

2021 Deer Habitat Improvement Program

Handbook and Scoring Details

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

Schedule for Deer Habitat Improvement Program Grants

Request for Proposals Begins	December 10, 2020
Grant Application Must be Received by	February 15, 2021
Review & Selection Process Completed-Awards Announced	March 1, 2021
Project Period Begins	Upon execution of Grant
Project Period Ends.....	September 15, 2021

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 2021 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 \$90,000 will be awarded in 2021. Grant applications will be accepted for a minimum funding amount of \$500 and a maximum of \$5,000.

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.

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

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; conifer plantings, 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.

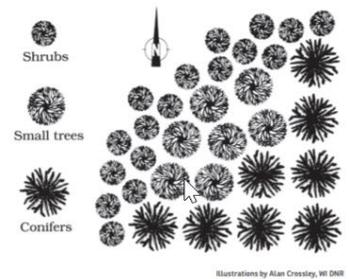
Conifer Plantings

Purpose: Many recreational landowners are interested in managing their property to increase their ability to harvest white-tailed deer. When properly planned and planted, conifers can increase hunting opportunities for deer by providing bedding, escape and travel cover. These plantings are intended to increase deer harvest, reduce bTB transmission to cattle and decrease deer impacts on agricultural lands. *Note: preference will be given to conifer clumps over linear corridors*

Eligible Practices:

- Conifer clumps:
 - No plantings in regular, geometric shapes or rows (e.g., no square/rectangular plantations w/rows).
 - Minimum 5 trees within forest plantings
 - Minimum 15 trees in non-forest plantings, minimum 50' wide
 - Perimeter planting of native shrubs preferred
- Corridors:
 - Minimum width of 50 feet, multiple “layers” of multiple native conifers suggested
 - Riparian corridors preferred
 - Preference will be given to corridors with seedlings planted in an irregular pattern (e.g. not in rows)

An example of clump planting



Requirements:

- Plantings must be at least 450 feet from home or buildings
 - Not eligible adjacent to driveway, farm lane or road
- Plantings to occur at non-linear spacings of at most 7'x7' spacing to produce dense cover
- Native conifers and shrubs.
 - Minimum two native conifer species preferred
 - Eligible native conifers: eastern white pine, white spruce, red pine, jack pine, balsam fir, and black spruce (Species must be matched to soil type)
 - Northern white-cedar and eastern hemlock not preferred or eligible without protection
 - Non-native (as defined by not having current native distribution in Michigan) conifers or shrubs not eligible

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

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 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, 2021. 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, 2021). Once the project is complete Conservation District staff will need to do a site visit verifying that the project was completed.

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.

Scoring Criteria	Maximum Score
Improvement or Creation of Deer Habitat.	5
Land Management Plan	2
Proximity to Cattle Farm or Active Agricultural Property	5
Deer Population Management	5
Tree Planting	8
DHIP Partnership	5
Total Maximum Score	30

Scoring Breakdown	
Each criterion is broken down below and each one indicates what is necessary to score each point.	
Improvement or Creation of Deer Habitat (Maximum of 5 points Available)	
New food plots – conversion of woods or conversion of fallow fields of at least 2 acres	5
New seedings or maintenance of already existing food plots	3
Land Management Plan (Maximum of 2 Points Available)	
Current land management plan prepared by a qualified professional available and being followed	2
No professional management plan	0
Proximity to Cattle Farm or Active Agricultural Property (Maximum of 5 Points Available)	
Project property is within 1 mile of a cattle farm	5
Project property is within 1 mile of active agriculture	3
Further than 1 mile of either cattle farm or active agriculture	0
Deer Population Management (Maximum of 5 Points Available)	
Will complete online deer hunter harvest survey, deer camp survey, TB testing, and will harvest more does than bucks	5
Unwilling to complete all population management requirements	0
Tree Plantings (Maximum of 8 Points Available)	
Will plant a mix of a minimum of 10 hard mast AND 10 soft mast trees	4
Will plant a conifer clump with required guidelines	4
Will plant a conifer corridor with required guidelines	3
Will plant a minimum of 10 hard mast OR 10 soft mast trees	3
No tree plantings	0
DHIP Partnership (Maximum of 5 Points Available)	
New applicant to DHIP	5
Previous year applicant and submitted all required surveys and heads for testing to DNR and Conservation District	3
Previous year applicant and completed proper 25% match of total project	2
Previous year applicant and did not complete surveys, testing, or match	0