

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

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Department of
Fish and Game

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Deer Released on Southern Kenai Peninsula

Oct. 7, 2025 (Soldotna) Extensive planning to capture and transplant Sitka black-tailed deer from the Kodiak Archipelago to the southern end of the Kenai Peninsula came to fruition at the end of September. The goal of the translocation project is to evaluate the success of an introduced deer population, track their expansion and survival in a new area, and potentially add another big game species to the Kenai Peninsula for future harvest.

“This project represents years of thoughtful planning, coordination, and dedication by our staff and partners,” said Alaska Department of Fish & Game Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang. “Successfully moving Sitka black-tailed deer from Kodiak to the Kenai Peninsula is a testament to the Department’s commitment to science-based management and enhancing hunting opportunities for Alaskans. Efforts like this help strengthen local food security and ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy and rely on Alaska’s rich wildlife resources. I want to thank everyone involved for their hard work on this project.”

Favorable weather allowed a team of biologists, veterinarians, technicians, and helicopter crews to capture and move deer from state lands on Sitkinak Island. Deer were caught using a netgun from a R-44 helicopter and transported to the release site near Port Chatham in either a BK117B2 or an AS350 helicopter. Capture efforts were selective to ensure a desired ratio of bucks to does in the animals being moved. Deer were sedated for transport and moved in groups ranging from two to five animals per flight, accompanied by veterinarians and biologists. They were met at the release site by another team of biologists and veterinarians who carried the deer in slings to a temporary three-acre holding pen. Deer were marked with ear tags, fitted with GPS collars, sampled for health surveillance, and held for monitoring while they recovered from sedation. When deer were alert and mobile, the pen was opened and they were able to move out onto the landscape. Capture operations were completed on Oct. 3, and 19 deer (five bucks and 14 does) are currently free-ranging on the Kenai Peninsula.

More than 40 deer were captured during this project. Some captured bucks were not translocated due to cryptorchidism and released immediately at their capture location. Only adult animals that appeared healthy were moved. The translocated deer are being monitored daily through GPS collars, including dispersal and survival. As part of this project, any deer that die following the translocation efforts will be located and investigated in an attempt to determine cause of death.

“We have had deer sightings on the Kenai Peninsula for many years from both the public and our biologists, but for some reason those animals have not been able to establish a persistent population and reproduce,” said Regional Supervisor Cyndi Wardlow. “Part of this project is also answering the question of what factors may be limiting deer from moving here on their own, even though they are thriving in surrounding areas with similar habitat types and weather conditions.”

There is currently no hunting season for deer anywhere on the Kenai Peninsula (Units 7 and 15), and you are encouraged to report any deer sightings to the Soldotna (907-262-9368) or Homer ADF&G office (907-235-1725).

To learn more about the history of game transplants in Alaska, visit:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/home/library/pdfs/wildlife/research_pdfs/game_transplants_alaska.pdf

Media Contact: For more information contact Regional Supervisor Cynthia Wardlow at cynthia.wardlow@alaska.gov, 907-267-2529; or Director Ryan Scott at ryan.scott@alaska.gov, 907-465-4191



Photo 1: A collared Sitka black-tailed deer from the translocation project, with ear tag and GPS collar. Photos courtesy of ADF&G.



Photo 2: A collared Sitka black-tailed deer from the translocation project, with ear tag and GPS collar. Photos courtesy of ADF&G.