

# Kent County, County-wide Deer Management Recommendations

Update to Public Safety Committee • 12/16/25



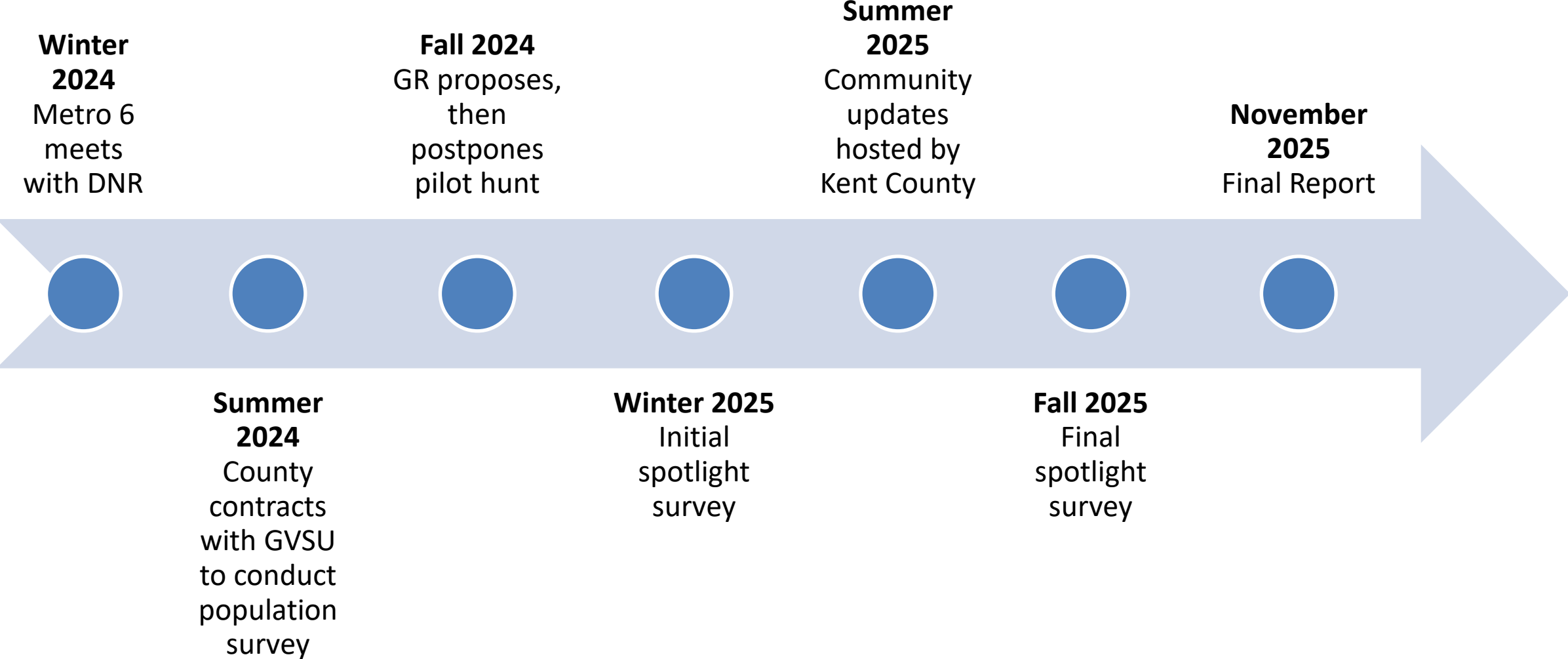
KENT COUNTY  
Deer  
Management  
Coalition



GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY



# Grand Rapids Timeline



# GVSU was hired to

Understand public concerns

Collect deer population data

Analyze trends


Develop data-driven recommendations




**GVSU's  
study  
consisted of  
several  
phases.**

**Nov 2024**  **Phase 1 – Perception Survey**

**Dec 2024  
Feb 2025**  **Phase 2 – Winter spotlight surveys**

**Jun 2025**  **Phase 3 – Public information & input session**

**May 2025  
Aug 2025**  **Phase 4 – Spring/summer spotlight surveys**

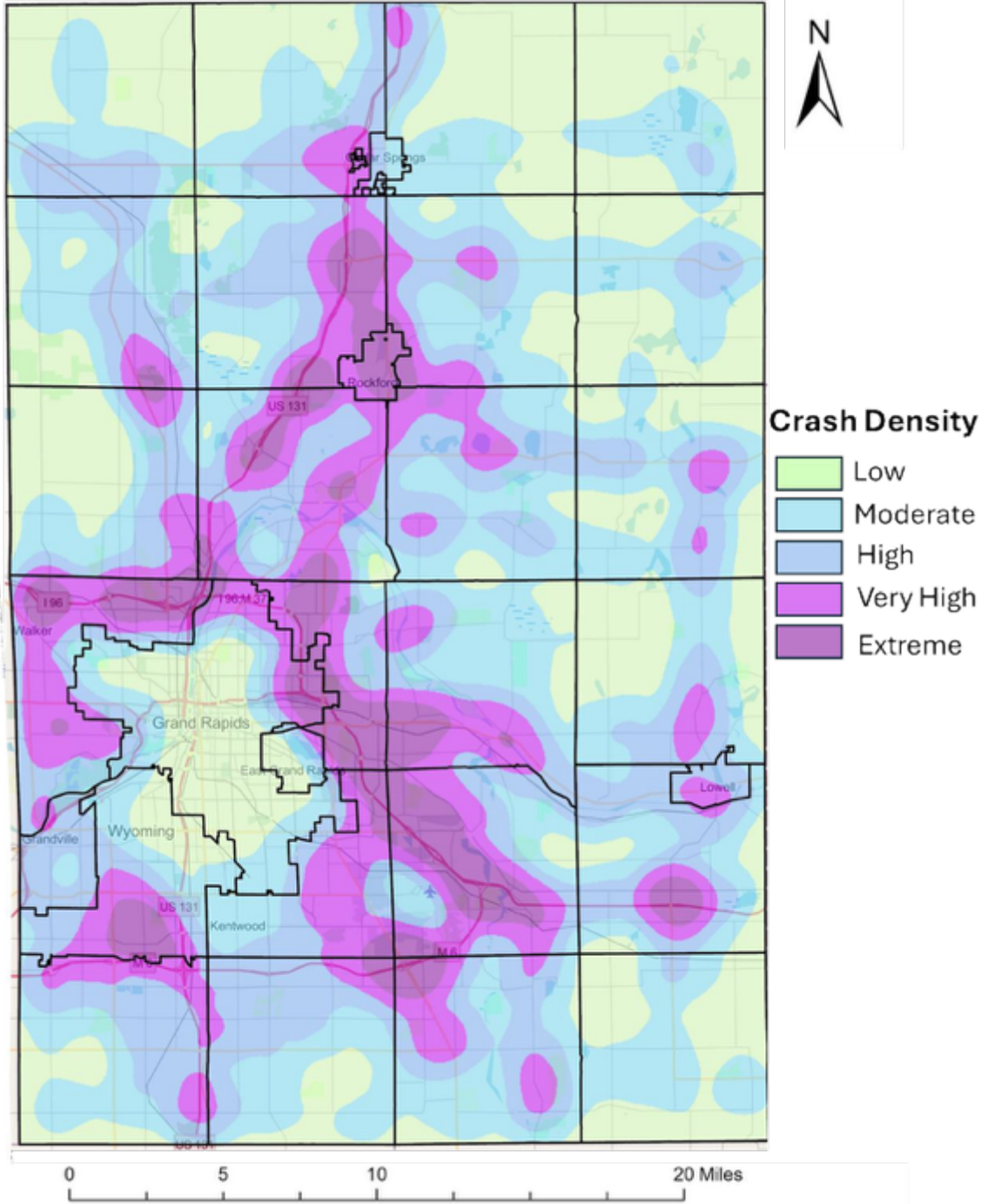
**Nov 2025**  **Phase 5 – Recommendations for best management**

