

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
Porter, Indiana



Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Deer Management Plan



Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Meetings

Your participation is vital to our analysis process. Because of your interest in Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore we are requesting your input in this important process to help the National Park Service develop management alternatives that will be analyzed in the Deer Management Environmental

You're Invited! Impact Statement
(EIS). More detailed

information will be available at the two scoping meetings about the proposed plan. Preliminary alternatives will be available for your review, and you will have opportunities to comment.

Because the EIS will analyze many complex social and ecological issues, your participation is encouraged and needed.

Thursday, September 11, 2003
5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center
Kemil Road at US 12, 3 mi. east of IN 49
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

Saturday, September 13, 2003
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Northwestern Indiana Regional
Planning Commission (NIRPC) Office
6100 Southport Rd.
Portage, Indiana



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
1100 North Mineral Springs Rd.
Porter, IN 46304





The Proposal: A Deer Management Plan for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

The National Park Service (U.S. Department of Interior) will soon begin preparation of the Indiana Dunes Deer Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Through preparation of this new plan, the National Park Service seeks to develop and implement an adaptive management approach for maintaining a healthy deer population.

History of Deer Management at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

Prior to European settlement, North American white-tailed deer populations are estimated to have been between 23 and 24 million. These numbers declined dramatically after European arrival. White-tailed deer were probably exterminated in the region of Indiana by 1900, but were reintroduced in the state in 1934. Populations quickly increased due to a lack of natural predators and increasingly favorable conditions for deer. The statewide deer population is currently estimated at 300,000. This growth has



The lakeshore has one of the highest number of vascular plant species in the National Park System, including the large-flowered trillium (above).

placed increasing demands on natural resources, and often results in a negative impact on vegetation and wildlife. Too many white-tailed deer could threaten the survival of many of the park's rare plant species and could lead to a decline in nesting bird species. Many entities, including federal, state, and local communities, have taken management actions regarding deer populations in order to protect resources and promote safety and visitor experience.

Deer currently have no natural predators within the region, and no hunting has been allowed in the lakeshore since it was established in 1966. The three other national lakeshores around the Great Lakes do allow deer hunting in their enabling legislation. Existing planning documents for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore do not address deer management issues; thus, no significant deer management actions have been implemented within the park. Without management, deer populations are expected to continue to increase in the future.

The Proposed Plan: Purpose and Need for Taking Action

The purpose of this plan and EIS is to:

- identify and maintain a deer impact level that is in balance with other components of the ecosystem and other park values
- facilitate public support, education, and appreciation for maintaining the integrity of that ecosystem
- provide for a scientifically-based system of checks and balances, such as monitoring, to ensure that deer populations are managed prior to degradation of park resources
- determine how to manage deer populations once degradation appears imminent
- identify and share with neighboring citizens and local governments the best technical information and expertise on deer management

A deer management plan is needed to ensure that the local deer population does not become a dominant force within the lakeshore that negatively influences ecosystem components, such as sensitive vegetation or other wildlife. The plan should also address the:

- relationship between deer population densities and the overall health of the local deer herd
- potential effect of deer populations on the restoration and augmentation of sensitive plant communities within the national lakeshore
- effect of deer population on sensitive animal species within the national lakeshore

We look forward to hearing from you at the public scoping meetings. Please help us develop the best solution to this important issue. Updates will be provided on the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/indu/index.htm>.



The Karner blue butterfly (left and inside flap) is an endangered species native to the Great Lakes region that is found at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. It depends on the wild lupine plant (above), a wildflower that prefers dry soils and open oak savannas that exist at the lakeshore.

Deer Management Plan Objectives

The following objectives were developed to help guide preparation of the deer management plan.

- Determine a science-based, well-informed, public-supported, and defensible vegetation and wildlife impact level and corresponding density of deer populations that would serve as a threshold for management action within the national lakeshore.
- Develop and implement an adaptive management approach for maintaining a healthy deer population.
- Maintain a healthy white-tailed deer population while protecting other park resources.

- Protect lower canopy and ground nesting bird habitat from adverse impacts as a result of deer browsing.
- Protect habitat of threatened and endangered species from adverse impacts related to deer browsing.
- Prevent deer browsing impacts from impairing the park's ability to achieve vegetation management objectives and goals.
- Protect enhanced or restored sensitive plant populations within the park from deer browsing.

- Prevent the extermination of rare plant species as a result of deer browsing.
- Reduce the potential for deer and visitor safety conflicts, including vehicle collisions.
- Educate the public regarding deer population and ecosystem issues, including the role of deer as part of a functioning park ecosystem, not the driving force within it.
- Recreate and manage historically accurate cultural landscapes. This includes maintaining the deer impact and visibility to an acceptable level to achieve the desired historical landscape.