

1990 DEER SEASON PRELIMINARY REPORT

This report contains a preliminary analysis of the 1990 deer hunting season based on data collected at highway deer check stations, from field reports, from counts of deer being transported on vehicles, and from highway traffic counters. The Michigan Department of Transportation and the Mackinac Bridge Authority assisted in providing data. Final harvest figures will be available in the summer of 1991. This report is a contribution from Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, Pittman-Robertson Project W-127-R.

STATUS OF THE DEER HERD

The winter of 1989/90 started early and ended early. Record cold temperatures and snow depths occurred in December, but record mild temperatures occurred in February and March. Had it not been for the mild temperatures in late winter, winter mortality of deer would have been even higher than the estimated loss of 98,800 deer in seven northern districts. For the first time since 1982, the number of deer in the fall population decreased. There were about 10-20% less deer in Michigan in the fall of 1990, compared to fall of 1989.

Upper Peninsula

Deer were yarded in the U.P. by mid-December. The thaws in late winter were associated with a noticeable increase in deer-vehicle accidents. Winter mortality of deer from starvation was pronounced. Spring pellet surveys showed an 11% drop in the U.P. deer herd. The herd decreased most in the eastern end of the U.P.

Northern Lower Peninsula

Attempts in former years to target antlerless harvest of deer on private land appear to have been successful. The spring herd in Northern Lower Michigan was estimated by pellet surveys to be about 19% lower in 1990 than in 1989. Some herds on public lands responded to habitat improvement and reduced hunting of antlerless deer. Deer distribution within this region was still very spotty in the fall of 1990.

Southern Lower Peninsula

Southern Michigan deer suffered a winter of extremes - it was the coldest December since 1876, but the warmest January, February and March since 1921. Former antlerless harvests, along with a probable decrease in fawn productivity, produced a smaller herd in 1990, except for select areas with deer population irruptions.

1990 DEER HUNTING SEASONS

Archery deer hunting opened on October 1, 1990, and continued through November 14, 1990. The regular firearm deer hunting season was November 15 through 30, 1990. Archery deer hunting resumed from December 1, 1990 to January 1, 1991. Muzzleloading deer hunting season was split (December 7 through 16 in the Upper Peninsula and December 14 through 23 in the Lower Peninsula).

The antlerless deer hunting license was continued. Antlerless-only licenses were first tested in Barry, Huron, and Menominee counties, expanded to 15 deer management units in 1987, to 62 units in 1988, and statewide in 1989. This year, as in 1989, hunters could apply for an antlerless license with *either* archery or firearm license. Also, antlerless licenses not used during the firearm or muzzleloading season were valid during the December 1 to January 1 archery season with an archery license.

A total of 322,890 antlerless deer licenses were issued, which was up slightly from the 317,747 that were issued in 1989. Applications for antlerless licenses were up 7 percent in 1990 (408,113 eligible applicants, compared to 383,734 in 1989).

General Antlerless Licenses

Private Land Antlerless Licenses

<i>Year</i>	<i>Applicants</i>	<i>Licenses Issued</i>	<i>Applicants</i>	<i>Licenses Issued</i>
1989	245,111	183,515	138,623	134,232
1990	270,979	189,178	138,134	133,712

Block permits were issued experimentally this year to select landowners throughout the state with severe crop damage. This was the second year for block permits. In 1989 block permits were issued in three Districts. Block permits were issued in all Districts in 1990. Those property owners with a documented history of serious crop damage were invited to work with district wildlife biologists to establish harvest quotas for antlerless deer to be taken on their property. These landowners then paid a \$3 application fee for each crop damage block permit. These tags were only for antlerless deer and only for the land where issued and adjoining property with permission of appropriate landowners. A total of about 1,300 landowners were issued about 25,000 crop damage block permits in 1990 for issuance to hunters on their property for use during archery, firearm, or muzzleloading seasons.

Block permits were envisioned as a way to provide flexibility to the landowner for controlling nuisance deer without having to reduce the herd in an entire deer management unit of several hundred square miles. Also, block permits were envisioned to reduce the number of deer taken on crop damage control permits outside the regular hunting season. Nuisance deer should be harvested through recreational hunting during the open hunting season, where possible. The social, biological, and economic impacts of the experimental block permit program are being thoroughly evaluated prior to formulation of 1991 deer hunting regulations.

