

**Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative**

**Annual Report**

**July 2024 to December 2025**

**KQDC ANTLERED DEER BROUGHT TO CHECK STATION DEC. 2, 2024**



**GOOD FOREST REGENERATION SUPPORTS HEALTHY DEER**



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Check Stations for 2024 – Marshburg, Rt 59 - Mary Hosmer (KQDC), Emily Rowan (KQDC), Matt O'Brien (ANF), Larry Wise (ANF), John Dzemyan (KQDC). Willows Restaurant, Rt 346 - Lisa Barlow (ANF), Lauren Grace (ANF), Danielle Rhodes (ANF), Jonny Barlow (Volunteer) Larry Wise (ANF) Andrew Wilmouth (ANF).

Check Stations for 2025 – Marshburg, Rt 59 – Mary Hosmer (KQDC), John Dzemyan (KQDC), John Keeses (Volunteer), Jen Denko (ANF), Scott Craig (ANF), Hannah Lundin (ANF), Emily Rowan (KQDC). Ben Salapek, Jorja R. Snyder and John C. Bruner (PSU-DuBois Fisheries/Wildlife Students) also assisted on last day (Sat, 12.6.25). Willows Restaurant, Rt 346 - Lisa Barlow (ANF), Andy Wilmouth (ANF), Asher Boyer (ANF), Scott Craig (ANF).

Pellet Group Transects for 2025 – Fourteen completed, although none were originally planned for 2025. They were performed by Generations Forestry, Collins Pine, Allegheny National Forest, USFS Lab Irvine, KQDC Coordinator and PSU-Dubois (one instructor, four students).

Hunter Vehicle Count Surveys for 2024 - Lisa Barlow (ANF), Aanchal Tewari. (ANF)

Hunter Vehicle Count Surveys for 2025 – Lisa Barlow (ANF) John Ellenburger (Volunteer), Scott Craig (ANF).

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## Executive Summary 2024–2025

Founded in 2000, the 74,000-acre Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative (KQDC) brings together private landowners, public land managers, scientists, hunters, and community partners in McKean County, Pennsylvania. The Cooperative's goals have remained consistent for 25 years: improve deer herd quality, strengthen forest ecosystem health, and enhance the hunting experience through practical collaboration grounded in long-term monitoring.

KQDC annually summarizes field data and evaluates trends in deer abundance, harvest outcomes, and habitat response. The 2024–2025 period is especially notable because KQDC data and testimony helped inform Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) decisions aimed at improving hunter opportunity, particularly opportunities to harvest antlerless deer. In 2024 and 2025, the PGC Commissioners voted to retain concurrent antlered and antlerless seasons during the 2-week rifle season, a key factor in maintaining antlerless harvest. They also supported increased antlerless license allocations statewide and within WMU 2F where KQDC is located. In April 2025, the Commissioners approved an additional late-season opportunity in DMAP-approved areas, allowing hunters to use rifles to harvest antlerless deer with valid DMAP permits from December 26, 2025 through January 24, 2026 (Monday through Saturday, no Sundays). These actions reflect a consistent message from hunters and landowners: participation is limited by time off work and limited access due to posted land. KQDC's DMAP program has long worked to address those constraints by keeping private lands open to public hunting and by expanding the days available to hunt. Hunters with access, time, and antlerless tags can help keep deer numbers in better balance with the landscape. As that balance improves, forest vegetation responds with increased abundance and diversity, supporting a healthier future forest and improved forage conditions that benefit deer health and herd productivity.

KQDC's monitoring results underscore why that balance remains a priority. In 2024, all 26 pellet-route transects were completed to estimate deer abundance and document habitat conditions. However, the winter of 2023–2024 was unusually mild and wet, with long stretches of warm weather and rain rather than persistent snow cover. Under these conditions, pellets may decompose more quickly, potentially reducing the number available to be counted in spring surveys and biasing population estimates downward. Because that concern could materially affect interpretation of the 2024 estimate, KQDC conducted a follow-up limited re-survey in late winter and early spring 2025 after a more typical winter with sustained snow cover from January into mid-March. Staffing and volunteer constraints prevented completion of all routes, but 14 transects were re-surveyed and showed much higher pellet counts than in 2024. While a partial re-survey is not a definitive population estimate, the comparison supports a defensible interpretation: 2024 likely underestimated deer abundance, and the 2025 results indicate deer densities remain high. A blended estimate combining 2025 values for the 14 completed routes with 2024 values for the remaining 12 routes is approximately 25.54

deer/mi<sup>2</sup>, well above the Cooperative's long-term management goal of 14 deer/mi<sup>2</sup>, a level more consistent with good deer health and successful forest regeneration.

Harvest indicators point in the same direction. KQDC continued operating two check stations (Marshburg and Willow Creek) and recorded 90 deer checked in 2024 over 4 days and 88 in 2025 over 3 days, the highest totals since 2009. Weather continues to influence hunter success, with snow generally improving tracking and visibility unless travel becomes restricted. A key recent trend is the marked increase in antlerless checks, with antlerless totals in 2024 and 2025 being the highest since 2009. This data supports the view that expanded opportunity, including access and season structure, can translate into meaningful antlerless harvest.

Deer condition metrics suggest that nutritional conditions may be constrained. Relative to the 2016 peak, recent check-station data indicate lower average size metrics, with the strongest decline in doe weights. Across 2023–2025, buck weight and antler spread were below 2016 levels and showed only partial rebound in 2025 after a decline into 2024, while doe weight remained near the recent low. These patterns are consistent with continued high deer density and sustained pressure on available forage.

On the habitat side, active forest management continues across the major KQDC ownerships, including thinnings, shelterwood harvests, and final harvests. Herbicide treatments remain a key tool to control ferns and invasive plants that inhibit regeneration, and fencing has increased on some sites to protect regeneration where browsing pressure remains high. DMAP permit levels remained stable through 2025, reflecting the continued need for antlerless harvest and the practical reality that realized harvest can stabilize or decline as deer numbers drop and hunter success changes. The new post-Christmas DMAP extension is expected to increase harvest by adding time and opportunity for hunter participation.

KQDC also continued building capacity for the next generation of monitoring and outreach. Outreach shifted away from a Deer Season Kickoff event toward social media and video content. Partnerships with PSU-DuBois engaged students and faculty in transect work and check-station support, and updated training materials developed by Dave deCalesta strengthen the Cooperative's ability to maintain consistent protocols. Sustaining volunteer capacity remains a challenge as the original contributor base has aged and workforce constraints have limited field capacity, but continued partnerships and training are helping maintain continuity.

Multiple indicators support the same conclusion: the 2024 transect estimate likely understated abundance due to unusually mild winter conditions, and the 2025 re-survey indicates deer densities remain high. Recent PGC decisions, informed in part by KQDC data and testimony, have expanded opportunity for hunters to harvest antlerless deer, including a new late-season DMAP rifle extension. Continued monitoring, sustained antlerless harvest, and active habitat management remain warranted to move deer density toward levels that support long-term forest regeneration and deer herd health.

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## INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK OF KQDC

In 2000 a group of private landowners, public land managers, scientists, hunters, and others with the support and guidance of the Sand County Foundation (SCF) came together to form the over 74,000-acre Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative (KQDC Figure 1). Common goals included improving deer herd quality, forest ecosystem health, and the hunting experience. An extensive monitoring program was established to track changes in deer density and habitat, deer harvest, hunter satisfaction, and deer condition (body weights, buck/doe ratios, and antler characteristics). The success of the program has been enhanced by deer management regulations enacted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission that include a three-point antler restriction, the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) which started in 2004, and the Saturday opener in 2019. In 2020 a Saturday opener with the next day, Sunday, being open to deer hunting for the first time in Pennsylvania's modern hunting history. In 2021 through 2024 concurrent antlered and antlerless seasons were again allowed for the first time since 2011. More changes are discussed in other sections of this year's report for hunting season 2025/2026.

Annually a report is issued that includes a summary of all data collected and trends that may be evident. Protocols have been described in detail in these past reports. Past reports can be viewed on the [www.kqdc.com](http://www.kqdc.com) website.

This year's report includes an analysis of deer density and impact from transects that were completed, deer harvest data collected at the check station, and vehicle counts compared to prior years.

The 2025 hunting season marked the 24<sup>th</sup> year under the three-point antler restriction rule and the 21<sup>st</sup> year of DMAP. Cumulatively, these annual reports provide a record of changes in deer quality (age, weight, antler size), habitat quality (browsing impact, tree regeneration), and deer density as DMAP, antler restrictions, and hunting regulations that have changed.

Presently the KQDC is made up of the following landowners as shown in Figure 1.

The KQDC initially participated in DMAP by creating north and south DMAP units as divided by State Route 59. (DMAP UNIT 134 was north of Rt. 59 is now DMAP 1996 and 1981) In order to achieve a better distribution of hunters and ultimately a better distribution of deer harvest, the Bradford Water Authority and Collins Pine properties were designated as a separate DMAP unit from the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) in 2012. The result is that the KQDC is now divided into three DMAP Units each with a separate DMAP permit request (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Landowners of the KQDC Project Area.

ANF = Allegheny National Forest. CF = Kinzua Forest LLC / Conservation Forestry. Watershed = Bradford Watershed Authority. Collins Pine = Collins Pine

