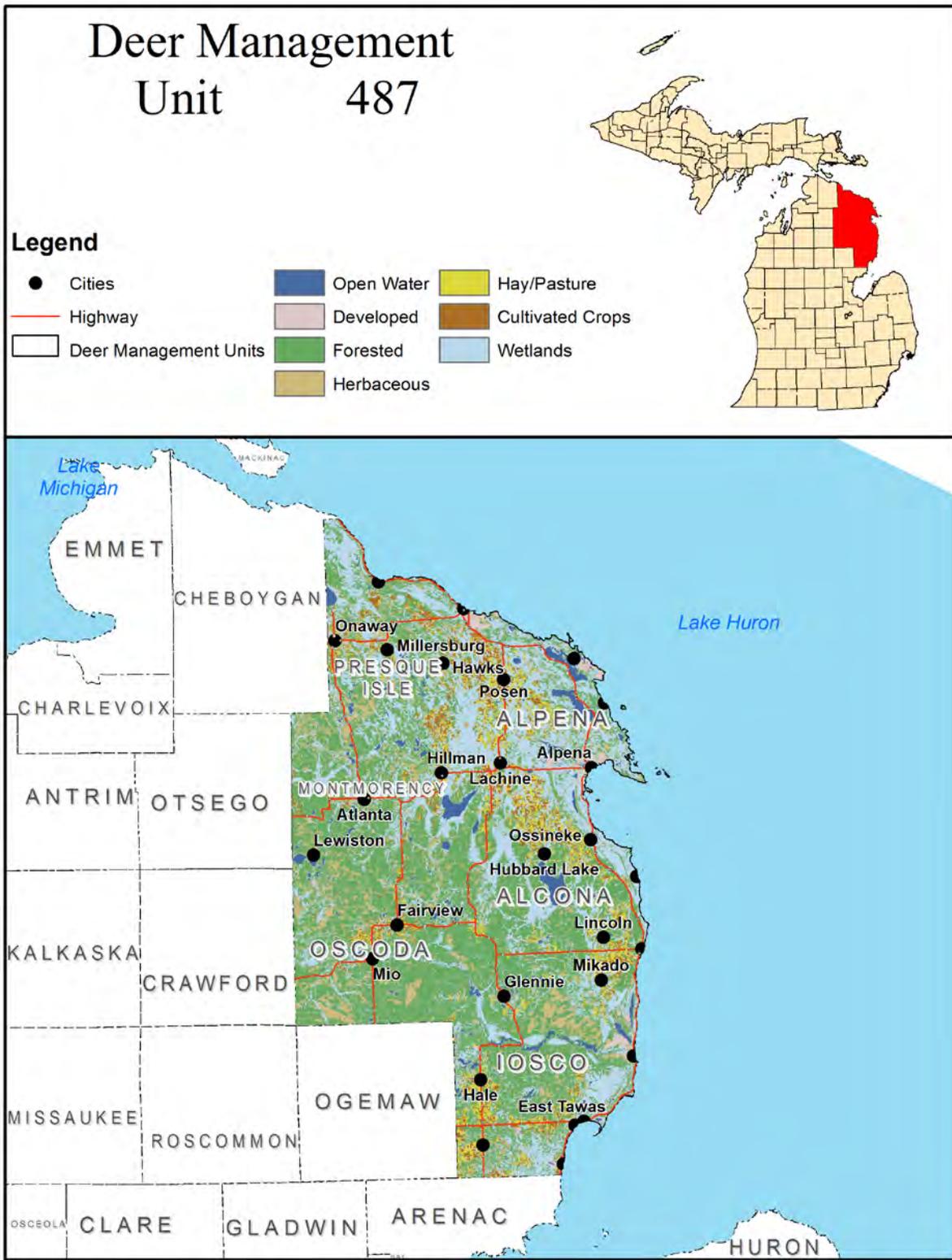


Figure 4: Habitat map of Deer Management Unit 487.