



MICHIGAN ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
FORT CUSTER TRAINING SITE COMMAND
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MEMO: After Action Report – 2006 Deer Hunt Activities at Fort Custer Training Center

Deer Hunting during the 2006 hunting season at Fort Custer Training Center was once again a success. 156 deer were harvested throughout the hunting season at FCTC, which is essential in order to ensure that our ecological goals for the property and the deer herd are achieved. Most importantly the impeccable safety record of the FCTC public hunt was maintained. The 2006 total harvest was once again lower than our historic average. I believe the historic average is inflated due to several years of extremely high harvest numbers. Comparing harvest totals from the past 2 years, to years in the more distant past, should be done with caution. It was the goal of FCTC-Environmental office to reduce the deer herd on Fort Custer Training Center. Through increased antlerless permits and continued public access we have been able to achieve that goal. Our herd is not as large as it was in the late 90's and early 00's because we intended to reduce the population to a healthier number. We are now beginning to see biological data such as harvest weight and antler growth that are closer to the Southern Michigan average as opposed to drastically below which are traits that are found in a stressed or over abundant population.

MILITARY/EMPLOYEE HUNT (MWR)

With the help of the FCTC front gate personnel MWR hunt check in/check out procedures went very well this year. Accountability of people using the TA's for hunting is essential in case of emergency situations. 24 deer were harvested during Military/Employee only hunt dates. There were more total MWR hunt dates in 2006 from 2005; 14 Bow Hunt days, 7 Shotgun days, and 8 Muzzleloader days in 2006.

PUBLIC HUNT

The 2006 public hunt ran very similar to the 2005 hunt. Hunt operations were run through the Augusta Armory with Deer Hunt Group Leaders assisting with logistics. There were 3 separate shotgun hunt periods for the 2006 hunt season. Nov 15 was hunt period 1, Nov. 18&19 was hunt period 2, and Nov. 25&26 was the 3rd period. Muzzleloader dates included the 9&10 of December. Antlerless permitting changed slightly for FCTC this year. Managed hunt permits were able to be purchased over the counter as in years past, but no application was needed to be eligible to purchase those permits. A total of 956 people applied for the public hunt with 1289 total hunt/man days tallied at FCTC during the seven days of public hunting activities. All hunters attend a mandatory hunter safety and orientation session. A public hunter had an average of 10% chance of harvesting a deer in any given hunt day.

DISABLED HUNT OPPURTUNITIES

2003 was the first year FCTC, in coordination with the Michigan Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, provided hunting opportunities for disabled hunters. In 2006 FCTC provided a total of 12 different heated/wheelchair accessible hunting blinds throughout all the training areas which were utilized heavily. Battle Creek Area Rotary Club, Whitetails Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Fort Custer Deer Hunt Group Leaders all helped to support these oppurtunities.

2007 CONSIDERATIONS

FCTC is currently exploring the idea of participating in some sort of Quality Deer Management protocol. Harvest numbers must be maintained so that the population can stay at a healthy density, but antler restrictions could be something that may be explored. Please provide comments to this possibility to jonathan.edgerly@us.army.mil. Also ongoing in 2007 will be the herd management project in conjunction with Michigan State University. This study will help provide us with the information on herd numbers that will allow us to maintain numbers at a level where over-browsing and herd health will not become an issue. While there may be fewer deer under this management scheme, the deer should be healthy and carry antler and body weights commensurate with the rest of southern lower Michigan.

