



# **2020 Deer Habitat Improvement Program**

## **Handbook and Scoring Details**

**Provided by:  
Alpena-Montmorency Conservation District  
and  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

## **SCHEDULE FOR Deer Habitat Improvement Program grants**

Request for Proposals Begins.....	October 15, 2019
Grant Application Must be Received by .....	January 1, 2020
Review & Selection Process Completed-Awards Announced .....	March 1, 2020
Project Period Begins.....	Upon execution of Grant
Project Period Ends.....	September 15, 2020

### **Initiative Summary**

The Northern Lower Peninsula Deer Habitat Improvement Program (DHIP) is a grant program designed to improve deer habitat to assist in reducing the transmission of Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) and agricultural and forest regeneration damage caused by deer.

### **Project Focus Area**

This competitive program will have a focus area within the Northern Lower Peninsula. The focus area for 2020 is private land in the following counties: **Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency, Oscoda, and Presque Isle**. These counties were selected for this program because there is both Bovine Tuberculosis in the deer herd and a high incidence of crop damage by deer.

### **Initiative Goals and Expectations**

The purpose of the DHIP is to develop a collaborative approach between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Districts to manage deer habitat on private land ownerships in the Northern Lower Peninsula. Department of Natural Resources Wildlife staff and/or Conservation District staff must have access to the property to inspect the approved proposals. All projects must be feasible and will score highest if they meet the following five objectives.

1. To produce and/or improve on-the-ground deer habitat in the project focus area
2. To increase partnerships between private landowners, agricultural producers, Conservation Districts, DNR, and other partners
3. To increase deer availability to hunters on private land
4. To reduce transmission of Bovine Tuberculosis, agricultural damage and forest regeneration damage caused by deer
5. To increase the harvest of deer, especially antlerless deer, and testing of deer for Bovine Tuberculosis

### **DHIP funding**

DHIP is funded from the Deer Range Improvement Program (DRIP) Fund. DRIP funds come from \$1.50 that is collected from every deer hunting license sold. The intent of the DRIP fund is to provide financial support to improve deer habitat statewide.

The required partner cost share for approved projects must be at least 25% of the total project cost. This can include labor or in-kind services. A total of \$50,000 will be awarded in 2020. Grant applications will be accepted for a minimum funding amount of \$500 and a maximum of \$2000.

### **Grant Application Process and Requirements**

This grant can be applied for every year by the same applicant. Previous year projects will determine your eligibility for the current year. Failure to complete all grant requirements could possibly jeopardize your future funding with this grant.

## **Proposal Criteria and Selection Process**

Examples of desired habitat improvement projects include but are not limited to: wildlife opening creation, rehabilitation, or existing opening maintenance; and increasing hard or soft mast by planting mast bearing shrubs or trees. Planting of trees or shrubs should include adequate protection (fencing) where appropriate. It is encouraged to consider planting perennials when creating or maintaining food plots.

Specific activities that will not be considered are: plantings of exotic or invasive species, commercial timber sale preparation, and construction of ponds. Proposals that increase undesired habitat fragmentation, increase wildlife disease transmission potential, have human safety implications, are contrary to deer management goals, or will have known direct adverse impacts on state or federally listed threatened and endangered species will not be considered.

Project properties that are adjacent to or in close proximity (within 1 mile) to cattle farms or active agriculture, or that have an active land management plan by a qualified professional will be given additional points towards the final score (see Appendix A).

Harvest of deer, especially antlerless deer, is an important component of proper deer management and is crucial to decreasing the prevalence of Bovine Tuberculosis in the deer herd. It is important to get your deer TB tested at a local DNR check station, find yours here: [www.mi.gov/DeerCheck](http://www.mi.gov/DeerCheck)

All applicants are encouraged to monitor deer activity by filling out a Deer Camp Survey that will be made available. The Deer Camp Survey can help the applicant track deer population trends. A copy of the completed survey will be collected by the Conservation District. The data will be compiled after the deer season and participants will receive a summary that will include data from all participants in the program. Only data summaries will be sent out, no individual property information will be made public.