HUNTING CONDITIONS

Bowhunters had fair hunting weather in 1990, with many rainy and windy weekends. Bowhunters reported that the rut started early but waned with high temperatures in late October and early November. Acorns were plentiful in many areas of the state, which reduced the effectiveness of bait.

Firearm deer hunting season opened with mild weather that allowed hunters to disperse well and to remain in the field for long periods of time. Yet, deer movement was reduced by warm temperatures in some parts of the state and there was little tracking snow. Although hunting pressure was up for the opening few days, interest in late-season hunting was lower than it was in 1989. The wet fall resulted in a late corn harvest, which reduced deer sightings and harvest in areas with standing corn, which served as refuges for deer.

There was some snow for muzzleloading season, but not enough to concentrate deer. Roads and trails were accessible and temperatures moderate. Bucks did not drop their antlers early this year. Deer fed on green grasses and forbs, as well as on acorns, throughout December.

HUNTER NUMBERS

About 275,000 bowhunters, 735,000 firearm deer hunters, and 130,000 muzzleloading hunters went deer hunting in 1990.

RECREATIONAL BENEFITS

Bowhunting effort decreased about 5 percent from 1989 to an estimated 4.5 million hunter days. Hunting effort during firearm season increased 10 percent to 5.7 million hunter days. About 0.8 million days of hunting recreation occurred during the muzzleloading deer hunting season.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Deer hunters were estimated to have spent more than \$350 million in Michigan during all three hunting seasons of 1990.

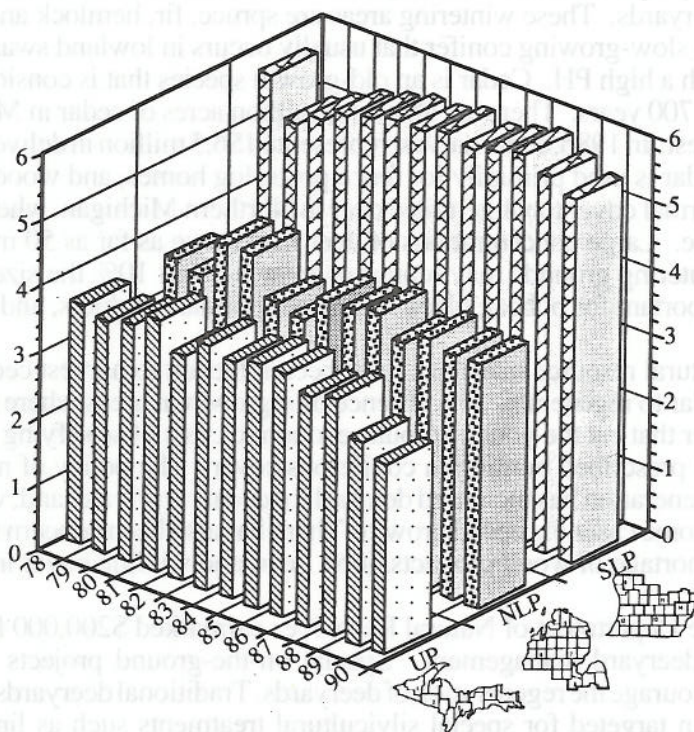
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF DEER

About 49 percent of the antlered bucks checked from the Upper Peninsula in 1990 were yearlings (1 1/2 years of age), compared to 64 percent in 1989. Yearlings comprised 70 percent of the antlered bucks in the northern Lower Peninsula compared to 76 percent in 1989. Seventy five percent of antlered bucks were yearlings in the southern Lower Peninsula harvest, which was the same as in the 1989 season.

Young-of-the-year comprised 39 percent of the antlerless deer harvest compared to 38 percent in 1989. Of the known-age does, 35 percent were yearlings, 25 percent were 2 1/2 years old, 21 percent were 3 1/2, and 19 percent were 4 1/2 years of age or older.