# What do the data reveal about deer in Kent County?



# In 2024, road-killed deer pickups exceeded hunter-harvested deer in Kent County





**Most crashes happen along I-96 US-131 and M-44, especially near the M-6 and M-37 interchanges.**

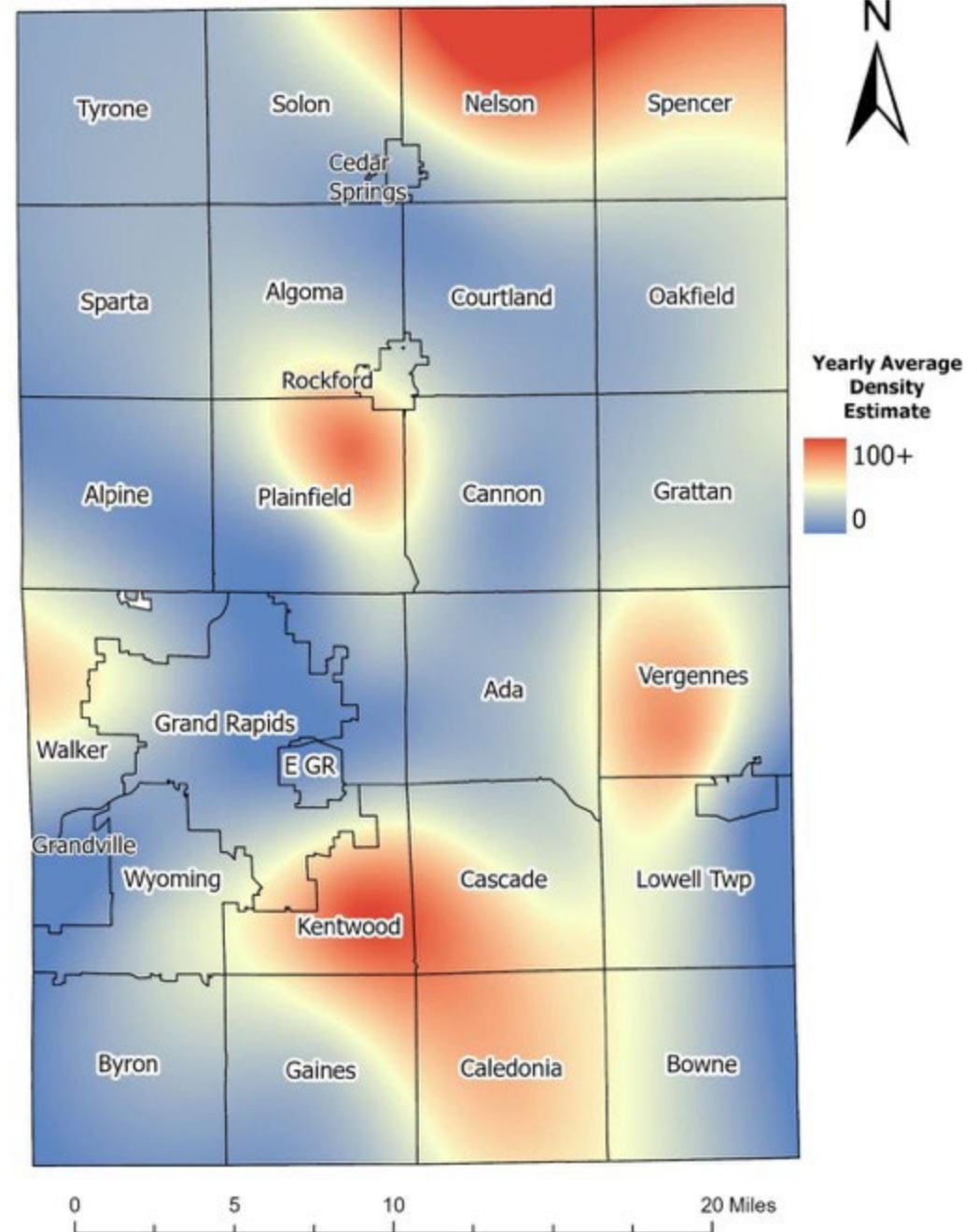


Deer spotlight surveys reveal abundance patterns.