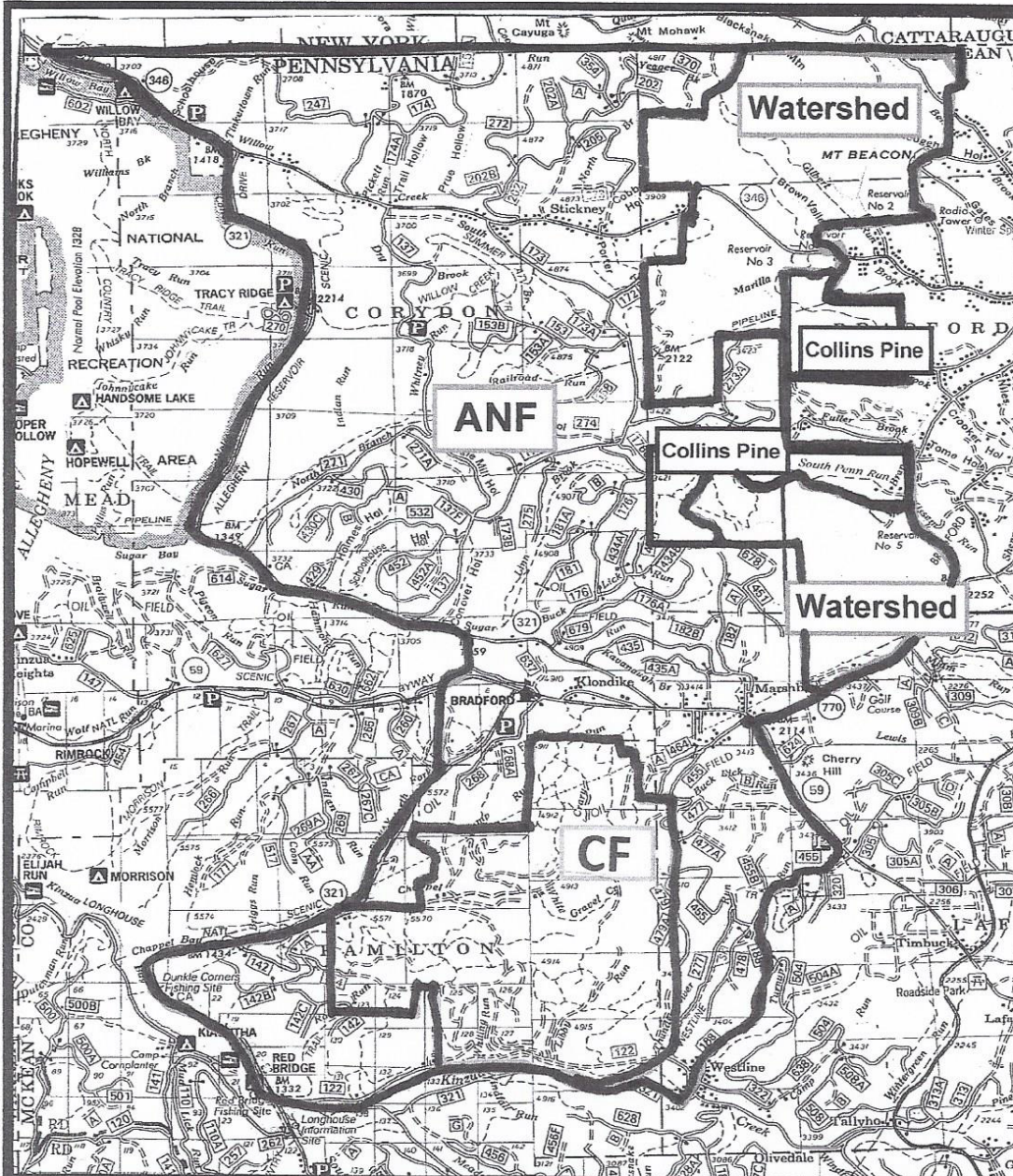
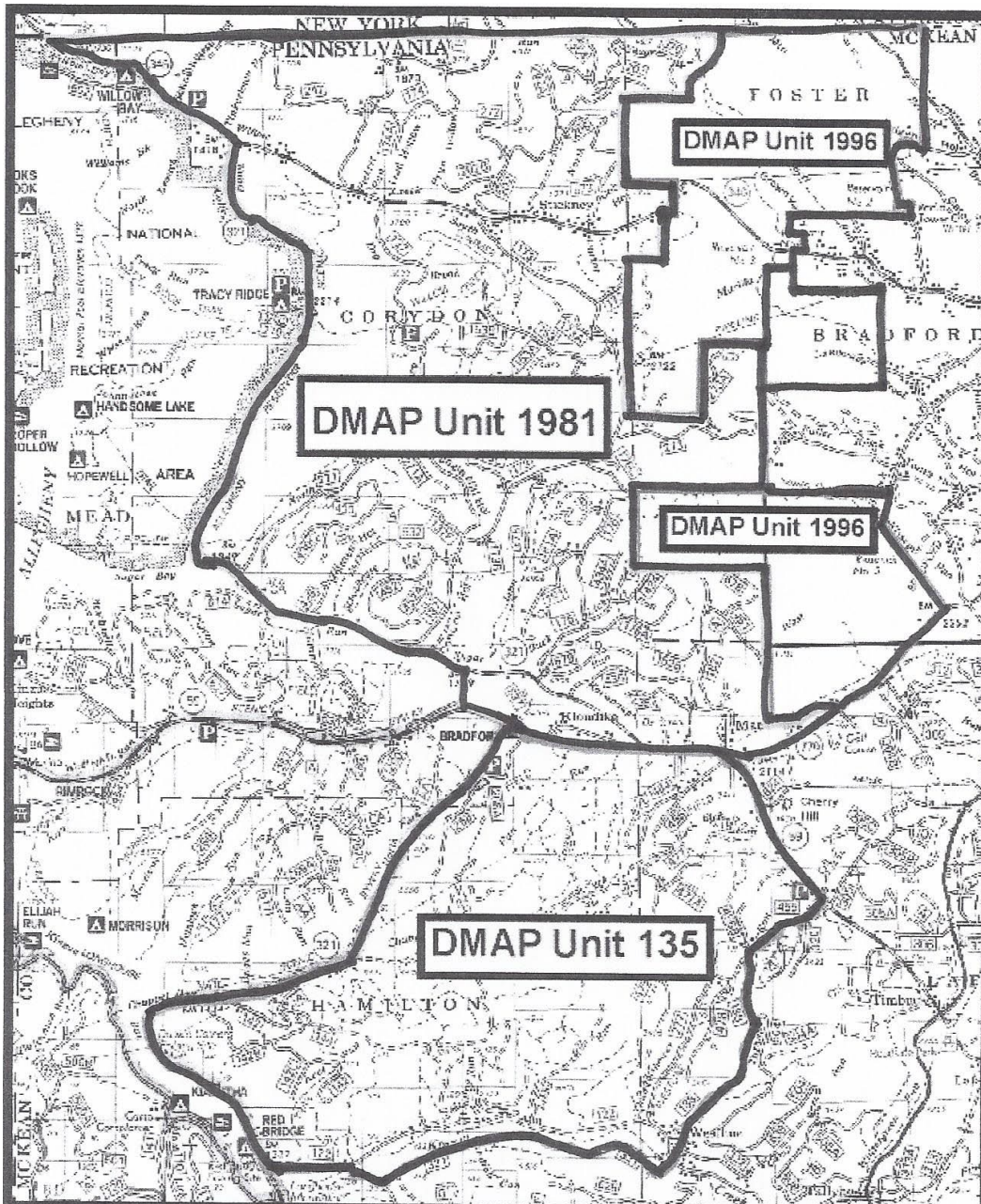


Figure 2. DMAP units within the KQDC:

DMAP Unit 1981 (Allegheny National Forest- north), DMAP Unit 1996 (Bradford Water Authority and Collins Pine), and DMAP Unit 135 (Kinzua Forest LLC. / Forecon Inc. and Allegheny National Forest-south).



## Deer Density and Habitat Conditions

### Deer Populations

From 2016 through 2022, pellet-count transects indicate a sustained increase in deer density across the full KQDC, using the pellet route deer estimation of deCalesta<sup>1</sup>. Whole-KQDC estimates rose from 11.4 deer/mi<sup>2</sup> in 2016 to 24.7 deer/mi<sup>2</sup> in 2022 (Table 1; Figure 3), roughly doubling over that period. No transects were completed in 2023, so there is no overwinter estimate for that year. In spring 2024, all 26 transects were completed, and the resulting whole-KQDC estimate dropped to 17.3 deer/mi<sup>2</sup>, marking the first clear downward shift since 2016.

Interpretation of the 2024 decline warrants caution. The January to March 2024 period was exceptionally mild, raising concern that faster pellet decomposition reduced the number of pellets available to count during the April and May surveys. If decomposition was accelerated, pellet counts would be biased low, which would make the 2024 density estimate an underestimate of true deer numbers.<sup>2</sup>

Spring 2025 results reinforced that caution. After a more typical winter in early 2025, only 14 of 26 transects were completed, but those routes produced a markedly higher estimate than in 2024 (Table 1; Figure 3). For the surveyed routes, deer density increased sharply relative to 2024, and the whole-KQDC estimate based on completed 2025 transects was 33.1 deer/mi<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the pattern is clear. Deer densities climbed steadily from 2016 through 2022, the full 2024 survey indicated a drop, but the unusually mild winter likely reduced pellet persistence and pulled that estimate downward. The 2025 resurvey then rebounded sharply, showing deer densities remain high. The best interpretation is that deer numbers may have decreased somewhat after 2022, but not as much as the 2024 pellet counts alone suggest, and the program should continue monitoring and management actions accordingly.

Data shows that the best years for deer health (by weight and antlers) and forest regeneration occurred when the populations were closer to 14 deer/mi<sup>2</sup> for the 12 year period from 2005 to 2017. Mast crops varied greatly in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Some areas mast was abundant, other areas were scarce. Acorns were the most abundant in 2025, but not everywhere. Beech nuts and black cherry seed were scarce in 2025, and spotty in 2023 and 2024. Deer living on the KQDC landscape are highly dependent on the plant quality and quantity for their survival and health. Deer populations and browsing impacts need to be reduced to the 2016 levels for the forest and deer to thrive. To do so KQDC land managers must find a way to increase the antlerless harvest with KQDC hunters.

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<sup>1</sup> D. S. deCalesta, Reliability and precision of pellet-group counts for estimating landscape-level deer density. *Human-Wildlife Interactions* **7**, 60–68 (2013).

<sup>2</sup> Delisle, Z. J. *et al.* Density from pellet groups: Comparing methods for estimating dung persistence time. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* **46**, e1325 (2022).

Table 1. Mean deer density (deer/square mile) by DMAP unit 2002 to 2025 with DMAP tags, regular antlerless tags, and concurrent season information.

YEAR	DMAP Unit 1981	DMAP Unit 1996	DMAP Unit 135	Whole KQDC	95% C.I.	Antlerless tags WMU 2F	DMAP Tags	2-week Concurrent seasons
2002	20.9	33.9	32.2	27.4	+/- 2.7	By county	0	Yes
2003	27.1	35.7	25.4	28.8	+/- 2.5	44,000	0	"
2004	23.0	29.3	23.9	24.8	+/- 2.0	44,000	3000	"
2005	12.2	20.4	13.2	14.4	+/- 1.6	30,000	3000	"
2006	7.4	14.1	15.1	11.6	+/- 1.4	28,000	700	"
2007	9.8	17.0	11.9	12.2	+/- 1.1	28,000	150	"
2008	9.3	24.8	15.3	15.0	+/- 1.7	28,000	300	"
2009	10.1	22.3	17.4	15.4	+/- 1.6	28,000	550	"
2010	8.4	26.9	15.9	15.3	+/- 2.0	22,148	800	"
2011	15.8	25.2	15.6	17.3	+/- 2.2	34,000	800	One week
2012	8.3	13.5	9.0	9.7	+/- 0.9	27,000	800	"
2013	12.3	22.3	11.3	13.9	+/- 1.6	29,000	905	"
2014	12.5	18.9	11.0	13.5	+/- 1.1	27,000	1067	"
2015	12.1	20.2	12.6	14.2	+/- 1.5	22,000	1067	"
2016	9.2	16.6	9.2	10.9	+/- 1.2	22,000	1067	"
2017	7.5	18.4	11.1	11.2	+/- 1.4	24,000	1067	"
2018	17.8	18.5	12.0	16.0	+/- 1.2	23,000	967	"
2019	22.4	24.2	14.8	20.2	+/- 1.7	31,000	1117	"
2020	18.8	35.6	N/A	26.5	+/- 3.7	36,000	1517	"
2021	26.5	26.2	15.1	22.5	+/- 1.9	32,000	1881	2 weeks
2022	28.0	32.4	15.5	24.7	+/- 2.7	37,000	1881	"
2023	No	transects	done	this	year	49,000	1881	"
2024	19.5	17.4	14.6	17.3	+/- 1.8	55,000	1881	"
2025	30.8	36.2	N/A	33.1	+/- 2.7	51,000	1881	"

Table 1 shows the number of antlerless licenses and antlerless DMAP permits combined with other ways to increase or decrease hunters' opportunities can produce increases or decrease in the post season deer populations. This is documented over the 24 years and hunting seasons with the deer pellet over winter population surveys and with the vegetation impact surveys.

The concurrent season started in 2001 in McKean County when county boundaries made up antlerless license areas. In 2002, KQDC became part of WMU 2F, and the concurrent structure continued there through 2011, when it shifted to a split season (5 days antlered only, followed by 7 days concurrent). The season structure returned to fully concurrent in 2021 to 2025. In 2021, the antlerless allocation was reduced because the number of days available to hunt increased. In 2022 antlerless licenses were increased due to CWD detection in Unit 2F near

Warren, Pennsylvania. From 2019 to 2023 DMAP permits were increased as data showed the population growing. In 2024 and 2025, DMAP numbers remained the same to ensure that hunter opportunities can maintain or lower deer levels present after the 2024, 2025 surveys. Overall, concurrent seasons appear to be an important tool for reducing deer populations and for maintaining lower deer densities once achieved.

Hunters still bring in more antlered deer than antlerless deer and have done so for 23 out of the 25 years the check stations have been operated. Does this mean that hunters harvest more antlered deer than antlerless deer on the KQDC? The question needs further investigation. Comparison to the Pennsylvania Game Commissions deer harvests of antlered versus antlerless for 2F can provide related information on this.

Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 3 show the population estimates for each one of the 26 individual transect units as they were surveyed over the last 23 years. During some years, not all the individual transects were completed. In 2023, no transects were done to save on time and labor expenses among all the cooperators.

Discussions continue each year about whether transects should be completed annually, every two years, or possibly every three years, and much of this is driven by increasing personnel constraints, particularly within the USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station (NRS). Historically, NRS was assigned 7 of the 26 transects (27% of work). When KQDC began, NRS had as many as seven technicians available to complete this work, but that capacity has declined over time and now rests with a single individual. Each transect requires a minimum of 10–12 hours of field work, and efficiency and data quality are typically best when two people work together on the same day.