ANTLER MEASUREMENTS

AVERAGE NUMBER OF ANTLER POINTS ON 1 1/2-YEAR-OLD BUCKS



Deer physical condition, as measured by antler beam diameter of yearling (1 1/2-year-old) bucks, was not as favorable this year as in 1989, especially in the Upper Peninsula.

Area	Percentage of Spikes among Yearling Bucks		Average Beam Diameter (mm) of Yearling Bucks	
	1989*	1990**	1989*	1990**
Upper Peninsula	51.0	54.0	17.0	16.6
Northern Lower Peninsula	41.0	36.0	18.2	18.4
Southern Lower Peninsula	12.0	10.0	22.0	21.6

* Final Data

** Preliminary Data

REPORT ALL POACHING (RAP)

Cooperation from Michigan's citizens has continued in reporting poaching during the Fall 1990 hunting seasons. During October and November, over 1300 complaints were taken and referred to Conservation Officers for investigation and follow-up. The continued cooperation of concerned citizens was welcomed by all Department of Natural Resources (DNR) employees during this busy season.

The toll-free RAP Hotline (1-800-292-7800) was again operated by experienced Conservation Officers during the Fall 1990 deer seasons. Seasoned officers are more effective at screening incoming complaints and better able to gather vital information from persons witnessing on-going poaching incidents. An added benefit of the program was the utilization of field officers on temporary light duty status. For the first time, dispatch officers at the Report All Poaching Headquarters in Lansing were given near direct radio communications with patrol officers in the field throughout the state. This increased their ability to dispatch poaching incidents in a timely manner and also ensure that field officers were given the most reliable information available. The veteran dispatchers also were able to provide valuable support to field officers needing LEIN, DNR arrest records, and other support and emergency services.

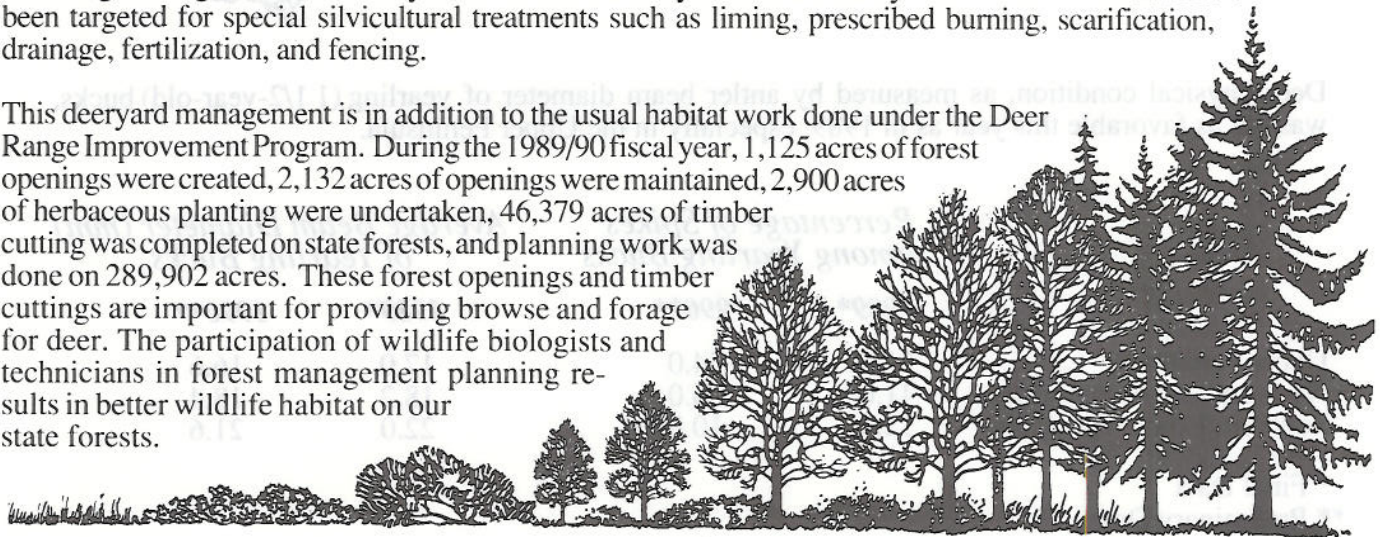
DEER HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