# Deer populations are highest in suburban areas.

- Kentwood
- Cascade Twp
- Caledonia Twp
- Vergennes Twp
- Nelson Twp
- Plainfield Twp



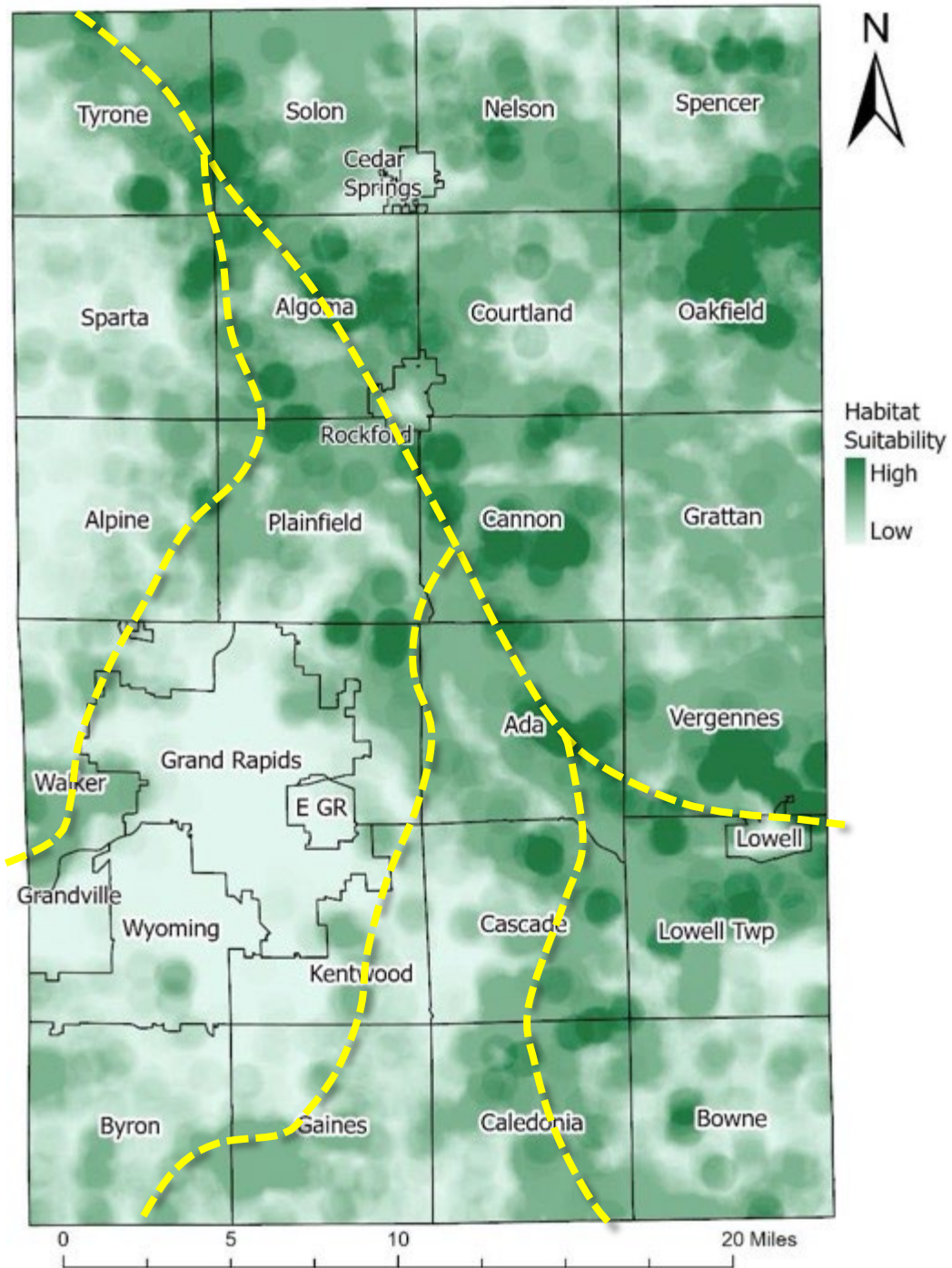
# Public viewpoints on deer vary.

Rural residents in northern townships were more likely to express enjoyment.



