

# City of Ann Arbor Deer Management Report Winter 2016



## **BACKGROUND**

In August 2015, City Council approved the establishment of a deer management program for the City of Ann Arbor. In adopting the deer management program, the City noted the elevated and increasing deer population in the city and established as the program's goal the development of information and strategies to address the deer population's impact on public health, traffic safety, landscape destruction and natural area ecosystems through data collection, public education efforts, and specific actions. The program's objectives support biological diversity in parks and natural areas by not placing one species above another. An approved Deer Management Plan identified several specific actions including the adoption by City Council of a Deer Feeding Ban Ordinance, development of a Deer Management City web page to provide the community with a single resource for program information and other educational information, and deer culls on City property in Wards 1 and 2 over a four-year period. It also directed city staff to explore a doe sterilization and/or contraceptive program in areas in the city where a deer cull is impermissible or impractical. In establishing these last two objectives, it was recognized by City Council that both actions would require Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) approval to conduct them.

While there were many program components to consider when developing the deer management program and implementing the specific actions of the Deer Management Plan, including year one of the deer cull, all decisions made had safety as a priority. As a result, city staff recommended a contract with experienced United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA APHIS) personnel who are specially trained to conduct culls in urban settings with safety, precision and accuracy as their top priorities. The MDNR, who is legally responsible for management of all wildlife (including deer) throughout the state, requires a permit to remove deer and notification of where deer are removed from by Township, Range, and Section. USDA APHIS personnel safely removed 63 deer from seven sections located within the City of Ann Arbor (see attached USDA Project Report). These seven sections are located within the 14 designated City of Ann Arbor parks and nature areas that were closed for cull activities. All requirements of the MDNR permit were adhered to, including the donation of 1,817 pounds of venison to a local food bank.

As noted in the February 1, 2016, City of Ann Arbor Deer Management Plan Update, several constraints on program activities, such as MDNR's shortened permit timeframe and the City's decision to reduce the number of cull locations, did, in fact, impact USDA APHIS's ability to remove up to 100 deer. However, despite unforeseen constraints, 63 deer were successfully and safely removed during the first year of this program, and many lessons were learned that will help future programs. Recommendations and modifications for future programs are noted later in this report.

Finally, it's important to recognize the amount of time, effort, outreach and careful consideration that went into the development of Ann Arbor's Deer Management Program, which the timeline highlights below. Clearly, there are very passionate views on both sides of this issue as well as varying opinions on how to measure success. Reducing negative interactions between deer and humans and supporting biological diversity in natural areas will require multiple years of deliberate action. Success will not be attained in a single year, and deer population issues will not be resolved with inaction.

## **TIMELINE**

Spring 2014: City Council directed Ann Arbor's City Administrator to develop a deer management options report. The directive from Council arose from an increased number of residents reporting landscaping damage, vehicle/deer collisions and a concern of deer-borne diseases.

August 14, 2014: The [Deer Management Options Report](#) was provided to Council. It outlined the need to develop a community-endorsed deer management plan built upon community input and management options approved by the MDNR.

October 2014-March 2015: Significant public outreach and engagement activities were conducted. This included dozens of stakeholder interviews, an online A2 Open City Hall survey and three public meetings (12/10/14, 2/5/15, 4/16/15). In total, more than 200 people attended the public meetings with more than 60 public comments recorded.

The public meeting process was facilitated by a consultant to allow for the broadest public input to be gathered and lethal and nonlethal deer management options to be explored. The meetings were structured to provide the most up-to-date information on the project background, purpose, and planning objectives. There were opportunities for attendees to ask questions of City staff and the MDNR. Although speakers were limited to three minutes of speaking time, there was no limit imposed on the number of speakers allowed. Those who did not wish to speak publicly were encouraged to submit questions on cards supplied for responses.

