

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources,
Wildlife Division
Deer Range Improvement Program:**

2019 Upper Peninsula

***Deer Habitat
Improvement Partnership
Initiative***

Grant Program



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**Michigan Department of Natural Resources,
Wildlife Division, Deer Range Improvement Program**

2019 Upper Peninsula Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative

Contents

2019 Upper Peninsula	1
<i>Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative</i>	1
Grant Program.....	1
1.1 Initiative goals and expectations:.....	3
1.2 Project concept development:	3
1.3 Initiative funding and Grant Process:	4
1.4 Project Implementation and Grant Process:.....	4
1.5 Eligible land ownerships:	5
1.6 Eligible partners:	5
1.7 Eligible proposal types:	6
1.8 Communications strategy:.....	7
1.9 Public notification process and application timeline:	7
2.0 Required application information:	8
2.1 Proposal selection process:.....	8
2.2 Proposal criteria and scoring:.....	8
2.3 Compliance monitoring and annual initiative reporting:	9
2.4 Wildlife Division Upper Peninsula / DHIPI Wildlife Biologist Contact List:.....	9
Appendix A.....	11

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Deer Range Improvement Program 2019 Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative

Program description:

The Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative (DHIPI) is a grant program designed to foster productive relationships between the DNR, sportsmen's organizations, concerned citizens and other partners that produce tangible deer habitat improvement benefits and educate the public about the importance of the work and the scientific principles involved in it. This Initiative is targeted for implementation in the Upper Peninsula.

This document is designed primarily as a guide for use by applicants. It is intended to provide basic information on: Initiative goals, proposal requirements, eligibility rules, grant application process, proposal criteria and selection process, funding, and the implementation process.

1.1 Initiative goals and expectations:

The purpose of this Initiative is to develop a collaborative approach to deer habitat improvement on **private land ownerships** across the UP; there are three primary goals for this Initiative. All projects should address these fundamental goals in order to be considered for funding:

1. Produce on-the-ground deer habitat (summer and/or winter range) improvement in the UP that address resource needs.
2. Establish and promote partnerships between the DNR, sportsmen's organizations, and other partners.
3. Showcase these cooperative projects through coordinated public relations outreach which educates the public on the benefits of the habitat improvement project and features the cooperative relationship between the DNR and partners.

1.2 Project concept development:

Prospective habitat improvement projects are to be developed by partner organizations through an application process as outlined in this document. These project proposals should be generated by eligible partners (see section 1.6 for eligible partner definition) for implementation on an array of eligible ownerships.

It is encouraged that collaborative interactions occur between the respective local DNR wildlife biologist and the partner organization throughout proposal development.

1.3 Initiative funding and Grant Process:

All Initiative activities will operate on the State of Michigan's fiscal year calendar, October 1 through September 30. Initiative funding is from an annual Deer Range Improvement Program (DRIP) fund appropriation. Public Act 106 of 1971 created the DRIP fund, whereby \$1.50 from every deer hunting license sold statewide is allocated into a restricted fund to be exclusively used for the improvement and maintenance of habitat for deer, acquisition of land for deer management, and the payment in lieu of taxes on purchased lands.

DRIP funds will be used to finance this Initiative through competitive grants. Your group may be required to initially incur the expenses associated with implementing the project and submit invoices (with organization name and contact information) for reimbursement (save all original receipts).

For 2019 the total value of DRIP funds to be made available through this competitive grant application process is \$100,000. **The maximum allowable limit for deer habitat improvement grants is \$15,000 with the minimum at \$2,000.** Funds will be allocated across the entire UP based on a competitive grant application scoring process.

To be eligible for consideration, all projects must meet the three Initiative goals. Projects that may require repeat applications for funding in multiple fiscal years will be considered, but will be limited to the above funding limitations per fiscal year unless there is unrequested leftover funding available within the current fiscal year. In the case of multiple-year projects, scheduled deliverables will be required to occur within the fiscal year deadlines as defined within the Agreement Contract and a grant disbursement rules.

