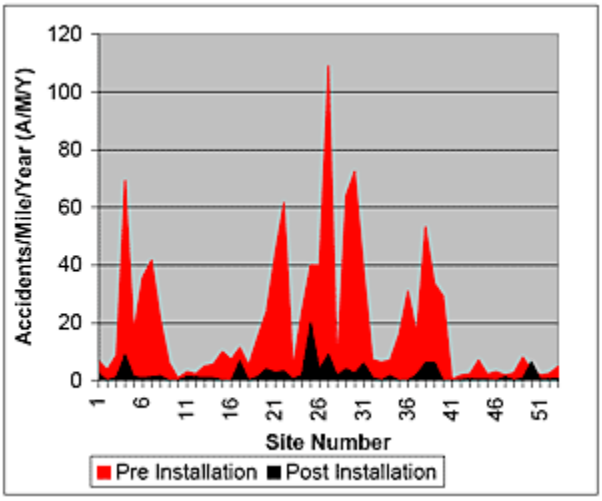
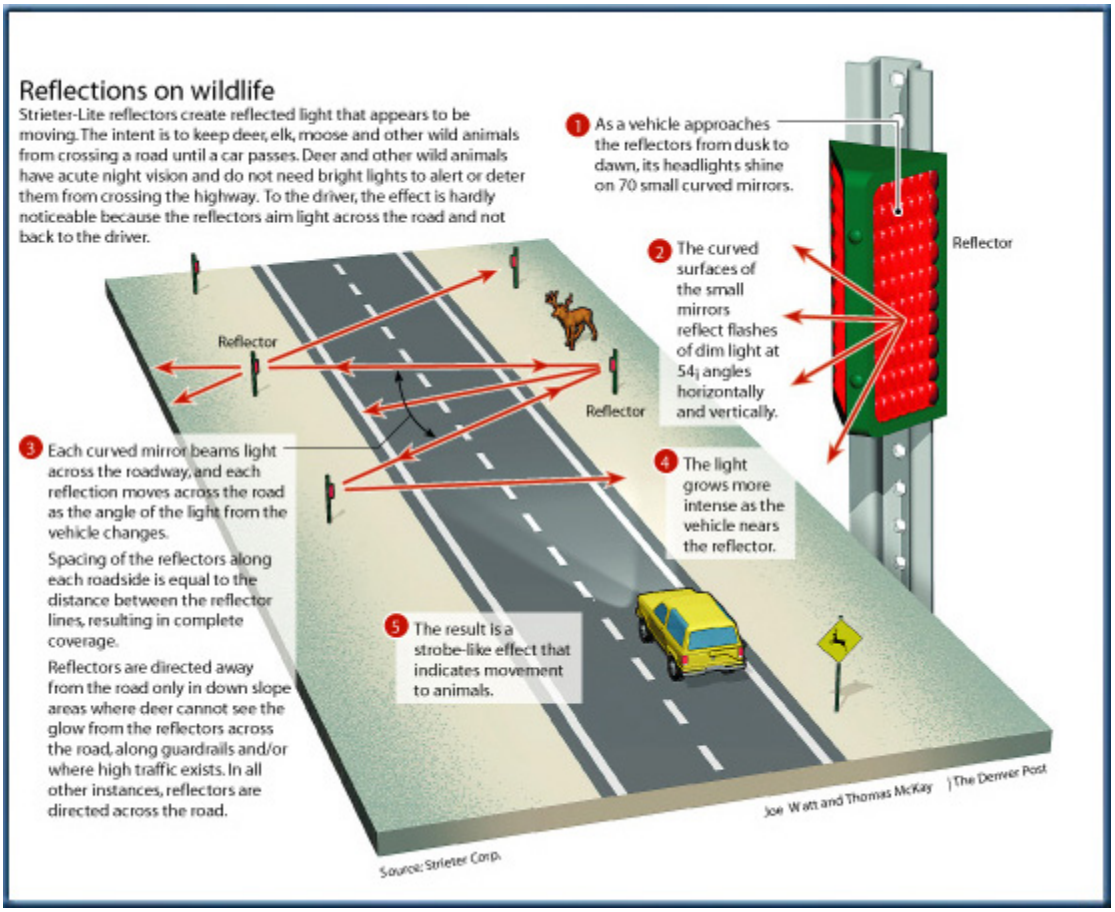
Deer-vehicle collisions

In 2006, 2007 and 2008, there were, respectively, 5, 8 and 8 deer-vehicle collisions in the city. Most of these occurred on or around Harbor Island where many visitors to the city are pulling boats to and from the marina. This is a wildlife corridor area where the Harbor Island deer are traveling to the wetland area on the other side of HWY 31. None of these accidents resulted in serious human injury. This reflects a state-wide trend; where only a small percentage of deer-vehicle collisions result in serious human injury, a trend that is likely accentuated by the city of Grand Haven's relatively low speed limit. In fact, most fatalities from deer-vehicle collisions happen in speed zones of 55 mph or higher, when the victims are not wearing seatbelts or motorcycle helmets. Viewed over a 10 year and even 5 year trend the deer-vehicle collision number is stable. Hence, the idea that the deer population in Grand Haven is spiraling out of control, and bringing with it a dramatic increase in deer-vehicle collisions, is not supported by the data. Of course, no one wishes to experience a car accident of any sort. And even though the data suggests that the rate of deer-vehicle collisions in the city is relatively steady, if our community wishes to reduce the rate of deer-vehicle collisions, there are numerous safe, ethical, and rational alternatives. For example, there are roadside reflector technologies such as the Streiter-lite system, which uses reflected light from the headlights of oncoming cars to alert deer. This system has been installed in numerous locations around the world. Its effectiveness in reducing deer-vehicle collisions has been studied, showing results of 78-90% (see graph at right which shows accident rates before and after installation of reflectors).



There are Strieter-lite system installations in at least 6 places in Michigan; the closest is in Battle Creek, MI. According to the Battle Creek officials, the reduction of deer-vehicle collisions has been high, nearly 100%.The cost of installing this system may also be reduced by federal grant support. The Defenders are working with traffic engineer consultant Dennis Randolph. Mr. Randolph was in charge of the road commission for Calhoun County for 25 years. We are also working with Sheriff Al Bylam who is a member of the State Deer Coalition. We think the Kitchel-Lindquist/ North Shore dune area is a perfect area for the Strieter-lite system.



Another promising technology, the Roadside Animal Detection System (RADS), takes a different approach. RADS uses radio sensors to detect large animals approaching a roadway. If an animal gets too near a road, the sensor activates a warning signal, alerting drivers to be cautious and slow down. One study in Switzerland found that such animal detection systems produced a reduction in collisions of up to 82 percent.