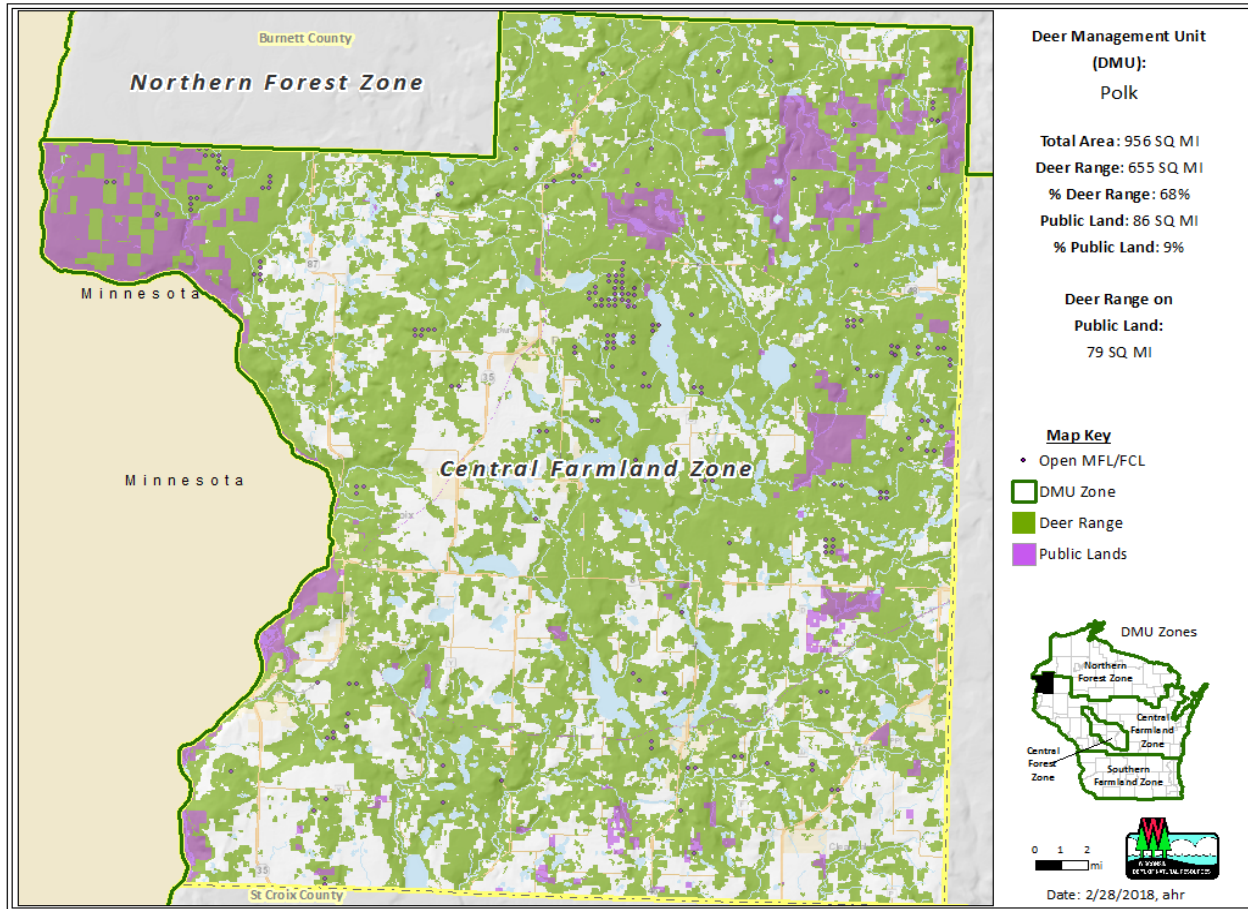


Polk County Deer Metrics Report

Spring of 2024

Management Unit:



Manager's Note:

The Polk County Deer Management Unit is located in the Central Farmland Zone. Approximately 69 percent of the unit is considered suitable deer range. Approximately 9 percent of the unit is comprised of lands open to public hunting. The northwestern portion of the unit is home to the Sterling Barrens, much of which is in public landownership. This relatively nutrient poor area is part of the Northwest Sands Ecological Landscape and is mostly forested, supporting jack pine, scrub oak and aspen. The remainder of the northern half of the unit is dominated by northern hardwoods mixed with some agriculture. Major public lands in the northern portion of the unit include McKenzie Creek Wildlife Area, Rice Beds Wildlife Area, Straight Lake Wildlife Area and Straight Lake State Park. Although it is still wooded, the southern half of unit transitions into a more open landscape with a greater agricultural presence. The very southern part is included in the Western Prairie Ecological Landscape. The majority of public land south of U.S. Highway 8, including Joel Marsh Wildlife Area, the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area and several Waterfowl Production Areas, are rich with prairies, grasslands and wetlands. Sometimes these cover-types are overlooked as a place to find deer, but good, warm season grass cover does a great job of hiding deer and they utilize it. Generally, the southern half of the unit receives more opening day hunting pressure than the northern half with an average hunter density of 20 hunters per square mile of deer range. One-third of bucks harvested in the unit are 2 ½ years or older and the average adult antlered harvest is 5 bucks per square mile of deer range. However, harvests vary depending on habitat type. The unit is usually in the top ten of units for deer harvest in the state. The current herd management goal is to stabilize the population.