



County Road Association
OF MICHIGAN

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WHEN DEER MEET THE ROAD: Kent County Road Commission takes a science-based approach to reducing deer-vehicle crashes

LANSING, MI – Deer are a familiar fall sight across Michigan – sometimes upright and sometimes lying dead next to the road. In Kent County, deer are a significant traffic safety concern that the county road agency is taking seriously. After ranking first in Michigan for deer-vehicle crashes for three consecutive years, the **Kent County Road Commission (KCRC)** has a new science-based approach to reducing those crashes – and the community seems to be embracing it.

“Our job is to provide reasonably safe and convenient roads. If we can reduce the number of those crashes, that’s a good thing,” said **Jerry Byrne**, KCRC managing director.

In 2024, KCRC helped form the Kent County Deer Management Coalition, bringing together local townships, cities and villages, Kent County, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and other partners. Before taking action, coalition members agreed they needed data to guide their next steps.

With the coalition in place, Grand Valley State University (GVSU) was hired to conduct a year-long study examining deer populations, habitat and crash data while gathering extensive public input. The research helped identify specific areas and corridors where management efforts could have the greatest impact.

With the study complete, the coalition has shifted from research to action, contracting with USDA Wildlife Services for a biologist based at KCRC. Armed with new data and expert guidance, coalition members are now putting the findings to work. KCRC is also applying the research within its own right of way, including a third late-season mowing and increased mowing widths to improve visibility for motorists.

Learn more about Kent County’s deer management efforts in the fall issue of *Crossroads*, the quarterly magazine of the County Road Association of Michigan, available digitally or for download at micountyroads.org/Crossroads.

The 83 members of the County Road Association of Michigan represent the unified voice for a safe and efficient county transportation infrastructure system in Michigan, including appropriate stewardship of the public's right-of-way in rural and urban Michigan. Collectively, Michigan's county road agencies manage 75% of all roads in the state, including 90,500 miles of roads and 5,868 bridges. County road agencies also maintain the state's highway system in 63 counties. Michigan has the nation's fourth-largest local road system.

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