Table 2. Overwinter deer density for spring pellet counts 2002 to 2012

Site	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
A	20.5	24.9	16.8	5.8	10.1	7.0	10.1	8.5	7.2	7.4	8.3
B	15.6	30.6	30.8	5.4	3.7	14.5	3.8	4.7	9.9	8.6	8.5
C	20.6	43.2	17.1	30.0	11.0	14.1	16.6	22.5	4.5	30.4	6.1
D	15.4	26.7	17.7	15.2	10.1	19.0	20.3	24.7	14.8	15.9	7.9
E	50.7	48.7	32.9	15.4	21.2	3.4	5.5	14.1	23.4	5.4	2.8
F	30.0	19.9	21.3	18.7	4.8	22.1	17.1	17.4	16.3	22.7	4.3
G	10.9	13.7	12.8	6.0	2.9	7.0	4.3	3.6	4.1	7.6	5.7
H	8.7	29.4	32.0	17.4	2.9	3.9	6.7	11.2	1.0	17.5	9.8
I	34.0	30.8	22.2	19.8	14.5	16.5	26.0	26.4	27.4	51.6	13.6
J	48.5	55.2	47.8	31.6	21.6	11.6	28.3	11.2	29.2		17.9
K	42.7	44.5	38.4	27.3	20.6	20.4	29.5	26.4	37.2		22.0
L	14.6	31.2	35.0	14.1	1.5	7.0	14.9	16.8	21.5	28.2	9.3
M	32.7	42.0	29.5	15.1	8.6	18.1	10.1	10.9	6.8	18.7	10.4
N	13.1	30.3	24.4	5.4	3.5	3.8	11.7	8.2	5.2	25.8	8.0
O	41.7	20.7	26.5	16.2	24.1	14.0	12.0	17.4	18.7	9.1	15.4
P	32.7	37.2	28.1	9.7	12.7	12.6	27.7	27.5	36.5	10.8	15.1
Q	37.5	19.6	17.4	12.8	9.9	13.5	5.3	2.7	8.7	11.2	3.9
R	13.5	12.8	11.0	6.0	3.4	5.4	6.8	4.3	5.1	9.0	5.6
S	28.8	32.7	12.1	3.2	11.5	8.1	5.6	4.1	6.0	10.9	8.0
T	27.8	21.5	8.3	11.8	6.6	6.1	3.0	8.7	4.9	8.7	4.8
U	17.9	6.4	21.0	7.1	17.0	20.1	24.7	20.3	26.7	17.3	12.2
V	36.9	20.5	28.8	4.9	20.8	11.0	21.2	24.7	20.5	15.7	11.7
W	15.2	14.8	25.7	7.1	13.1	12.4	18.0	22.3	10.6	12.3	8.1
X	47.7	33.5	38.4	22.8	19.9	21.2	29.3	25.7	17.9	28.3	13.8
Y				26.1	10.0	10.0	12.6	20.2	19.3	14.1	7.8
Z				20.5	16.1	14.9	18.2	16.2	13.8	27.8	11.6
Mean (± SE)	27.4 ± 2.7	28.8 ± 2.5	24.8 ± 2.0	14.4 ± 1.6	11.6 ± 1.4	12.2 ± 1.1	15.0 ± 1.7	15.4 ± 1.6	15.3 ± 2.0	17.3 ± 2.2	9.7 ± 0.9
Antlerless Licenses WMU 2F	44,000	44,000	30,000	28,000	28,000	28,000	28,000	22,148	34,000	27,000	29,000
DMAP	0	0	3000	3000	700	150	300	550	800	800	800

Table 3. Overwinter deer density for spring pellet counts 2013 to 2025

Site	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
A	7.7		5.6	13.6	5.7	22.5	23.5	18.6	17.1	19.5		6.2	12.6
B	9.2	12.1	18.0	4.0	10.5	28.6	39.9		27.2	8.2		14.6	
C	10.9	9.1	10.7	6.8	12.9	18.5	25.2	24.9	21.6	24.7		28.7	33.0
D	8.6	9.5	9.8	11.8	12.2	18.8	18.0	20.1	22.9	25.6		17.8	32.8
E	9.4	4.4	17.7	4.0	5.6	18.0	20.9		14.8	18.3		6.6	
F	10.2	18.8	10.3	5.0	9.0	11.3	17.0	54.4	18.5	21.6		15.8	30.5
G	24.6	11.3	5.5	5.2	9.9	8.0	7.1	6.9	13.5	14.0		23.2	19.2
H	2.4	6.2	5.1	4.3	6.6	15.5	21.2	13.4	31.5	21.9		37.7	54.6
I	34.2	15.4	22.2	8.2	18.4	15.9	16.2	36.3	19.5	21.0		12.0	38.8
J	30.0	19.9	31.6	23.3	13.9	23.8	38.9	48.3	25.4	33.1		18.8	37.3
K	28.4	27.9	22.0	27.2	34.6	26.9	37.2	33.1	32.8	44.9		22.2	38.3
L	10.4	12.9	15.5	13.3	2.9	11.6	15.1	25.8	15.8	47.9		17.8	39.3
M	18.6	21.1	20.2	7.2	5.5	15.4	31.8		48.2	47.2		22.3	
N	19.7	10.5	11.4	11.3	4.8	20.8	31.5	21.0	32.2	45.9		20.3	28.4
O	14.3	18.4	21.5	18.1	10.2	23.3	14.3		29.0	27.7		12.7	26.6
P		21.6	25.2	24.1	22.4	14.5	17.8	21.4	38.1	48.3		17.9	39.1
Q	9.6	9.7	11.0	8.8	7.2	11.5	18.2		22.4	32.9		7.0	
R	7.4	13.3	8.5	8.5	6.0	20.6	19.1	20.8	32.5	18.1		23.4	32.5
S	6.5	7.8	7.2	8.8	4.7	19.7	16.6		17.3	8.0		7.0	
T	6.8	12.0	3.3	8.3	7.0	7.3	12.3		21.6	22.0		8.9	
U	9.1	9.3	7.3	9.4	6.2	8.3	15.9		11.4	6.9		16.2	
V	14.9	11.1	9.9	7.8	16.6	8.0	15.3		7.9	5.4		6.8	
W	5.8	13.2	17.0	11.8	12.8	11.0	9.9		17.9	29.5		42.5	
X	16.1	17.3		10.3	16.9	12.1	14.6		13.4	27.1		11.6	
Y	14.0	14.8	12.0	8.9	15.6	6.9	12.9		7.9	17.6		24.8	
Z	18.8	8.7	26.2	13.7	14.2	16.8	14.7		23.8	4.2		6.9	
<b>Mean (± SE)</b>	<b>13.9 ± 1.6</b>	<b>13.5 ± 1.1</b>	<b>14.2 ± 1.5</b>	<b>10.9 ± 1.2</b>	<b>11.2 ± 1.4</b>	<b>16.0 ± 1.2</b>	<b>20.2 ± 1.7</b>	<b>26.5 ± 3.7</b>	<b>22.5 ± 1.9</b>	<b>24.7 ± 2.7</b>		<b>17.3 ± 1.8</b>	<b>33.1 ± 2.7</b>
Antlerless Licenses WMU 2F	27,000	22,000	22,000	24,000	23,000	31,000	36,000	32,000	37,000	49,000	49,000	55,000	51,000
DMAP	905	1067	1067	1067	1067	967	1117	1517	1881	1881	1881	1881	1881

Because spring 2025 surveys were completed on only 14 of 26 pellet-count transects, Table 4 presents two 2025 deer density (deer/mi<sup>2</sup>) estimates: one based on completed transects only and one adjusted to account for missing transects. The observed 2025 value reflects results from the 14 completed transects, which have historically produced slightly higher density estimates than the 12 transects not completed in 2025. The adjusted 2025 value fills those 12 missing transects with their 2024 results (underlined). Those missing transects include

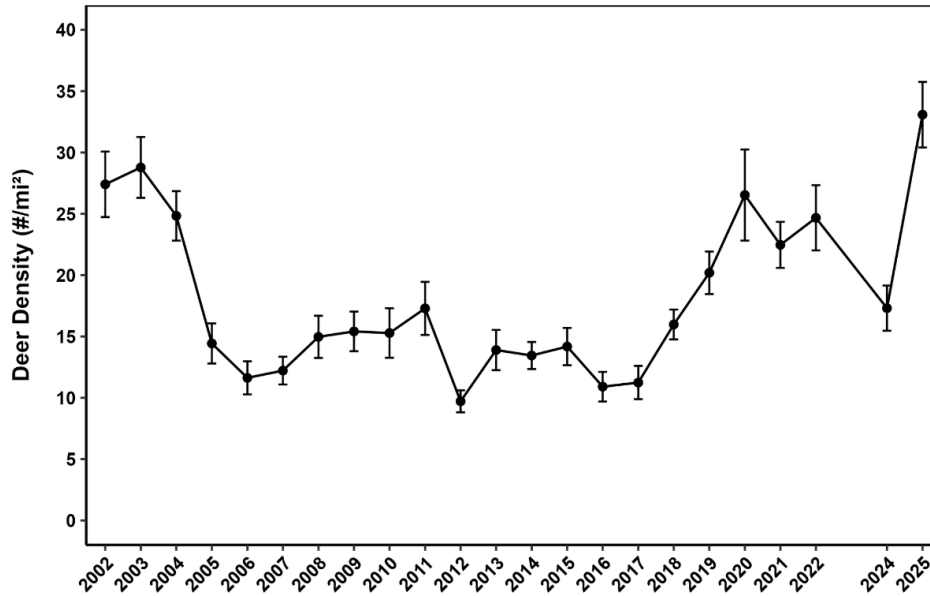
substantial pole-stage forest on private lands, where deer densities are typically lower, so including them provides a more balanced estimate of the 26 square mile average for the full KQDC. Although this is not a formal analysis, we present it as a conservative, informative comparison.

If the missing transects had been completed in 2025 and also increased relative to 2024, the overall average could plausibly fall between about 25 and 30 deer/mi<sup>2</sup>. Based on field observations, that range is realistic. Either way, deer densities remain above program goals, and expanded DMAP seasons can help move the population toward better balance with available habitat.

*Table 4. Deer density from completed 2025 transects, plus an adjusted 2025 estimate that replaces missing 2025 transects with 2024 values.*

Block	2024	2025	2025 (est)
A	6.2	12.6	12.6
B	14.6		<u>14.6</u>
C	28.7	33.0	33.0
D	17.8	32.8	32.8
E	6.6		<u>6.6</u>
F	15.8	30.5	30.5
G	23.2	19.2	19.2
H	37.7	54.6	54.6
I	12.0	38.8	38.8
J	18.8	37.3	37.3
K	22.2	38.3	38.3
L	17.8	39.3	39.3
M	22.3		<u>22.3</u>
N	20.3	28.4	28.4
O	12.7	26.6	26.6
P	17.9	39.1	39.1
Q	7.0		<u>7.0</u>
R	23.4	32.5	32.5
S	7.0		<u>7.0</u>
T	8.9		<u>8.9</u>
U	16.2		<u>16.2</u>
V	6.8		<u>6.8</u>
W	42.5		<u>42.5</u>
X	11.6		<u>11.6</u>
Y	24.8		<u>24.8</u>
Z	6.9		<u>6.9</u>
<b>Average</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>33.1</b>	<b><u>25.54</u></b>

Figure 3. Deer density over time as estimated from pellet route data.



Interpreting year-to-year changes also requires acknowledging shifts in hunter opportunity and harvest context since 2015. Weekend availability for hunters has increased, antlerless license allocations declined after 2011 and then increased again beginning in 2019, and concurrent seasons were eliminated from 2011 to 2019 and later reinstated. COVID also affected hunter participation in 2022. These factors, among others, can influence deer density (deer/mi<sup>2</sup>) estimates through time. Even so, the broader pattern from 2016 through 2025 is that deer numbers have risen to levels similar to the early 2000s and are above the original KQDC goals.

## **Habitat and Forest Conditions**

All landowners across the KQDC continue to implement forest treatments aimed at supporting sustainable timber harvest and a resilient forest ecosystem, including regeneration harvests, partial harvests, and herbicide treatments by both private and public timber managers. Removal of old fencing remains ongoing, while new fencing has become very expensive and is being installed again only on a limited basis on public lands.