Applicants are also encouraged to complete the online Deer Harvest Survey at the end of their hunting season. The survey can be completed online voluntarily and is also mailed to random hunters across the state; data is used by the DNR to estimate hunter participation, deer harvest, and hunter effort. Applicants can take the Deer Harvest Survey by going to [www.mi.gov/Deer](http://www.mi.gov/Deer) and scrolling down to the Surveys and Info section where there is a link to the survey.

Immediately following the application deadline, a selection committee of Conservation District staff and DNR wildlife staff will evaluate proposed projects. All projects meeting the eligibility requirements will be reviewed. The selection and project scoring process is designed to be standardized, treat all applicants fairly and be as transparent as possible (Appendix A). The selection committee may approve, reject, or request modifications to projects. Selection committee decisions will be final. Notification of project acceptance will be made by March 1, 2020. Notification of unfunded projects will be made shortly thereafter. Failure to meet project obligations or noncompliance as spelled out in the project contractual agreement will result in project termination and ineligibility for future applications.

A work agreement including project description will be signed by successful applicants and the release of grant funds will occur after the project has been successfully completed and a final site inspection has been held.

### **Implementation**

For all approved projects, the applicant or their representative will be required to periodically report to the designated Conservation District staff on the project status, expenditures to date, future objectives to be completed, and estimated timeline for completion throughout the implementation process (final deadline is September 15, 2020). Once the project is complete Conservation District staff will need to do a site visit verifying that the project was completed.

**PLAN grant participants CAN NOT receive DHIP funding for the same fiscal year.**

### **REQUIRED CONTENT FOR ALL APPLICATIONS:**

- Project location map
- Documentation of proximity to cattle farm or agricultural land (e.g. air photo)
- Plat book location (can be provided by Conservation District)

### *Appendix A-Grant Scoring Criteria*

The Conservation District staff and DNR wildlife staff will review all grant applications and determine their eligibility. For eligible project proposals, the application is scored using the following criteria which reflect the goals and objectives of the program.

<b>Scoring Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum Score</b>
Improvement or Creation of Deer Habitat.	<b>5</b>
Land Management Plan	<b>3</b>
Proximity to Cattle Farm or Active Agricultural Property	<b>5</b>
Deer Population Management	<b>5</b>
Tree Planting	<b>5</b>
DHIP Partnership	<b>5</b>
<b>Total Maximum Score</b>	<b>28</b>

**Scoring Breakdown:** Each criterion is broken down below and each one indicates what is necessary to score each point.

<b>Improvement or Creation of Deer Habitat (Maximum of 5 points Available)</b>	
New food plots – conversion of woods or conversion of fallow fields	<b>5</b>
New seedings or maintenance of already existing food plots	<b>3</b>
<b>Land Management Plan (Maximum of 3 Points Available)</b>	
Current land management plan prepared by a qualified professional available and being followed	<b>3</b>
No professional management plan	<b>0</b>
<b>Proximity to Cattle Farm or Active Agricultural Property (Maximum of 5 Points Available)</b>	
Project property is within 1 mile of a cattle farm	<b>5</b>
Project property is within 1 mile of active agriculture	<b>3</b>
Further than 1 mile of either cattle farm or active agriculture	<b>0</b>
<b>Deer Population Management (Maximum of 5 Points Available)</b>	
Will complete online deer hunter harvest survey, deer camp survey, TB testing, and will harvest more does than bucks	<b>5</b>
Unwilling to complete all population management requirements	<b>0</b>
<b>Tree Plantings (Maximum of 5 Points Available)</b>	
Will plant a mix of a <b>minimum</b> of 10 hard mast <b>AND</b> 10 soft mast trees	<b>5</b>
Will plant a <b>minimum</b> of 10 hard mast <b>OR</b> 10 soft mast trees	<b>3</b>
<b>DHIP Partnership (Maximum of 5 Points Available)</b>	
New applicant to DHIP	<b>5</b>
Previous year applicant and submitted all required surveys and heads for testing to DNR and Conservation District	<b>3</b>
Previous year applicant and completed proper 25% match of total project	<b>2</b>
Previous year applicant and did not complete surveys, testing, or match	<b>0</b>