Visit www.fortcusterhunt.org for more information

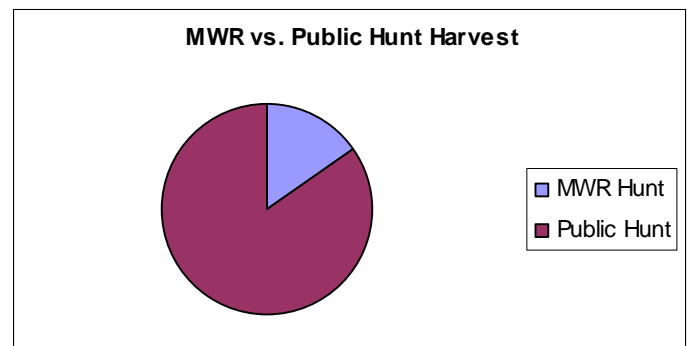
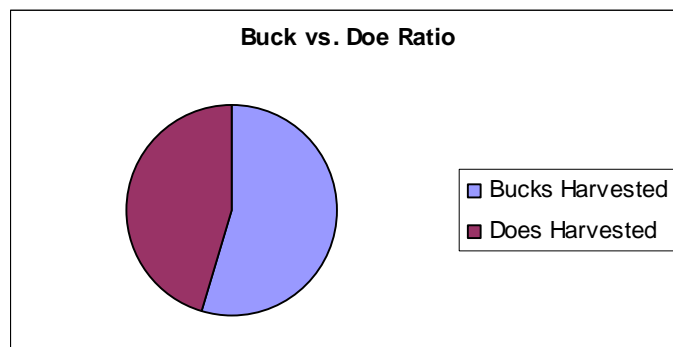
Please Direct any questions to Jonathan Edgerly in the FCTC Environmental Office at 269-731-6506

DATA

Date	Bucks Harvested	Does Harvested	Deer Harvested	Hunter's	Success Rate
15-Nov	49	28	77	369	20.9%
18-Nov	15	16	31	347	8.9%
19-Nov	1	4	5	171	2.9%
25-Nov	3	4	7	168	4.2%
26-Nov	2	4	6	106	5.7%
9-Dec	2	1	3	83	3.6%
10-Dec	1	2	3	45	6.7%
Military/Employee	12	12	24	n/a	
TOTAL	85	71	156	1289	10.2%

Figure 1: Harvest data from each day of the public hunt and total Military/Employee take (above).

Figure 2: 2006 Harvest Ratio Bucks vs. Doe (below) Figure 3: Percentage Harvest MWR/Public(below)



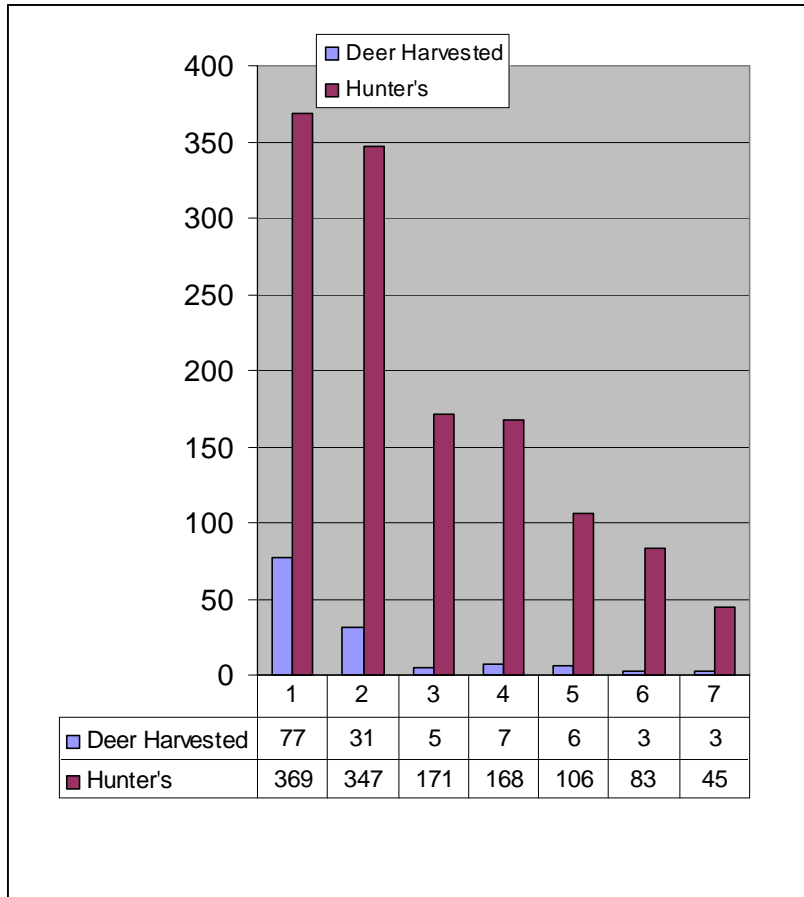


Figure 4: 2006 Public Hunter Numbers vs. Deer Harvested (above)

