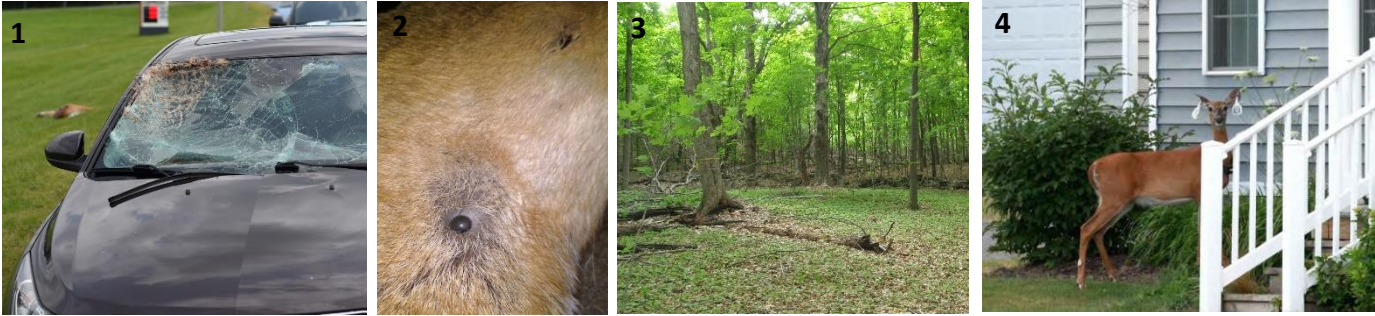


# Fort Drum Natural Resources

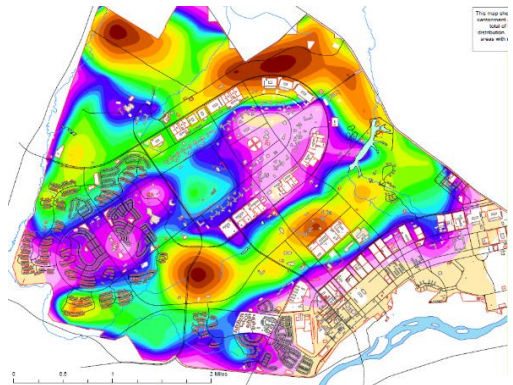


## Deer Management in the Cantonment Area (Updated 17 May 2018)

White-tailed deer are commonly seen in Fort Drum's Cantonment Area. The overall deer management goal is to intensively harvest deer to minimize potential human-wildlife conflicts including: (1) deer-vehicle collisions; (2) deer as reproductive hosts and transport mechanisms for black-legged ticks that carry Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases; (3) deer browsing inhibiting reforestation; and (4) deer browsing on landscape vegetation. Although deer hunting is an important management tool, providing recreational opportunities is a secondary goal to human-wildlife conflicts.



Fort Drum Natural Resources has been working with Cornell University since 2015 to study white-tailed deer biology in the Cantonment Area. Research has focused on fawn survivability/mortality, population, and movements. Based on population estimates, there are approximately 40 deer/square mile in the Cantonment Area; however, deer are not uniformly distributed across the Cantonment Area (*map on far right*) and some areas have densities as high as 150 deer/square mile. Deer survivorship is high with relatively little mortality despite deaths from vehicle collisions, some predators (i.e., coyotes), and hunting.



One of four deer exclosures established in the Cantonment Area showing young trees growing in the understory after only 1 year without deer browsing.

High numbers of deer can have significant negative impacts to forest ecosystems. A healthy forest should have an understory of young trees and other plants growing below the tree canopy. This understory not only provides food and cover for wildlife, but the young trees will continue to grow and replace the older trees in the overstory to continue the natural cycle of forest regeneration. When there are too many deer, there is a lack of understory vegetation which will impact future forests as well as wildlife species such as birds and bats.

Deer management objectives to allow for forest regeneration is approximately 20 deer/ square mile; objectives to potentially reduce tick abundance is approximately 9 deer/ square mile. For comparison, deer density in some areas of the Adirondacks is less than 9 deer/square mile.



Reducing the deer population on Fort Drum will be accomplished through recreational deer hunting and culling by US Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS).

## DEER HUNTING

\* Only archery and crossbows are allowed in the Cantonment Area on 2883 acres (35% of the fenced-in portion) by DoD ID holders. All hunters must show their shooting proficiency during a qualification session. The 2018 season is 27 Sep – 9 Dec. NYSDEC is allowing crossbows to be used the entire season.

\* The Cantonment Area is a special hunting area eligible for Deer Management Area Program (DMAP) permits issued by NYSDEC to take additional antlerless deer.

\* In 2018, an “Earn-A-Buck” will be initiated—hunters will be required to kill an antlerless deer before killing an antlered deer. NYSDEC will issue additional DMAPs.



## DEER CULLING

\* USDA-WS will be contracted to kill deer using firearms from a vehicle during three periods outside of the archery season—early September, early January, and late March. Shooting will be done at night utilizing spotlights and a FLIR system to ensure safe shooting conditions. In 2018, deer will be taken opportunistically (no baiting) primarily in non-hunting/housing areas.

\* USDA-WS performs other deer culling operations in residential communities in NYS such as Fayetteville, Camillus, DeWitt, and Winkworth as well as Letchworth State Park. USDA-WS killed 18 deer at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield in September 2017 and 9 deer in May 2018.

\* Killing deer outside of the hunting season has been authorized by NYSDEC through the use of nuisance deer tags. All harvested deer will be donated to people in need through the Venison Donation Coalition ([www.venisondonation.com](http://www.venisondonation.com)) and/or through coordination with the Watertown food pantry of Feed Our Vets ([www.feedourvets.org](http://www.feedourvets.org)).



Deer management in the Cantonment Area is a continual and evolving process that will be re-evaluated annually. Monitoring of deer will continue utilizing trail cameras and tagged deer to determine densities as well as some deer that will be tracked on a daily basis utilizing GPS collars. Deer impacts to forests will continue to be monitored by assessing forest plots inside and outside of deer exclosures. Data from deer harvested through hunting and culling will be collected and analyzed. Hunters can bring their deer to the check station at Bldg. T4848 seven days a week during the deer hunting season.