1.4 Project Implementation and Grant Process:

It is the responsibility of the partner organization to undertake the primary role in implementation of an approved grant project. Partnering organizations will need to actively participate in the project through financial match, cost share, volunteer labor, material contributions, or other in-kind support. The required partner cost share for approved projects is 25% of the total project cost. Proposed partner cost share and additional contributions to projects will be considered in the scoring process.

Approved grant projects will require the partnering organization or their representative to be Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) compliant and a registered vendor of the State of Michigan's SIGMA system. Registration through the SIGMA process is available online at www.michigan.gov/sigmavss. This will be necessary to facilitate transfer of grant funds from the DNR to an approved partner or other service provider. The EFT process will generate a W-9 and 1099 tax form for the approved organization, as required for grant funds by law.

Successful applicant organizations and participating landowners will be required to sign a contractual DHIPI Agreement and liability release prior to any implementation. This agreement will specify the project deliverables, define partner responsibilities, and stipulate the minimum duration the project is to be maintained by the applicant. Additionally, successful applicant organizations will need to complete a Partner Organization Grants Account form. Scheduled release of grant funds will occur after deliverables / objectives have been completed successfully as defined in the DHIPI Agreement. Under some circumstances partial prepayment of grant funds may be approved depending on the financial nature and time scale of the proposed project.

Failure to meet project obligations or noncompliance as spelled out in the project contractual agreement will result in project termination and ineligibility for future applications.

1.5 Eligible land ownerships:

In 2019 the focus of DHIPI will continue to be improvement deer habitat on rural forested lands where the DNR has not traditionally had significant wildlife habitat influence. Therefore, DHIPI projects **may occur on:** privately owned lands (partner must provide written proof of ownership); industrial forest or Commercial Forest Act (CFA) or Qualified Forest Program (QFP) enrolled lands (with appropriate written permission from landowner); federal lands (with appropriate written permission of federal administrator); or other lands with perpetual conservation mandates. Lands zoned primarily as business, industrial, agricultural, or within incorporated areas are ineligible. While not required, public access to projects is highly desired. Projects with provisions that allow legal public access (minimum of foot traffic) for hunting and fishing will benefit in the project scoring process. The DNR or the State of Michigan will not assume indemnification for liability involving projects undertaken on non-state owned lands.

State owned lands are not eligible for Initiative funding in 2019. Currently there are existing mechanisms for partnerships between the DNR and external partners to enhance state land wildlife habitat. If you are interested in partnering on state lands, you should contact the respective local wildlife biologist or forester as soon as possible to explore feasibility.

1.6 Eligible partners:

Given the limited funding, the expansiveness of the UP, and the desire to utilize this funding as effectively as possible, private individuals, are not eligible to apply directly at this time. Unfortunately, there is not enough funding to make this possible.

An application may be submitted by a conservation organization, sportsperson group, non-governmental organizations, land conservancies, and/or local Conservation District(s). Additionally industrial working forest landowners with Upper Peninsula ownership in excess of 10,000 acres are eligible to participate directly. As well, wildlife

land management service providers are eligible to submit an application(s) on behalf of an eligible landowner / partner. Additionally, formal private land affiliations have been added to the list of eligible partners.

For the purpose of this Initiative a formal private land affiliation is a group of 2 or more unrelated individuals who collectively own a legally recognized (i.e. plat book designation) block of contiguous, rural land, 400 acres or larger for the purpose of wildlife-based recreation. Joint or common tenancy may be considered eligible ownership provided the land is managed collectively for wildlife based recreation purposes and meets all other requirements. Non-legally binding or collectives of adjacent landowners are considered ineligible. Family (direct and extended) owned lands are also considered ineligible.