Over the full record, our measured habitat indicators tell a consistent story: when deer densities were high, many plots failed to regenerate and few produced young trees that could grow without browsing impact, conditions improved during the decade of lower deer numbers, and in the most recent period regeneration is more common but it is less consistently escaping browsing.

In the early high-density years (2002–2004), about 60% of plots had no regeneration, and only about 13% had regeneration with no browsing impact (Figures 5 and 6). During the long low-density period (2005–2017), the system moved in the expected direction, with the share of plots lacking regeneration dropping to about 51% and the share with regeneration and no browsing impact rising to about 29%, even though the canopy stayed mostly closed (about 83% closed canopy from 2008–2017; Figure 7). In the recent increase period (2018–2025), fewer plots are completely failing to retain seedlings (about 46% with no regeneration, excluding 2024 from the average), but the key deer-sensitive signal has weakened. Plots with regeneration and no browsing impact averaged about 37% in 2018–2019, then fell to about 20% across 2020–2022 and 2025 (excluding 2024 from the average, noting 2024 stands out as an unusual year). Canopy closure remains high in recent years (about 81% closed canopy, excluding 2024 from the average), so these swings are not explained by a broad shift toward more open canopy conditions. Overall, regeneration is occurring on more plots than in the early record, but where regeneration is present it is being browsed more frequently.

Figure 4. Transect locations 2001 to present.

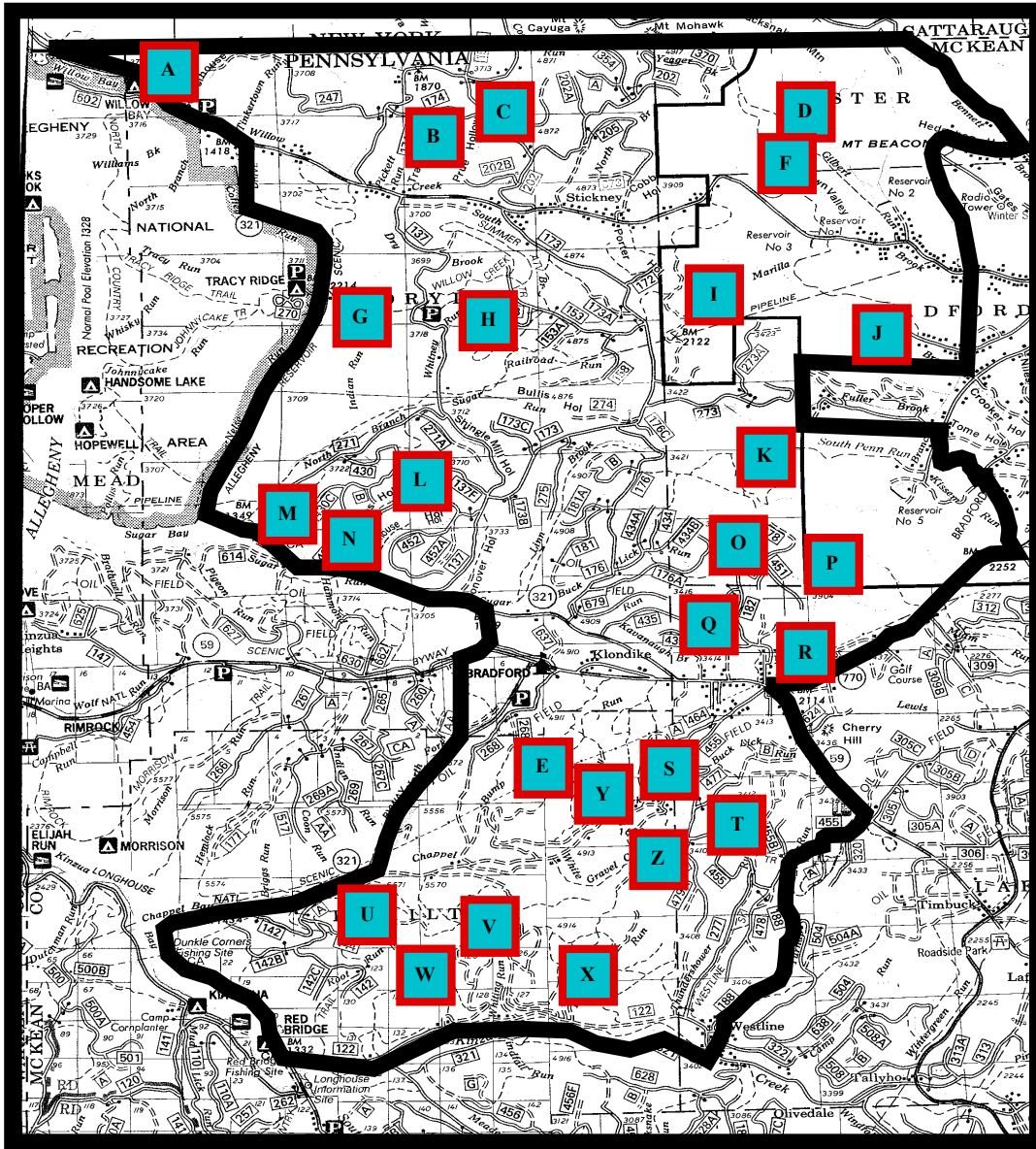


Table 5. Habitat variables on the KQDC from 2002 to 2025

Year	Percent plots without regeneration	Percent of plots with regeneration & no browsing impact	Percent of plots with a closed canopy
2002	58.6	15.5	N/A
2003	62.5	8.4	N/A
2004	60.0	15.1	N/A
2005	52.7	34.0	N/A
2006	51.3	37.6	N/A
2007	55.7	29.3	N/A
2008	53.5	26.1	78.1
2009	54.5	24.6	79.4
2010	55.4	23.3	78.9
2011	50.4	22.2	84.4
2012	41.0	35.2	78.5
2013	49.1	24.8	86.8
2014	43.1	28.5	85.9
2015	58.3	27.0	84.0
2016	53.5	32.9	86.8
2017	49.7	35.0	87.0
2018	50.4	34.5	86.0
2019	42.4	39.5	79.4
2020	51.8	15.8	82.4
2021	43.9	23.1	75.7
2022	46.4	24.3	81.0
2023			
2024	40.4	41.5	85.3
2025	46.2	17.8	80.0
<i>*2025 data reflects 14 of 26 transects</i>			

Figure 5. Percent of plots without regeneration.

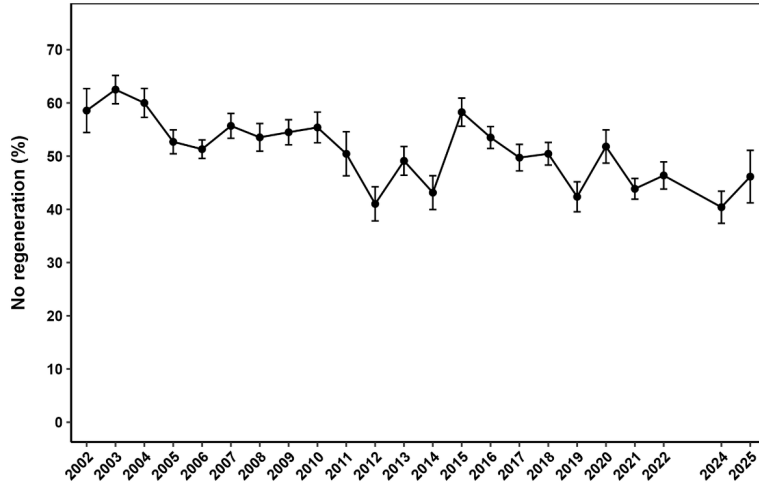


Figure 6. Percent of plots without browsing impact.

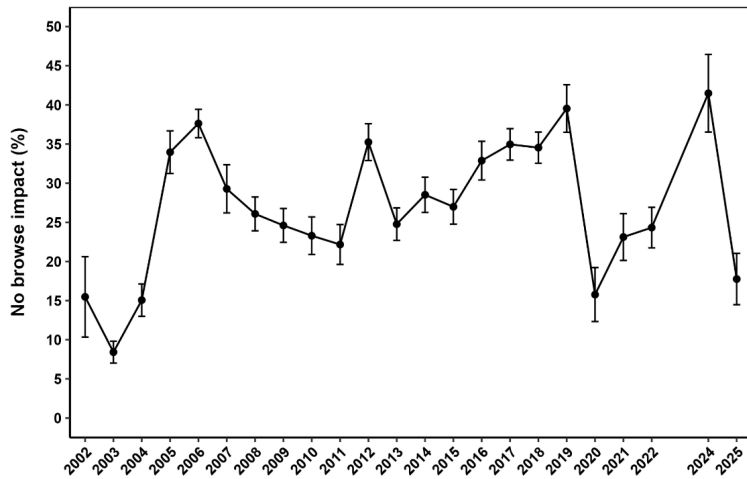
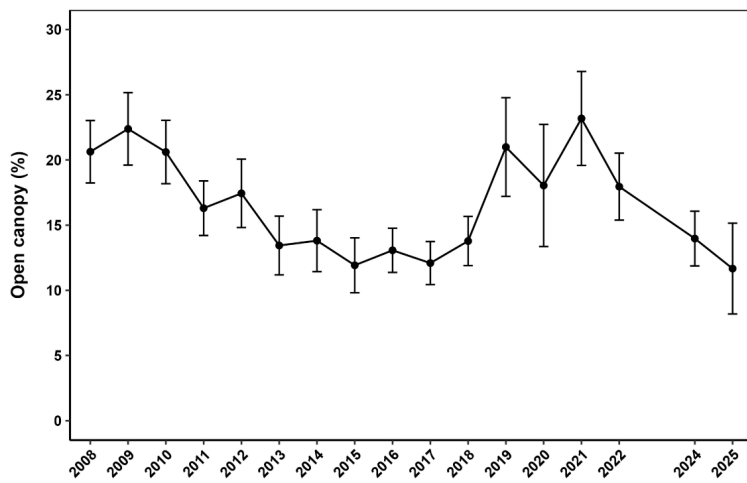


Figure 7. Percent of plots with open canopy conditions.



## Check Station Data and Deer Size Metrics

In 2024, a total of 90 deer were brought to the check stations (50 to Marshburg and 40 to Willows). The two stations operated on four days in total, covering opening weekend (Saturday and Sunday), Monday, and the Saturday at the end of the first week.

In 2025, 88 deer were brought in (47 to Marshburg and 41 to Willows), but the stations operated for only three days due to staffing constraints caused by cutbacks in both public and private workforce. Monday, which has typically produced the fewest deer checks, was therefore cancelled.

The 2023–2025 seasons represent the three highest check-station totals since 2009, and we believe these higher totals reflect sustained outreach and visibility efforts over the last three years (Table 6). Local advertising through newspapers and radio continues, roadside signs are posted a few days prior to the rifle season, and vehicle counts where staff place flyers on parked vehicles to advertise the check stations were conducted in 2023, 2024, and 2025.

The Willows site is made available through the generosity of Willows Restaurant owners Janet LaRoche and her husband Jim, and the Marshburg site is made available by trucking business owner John Perkins of Marshburg. While we would like to process more deer, doing so would require additional staffing and more operating days than are currently feasible. Even at current capacity, the stations provide valuable biological data and an important face-to-face venue for deer managers and hunters to exchange information.

Check-station metrics indicate that deer condition has declined from the mid-2010s highs, with the strongest change in doe weights (Table 7). Buck weight and doe weight peaked in 2016 (144.7 lb and 123.0 lb; Figures 8 and 9), while antler characteristics peaked in the mid-2010s as well, with beam diameter highest in that period (Figure 10), antler spread reaching its maximum in 2017 (16.9 in; Figure 11), and average points peaking around 2015–2016 (about 9 points; Figure 12).

Across 2023–2025, 3-year means were 133.3 lb for buck weight, 15.5 in for antler spread, and 103.0 lb for doe weight, representing declines of about 8%, 5%, and 16%, respectively, relative to 2016. Within that window, values declined from 2023 to 2024, and 2025 showed only a partial rebound for buck weight and antler spread. In 2023, buck weight, antler spread, and doe weight were 135.4 lb, 15.9 in, and 108.4 lb. In 2024, they declined to 130.7 lb, 15.1 in, and 99.9 lb. In 2025, buck weight and antler spread increased modestly to 133.9 lb and 15.6 in, while doe weight remained near the 2024 low (100.8 lb). Average points show a similar but more muted pattern, settling into a relatively stable range since 2020 (about 8.0 to 8.5 points), with 2025 near the upper end of that recent band (Figure 12).

