# The Deer-Forest Study

## *Hunter Benefits*

A primary concern and consideration for the Game Commission is that the data we use accurately reflect the effects of deer on forests. Deer are not the only factor affecting forest regeneration. But deer impact assessment is the most important measure used in deer management recommendations. By evaluating the role of deer, as measured by the deer impact assessment, and making improvements, this study will benefit hunters in three ways.

First, this large-scale project allows us to monitor the effect of deer on forest regeneration under real conditions. Deer are often an easy target when it comes to lagging forest regeneration, given their browsing in the understory. Deer also are easier to manage than many of the other factors affecting forest regeneration. However, if deer are not the cause, then further deer population reductions will not lead to the ultimate goal – healthy and sustainable forest habitats that support abundant wildlife populations. By furthering our understanding of the role of deer and other factors on forest regeneration, misplaced blame does not fall on deer.

Second, recommendations to reduce deer populations have significant impact on hunters. A high deer impact assessment leads to a recommendation to reduce deer populations. By critically evaluating the deer impact assessment under real-world conditions, the Game Commission is ensuring that recommendations to reduce deer populations are truly necessary and responsible. Recommendations to reduce deer populations are not taken lightly, and this study is designed to strengthen the data upon which future recommendations are based.

Finally, DMAP is available for landowners to manage deer to achieve their objectives. DCNR is the largest, and most scrutinized, user of DMAP. This study will investigate the role of DMAP and the influence of forest management on deer populations and associated impacts. By clarifying these relationships, DCNR can apply DMAP in the most effective manner.