In addition to private individuals, unrecognized organizations, cities, municipalities, townships, counties, and federal or other state governmental entities / agencies are all ineligible to directly apply for funding from this Initiative. These interested parties may however be third party cooperators for approved projects, where appropriate (i.e. as cooperating landowners on which projects can occur or contributing partners).

Conservation organizations may be UP based or local chapters of state, regional or national groups. Eligible applicants must provide a federal tax number or social security number in order register with the State of Michigan to facilitate grant funding. A partner organization must name a project contact person / representative and include appropriate contact information on the application. Eligible partner organizations may apply for funding for multiple projects in a fiscal year, each of which will be evaluated independently. Eligible partner organizations may not apply for funding for unspecified projects or purposes. DHIPI applications are not mutually exclusive with other DNR grant programs.

1.7 Eligible proposal types:

Organizations considering participation in this Initiative are encouraged to contact their local wildlife biologist or the private land biologist to collaboratively develop project proposals.

Examples of activities proposals may include are: wildlife shrub plantings, tree plantings (i.e. oak or other hard mast species, fruit bearing or other soft mast species, winter cover conifers such as white pine, hemlock, or cedar), scarification for regeneration of light-seeded tree species, non-commercial timber stand improvement activities, direct mechanical habitat manipulation (i.e. regeneration of aspen or alder habitat), wildlife opening creation or maintenance, plantings of non-invasive herbaceous grasses and forbs, approved warm / cool season grasses, and native prairie herbaceous plantings.

Proposals which involve eligible partners who sponsor or engage in similar habitat improvement projects on multiple eligible landowner types within a region or defined

geographic area are eligible provided there are: clear habitat goals; landowner selection criteria; and project methods are consistent with DHIPI intent.

Specific activities that will **not** be considered are plantings of: annual species such as corn or root crops; exotics or invasive species; non-DNR approved naturalized plant species; commercial timber sale preparation, and construction of ponds. Proposals will not be considered if they would increase undesired habitat fragmentation; increase wildlife disease transmission potential; have human safety implications; are contrary to current DNR policy and opinion; counter to Best Management Practices (BMP's); or have adverse impacts on state or federally listed threatened and endangered species.

To aide applicants in formulating cost effective proposals it is suggested they refer to Michigan State University Extension's most recent [Custom Machine and Work Rate Estimates worksheet](http://bit.ly/ratesworksheet) for current values on standard farming practices that may be applicable at: <http://bit.ly/ratesworksheet>

1.8 Communications strategy:

A requirement for each approved project is a planned communications strategy. Development of the rough framework for this strategy is the responsibility of the partnering organization and is required to be included in the application. This framework should include a detailed description of how the public will be informed of the intended deer habitat and other wildlife benefits, the project location, a detailed description of the proposed habitat enhancement activities, any public education plans, all project cooperators, and the funding sources. It should also include any specific plans for site signage, local newsprint, radio, television, other media outreach, and list of likely local media contacts. The partnering organization must be prepared to be an active participant in outreach efforts.

Development of the final communications strategy for projects is expected to be a cooperative venture between the partnering organization and the DNR. Coordination and public delivery of the communications message will be conducted by the DNR.

1.9 Public notification process and application timeline:

In 2019 the following Initiative timeline is being pursued:

- **January 14, 2019 (Monday) - Initiative requests for project (RFP) application period opens** including a direct mailing of application packages to an existing list of UP sportsperson organizations and web posting.
- **March 1, 2019 (Friday) - Final application deadline (close of business day).**
- **March 18, 2019 (Monday) - Notification to successful applicants.** Implementation of approved projects will commence immediately upon completion of contract and agreement paperwork.

[Complete application packages](#) including: application forms, Initiative description and requirements, and related materials are available online at www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants then following the [Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative link](#). Packages are also available upon request from Bill Scullon, Field Operations Manager, Department of Natural Resources, Norway Field Office, 520 West US Hwy 2, Norway MI 49870, telephone 906-563-9247, fax 906-563-5802 or email Scullonh@michigan.gov.