Hunters continued to bring in more antlered than antlerless deer, but antlerless checks increased sharply in the most recent period, rising from 8 of 39 deer checked in 2022 to 40 of 90 in 2024 and 38 of 88 in 2025.

Table 6. Number of antlered and antlerless deer brought to check stations

Year	Antlered Deer	Antlerless Deer	Total	Female Antlerless	Male Antlerless	Unsexed
2001	104	48	152	39	9	
2002	71	62	133	48	11	3
2003	87	168	255	145	23	
2004	57	86	143	76	10	
2005	47	44	91	36	8	
2006	54	35	89	30	5	
2007	32	26	58	24	2	
2008	57	28	85	21	7	
2009	44	31	75	26	4	1
2010	40	13	53	10	3	
2011	22	5	27	5	0	
2012	37	4	41	3	1	
2013	31	10	41	8	2	
2014	15	4	19	3	1	
2015	19	7	26	4	3	
2016	21	4	25	3	1	
2017	26	10	36	10	0	
2018	24	15	39	10	5	
2019	21	11	32	8	3	
2020	38	19	57	16	3	
2021	51	20	71	19	1	
2022	31	8	39	6	2	
2023	42	31	73	28	3	
2024	50	40	90	32	8	
2025	50	38	88	33	5	
<b>totals</b>	<b>1071</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>1838</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>4</b>

*Table 7. Average weight of adult buck, average antler spread of all bucks, and average weight of adult doe brought to the check stations*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Buck weight (lbs)</b>	<b>Antler spread (inches)</b>	<b>Doe weight (lbs)</b>
2001	114.7	12.8	98.8
2002	118.6	15.1	92.5
2003	121.2	13.6	94.5
2004	123.3	13.2	98.6
2005	123.1	14.8	103.2
2006	131.8	14.6	102.4
2007	135.7	14.1	98.8
2008	132.7	14.9	109.6
2009	141.3	14.5	109.6
2010	133.7	14.6	107.1
2011	140.2	15.1	112
2012	137.7	15.6	105
2013	137.2	15.8	105.2
2014	133.7	14.9	105.5
2015	137.9	16.5	122.5
2016	144.7	16.4	123
2017	137.7	16.9	107.3
2018	144.3	15.8	105.1
2019	131.3	15.1	99.2
2020	133.5	14.6	100.9
2021	137.2	16	110.3
2022	132.2	15.1	83
2023	135.4	15.9	108.4
2024	130.7	15.1	99.9
2025	133.9	15.6	100.8

Figure 8. Average weight of adult bucks and does brought to the check stations.

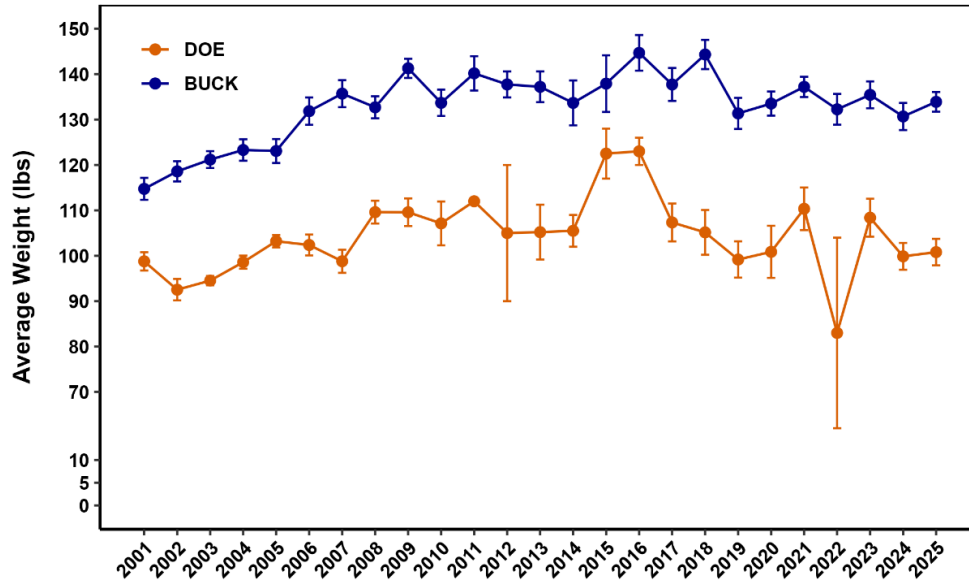


Figure 9. Average antler main beam diameter of bucks brought to the check stations.

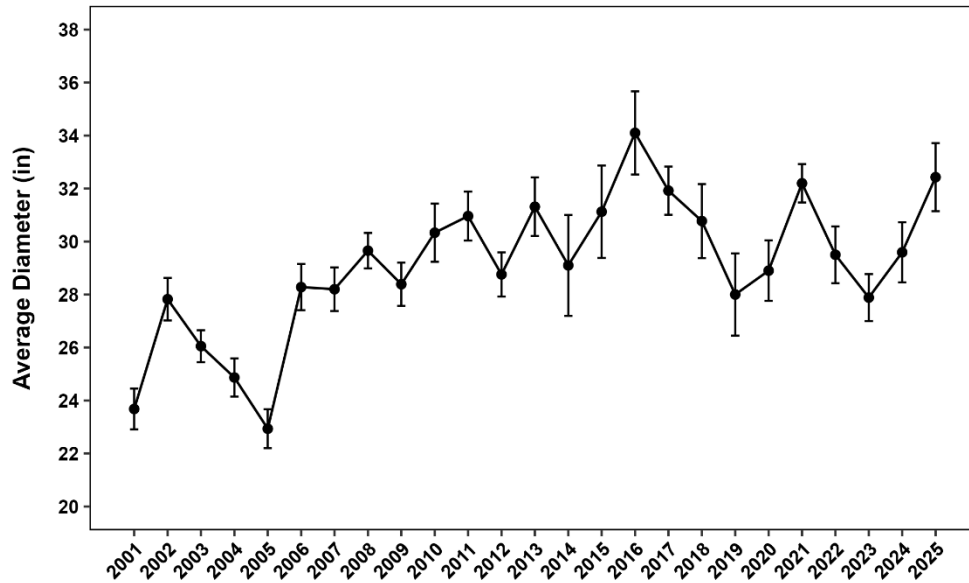


Figure 10. Average antler spread of all bucks brought to the check stations.

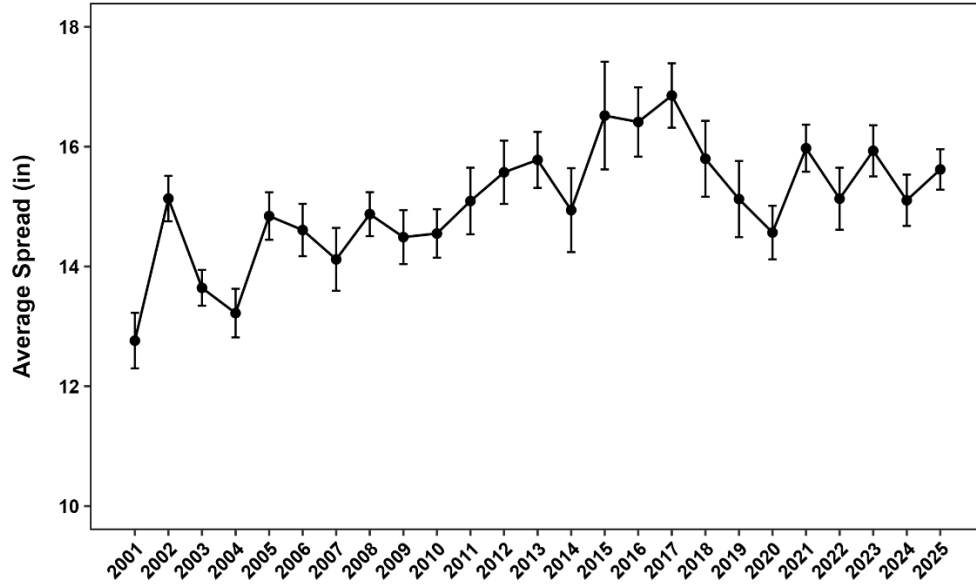
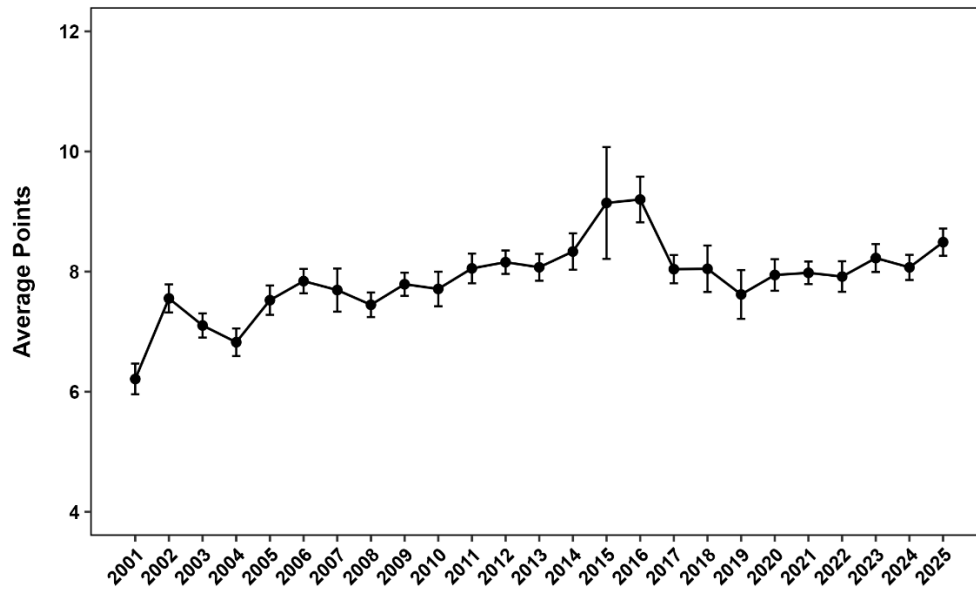


Figure 11. Average number of points of all bucks brought to the check stations.



## DMAP, KQDC and the Pennsylvania Game Commission

The information collected by the Pennsylvania Game Commission is all reviewed in February and March and DMAP Cooperators are then sent the information to assess how effective the DMAP program is at helping to control the deer population.

*Table 8. DMAP harvest reports for KQDC Units (#135, #1981, and #1996)*

License Year	DMAP Unit Number	DMAP Permits Approved	DMAP Permits Sold	DMAP Permits Unsold	Percent Permits Sold	DMAP Reports Received	DMAP Reports Not Received	Percent Reports Received	Reported they did Harvest a deer	Reported Did Not Harvest a deer	Percent Hunters successful
2018	135	416	416	0	100%	314	102	75.4%	64	250	15.3%
2019	135	416	416	0	100%	322	94	77.4%	53	269	12.7%
2020	135	417	417	0	100%	327	90	78.4%	65	262	15.5%
2021	135	440	440	0	100%	245	195	55.6%	57	188	12.9%
2022	135	440	440	0	100%	297	143	67.5%	41	256	9.3%
2023	135	440	362	78	82.3%	193	169	53.3%	33	160	9.1%
2024	135	440	351	89	79.7%	198	153	56.4%	38	160	10.8%
2018	1981	200	200	0	100%	151	49	71.5%	43	108	21.5%
2019	1981	200	200	0	100%	159	41	79.5%	42	117	21%
2020	1981	300	300	0	100%	235	65	78.3%	46	189	15.3%
2021	1981	641	594	47	92.7	286	308	48.1%	42	244	6.5%
2022	1981	641	641	0	100%	419	222	65.3%	51	368	7.9%
2023	1981	641	494	147	77.1%	192	302	38.8%	41	151	8.2%
2024	1981	641	462	179	71.9%	235	228	50.8%	57	178	12.3%
2018	1996	500	500	0	100%	288	212	57.6%	70	218	14%
2019	1996	500	500	0	100%	329	171	65.8%	76	253	15.2%
2020	1996	800	800	0	100%	532	268	66.5%	95	437	11.85%
2021	1996	800	800	0	100%	330	470	41.2%	60	270	7.5%
2022	1996	800	798	2	99.8%	410	388	51.3%	48	362	6%
2023	1996	800	554	246	69.2%	208	346	37.5%	34	174	6.1%
2024	1996	800	444	356	55.5%	202	242	45.5%	39	163	8.7%
2025	not	available	at	time	of	report					

DMAP Information for the 2025 Season continues to be collected through January of 2026, so results will not be available until about March of 2026

From 2018 to 2024 hunters reported harvesting a total of 1095 deer across the entirety of KQDC's 74,350 acres. That's an average of 156.4 deer per year taken with DMAP permits.