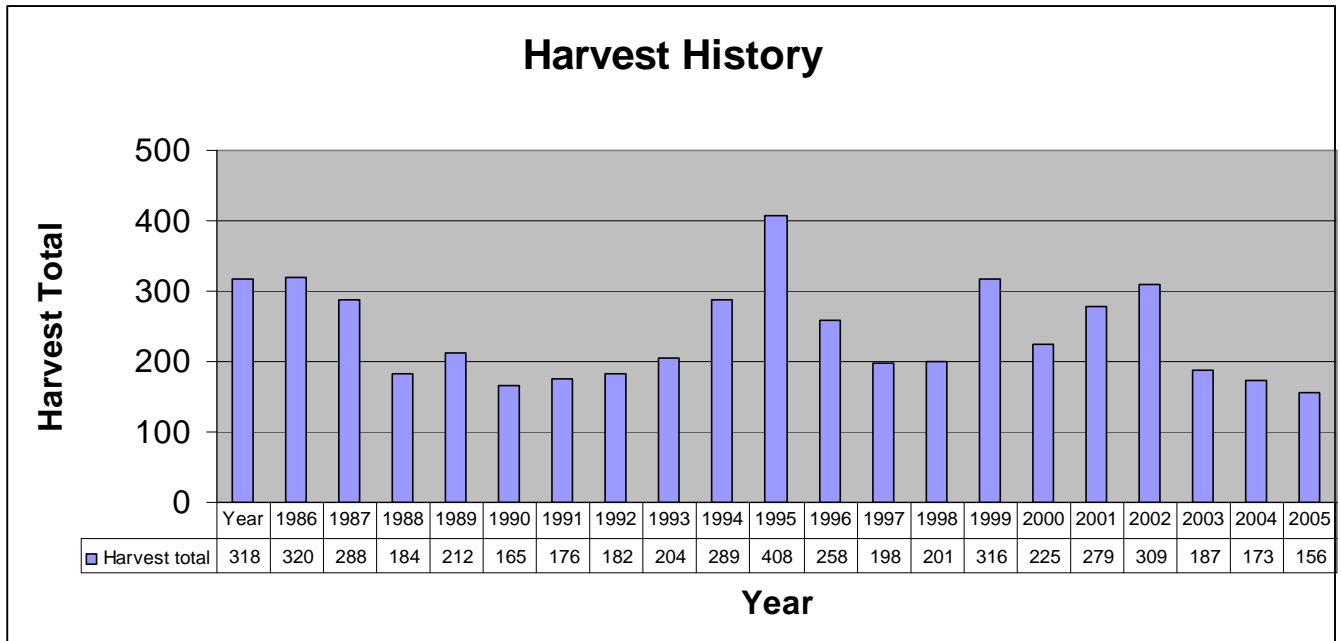


Figure 5: 21 year Harvest History
(Average Harvest 240 Deer)

PICTURES



Left: Capt. Andy Kuhns harvested this buck during an MWR Gun Hunt.
Right: 4 Generations of the Cota family hunt at Fort Custer during the public gun hunt.



Left: Opening day 0400 hrs in the Augusta Armory Parking Lot.
Right: Deer skull found during hunting recon in Area 2.



Left: Opening day harvest by this hunter, her first deer.
Right: MSU student combs deer on opening day looking for ticks.



Left: Maj. Czajka harvested this buck during the public hunt on Nov. 15.
Right: This buck was harvested during the public hunt in training Area 3.