A special initiative was begun in 1990 under the Deer Range Improvement Program to focus on northern deeryards. These wintering areas are spruce, fir, hemlock and most importantly, cedar. Northern White Cedar is a slow-growing conifer that usually occurs in lowland swamps or is sometimes found in upland sites on soils with a high PH. Cedar is an old-growth species that is considered young until 100 years of age; cedar may live for 700 years. There are about 1.2 million acres of cedar in Michigan, representing about 7% of the commercial forest. In 1986, cedar harvest represented \$6.5 million in delivered wood and helped support more than 1,600 jobs. Cedar is used primarily for fence posts, log homes, and wood shingles. Cedar swamps are of special value for thermal cover to white-tailed deer in Northern Michigan, where they may winter as many as 200 deer per square mile. Large concentrations of deer may move as far as 50 miles to winter in cedar swamps. These traditional wintering grounds may represent an area about 10% the size of the summer range of whitetails. Cedar is also important for bobcat, black bear, blackburnian warblers, and more than 100 other wildlife species.

Natural resource managers have been reluctant to harvest cedar on public lands because of difficulty in getting cedar to regenerate. The absence of regrowth in areas where cedar has been cut may be due to high numbers of deer that eat the young sprouts, economic costs of scarifying the seed bed in swampy areas, and a reluctance to use prescribed burning in coniferous cover. The policy of not cutting cedar on public lands for fear of losing regeneration has increased demand for cedar on private land, where timber values have increased and harvest has in some cases exceeded growth. There has also been concern that the lack of cedar regeneration today may mean a shortage of wood products, jobs, deer, and wildlife cover in the next century.

The Department of Natural Resources earmarked \$200,000 for the 1990 fiscal year that is specifically devoted to deeryard management. Special on-the-ground projects will be undertaken in 5 northern districts to encourage the regeneration of deeryards. Traditional deeryards that currently have low deer numbers have been targeted for special silvicultural treatments such as liming, prescribed burning, scarification, drainage, fertilization, and fencing.

This deeryard management is in addition to the usual habitat work done under the Deer Range Improvement Program. During the 1989/90 fiscal year, 1,125 acres of forest openings were created, 2,132 acres of openings were maintained, 2,900 acres of herbaceous planting were undertaken, 46,379 acres of timber cutting was completed on state forests, and planning work was done on 289,902 acres. These forest openings and timber cuttings are important for providing browse and forage for deer. The participation of wildlife biologists and technicians in forest management planning results in better wildlife habitat on our state forests.



DEER HUNTING - A SAFE OUTDOOR SPORT

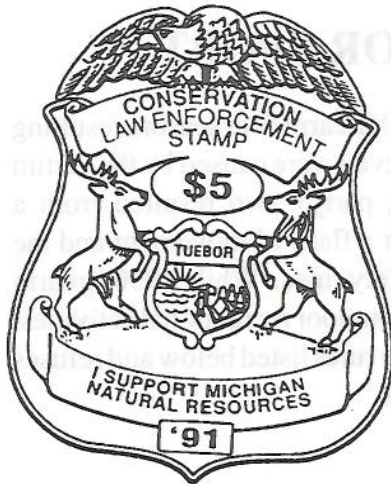
Preliminary reports indicate a total of 39 accidents occurred during the 1990 firearm deer season, resulting in the death of 2 hunters. Thirteen of these accidents were self inflicted, eleven were caused by the victim being in the line of fire (usually by someone in the victim's hunting party), two resulted from a malfunctioning firearm, six were caused by the shooter firing at sound or a flash of movement and the remaining seven resulted from a variety of violations of the most basic safety rules. While 1990 firearm deer accidents were up over 1989, hunting continues to be one of the safest outdoor recreational activities. Hunting accidents can be prevented if each hunter follows the firearm safety rules listed below and refuses to hunt with relatives, friends and acquaintances who violate these basics.