- DMAP 1996 (Bradford Watershed) leads with 422 deer taken or 60.3 deer per year.
- DMAP 135 (Kinzua Forest LLC. and ANF north of Westline) shows 351 taken or 50.1 per year.
- DMAP 1981 (Mostly ANF lands north of Rt. 59) shows 322 taken or 46 per year

Some of the main factors that affect the number of antlerless deer reported taken by DMAP in each unit are:

- number of DMAP permitted hunters on the unit
- number of acres (square miles) those hunters are spread out across
- number of days to use the DMAP permit
- road access throughout those individual areas

The more road access, the better the harvest and ability to bring harvested antlerless deer out of the woods.

DMAP holders are also required to report whether they killed a deer for every DMAP tag issued. The reporting rate for DMAP tags varies year to year and unit to unit, from a high of 79.5% to a low of 37.5%.

Square miles per DMAP UNIT and 6-year average of deer taken per square mile with DMAP permits

- UNIT 135 = 20,000 acres = 31.2 square miles 7-year avg. = 50.1 deer = 1.61 deer per mi<sup>2</sup>.
- UNIT 1996 = 14,800 acres = 23.15 square miles 7-year avg. = 60.3 deer = 2.60 deer per mi<sup>2</sup>.
- UNIT 1981 = 38,540 acres = 60.22 square miles 7-year avg. = 46.0 deer = 0.76 deer per mi<sup>2</sup>.
- Total KQDC = 73,340 acres = 114.5 square miles 7-year avg. = 156.4 = 1.37 deer per mi<sup>2</sup>.

As the data shows, there is a good bit of difference with the reported DMAP harvest per mi<sup>2</sup> on the KQDC. Two factors stand out. #1) The number of DMAP permits allowed per mi<sup>2</sup> #2) The ability of hunters to access the property. The more hunters an area can have hunting per square mile seems to improve the number of deer taken per mi<sup>2</sup>.

To those familiar with the landscapes throughout the KQDC it appears to show that the harder it is to access an area result in lower antlerless deer harvests. Talking to many hunters over the past 46 years of my involvement with hunters and deer management, both on and off the KQDC also supports this concept.

Hunters have long shown that they will walk further and drag a deer further when buck hunting. When it comes to antlerless deer, many hunters expend less effort, especially when it comes to walking far from a road. Many times, it is not necessary to do so to harvest an

antlerless deer, as hunters almost always see more antlerless deer than antlered deer during their efforts and hours hunting. On the rarer occasion when a hunter was walking to a remote area, chances are, they would harvest an antlerless deer before they got that far back in. The result is some areas, especially remote areas, was a very low antlerless deer harvest. I can truthfully say that back in the 1970's and up to the 1990's there were numerous areas in McKean, Elk, Cameron and Potter counties where I never saw anyone antlerless deer hunting on thousands and thousands of remote acres of land. Like most things related to deer management, there were many factors that produced such a result. Lower numbers of antlerless deer licenses in the past. Less days to hunt antlerless deer back then. Few or no special programs or areas to assist hunters with antlerless harvest or with improved access to remote areas. All these things and more lead to a culture of underharvesting antlerless deer.

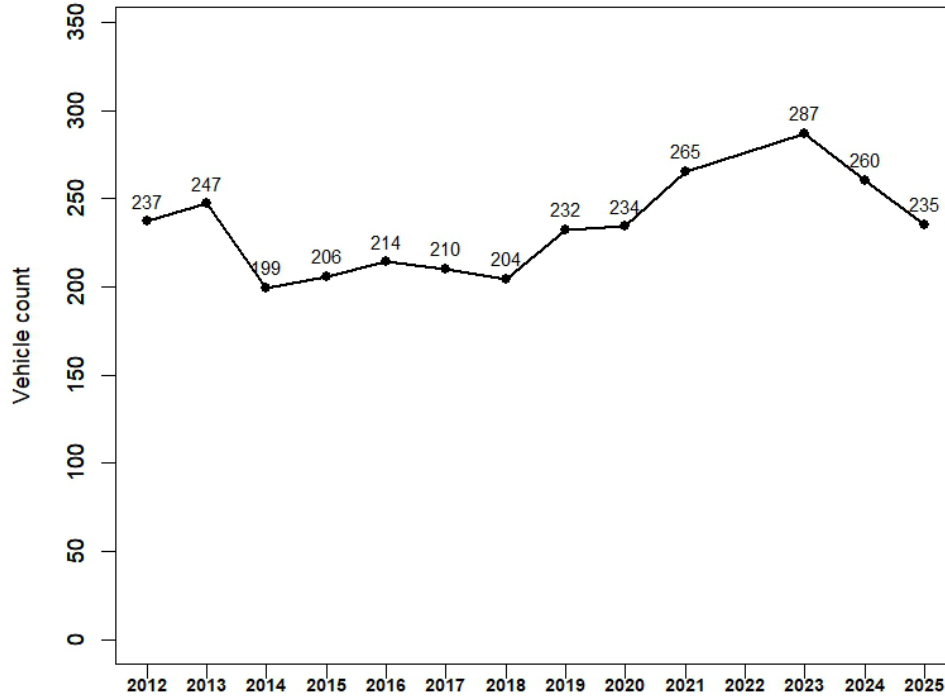
Today's hunters and manager now have a lot more opportunities to harvest antlerless deer than they did 25 to 50 or more years ago in Pennsylvania. Land managers, foresters and deer managers need to continue to reach out to hunters and others to make this happen.

DMAP permits per square mile per unit are as follows:

- UNIT 1996 = 800 DMAPS on 23.15 square miles = 34.56 DMAPS per mi<sup>2</sup>. (1 per 18.5 acres)
- UNIT 135 = 440 DMAPS on 31.2 square miles = 14.1 DMAPS per mi<sup>2</sup>. (1 per 45.39 acres)
- UNIT 1981 = 641 DMAPS on 60.22 square miles = 10.64 DMAPS per mi<sup>2</sup>. (1 per 60.15 acres)

In addition to the information gathered at the check stations, KQDC has used car counts as a simple index of hunter density and distribution. Demographic information is also gathered from hunters who apply for DMAP licenses. Car counts involve tallying the number of vehicles along a standardized route that includes the Cooperative properties to estimate relative hunter use. These counts were collected on the same routes prior to the KQDC's formation, discontinued in 2000, and then reinstated in 2012 to enable direct comparisons with earlier data. The 2018 vehicle count included a survey focused on hunter distribution and use across the KQDC, and in 2022, counts were not performed due to volunteer constraints and weather. The 2024 and 2025 vehicle counts were down slightly from 2023, but still above the last 13 years average of 233 (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Vehicle counts from 2012 to 2025.



Five main factors stand out in providing increased hunting opportunities over the last ten years. The Saturday opener, Sunday hunting, the concurrent season, the increase in antlerless licenses and DMAP permits – all have contributed to increasing the number of individuals hunting on KQDC properties. Additional factors include improved advertising with an updated KQDC brochure, and the Covid-era increase in demand for accessible outdoor experiences and recreation.

Another point related to our data collection: during the first day of vehicle counts, KQDC volunteers place informational flyers on every vehicle they encounter, noting check-station locations and operating hours. This outreach appears to play a meaningful role in increasing the number of deer brought to check stations—and, in turn, strengthening the quantity and quality of our data.

In 2022, vehicle counts were not done, and no flyers were put on vehicles. The number of deer brought in was only 39 total, even with two check stations in operation. By contrast, when flyers were left on vehicles in 2021, 71 deer were brought into the check station at Marshburg (the only check station operated that year). In 2023, flyer distribution was reinstated, and 73 deer total were brought in. A similar process ensued in 2024 and 2025, and a total of 90 deer and 88 deer were brought into the check stations, respectively, and even with one less day of check station operation in 2025. The inclusion of flyer distribution on hunter vehicles in the annual KQDC process appears to increase awareness of the check station operation and logistics, and the likelihood of hunter participation in data collection.

## **2024/2025 Weather, Hunters, Hunting and Tradition.**

Weather is a major factor during the opening days and Saturday of the regular rifle season. If the ground is snow-covered and the weather is mild and pleasant, hunters can remain comfortable and experience increased deer sightings due to snow cover, tracks, etc. Inclement weather, especially rain, fog, or heavy snow during the hunting hours of opening week of rifle season can reduce the annual total deer harvest.

In 2024 the opening day had 10 to 12 inches of snow throughout the KQDC. On Friday night before the Saturday opener both check stations had to be visited, with snow plowing and shoveling for the check stations to operate. Thank you to John Perkins who plowed much of the parking lot at Marshburg, and to Janet and Jim LaRoche of the Willows who plowed the parking lot there. Both buildings had to have snow removed with snow shovels from the weighing area and the doors so the workers could use the buildings and the scales.

In 2025 the same thing occurred with snow even deeper, up to 15 inches in parts of the KQDC's 74,000 acres. Many of the region's highway signs had to be uncovered from snow drifts and plowed snow that was obscuring driver visibility.

Both these seasons had snow cover and cold weather for the entire two weeks of the concurrent rifle deer season. Conditions like these are both beneficial and detrimental. For those hunters who can travel the many unplowed unmaintained dirt roads throughout the KQDC, the hunting conditions were very good for seeing brown deer against the white snow-covered landscape. Ample snow was available for tracking deer the whole two weeks of both years. However, many areas were not accessible to hunters except those who had high clearance four-wheel drive vehicles to get back into some areas off the main roads. Even parking along state highway routes 59, 321, and 346 was difficult in many places due to the depth of the snow. Once a hunter was parked and ready to walk, snow depth and drifts in areas made foot travel difficult. Anyone who regularly travels the roads around KQDC public and private lands knows that such snow cover reduces the number of vehicles and hunters, even on those opening days. Most of the two weeks were cold, but there were a few times when the snow turned to rain or sleet for part of the day, making hunting even more difficult. The results were still better than average at the check stations, with 90 deer brought in 2024 and 88 deer in 2025.

Conversations with hunters during the 2023 - 2025 seasons show that many still practice the tradition of not hunting or harvesting antlerless deer until after they get a buck. Many hunters who are knowledgeable about the need to harvest antlerless deer for the benefit of the deer and forests often still hold to that tradition. Some hunters continue to profess their belief that there are not enough deer, so they will not shoot a doe because they want the deer numbers to increase. Continued information and education programs on why antlerless deer need to be harvested to keep the herd healthy and in check remains vital to producing quality deer and quality habitat.

## **Trail Camera Information 2024 and 2025**

In 2024 ten trail cameras were set out and maintained by the KQDC Coordinator. They were in place as of August 1<sup>st</sup> and remained in place until December 31<sup>st</sup>, both in 2024 and 2025. Camera cards were collected and data recorded once each month. Two cameras went missing. Stolen by people? Removed by bears? We could not tell. Also, some cameras malfunctioned, and at least once a camera card was taken (but the camera was left).

The value of the pictures is primarily their use on the KQDC Facebook page, although they are also valuable for affirmation of data conclusions. Both 2024 and 2025 were “normal” years for photos, with deer being the most common animal at every location by far. Of approximately 1500 total pictures per year, 90% to 95% of the photos are of deer. If following KQDC on Facebook, one will notice that the antler size seems to have diminished slightly according to the pictures, which also aligns with the check station information. The other 5% - 10% of the pictures, in order of recurrence, are bears, turkeys, raccoons, coyotes, squirrels. One or two pictures each year of animals like bobcats, fishers, red or gray foxes are also captured, along with the occasional grouse.

