



News Release; The “Deer Save” Program on Manitoulin Island

Conservation, Sustainable Harvesting and Protecting the Deer of Manitoulin Island

“Deer Save” is a local initiative introduced in 2010 to help save our local deer populations during years of severe winter snow conditions. It was co-led by Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council (MASC), OFAH, local First Nations, Manitoulin & North Shore area Fish and Game Clubs, Community volunteer members, cooperating landowners and works with the approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Sudbury District office. In 2014 MASC amalgamated with the Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association www.manitoulinstreams.com and the future “Deer Save” program will now be coordinated under the “Manitoulin Streams” name.

In 2008 MASC, through a socio-economic study they had carried out, were able to formally value the deer hunt as a valuable economic resource on Manitoulin. The peer reviewed study focused on the economic stimulus of the hunt. It concluded that the deer hunt alone brings in approximately \$16,000,000 per year, based on out of pocket expenditures alone, to the local economy. Furthermore, out of 670,000 acres on the island, almost half is privately owned specifically for deer hunting, not to mention 50,000+ of additional acres which are leased out for the deer hunt. This had prompted the creation of the “Deer Save” initiative in 2010 and has been a growing program ever since.

For the most part, recent winters have remained mild. However, four years ago, “Deer Save” efforts averted disaster for local deer populations as a result of efforts coordinated by MASC, with the permission of landowners within core deer wintering areas and the assistance of nearly 250 volunteers. We also contracted a bulldozer to open an existing 500+ kilometers of existing snow bound trails which landowners had granted us prior permission to access. Deer would then use these newly opened trails to avoid deep snow and to access natural food. Prior to the emergency clearing of trails, most deer were severely stressed by their struggle to move in deep snow and bitter cold weather and many were dying due to these harsh winter conditions. Thanks to many landowners, volunteers and contributors, “Deer Save” had managed to make a positive impact on the survival of the deer herd, averting further loss.

Healthy populations of the deer herd now continue to thrive; however, we may again be faced with another harsh winter for 2016/2017. If we do not take proactive measures now and prepare to help sustain this valuable deer resource, we could stand to lose much more than the economic

impact of a diminished deer herd. The facts are simple, to sustain the deer hunt, we need to help sustain the deer herd!

Susanne Meert remains the Deer Save Coordinator leading these efforts. Please contact Sue Meert at (705) 859-1653 suemeert@hotmail.com for further details. We also have our facebook page at Deer Save Manitoulin where updates are posted regularly during winter watch.

How can you help.....!!!!

Register your property if it lies within core deer wintering yard areas – if you own acreage in the noted winter yard areas, please register with us to allow entry of our volunteers to carry out Deer Save efforts such as; clearing snow off of existing trails and roadways, browse cutting etc.. NOTE: All “Deer Save” activities are covered under our OFAH liability insurance program.

Volunteer – whether you own property or just want to help, we need volunteers to assist in breaking trails and feeding when deemed required under emergency protocol. If you are able to help, contact our office for further details.

Do not feed the deer - Improper feeding of grain or hay to deer when *not* deemed necessary for emergency efforts can cause death of deer.

Cedar Browse Cutting- Do not cut down full trees, this takes away future cover and food sources. Browse is typically supplied to deer along our cleared trails by pruning cedar branches and letting these fall to the ground where deer can access them. This is a natural food item for deer and can help to sustain them through a harsh winter. Cedar browse can be supplied to deer year round without emergency protocol, as it's their natural food.

Winter Activities - do not conduct winter activities or let dogs run loose near the deer yards to chase deer, this consumes much of the deer's energy

Donate- any donations of funds, equipment or in-kind support would be much appreciated! Funds are placed into a trust fund which is specifically dedicated and held in trust for future “Deer Save” efforts only.

Deer Heads Required for Study - Manitoulin Streams has been asked by the MNRF to be a depot station where hunters can drop off their yearling or older deer heads so that they can be tested for Chronic Waste Disease (CWD). CWD is a fatal brain disease of white-tailed deer and has not been found in Ontario but has been found in Western Canada and the States. MNRF is promoting a CWD Surveillance program and are looking for volunteers to drop off samples to have them tested. We are open Mon-Fri 8:30-4:30. Bridal Veil Esso is the second depot on the

island. Thanks to everyone that is helping to monitor our deer herds! For more information please see the website www.Ontario.ca/CWD

25B Spragge St. Box 238
Manitowaning, ON P0P 1N0
Ph: (705) 859-1653
Fax: (705) 859-3010
www.manitoulinstreams.com