- ALWAYS TREAT ALL GUNS AS IF THEY ARE LOADED.
- ALWAYS WATCH THAT MUZZLE. Be able to control its direction even during a fall.
- ALWAYS MAKE CERTAIN THE BARREL AND ACTION ARE CLEAR OF OBSTRUCTIONS.
- ALWAYS IDENTIFY THE INTENDED TARGET AND BEYOND BEFORE PULLING THE TRIGGER.
- ALWAYS UNLOAD ALL GUNS WHEN NOT IN USE.
- NEVER POINT A GUN AT ANYTHING WITHOUT THE INTENT TO SHOOT IT.
- NEVER CLIMB UPON OR JUMP OVER AN OBSTRUCTION WITH A LOADED GUN.
- NEVER SHOOT A BULLET AT A FLAT HARD SURFACE OR WATER.
- ALWAYS STORE GUNS AND AMMUNITION SEPARATELY.
- NEVER CONSUME ALCOHOL OR MOOD ALTERING DRUGS BEFORE AND DURING THE HUNT.

***WEAR BLAZE ORANGE WHEN HUNTING!
IT'S THE LAW AND IT WORKS!***

Although even one accident is too many, hunting continues to be one of the safest outdoor sports nationwide. For more information on becoming a safer hunter, contact your local Conservation Officer or the Law Enforcement Division Recreational Safety Education Unit at 517-373-6250.

SUPPORT CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT



Now all of Michigan's citizens will be given the opportunity to support conservation law enforcement in Michigan. Beginning with the coming license year, silver and gold 1991 Conservation Law Enforcement Stamps will be available for sale to the public. The stamps, which may be purchased at any of Michigan's license agents or Department Offices statewide, represent the first in a collector's series to be produced annually. The stamps sell at \$2.00 (silver) and \$5.00 (gold) each, with the proceeds being placed in Michigan's Wildlife Resource Protection Fund to help prevent the illegal poaching of protected species in Michigan.

Take pride in Michigan's conservation law enforcement efforts, and help support the protection of valuable wildlife species through the purchase of Conservation Law Enforcement Stamps when you obtain your 1991 hunting or fishing license.

DEER HARVEST STATISTICS

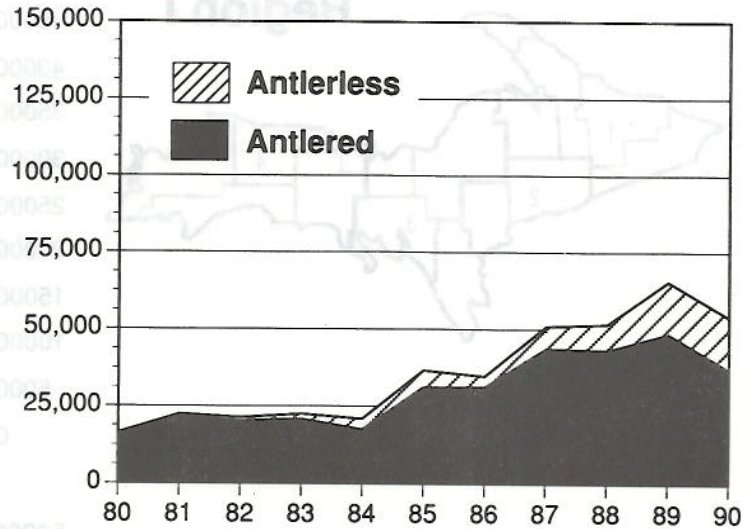
Deer Hunting Season	Estimated Number of Hunters	Estimated Harvest of Deer		
		Antlered	Antlerless	Total
Archery	275,000	40,000	35,000	75,000
Firearm	735,000	161,000	139,000	300,000
Muzzleloading	130,000	7,000	18,000	25,000