The trail camera pictures continue to be popular on KQDC Facebook.

## **KQDC Outreach Efforts**

In 2024 and 2025 no KQDC Deer Season Kick Off programs were held. Attendance had declined to just 37 people in 2023, down from what had originally drawn over 100 participants. The leadership group decided that efforts to reach out to hunters and others with our deer and forest health education message should change and shifted towards creation of video content that could be shared on Facebook, the kqdc.com web site, and other public-facing education venues. In 2024, Alex Bond – a local professional videographer based in Kane, was contracted to create several videos for KQDC. The first video, filmed in March and April of 2024 on how and why transects are performed, was produced and put on the KQDC Facebook page in late summer of that year. The three-minute video has been viewed favorably by the public and was also quickly picked up for use at the Penn State College DuBois Campus for educating students in their two-year fisheries and wildlife technology course. It also has been shared on a variety of Facebook deer hunting sites in Pennsylvania. A second video, explaining the process and importance of the deer check stations in KQDC's data collection, is in the works. A third is also planned, which will spotlight the landowners and land managers who participate in the KQDC.

### **Check Stations**

Deer Check Stations were held at two locations in 2024 and 2025 (Marshburg and Willows). Hunters that brought deer to the check station were gifted a fluorescent orange KQDC hat in 2024 and a KQDC embroidered fluorescent orange tassel stocking cap in 2025. All participating hunters were also entered in a raffle for cash prizes; antlerless deer (\$500) and antlered deer (\$250). Prizes have been mailed to the winners, and their pictures and names posted on the Facebook page and in local print media.

Information on Chronic Wasting Disease, KQDC maps Brochures, deer density maps, and contact information on a variety of subjects is handed out to hunters. Most individuals who bring deer to a check station have one or two other hunters accompanying them. A few hunters stop by without deer just to ask questions, get information, or to observe deer being brought in and processed. We estimate at least 120 hunters visited the check stations in 2024 and 2025, with plenty of questions answered and information disseminated.

### **College Interaction**

Contacts in 2024 and 2025 continued with two colleges in the KQDC region, Pitt-Bradford and Penn State-Dubois, to encourage students and staff to get involved. In the spring of 2025, four students from Penn State-DuBois spent the day on KQDC property learning how to perform transects, completing Transect O that was used in the final data for the year. Students were Joe Hertal, Ryan Lutz, Karlin Hoffman, Erik Stafford and instructor Mike Eckly.

Three students were also able to observe and participate in December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025 operations at the Marshburg check station, where they were instructed by Emily Rowan and Mary Hosmer. Students were Ben Salapek, Jorja R. Snyder, and John C. Bruner.

## **Brochures**

The 2019 printing of the KQDC trifold brochure is still available as of 2025, although now in limited numbers. It is distributed through the ANF Visitors Bureau, Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group, and KQDC partner participation in public events. It is also available online in three places: Facebook, KQDC website, and ANF Visitors Bureau. The ANF Visitors Bureau distributes the brochures in rack card stands throughout Pennsylvania and adjacent states, actively promoting hunting for this area.

Brochures are also on display and available in numerous public locations such as local State Parks (Kinzua Bridge, etc), McKean County courthouse, and the ANF Visitors office in Bradford, to name a few. Thousands of people access the ANF site daily and can find links to KQDC on that site. The ANF Visitors Bureau has offered to assist KQDC leadership in developing an updated brochure in the coming year.

## **News Releases**

For at least the past ten years, dedicated KQDC volunteer, Mary Hosmer, has taken the lead in drafting and circulating news releases relative to KQDC events and operations. She has developed a standard news release template which works well for local newspapers, radio stations and other media outlets. She maintains a database of nearly 80 contacts for distribution of KQDC releases. Other KQDC leadership staff assist with the editing and content, and Mary diligently gets it circulated. Thank you, Mary!

## **Scientific Publications**

In 2021, a research team re-surveyed the permanent plot network originally monumented within the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative in 2001, with funding from the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Field work was led by Wright State University, under the direction of Mariah Slaughter, with assistance from undergraduate researchers Rachel Menella and Karen Klug. The re-survey documented long-term changes in understory plant communities and tree regeneration, and the results closely mirrored patterns observed across the broader KQDC monitoring effort: gains accrued during years of sustained deer herd reductions, followed by erosion of those gains as deer density and browsing pressure increased. A copy of the paper can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/4cwf73rj>.

## **Testimony at Pennsylvania Game Commission Meetings**

The KQDC Coordinator provided written and verbal testimony at the January 2024 and 2025 Commission public meetings and plans to continue that effort. In 2025 a second letter was written for the April PAGC meeting to support expanded DMAP hunting days with rifles, which was approved by the Commission. KQDC leadership team works collaboratively, and informed by our data, to draft KQDC annual and as-needed written and verbal communications / testimony.

## **KQDC Facebook page and KQDC website**

KQDC maintains a modest but steady Facebook audience (1300+ followers) during the fall hunting months, with visitors checking in from September through December for updates, information, and photos of deer and other wildlife from the cooperative area. The page is managed by KQDC Coordinator, John Dzemyan and can be found at [facebook.com > KQDC](https://www.facebook.com/KQDC). Efforts are underway to expand its reach by developing shared links with other Facebook communities, including Hunting 2F, the ANF Visitors Bureau, the Mt. Jewett Sportsman’s Club, and several Ruffed Grouse groups.

The KQDC website is easily reached online at [www.kqdc.com](http://www.kqdc.com). It provides several useful tools to make the full breadth of KQDC information readily available to the public: downloadable maps and the KQDC brochure, details on where the cooperative is located, how to apply for DMAP permits, and information about habitat conditions and access points. Visitors can also explore photo galleries, videos, publications (including these annual reports), and blog updates that showcase the landscape, wildlife, and ongoing management work.

Together, these resources help hunters prepare for the season, understand the area’s habitat and deer population trends, and stay informed about KQDC activities. Plans are also underway for a KQDC YouTube page and an upgrade to the website, in addition to expanding our Facebook following.

## **Looking Ahead**

KQDC’s leadership anticipates stable funding into 2026, supported by landowner contributions (reinstated in 2025 after suspending in 2024 due to forest product market conditions) and continued public-sector investment through the USFS – ANF grant funds. These resources are expected to allow completion of the remaining contracted videos, continued support for coordinator duties, and coverage of future check-station operations.

Looking ahead, KQDC will implement strategies to increase capacity (paid and volunteer) for transect completion, check-station coverage and vehicle-count operations, particularly at Marshburg, to reduce reliance on limited cooperator personnel, both private and public sector. The Cooperative also expects to expand public education efforts through increased social media, website improvements and transect training sessions for private landowners. KQDC will refine its digital data-storage systems and intends to contract services for analytical work and annual report graphics.

## **KQDC Leadership Team**

The Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative's leadership team reflects the Cooperative's founding principle: meaningful deer and forest management requires shared responsibility across public agencies, private landowners, research institutions, and nonprofit partners. The leadership group brings together professionals whose roles, expertise, and landholdings collectively shape the 74,000-acre project area. Their collaboration ensures that decisions are grounded in science, aligned with landowner objectives, and responsive to hunters and the broader community.

### **Public Landowner: Allegheny National Forest (USFS) - 48,350 acres (66%)**

Pennsylvania's only national forest, Allegheny National Forest (ANF), anchors the Cooperative's leadership, with team members providing stewardship of federal lands within the KQDC boundary and coordinating participation in check stations, pellet transects, and vehicle counts. Their involvement ensures that KQDC's monitoring and management align with broader Forest Service mandates for ecosystem health, wildlife habitat, and public access.

The U.S. Forest Service also continues to provide essential cost-share support to the Cooperative, helping sustain long-term monitoring, habitat assessments, and public-access initiatives across the project area. This funding remains a critical component of KQDC's collaborative model, ensuring that federal, private, and nonprofit partners share the responsibility and investment required to manage deer and forest conditions at a landscape scale.

### **Private & Municipal Landowners: Kane Hardwood/Collins Pine; Kinzua Forest LLC ; Bradford Municipal Water Authority ; RAM Forest Products - 24,900 acres (34%)**

Private landowners contribute the balance of the acreage within the Cooperative and play a central role in shaping deer management outcomes. Along with direct funding of KQDC, these landowners maintain open access for public hunting through DMAP participation, invest in habitat treatments, and provide on-the-ground capacity for pellet transects and regeneration monitoring. Their long-term commitment to sustainable forestry and watershed protection aligns with KQDC's goals of balancing deer populations with forest recovery.

### **Private Forestry Companies: Generations Forestry, Inc ; Forecon Inc.**

The Cooperative benefits from the technical expertise and operational capacity of several private forestry companies that manage significant acreage within the project area. These partners bring decades of silvicultural experience, contribute staff to monitoring efforts, and help interpret how deer browsing interacts with regeneration, herbicide treatments, and harvest cycles. Their participation ensures that KQDC's recommendations remain grounded in real-world forest management needs and economic realities.

**Research Partner: USFS Northern Research Station**

Scientific rigor remains a defining feature of the Cooperative, supported by long-standing research partnerships. These partners maintain and refine the Cooperative’s monitoring protocols, analyze pellet-count and vegetation data, and produce the charts, graphs, and interpretations that underpin the annual report.

Note: Uncertainty in federal research staffing / funding raises concern about the long-term capacity to sustain KQDC’s level of scientific support, making continued collaboration and adaptive planning increasingly important.

**Nonprofit and Community Partners: Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group (AHUG); Sand County Foundation**

Nonprofit organizations provide continuity, administrative support, and community engagement.

Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group (AHUG), headquartered in Kane, is a regional promotion, education and economic development organization dedicated to supporting the forest and wood products sector and forest-reliant communities of northwest and north central PA by advancing the sustainable, science-based management of natural resources. AHUG employs the KQDC Coordinator, provides fiscal and grant administration, and supports outreach and communications.

The Sand County Foundation played a foundational role in establishing the Cooperative and continues to support its collaborative model.

**KQDC Volunteers:**

Long-time volunteers—many of whom are retired scientists, foresters, or wildlife professionals—sustain the Cooperative’s field capacity for institutional memory, and public-facing presence. They are the life-blood of the KQDC, contributing invaluable expertise and countless hours of donated time.

**KQDC Coordinator:**

Serving as the operational hub of the Cooperative, the Coordinator organizes fieldwork, manages check stations, supports data collection, and maintains communication among partners. The role ensures that the Cooperative’s diverse sectors remain aligned and that monitoring, outreach, and reporting continue uninterrupted despite shifting agency staffing and volunteer availability.

Together, these public agencies, private landowners, forestry companies, researchers, nonprofits, and volunteers form a leadership structure that is both distributed and deeply collaborative. Each sector contributes unique strengths—land management authority, scientific expertise, operational capacity, or community engagement—and the Cooperative’s success depends on maintaining this balance. The 2024–2025 leadership team reflects the enduring

commitment of these partners to sustaining healthy forests, productive deer herds, and a high-quality hunting experience across the KQDC landscape.

### **Closing Message:**

As coordinator for the KQDC I take the closing lines to say thank you to all those who continue to assist with the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative as well as to the new partners and volunteers who joined our efforts in 2024–2025. The Cooperative has always depended on this broad network of landowners, agency staff, researchers, volunteers, and community partners, and the strength of that network remains one of our greatest assets.

The long-term goal of KQDC to provide in-field data to support quality forests and quality deer on a sustainable basis continues. December 2025 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> year of forest and deer data collection and documentation - a milestone made possible only through consistent collaboration and shared stewardship.

As we move into 2026, we look forward to building on this foundation, maintaining the continuity of our datasets, and continuing the practical, science-based efforts that have defined the Cooperative for a quarter century.

Sincerely, Thank You.