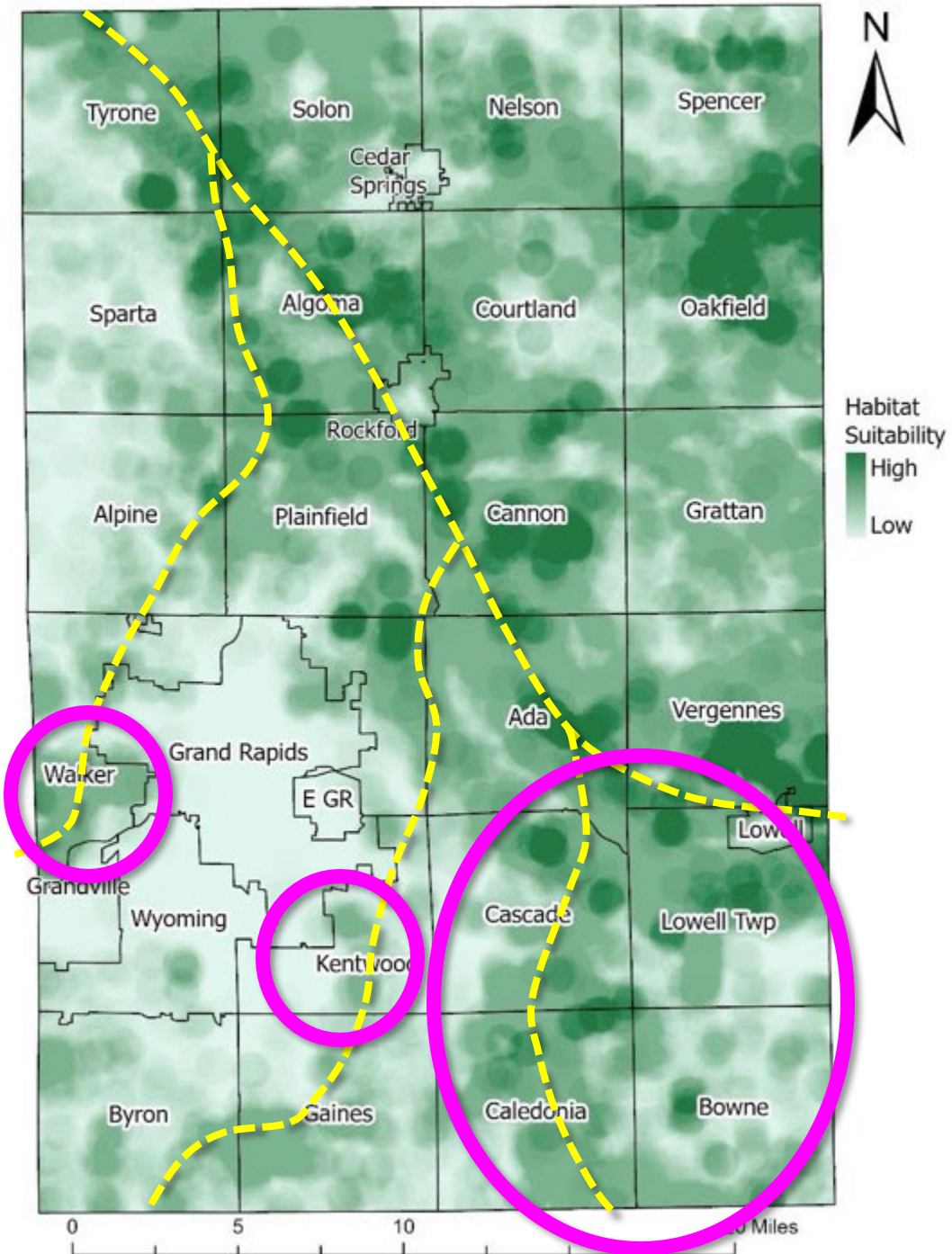
Urban and suburban residents in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and Wyoming, tended to lean more toward concern or nuisance.





**Highest quality habitat occurs north and east of Grand Rapids.**

**Deer likely travel through high-quality habitat corridors...**



**Highest quality habitat occurs north and east of Grand Rapids.**

**Deer concentrate in higher-quality habitat patches in suburban areas like Walker, Kentwood, and townships southeast of Grand Rapids.**

