



Nick Neverisky <nickneverisky@gmail.com>

Re: brief call re: managing deer yards in Richmond's town forest?

Nick Neverisky <nickneverisky@gmail.com>
Draft

Mon, Sep 12, 2022 at 3:41 PM

From: **Fortin, Nick** <Nick.Fortin@vermont.gov>
Date: Tue, Aug 23, 2022 at 8:24 AM
Subject: RE: brief call re: managing deer yards in Richmond's town forest?
To: Caitlin Littlefield <clittlef@gmail.com>

Hi Caitlin,

Happy to help! I think you've summarized our conversation perfectly.

Best,

Nick

From: Caitlin Littlefield <clittlef@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 22, 2022 5:05 PM
To: Fortin, Nick <Nick.Fortin@vermont.gov>
Subject: Re: brief call re: managing deer yards in Richmond's town forest?

Hi Nick,

Thanks for speaking with me this afternoon re: protecting deer wintering area on the Andrews Community Forest. I've recapped the key points from our conversation below along with some broader lessons I took away. Can you confirm that I've accurately captured what we discussed?

Many thanks!

Caitlin

1. The whole southern aspect rising from the Winooski River Valley between Richmond and Waterbury serves, to some degree, as deer wintering area. Especially as the winters get milder, simply being on a south-facing aspect may provide enough thermal protection. (This is in contrast to elsewhere in the state, especially the colder NEK, in which targeting and protecting dense softwood cover will likely capture the areas deer use the most.)
2. Based on Nick Fortin's observations on ACF (which are consistent with what Caitlin Littlefield and Nick Neverisky observed when doing pellet counts), there's more winter deer activity in the steeper, higher grounds near Sip of Sunshine than within the hemlock stand that the Hemlock Valley trail cuts through. During bad winters with >3' of snow, that hemlock stand may well be important, but

when winters are mild, the sparser hemlock cover in the steeper terrain is worth the trade-off, as there's greater food availability up higher.

3. Seasonal closures can be an appropriate tool to protect deer wintering areas so long as they can be enforced. Closures from December 15 - April 1 are recommended and are consistent with state-level development reviews.
4. The high degree of variability and uncertainty in our winters means we need to give deer and all wildlife ample space to shift and adapt. Predicting how and where deer will use resources during the winter is increasingly challenging -- for example, they may use one yard one winter, then use another location the next winter. This underscores the fact that we can't simply delineate and protect one hemlock stand and say we've done enough.
5. Thus, it's likely preferable and better for wildlife to close a swath of the network (eg both Hemlock Valley and the East Climb) during the recommended time period rather than simply close one trail and route traffic elsewhere. This does not have to mean people can't use the forest -- they can wander off trail. But simply establishing an official trail closure will likely reduce traffic overall.