

## MINUTES OF THE 1970 MEETING OF THE GREAT LAKES DEER GROUP

by Milt Stenlund

A joint meeting was held with the Ruffed Grouse Workshop at Quadna Mt. Lodge, Hill City, Minnesota, on September 21 - 24, 1970. This is the first meeting of this type where both groups met individually and jointly. The meeting started on September 21 with the Ruffed Grouse Workshop. About 55 were in attendance including several Deer Group personnel. Gordon Gullion of the University of Minnesota was moderator for the day's discussion on population trends, methods of monitoring ruffed grouse populations, grouse ecology and biology, grouse habitat and its evaluation, and grouse habitat management. Gullion pointed out that populations of one breeding pair per 6 to 7 acres has been achieved and that a breeding pair per 10 acres could be obtained under good habitat management. He suggested that 2½ acres of aspen cut on each 40 every 10 years will maintain good grouse habitat.

The entire second day of the meeting was spent on a panel discussion of the future of aspen in the Great Lakes forest. This was a joint meeting. Dick Schneider, an industrial forester, pointed out that half of Minnesota's aspen is 40 years old or over, that Wisconsin and Michigan are cutting aspen about equal to its annual growth, that 87 million cords of aspen were growing in the Lake States and that greater emphasis is being placed on aspen silva culture by industrial concerns.

Zig Zazada of the University of Minnesota described mechanical types of aspen harvesting and their effects on aspen reproduction and ground cover. Louis Hendricks of the University of Minnesota described new wood products being processed from the aspen, including studs, plywood paneling, and furniture core wood.

John Mathisen of the Chippewa National Forest gave a broad outline of a proposed timber management plan on the Chippewa. It included greater emphasis on hardwoods and less emphasis on conversion of present hardwoods to conifer types. In general, the entire new management proposal would be of great benefit to wildlife in Minnesota. Rod Sando of the North Central Forest Experiment Station discussed fire in aspen management. He described conditions under which fires can be used as a management tool and suggested that only spring and fall burns are practical in most cases.

Allen Lundgren of the North Central Forest Experiment Station discussed the economics of aspen management. He pointed out that cost wise aspen management costs no more than conifer management and often costs less. With the increased demand for aspen in the future, he raised the question as to whether costly conifer management is worthwhile.

Bob Brander will prepare a bulletin on the papers presented during the aspen panel and will mail them to the members who were in attendance.

On Wednesday morning the two groups met independently, the grouse group driving to the Mille Lacs Wildlife Management area on a field trip. Larry Krefting discussed his work in Upper Michigan mixed conifer swamps and methods for improving deer habitat, during the morning meeting of the Deer Group. Jack Mooty, Minnesota Big Game Biologist, discussed track and pellet group counts in Minnesota. So far there is a good correlation between these two methods of censusing deer in the northern part of the state.

Mooty also gave a brief discussion on Minnesota's current mirror project. As is common with most of these projects the results from the four year study are inconclusive. The remainder of the morning was taken up by an open discussion on current habitat management techniques, costs and results. In the afternoon a field trip was made to a nearby deer habitat project which was sheared during the winter of 1969-70. A demonstration was held of a John Deere 450 tractor with an improvised shearing blade made from a discarded road grader blade.

The Deer Group next went to a site where a LeTourneau Model 3523 tree crusher was working on a U.S. Forest Service regeneration project. This 40 ton roller crusher is the only one of its kind at present in this area. It appears that this machine could have good use on deer habitat areas and will be used in Minnesota during the coming year on several large projects.

On Thursday morning Jack Mooty discussed his vegetation survey and summer food habits study on a research area in Itasca County, Minnesota. The remainder of the morning was taken up by general discussions and a business meeting.

Minnesota is in its second year of a \$600,000 deer habitat improvement project. During the first year 26,000 acres of projects were approved and 10,500 acres were completed. In Wisconsin aspen regeneration and wildlife openings rate highest in the habitat program. \$312,000 was provided and 8,000 acres were treated. Projects range from 15 to 250 acres in size. This year it is proposed to treat 22,500 acres and \$583,000 is available. Main emphasis will be placed on summer range. Wildlife openings are being maintained by the use of herbicides and a one chain no cut strip is reserved around all wildlife openings. In Michigan \$55,000 was provided last year and \$65,000 this year for deer habitat improvement. The main problem in Michigan is the pole sized stage of timber on much of the deer range. The second problem is conversion of the aspen stands to less desirable types. The third important problem is the loss of wildlife openings.

No information was available as to any deer habitat projects in Ontario. Most of the business meeting was taken up by a discussion as to whether the Deer Group and Ruffed Grouse Workshop should meet jointly from now on as a Forest-Wildlife Group. Jim Hale of Wisconsin gave a strong case for meeting jointly. Ralph Bailey of Michigan pointed out some of the drawbacks. Milt Stenlund of Minnesota pointed out some of the problems that arose during the present meeting. These included too large a group to be handled efficiently. More than 85 people attended the aspen panel meeting on Tuesday. This large group detracts from the original purpose of the Deer Group which was to have small informal discussion sessions. However, it was also pointed out that some workers who do not attend the Deer Group meeting feel that we run a "closed meeting". It was pointed out that under present day land management policies we can no longer afford to specialize into deer or grouse alone. Anything we do with either species will affect the other. The following proposals were offered. The deer group should meet independently as we always have done. Secondly, the two groups should join together and form a Forest-Wildlife Group. Third, since the Ruffed Grouse Workshop has been meeting only every third year, it was suggested that the Deer Group meet independently annually, but meet jointly with the Ruffed Grouse Workshop when they have their meeting. Since four agencies belong to the Deer Group and the Grouse Workshop meets every third year, it would mean that the Grouse Workshop could then meet in a different state or province every third year. However, Ontario is not affiliated with the Grouse Workshop. It was decided that each state or province should discuss the above proposals and come up with a recommendation at the next years meeting at which Michigan will be the host state.