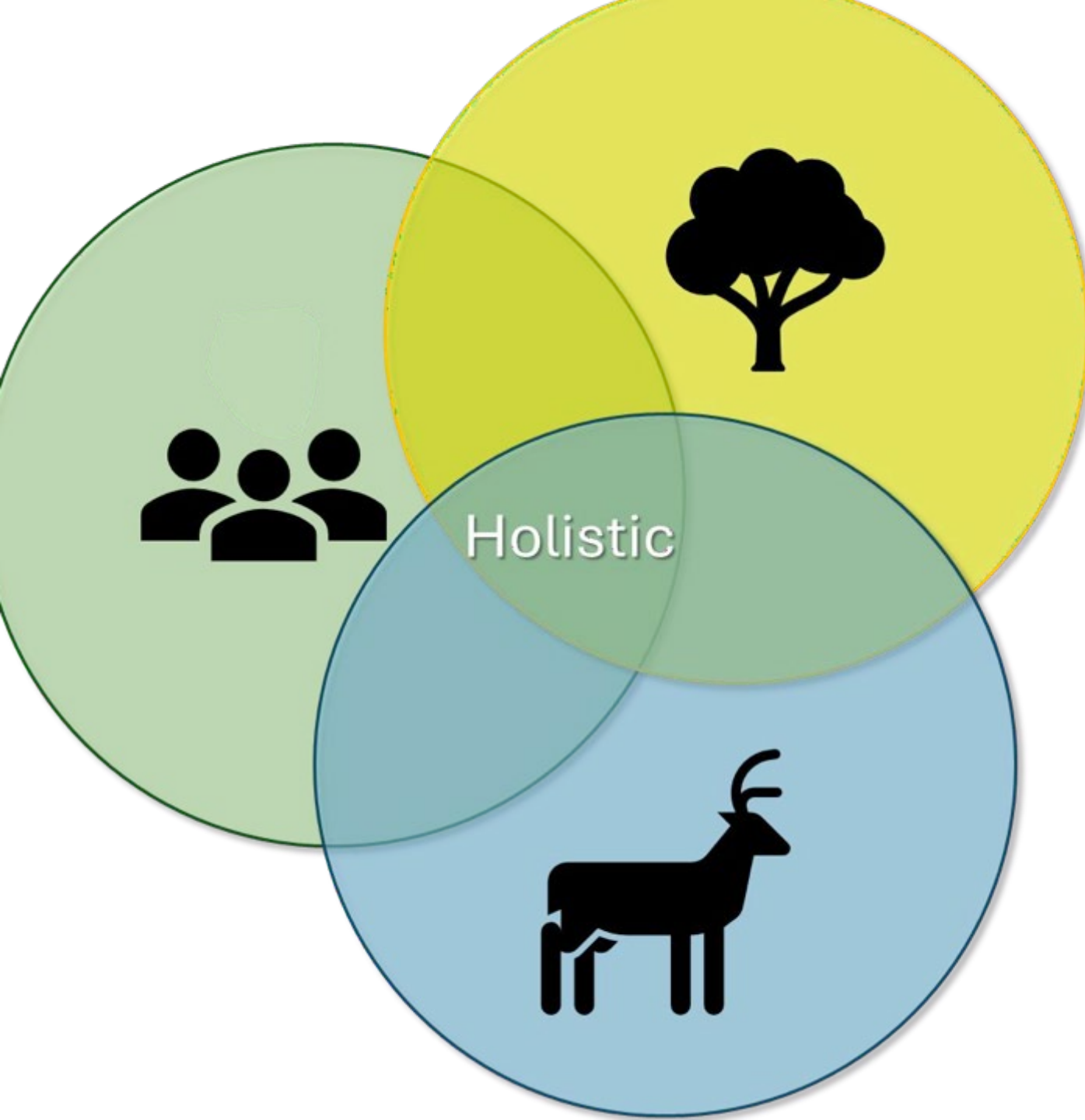


# Management Recommendations





**Goal: Reduce deer-vehicle collisions by 1,050 within two years by increasing annual harvests by 1,900 deer.**



## Recommendations consider deer, habitat & humans

**Maintain**

healthy deer herd

**Reduce**

safety risks for motorists

**Limit**

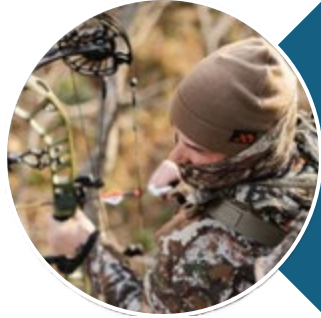
property damage

**Protect**

natural ecosystems

# Management of the Deer Population

1



Urban Archery Hunting

2



Localized Deer Reduction with a Focus on Ethical Utilization

3



Facilitating Hunter Recruitment and Access to Land

Help shift deer mortality from roadkill to ethically harvested and utilized resource

# Management of the Deer **Habitat**

4



Increase Road Right-of-Way  
Mowing

Help reduce hiding  
cover and food  
sources that  
concentrate deer

5



Native Landscaping

6



Establish & Enforce Ordinances  
to Ban Deer Feeding

# Management: Engagement & Planning

To provide structure, direction, and rationale for future decision-making.