2.0 Required application information:

Applicant organizations must meet eligibility requirements and grant application forms must be filled out completely to be considered. Potential partnering organizations must name a project contact person / representative and include appropriate contact information. Additional sheets may be attached to fully describe the proposed project in detail. It is strongly encouraged that applications be as detailed as possible since they will be evaluated competitively. The project proposal must provide: an itemized estimate of project costs, materials and any other related expenditure(s); detailed description of how the sponsoring organization plans to provide the required 25% project cost share; the legal location description of the project including GPS coordinates if applicable; acreage estimate; and any relevant maps / air photos must be provided. Written documentation of third-party landowner permission for the proposed activity must be included where necessary. Specific local recommendations for any contractual service providers should be included. Project proposals may undergo modification to ensure habitat practices are sound, to overcome logistical and feasibility issues, and to be in compliance with union / labor agreements where applicable.

2.1 Proposal selection process:

Immediately following the application deadline, a multi-disciplinary selection committee will convene to review proposals and select projects to be funded. This selection committee may be composed of; Upper Peninsula WLD Regional Supervisor, Upper Peninsula WLD Field Operations Manager, the DNR WLD Private Land Program Biologist, a representative of DNR Forest Resource Division, a UP Natural Resource Commissioner (NRC) as available, and a DNR UP communications representative.

The selection committee may approve, reject, or make modifications to project(s). Partners who submit projects that are not approved may seek feedback from the selection committee. Selection committee decisions will be final. The selection and project scoring process is designed to be standardized, treat all applicants fairly and be as transparent as possible.

2.2 Proposal criteria and scoring:

Grant proposals will be evaluated for completeness, inclusion of all three primary Initiative goals, eligibility, and meeting the five proposal criteria. Proposals will be

numerically scored by the selection committee. This is a competitive process for limited funds. The selection committee will use scientific principles, professional experience and judgment in scoring proposals. A gradient scale will be used to evaluate the proposal on the criteria. The lower the score for an individual criterion indicates a lower priority assessment. The final total score for a given proposal will be based on a compilation of values for each of the criteria. The maximum score a proposal can receive is 25. The minimum score a project can receive and still be considered eligible for funding is 12.

The five proposal evaluation criteria are presented in no particular order:

- Production of tangible deer habitat enhancement benefits.
- Proposal is logistically feasible.
- Public accessibility and / or proximity to public lands.
- Partner will provide the required cost share and participation in the implementation of the project.
- The inclusion of a communications strategy.

2.3 Compliance monitoring and annual initiative reporting:

For all approved projects, the partner's representative will be required to periodically report to the private land biologist or designated DNR field staff on the project status, expenditures to date, future objectives to be completed, and estimated timeline for completion throughout the implementation process (final deadline is the end of the Fiscal Year on September 30, 2019). DNR staff will be responsible for assessing whether or not the partner complied with the intended contract obligations, prior to final payment release.

Following the completion of the project, a subsequent periodic compliance monitoring may take place for a predetermined (as specified in contractual agreement) time period to determine if the partner organization fully filled all requirements. The DNR reserves the right to access the project for compliance monitoring for the period specified in the contract agreement.

2.4 Wildlife Division Upper Peninsula / DHIPI Wildlife Biologist Contact List:

Bill Scullon, Field Operations Manager Scullonh@michigan.gov
Norway Field Office, 520 West US Hwy 2, Norway MI 49870. 906-563-9247

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906-228-6561

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906-353-6651

Monica Joseph, Wildlife Biologist Josephm@michigan.gov
Crystal Falls Field Office, 1420 Highway US-2 West, Crystal Falls MI 49920. 906-875-6622

Karen Sexton, Wildlife Biologist SextonK2@michigan.gov
Escanaba Field Office, 6833 Hwy. 2, 41, and M-35, Gladstone MI 49837. 906-786-2351

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