John Dzemyan

KQDC Coordinator

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Year 2024 Deer Check Stations

#### Deer (#1-60 at Rt. 59) Deer (#61-90 at Rt. 346)

DEER #	GENDER	POINTS RIGHT	POINTS LEFT	SPREAD inches	WEIGHT (gutted out)	AGE	Beam diameter right	Beam diameter left
1	BUCK	4	4	12	115	1yr 7m	23	22
2	BUCK	4	4	17.75	147	3.5	36	39
3	BUCK	3	3	10.5	105	1yr 7m	23	23
4	BUCK	2	2	8.5	100	1yr 7m	18	18
5	BUCK	5	7	17.75	162	4.5	38	39
6	Buck	0	0	0	68	7m	0	0
7	BUCK	4	4	17	127	3.5	32	30
8	DOE	0	0	0	99	3.5	0	0
9	BUCK	5	4	14.5	143	3.5	34	34
10	BUCK	5	5	18.875	172	4.5	41	40
11	BUCK	4	4	16.75	? (head)	2.5	27	25
12	Buck	0	0	0	53	7m	0	0
13	DOE	0	0	0	110	2.5	0	0
14	BUCK	5	4	16.5	145	2.5	27	27
15		4	4	18.25	131	2.5	29	27
16	BUCK	3	3	13.5	101	2.5	22	22
17	BUCK	4	4	16.75	146	3.5	38	36
18	Buck	0	0	0	60	7m	0	0
19	Buck	0	0	0	87	7m	0	0
20	DOE	0	0	0	100	1.5	0	0
21	DOE	0	0	0	58	7m	0	0
22	DOE	0	0	0	118	4.5	0	0
23	BUCK	4	3	10.25	100	1.5	23	19
24	DOE	0	0	0	95	2.5	0	0
25	BUCK	4	4	15.25	153	3.5	25	25
26	BUCK	4	4	14	125	3.5	28	26
27	BUCK	4	4	15	136	2.5	30	28
28	BUCK	4	4	16.5	142	2.2	30	32
29	DOE	0	0	0	101	4.5	0	0
30	DOE	0	0	0	80	1.5	0	0

**Marshburg Check Station continued #31 to #60. YEAR 2024**

DEER #	GENDER	POINTS RIGHT	POINTS LEFT	SPREAD inches	WEIGHT (guttied out)	AGE	Beam diameter right	Beam diameter left
31	BUCK	4	4	17.25	125	2.5	30	28
32	BUCK	4	4	14.75	? (head)	2.5	29	26
33	BUCK	4	4	17.5	? (head)	5.5	43	43
34	DOE	0	0	0	99	2.5	0	0
35	BUCK	4	4	0 = off	120	2.5	24	26
36	BUCK	3	4	13.375	118	2.5	26	25
37	BUCK	7	5	19	151	?	42	38
38	BUCK	4	4	12.5	118	2.5	30	29
39	DOE	0	0	0	81	3.5	0	0
40	BUCK	3	3	12.25	122	2.5	19	19
41	DOE	0	0	0	108	2.5	0	0
42	DOE	0	0	0	85	1.5	0	0
43	DOE	0	0	0	102	2.5	0	0
44	DOE	0	0	0	115	2.5	0	0
45	BUCK	4	4	12.75	? (head)	2.5	24	25
46	BUCK	4	4	13.25	125	2.5	26	26
47	BUCK	4	3	15.5	125	2.5	31	31
48	DOE	0	0	0	105	2.5	0	0
49	DOE	0	0	0	100	1.5	0	0
50	BUCK	3	2	7.125	105	2.5	22	20
51	DOE	0	0	0	62	7m	0	0
52	BUCK	4	4	11.25	120	2.5	28	27
53	BUCK	4	4	18	130	3.5	30	34
54	BUCK	4	4	16	155	3.5	38	38
55	DOE	0	0	0	95	2.5	0	0
56	DOE	0	0	0	90	6.5	0	0
57	DOE	0	0	0	102	1.7	0	0
58	Buck	0	0	0	64	7m	0	0
59	Buck	0	0	0	60	7m	0	0
60	DOE	0	0	0	93	2.5	0	0

### #61 Through #90 at Rt. 346 (The Willows Check Station) YEAR 2024

DEER #	GENDER	POINTS RIGHT	POINTS LEFT	SPREAD inches	WEIGHT (guttied out)	AGE	Beam diameter right	Beam diameter left
61	BUCK	4	4	15.5	133	3.5	34	31
62	BUCK	3	3	12	116	2.5	27	28
63	BUCK	5	5	18.5	130	3.5	38	38
64	BUCK	4	4	13.75	141	3.5	26	23
65	DOE	0	0	0	83	1.5	0	0
66	DOE	0	0	0	54	5m	0	0
67	Buck	0	0	0	67	1.7m	0	0
68	BUCK	3	3	11.75	106	2.5	0	0
69	BUCK	5	5	18.5	142	3.5	37	37
70	BUCK	5	5	18.25	126	3.5	35	38
71	Buck	0	0	0	63	5m	0	0
72	BUCK	4	4	11	110	3.5	26	25
73	BUCK	4	5	18.75	124	3.5	35	36
74	BUCK	4	4	13.25	110	3.5	24	24
75	DOE	0	0	0	113	3.5	0	0
76	BUCK	4	3	12	128	2.5	28	28
77	BUCK	1	1	9	94	?	17	19
78	BUCK	4	4	12	110	3.5	28	32
79	BUCK	4	4	14.5	114	2.5	26	27
80	DOE	0	0	0	115	3.5	0	0
81	DOE	0	0	0	55	5m	0	0
82	BUCK	2	3	15	? (head)	2.5	29	30
83	BUCK	5	5	15	? (head)	4.5	35	34
84	DOE	0	0	0	71	2.5	0	0
85	DOE	0	0	0	114	3.5	0	0
86	DOE	0	0	0	68	2.5	0	0
87	DOE	0	0	0	107	3.5	0	0
88	BUCK	5	5	20.25	177	4.5	42	42
89	DOE	0	0	0	88	3.5	0	0
90	DOE	0	0	0	110	2.5	0	0

**Appendix 2 - YEAR 2025 Deer Check Stations Rt. 59 + Rt. 346**

**#1 through #47 at Rt. 59. #48 Through #88 at Rt. 346**

DEER #	GENDER	POINTS RIGHT	POINTS LEFT	SPREAD inches	WEIGHT (gutted out)	AGE	Beam diameter right	Beam diameter left
1	DOE	0	0	0	100	2.5	0	0
2	buck	0	0	0	64	6 months	0	0
3	BUCK	4	4	12.5	115	2.5	25	27
4	BUCK	4	4	20.75	155	3.5	38	33
5	BUCK	4	4	9.5	115	2.5	24	23
6	BUCK	3	3	15	124	2.5	25	26
7	BUCK	4	4	12	135	2.5	29	29
8	Doe	0	0	0	60	6 months	0	0
9	Buck	0	0	0	65	6 months	0	0
10	Buck	0	0	0	55	5 months	0	0
11	BUCK	5	5	16.25	146	4.5	34	35
12	BUCK	4	4	13.75	152	2.5	31	28
13	BUCK	6	7	17.25	155	5.5	38	38
14	DOE	0	0	0	60	2.5	0	0
15	BUCK	4	4	17.75	160	3.5	30	32
16	DOE	0	0	0	90	1.5	0	0
(Day 2) 17	BUCK	4	5	16.25	115	3.5	130	36
18	DOE	0	0	0	95	3.5	0	0
19	DOE	0	0	0	100	2.5	0	0
20	BUCK	4	3	15	145	2.5	29	26
21	DOE	0	0	0	115	3.5	0	0
22	BUCK	5	5	18.75	165	4.5	42	43
23	BUCK	5	5	16	150	2.5	34	35
24	BUCK	0	4	0	130	2.5	0	29
25	DOE	0	0	0	110	3.5	0	0
26	DOE	0	0	0	105	2.5	0	0
27	BUCK	7	6	19	165	2.5	43	46
28	BUCK	4	4	16	135	2.5	30	29
29	BUCK	5	5	13	145	2.5	32	32
30	BUCK	4	4	10.5	130	2.5	26	26

**Page 2, # 31 to # 60 YEAR 2025 (Willows Check Station Day #1 starts at deer #48)**

DEER #	GENDER	POINTS RIGHT	POINTS LEFT	SPREAD inches	WEIGHT (guttied out)	AGE	Beam diameter right	Beam diameter left
31	Doe	0	0	0	61	5 months	0	0
32	DOE	0	0	0	91	2.5	0	0
33	DOE	0	0	0	95	3.5	0	0
34	DOE	0	0	0	97	1yr 7 mo	0	0
35	DOE	0	0	0	115	2.5	0	0
36	BUCK	3	4	11.75	125	2.5	25	24
37	BUCK	4	4	17	150	3.5	36	34
38	BUCK	5	5	18	145	3.5	33	33
(Day #3)39	DOE	0	0	0	115	2.5	0	0
40	Doe	0	0	0	57	5 months	0	0
41	DOE	0	0	0	105	3.5	0	0
42	DOE	0	0	0	96	4.5	0	0
43	BUCK	1	1	9.5	103	1.5	15	15.5
44	DOE	0	0	0	105	2.5	0	0
45	BUCK	4	4	17	150	3.5	32	33
46	Buck	0	0	0	56	5 months	0	0
47	DOE	0	0	0	95	1.5	0	0
48	DOE	0	0	0	105	4.5	0	0
49	BUCK	5	4	16	121	3.5	35	34
50	BUCK	4	6	17	139	4.5	40	43
51	BUCK	4	4	15.5	head	25	33	37
52	BUCK	4	4	16	123	4.5	30	29
53	DOE	0	0	0	89	2.5	0	0
54	Buck	0	0	0	64	1yr 4mo	0	0
55	BUCK	5	4	17.5	head	3.5	40	39
56	BUCK	3	4	14	128	2.5	30	31
57	BUCK	4	4	16.25	126	2.5	32	31
58	DOE	0	0	0	118	3.5	0	0
59	DOE	0	0	0	69	2.5	0	0
60	BUCK	5	4	17.75	126	3.5	35	33

**page 3, #61 to #88 YEAR 2025**

DEER #	GENDER	POINTS RIGHT	POINTS LEFT	SPREAD inches	WEIGHT (guttied out)	AGE	Beam diameter right	Beam diameter left
61	BUCK	5	7	17.75	115	2.5	27	28
62	BUCK	5	5	18.5	135	3.5	31	27
63	DOE	0	0	0	112	3.5	0	0
64	BUCK	4	5	17	132	3.5	38	37
65	DOE	0	0	0	96	2.5	0	0
66	DOE	0	0	0	116	3.5	0	0
67	DOE	0	0	0	104	2.5	0	0
68	DOE	0	0	0	111	2.5	0	0
69	BUCK	4	4	16.5	123	3.5	25	24
70	BUCK	4	4	18	136	2.5	33	34
71	BUCK	4	5	14.5	126	2.5	31	34
(Day2) 72	BUCK	4	4	18.5	142	3.5	36	37
73	BUCK	4	4	11.75	125	3.5	24	25
74	BUCK	4	4	13	112	3.5	26	26
75	28	4	4	16	125	3.5	29	29
76	BUCK	4	5	13.5	119	2.5	28	27
77	BUCK	4	3	16.5	154	3.5	28	31
78	BUCK	4	4	15	114	2.5	26	25
79	BUCK	3	3	14	124	2.5	20	24
80	BUCK	4	4	15	140	3.5	36	37
81	DOE	0	0	0	64	1.5	0	0
82	BUCK	4	3	14	129	2.5	37	28
83	BUCK	5	4	15	108	2.5	34	34
84	BUCK	4	5	17	139	5.5	34	34
85	BUCK	4	4	15.25	125	2.5	24	26
(Day3) 86	DOE	0	0	0	84	1yr 7mo	0	0
87	DOE	0	0	0	113	5.5	0	0
88	DOE	0	0	0	80	2.5	0	0

Notes: Three check stations from 2001 to 2009, (Warehouse, Rt. 59, The Willows, Rt. 346, and Bobs Trading Post, Rt. 321). In 2010 to 2015 there were two check stations, (The Warehouse and the Willows) (in 2011 there was also a roving check station) (in 2012 Marshburg one was at USFS Bradford Ranger Station Rt 59) From 2016 to 2021 one check station located at ANF's Timberdoodle Flats on Rt. 59. In 2021 the Rt. 59 Marshburg check station was moved to John Perkins parking lot. From 2022 to 2025 we had two check stations. Rt. 59 Perkins trucking garage parking lot and Rt. 346 Willows restaurant.