7

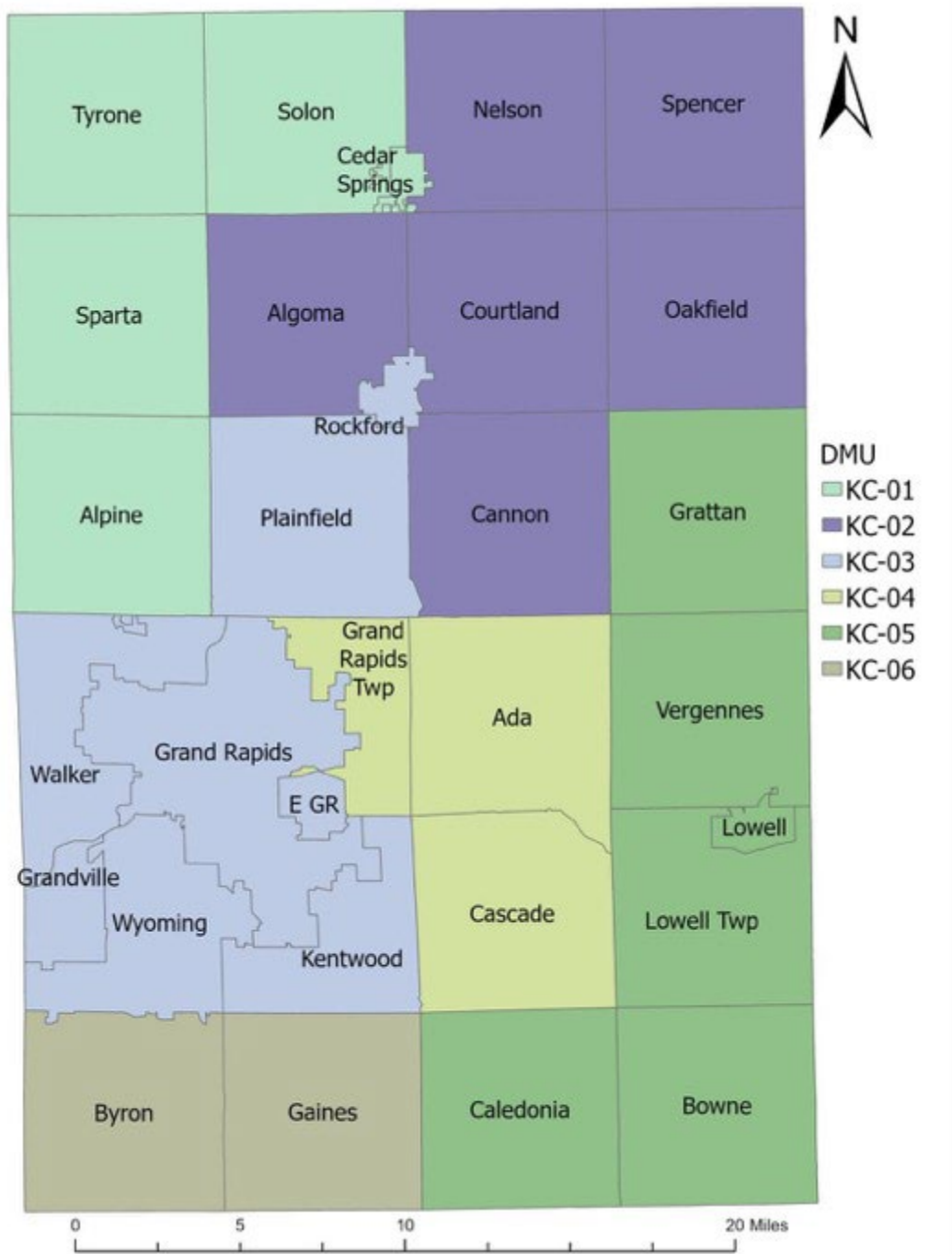


Monitor Public Perceptions

8



Strategic Planning



# Deer Management Units (DMU)

Geographical areas delineated based on statistical groupings of deer abundance, habitat, collisions, and public perceptions