May 2015: The [Ann Arbor Deer Management Plan](#) was provided to Council. The Plan recommended decreasing the deer population in order to reduce negative deer-human interactions and to support biological diversity in natural areas. The recommended methods identified in the report were all options permitted by the MDNR.

August 17, 2015: City Council approved the establishment of a deer management program for the next four years. The approved program included conducting culls in City of Ann Arbor parks or natural areas beginning in the winter of 2016.

September 8, 2015: Per the Deer Management Plan recommendations, City Council also approved a Deer Feeding Ban Ordinance, which made it a civil infraction to feed deer on private property.

November 5, 2015: City Council passed a Resolution to Impose a Temporary Moratorium on Enforcement of the Prohibition Regarding the Possession and Discharge of Weapons in Public Places. The moratorium only applied to the cull activities.

November 5, 2015: City Council approved a Cooperative Service Agreement between the City of Ann Arbor and the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS) to conduct the cull the first year. There was a \$35,000 cap placed on the contract.

December, 2015: Per Council resolution, deer management education materials were provided to the public including deer-resistant gardening techniques, “Don’t Veer for Deer” tips for motorists and Lyme-disease prevention resources. These resources were available [online](#) as well as in a brochure in the lobby of Larcom City Hall. These resources continue to be available today.

Dec. 23, 2015: The City received a MDNR permit for USDA APHIS staff to remove a maximum of 100 deer in designated City of Ann Arbor parks and nature areas from January 2 - March 1, 2016.

Jan. 2 – March 1, 2016: Designated parks and nature areas were closed for all purposes Monday through Friday evenings from 4 p.m. to 7 a.m. All parks remained open during regular hours on Saturdays and Sundays. The City informed residents of park and nature area closures through a variety of communication channels including:

- Signage in three languages, including English, Spanish and Chinese, at all designated entrances to the 14 identified parks and nature areas
- 2,500 postcards were mailed to residents located near designated parks and nature areas
- Media releases
- Ads in print media
- Resident newsletter articles
- Email notifications
- Social media
- City of Ann Arbor website, and a deer management project webpage was established and weekly updates were provided
- Community Television Network
- Direct email to all registered neighborhood associations
- Direct notifications were also made to Ann Arbor Public Schools and the University of Michigan

Jan. 2 – March 1, 2016: USDA APHIS staff safely removed 63 deer from designated parks and nature areas.

In addition, after-action meetings were conducted with City, MDNR and USDA APHIS personnel to discuss outcomes as well as recommendations for future consideration.

April – May, 2016: Staff report was developed on results of the 2016 winter lethal deer program.

## **DATA/STATISTICS**

The August 17, 2015, City Council Resolution to Establish a Deer Management Program within the City of Ann Arbor directed city staff to, “report on City’s deer management efforts, to include the results from A2 Open City Hall Survey, flyovers and deer/vehicle crash data, in May of each year.”

### **Aerial Count**

The City of Ann Arbor completed an aerial survey of the deer population on February 18, 2016. This survey resulted in 202 deer counted. At the time of the survey, 51 deer had already been removed by USDA APHIS. In March 2015, a comparable aerial survey had been conducted with a 168 deer counted. The aerial surveys were conducted by the same three-person crew of city staff who visually counted deer via helicopter. The two flyovers revealed approximately 80% of the deer counted were in or near the boundaries of Wards 1 and 2.

Flyover deer-count results are not absolute or intended to be a comprehensive census of the entire deer population, but rather give insight into the minimum deer population in certain areas of the city at a point in time. Deer count numbers are useful as data points to compare trends over time.

### **Deer/Vehicle collisions**

Deer-involved vehicle collisions reported directly to the Ann Arbor Police Department in 2015 increased 74% from the previous year.

Ann Arbor Police Department Total Crash Reports Involving Deer		
Year	Crashes	Total involving personal injury
2011	23	2
2012	21	1
2013	34	0
2014	31	1
2015	54	2
2016 (1/1 – 2/21)	6	0

When the Ann Arbor Police crash numbers involving deer are compared to total Ann Arbor area crashes involving deer reported to the State Police by all agencies, a similar increase is seen. As a matter of priority, police do not respond on-site to every call.

