Dave,

We have had many of the same discussions over the years.  I think you heard the issues when we met with Jim Hammill and Bob Doepker.

We need to re-think our cedar treatments, as well as the hemlock and balsam as we have discussed.

The most important thing we have for the survival of the deer heard is the pregnant doe.

George has again hit on the key factors to the UP Habitat Work Group, only the DNR has to come into the fold instead the State lands being off limits.

George is right.  We have steadily lost loggers/truckers over the past 2 years.  There is plenty of wood sitting on the ground and every day it sits, the logger loses money because the moisture leaves the wood in the woods or left roadside.  The mills buy wood by weight not cords.

We do need to find a way to cut wood to provide slash for the deer.  If you go back to the 80's and 90's we opened Champion and Sagola mills, we still had Consolidated Lac de Flambeau,a couple paper mills in MN and Jefferson Smurfit.  We now have Sagola, KI Sawyer, Munising mills Escanaba and a couple of smaller dimension mills like Kretz Lumber.  We began cutting closer to the mills in a fashion that was not sustainable.  We started close to the mills and worked our way out.  As a result, we had plenty of food available unless we had an extremely harsh winter.  We need slash and young aspen growth (a fast growing species) as winter food to maintain a high deer population.

In summary, good forest management includes management for the animals that use the forest. This includes using slash for winter food or cover for animals such as rabbits and hare and provide new growth regeneration sufficient to replace itself and food for animals using the area.

Old growth forests are nice to have, but most old growth support different animals than young or medium growth forest. What is the definition of old growth? Each species of tree has a different life span. Most species live longer than humans and as a result, we have difficulty degerming old growth using our life span as a measure. The Great Basin bristlecone pine in CA is almost 5K years old, the redwoods, cypress and sequoia have long life spans. Our forests have different lives for different species as well.

Predator load is another issue that needs to be addressed.  Not only do we have wolves, bears and bobcats, but we have the mountain lion also.  The herd on a landscape basis faces challenges without the food issue with then increased predator pressure.

Another issue is the winter severity.  The most critical time for deer is going into winter strong and coming out strong or with the ability to access food unlike the end of 2023 winter.  If food is not found in a reasonable time, deer will starve even though fresh food becomes available.  I have had deer that starved in the backyard with green grass all around.  Also, the winter last year can lead to low birth rates, 3-4 lbs. v 6-8 lbs.  This will result in a hit to the heard.

I know I have put quite a bit out there in summary, we agree with the UP Marquette Whitetail response and we need to look at the total landscape and not expect an overnight rebound.