



Deer Exclosure at Tennis Court Parking Lot

By now I'm sure many people in the development have noticed the fenced in area between Lake Lane and the Tennis Court Parking Lot. The fence was assembled to prevent deer from feeding in that area. The current population of deer in the development is 5-6 times what the land can actually handle. When you look in most wooded areas in the development you can see a defined browse line where the deer have eaten everything from the ground level to their head height. The fenced in area will mimic what it would look like if we had the deer population at a level the land could support. Over the next couple years you will notice many seedlings that get established in the fenced site. In a few more years, the density of trees will be incredible due to the lack of deer damage. Hopefully, the site will serve as an educational tool on forest management.

One hundred years ago, deer were none existent in many parts of state. The reason was mostly due to predation from humans and other large mammals (cougars). Obviously, during that time frame agriculture was king and deer were simply not allowed to destroy crops and the deer was also a good food source for many families. Today, things are very different and the need for deer as a food source is not the same, although many hunters still enjoy venison. Due to deer being kept in check within their environment in the past, the forest always had good regeneration (new seedlings-future trees). Unfortunately, today in many areas of the state deer population have exploded due to the lack of hunting and natural predators. As a result, the forests are having difficulty regenerating a diversity of quality trees. In our development for instance, the deer browse just about all of the hardwood seedlings they see including beech which they typically will not eat. What does this mean? Well, as time goes on, and the overstory trees (Big trees) begin to die off there will be very few trees to replace the large trees.

In addition to fencing the site, we have applied herbicides to a hand full of undesirable tree species and understory weeds (fern and grass) in order to open the soil bank so the seeds from the large trees have an easier time getting established. This is a very common practice in forestry today. Fern and grass might look nice, but it also prevents seeds from germinating in the soil. Many of the states woodlands are dominated by hay scented fern largely due to the fact the deer will not eat it. Deer will browse the seedlings instead and basically cause a monoculture of fern on the forest floor. The only way to eliminate this competition for the seedlings is to use an approved herbicide to kill the fern.

Hopefully everyone will have a chance to view this site over the next couple years to watch the progress of site.