DEER HARVEST IN MICHIGAN: PRELIMINARY 1990, COMPARED TO FINAL 1989

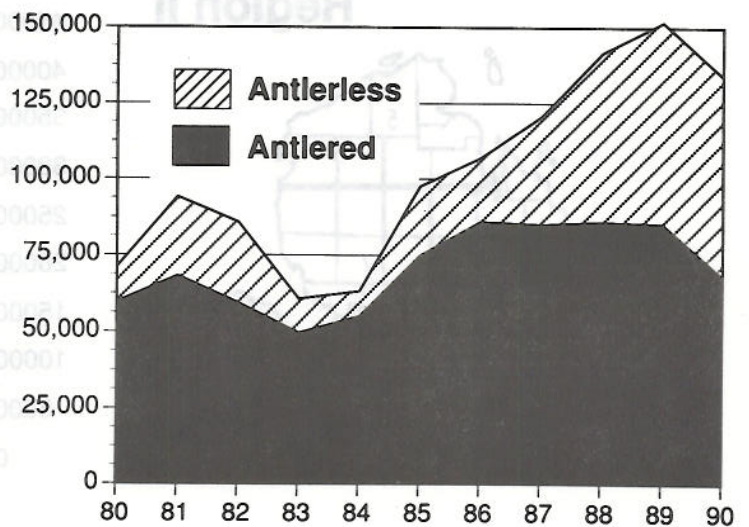
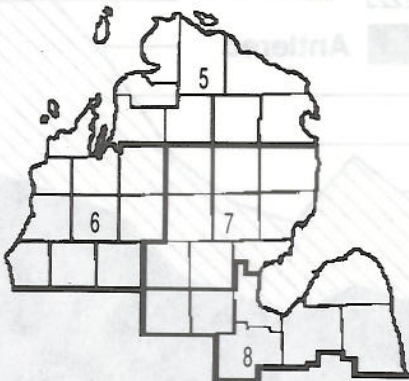
REGION	ARCHERY		FIREARM		MUZZLELOADER	
	ANTLERED	OTHER	ANTLERED	OTHER	ANTLERED	OTHER
I 1990 (1989)	5,000 (6,260)	5,000 (5,530)	37,000 (48,560)	17,000 (16,980)	1,500 (1,750)	1,500 (1,380)
II 1990 (1989)	20,000 (25,100)	20,000 (25,570)	68,000 (85,330)	66,000 (66,420)	3,000 (3,900)	9,000 (5,500)
III 1990 (1989)	15,000 (19,070)	10,000 (15,560)	56,000 (60,930)	56,000 (56,710)	2,500 (2,310)	7,500 (5,630)
TOTAL 1990 (1989)	40,000 (50,430)	35,000 (46,660)	161,000 (194,820)	139,000 (140,110)	7,000 (7,960)	18,000 (12,510)

DEER HARVEST BY REGIONS FIREARM SEASON

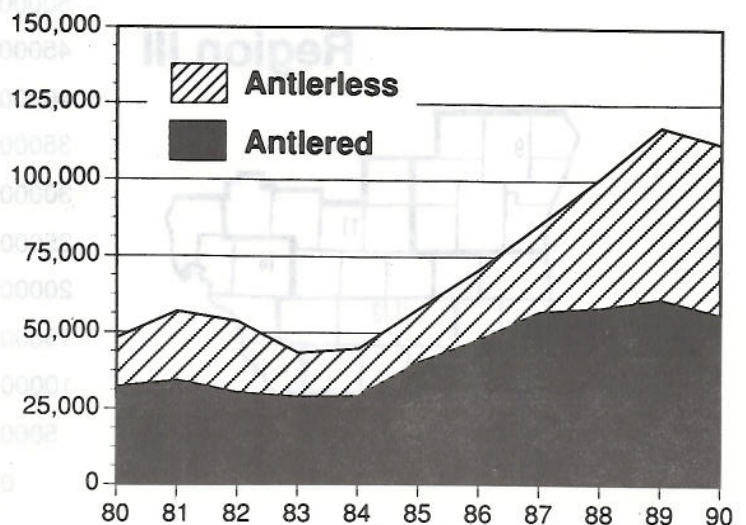
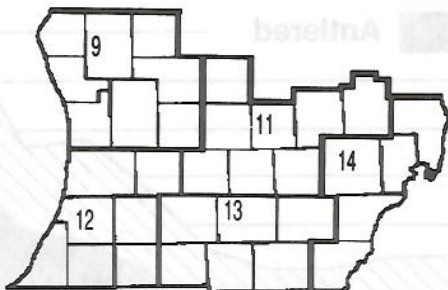
Region I