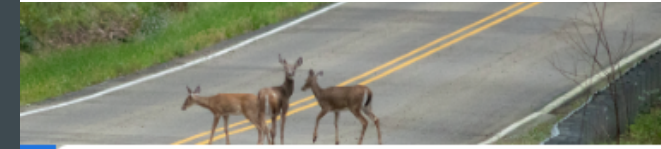


A photograph of a forest in autumn. The ground is covered in fallen brown leaves. The trees are mostly bare, with some showing hints of orange and yellow. The sky is a clear blue. A semi-transparent white box with a thin black border is centered over the image, containing the text.

**To be EFFECTIVE,  
management must occur  
county-wide  
across all DMUs.**

# Next Steps

- County “roadshow” with local municipalities and townships
- Identify operational/financial commitments and timelines across the region
- Prioritize and begin execution on recommendations as resources allow



[Home](#) > [Departments & Offices](#) > [Departments](#) > [Administration](#)  
> [Deer Management Coalition](#)

## Deer Management Coalition

### About the Kent County Deer Management Coalition

The Kent County Deer Management Coalition was established in 2024 to conduct a countywide assessment of the deer population and offer management strategies that enhance public safety while maintaining a healthy herd.

This collaborative effort is funded by local townships, cities, villages, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Kent County Road Commission, and Kent County.

### Why Deer Management Matters

Kent County leads the state in vehicular deer crashes. In 2023, deer-related incidents made up 26% of all vehicle crashes in the county's townships, underscoring community concerns about the impact of the local deer population.

While the number of deer removed from roadways is increasing, the number of deer harvested by hunters in Michigan continues to decline. This disparity exemplifies the need for deer management, which aims to:

- Maintain a balanced and healthy deer population
- Reduce safety risks for motorists
- Limit property damage
- Protect natural habitats for long-term sustainability

### Deer Management Data

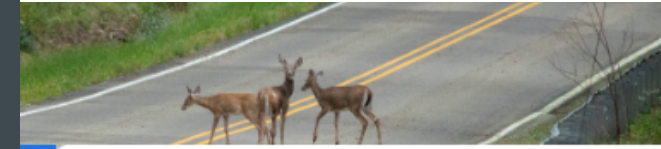
- [Kent County Deer Carcass Tracking App](#)

The coalition partnered with the Grand Valley Metro Council to develop an application that tracks all dead deer picked up in the public right-of-way within Kent County. Local road agencies

# Kent County, County-wide Deer Management Recommendations

**REPORT AVAILABLE:  
KENTCOUNTYMI.GOV/DEER**

[KENTCOUNTY.GOV/DEER](https://kentcounty.gov/deer)



[Home](#) > [Departments & Offices](#) > [Departments](#) > [Administration](#)  
> [Deer Management Coalition](#)

## Deer Management Coalition

### About the Kent County Deer Management Coalition

The Kent County Deer Management Coalition was established in 2024 to conduct a countywide assessment of the deer population and offer management strategies that enhance public safety while maintaining a healthy herd.

This collaborative effort is funded by local townships, cities, villages, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Kent County Road Commission, and Kent County.

### Why Deer Management Matters

Kent County leads the state in vehicular deer crashes. In 2023, deer-related incidents made up 26% of all vehicle crashes in the county's townships, underscoring community concerns about the impact of the local deer population.

While the number of deer removed from roadways is increasing, the number of deer harvested by hunters in Michigan continues to decline. This disparity exemplifies the need for deer management, which aims to:

- Maintain a balanced and healthy deer population
- Reduce safety risks for motorists
- Limit property damage
- Protect natural habitats for long-term sustainability

### Deer Management Data

- [Kent County Deer Carcass Tracking App](#)

The coalition partnered with the Grand Valley Metro Council to develop an application that tracks all dead deer picked up in the public right-of-way within Kent County. Local road agencies