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R E S E A R C H U P D A T E

"Swareflex" Wildlife Warning Reflectors

Reference - Work Plan 86-R-9.

History - Because deer/vehicle accidents have steadily increased Nationwide with the ever increasing number of vehicles on the highways, the Vermont Agency of Transportation is interested in systems designed to prevent deer/vehicle collisions.

A "Swareflex" System is being evaluated on Vermont Route 64 (Mill Hill) between Route 12 and Interstate 89 in the Towns of Northfield and Williamstown. The system is designed to reflect a red light to the side of the highway which varies in location and intensity as vehicle headlight beams progress along a line of specially designed reflectors. The result is a "visual fence" which initiates a "freeze reaction" in deer long enough to prevent them from crossing while vehicles are present. Previous tests of this system in Europe and the United States have shown that it may be of value in reducing nighttime deer/vehicle collisions.

Status - Wildlife reflectors were installed in October of 1986 along various segments of the highway. The areas were selected, with the assistance of Department of Fish & Wildlife employees, because of the likelihood of crossings due to their proximity to deer yarding and feeding areas or the project's intersection of known runways.

Projection - The project is presently being monitored prior to each snowstorm in an effort to determine through counting tracks whether deer are crossing in reflectorized areas or elsewhere. To date, crossings have averaged seven deer per 24 hour period. Deer/vehicle collisions will be recorded by Fish & Wildlife since wardens are required to investigate accidents involving deer.

Analysis of where deer are struck in relation to reflector position should determine over a period of time whether the "visual fences" are effective in reducing deer/vehicle collisions.

Distribution A, B, C, D, E, F, G