Region II

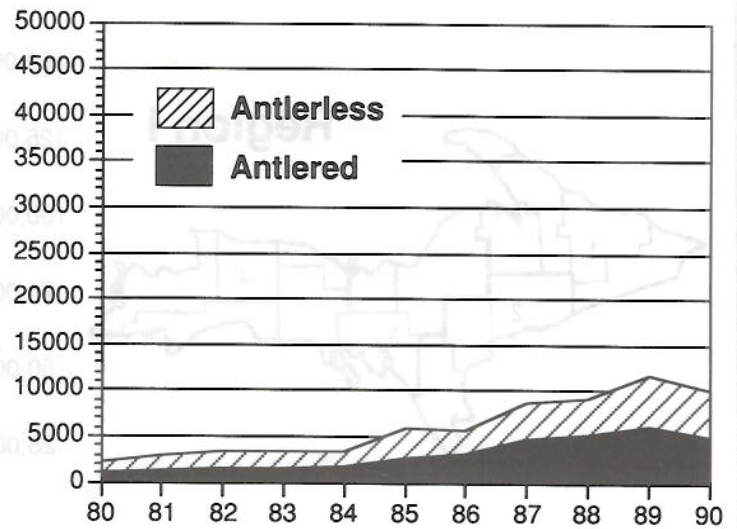
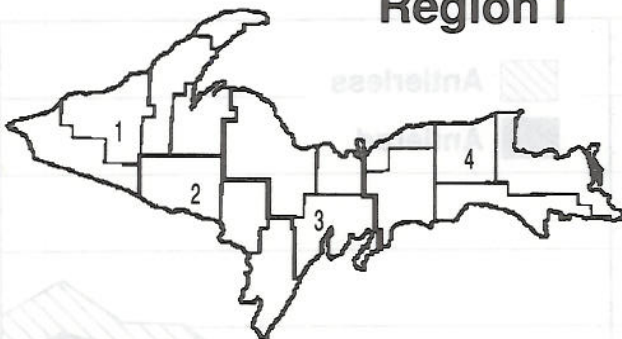


Region III

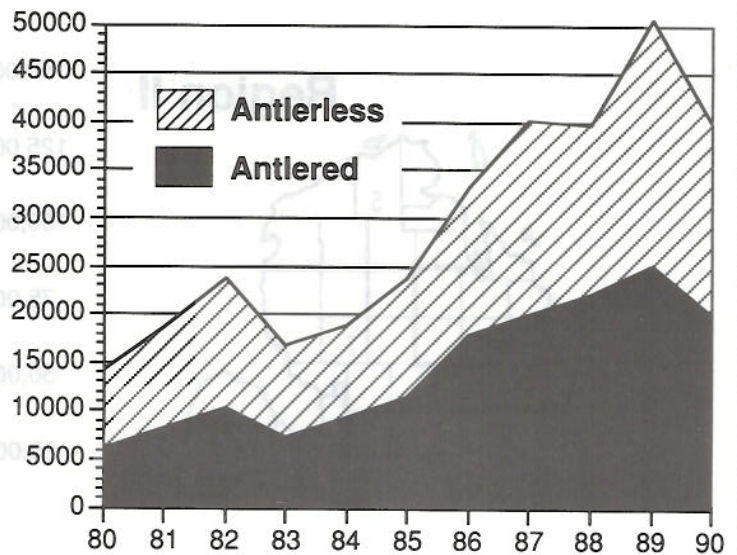
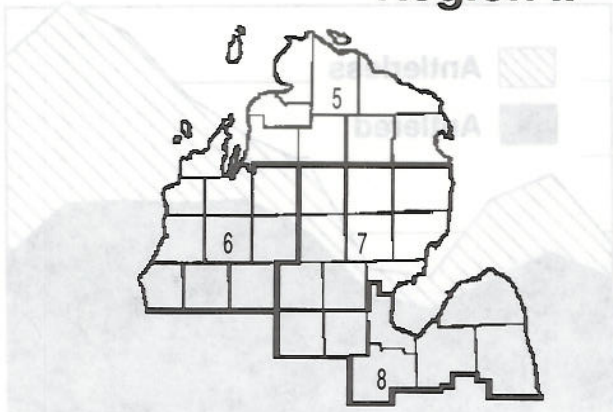


DEER HARVEST BY REGIONS BOW AND ARROW

Region I



Region II



Region III

