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STUDY REVEALS PENNSYLVANIA'S NEEDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN DEER MANAGEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2009, Harrisburg, PA - A recent study released by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation-- authored by Dr. Marrett Grund and Bryon Shissler and entitled "Managing deer in the Commonwealth: A study of Pennsylvania and other states" -- shows that Pennsylvania is ahead of many states in finding new and better ways to bring deer populations in balance with nature. However, the state still has a ways to go.

The study looked at how agencies throughout the United States use science to inform deer management decisions to manage deer populations while striving to limit deer numbers in order to maintain healthy forest ecosystems. Many states have struggled with managing deer herds. It commends the Pennsylvania Commission for the program they have today, but says more progress will be necessary.

The study recommends critical new steps to manage deer herds in balance with healthy forest ecosystems. It recommends that the state develop better science-based indicators of deer impacts on forests with which to guide deer management. It also recommends the state should employ more staff to focus on ecosystem science, and improve methods for determining public expectations on what deer management should achieve.

In 2002 the Game Commission asked the public how they would like deer managed. The citizens of Pennsylvania ranked healthy, sustainable forest ecosystems as their number one goal for deer management. The Commonwealth is now one of the few states with a written deer management plan that includes goals related to habitat and health of deer, and actual measures of vegetation to inform deer management decisions. This scope is rare among agencies around the country.

While Pennsylvania now has one of the most progressive deer management programs in the country it still falls short of what the public has said it wants. Too few studies look at the relationship between the condition of a forest ecosystem and varying deer densities, or the recovery of a forest once deer are brought down to more natural densities. In many parts of the state deer still damage forest ecosystems.

For more information about this study, please contact the Pinchot Institute of Conservation or the authors of the study.

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