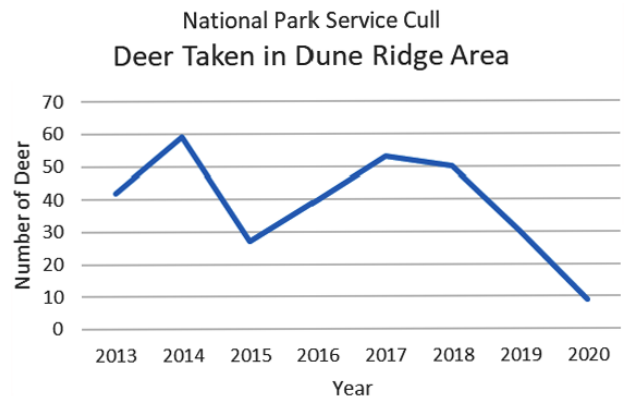


ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION GROUP DEER REPORT 2020

BY HOWARD MARVEL

The Environmental Restoration Group (ERG) keeps a careful watch on the number of deer in Beverly Shores. We have purchased deer control equipment, set standards for hunters, obtained landowner permission for hunting, and supervised and monitored fall deer hunts and winter deer culls. For the last few years, including this past winter, we have held neither a hunt nor a cull, but will seek town permission to do so in the future if we believe deer population control is warranted.

We have been able to avoid hunting deer in Beverly Shores in part due to the culls that the Indiana Dunes National Park (IDNP) has carried out in the park property that surrounds us. There is some reason to be concerned about the future of their culls. The grant funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative that the Park used to finance these culls has ended. The culls continue, but now rely on Park personnel rather than the outside hunting specialists that the grant funding supported. The figure on the right charts the declining number of deer taken during the culls. The total of 9 deer for the past year is the lowest in the history of these culls.



The end of grant funding has changed how deer are hunted in our area, accounting for some of the decline in numbers. IDNP hunters do not drive our back roads in search of deer, relying instead on deer blinds. These hunters do not have access to the thermal cameras that were used when the cull was grant funded. But observations of the impact of deer in our area are encouraging. The forest understory has improved considerably over the last eight years. Park biologists are seeing fewer deer. Trillium, a species that is particularly sensitive to deer browsing, is recovering. These plants had been unable to survive above the height of surrounding herbaceous plants, but they are now poking above that level.

Our most recent aerial census showed an increase in the "island" of Beverly Shores, that is, north of Beverly Drive from Derby Ditch to Drake and Montana Avenues. We shall monitor the situation carefully before requesting permission for a new hunt and cull. Unfortunately, the firm that used to count deer for the last decade is no longer available. Therefore, we are investigating other possible approaches to monitoring deer numbers locally.