### Survey Results

Between April 6 and April 29, 2016, more than 2,000 participants completed an online survey that evaluated residents' interactions with and attitudes about deer in the city of Ann Arbor, as well as attitudes toward the City's deer management plan. The online survey was conducted via A2 Open City Hall, which required participant registration in order for results to be mapped by ward.

In consultation with researchers at the University of Michigan Survey Research Center, survey questions underwent an expert panel review as well as focus group pretesting to minimize bias and help ensure question clarity. Although the survey was open to all residents and nonresidents alike, mailed survey invitations were also sent to 500 randomly selected residents from each ward in an effort to help achieve a representative sample of residents' opinions. With 2,226 surveys completed, participation across each of the five wards was strong. 272 of the respondents were outside city boundaries.

### **In summary, survey responses revealed the following:**

- 42% of respondents reported seeing an increase in deer in their neighborhood during the past three years. 6% reported seeing a decrease; and 43% indicated that the amount of deer has remained the same. In comparison, 58% of respondents in Wards 1 and 2 reported seeing an increase in deer in their neighborhood during the past three years. 5% reported seeing a decrease; and 30% indicated that the amount of deer had remained the same.

- 43% of respondents said they typically don't see any deer in their neighborhood; 31% see 1-4 deer; 12% see 5-9 deer; and 14% see 10 or more deer on average per week.
- 93% of respondents did not have someone in their household involved in a vehicle/deer collision in the last three years and 7% had; while 34% had someone in their household involved in a near-miss collision during the same time period.
- 41% of respondents reported their landscape or garden plants had been damaged by deer in the last three years, while 52% reported no damage. In comparison, 63% of respondents in Wards 1 and 2 reported their landscape or garden plants had been damaged by deer in the last three years, while 32% reported no damage.
- 78% of respondents had not encountered a deer on their property that had become aggressive with pets, people or shown little fear of humans, while 17% of respondents did have such an encounter on their property. Of wards 1 and 2, 66% of respondents had not encountered a deer on their property that had become aggressive with pets, people or shown little fear of humans, while 30% of respondents did have such an encounter on their property.
- A combined 54% of respondents either strongly or somewhat supported continuing lethal methods (e.g., culling deer with firearms) to reduce the deer population in the city of Ann Arbor, while 45% of respondents either strongly or somewhat opposed continuing lethal methods. Of wards 1 and 2, a combined 61% of respondents either strongly or somewhat supported continuing lethal methods (e.g., culling deer with firearms) to reduce the deer population in the city of Ann Arbor, while 39% of respondents either strongly or somewhat opposed continuing lethal methods.
- Regardless of a respondent's thoughts on utilizing lethal methods, a combined 61% of respondents either strongly or somewhat supported implementing nonlethal methods (e.g., contraceptives, trapping and sterilization) to reduce the deer population (if MDNR approval could be obtained); and 32% of respondents either strongly or somewhat opposed implementing nonlethal methods. Of wards 1 and 2, 59% of respondents either strongly or somewhat supported implementing nonlethal methods (e.g., contraceptives, trapping and sterilization) to reduce the deer population (if MDNR approval could be obtained), and 34% of respondents either strongly or somewhat opposed implementing nonlethal methods.

(\*Not all responses add to 100% due to inapplicable or skipped questions.)

Comprehensive survey results, as well as ward and demographic breakdowns, are available at [www.a2gov.org/a2opencityhall](http://www.a2gov.org/a2opencityhall) by clicking on the closed topics tab, selecting the Deer Management Program Citizen Survey link, click on "go to topic" and select "feedback."

### Natural Area Vegetation Study

The City does not currently have quantitative data to assess impacts of deer on vegetation in natural areas. However, staff is exploring the costs and parameters to implement a long-term monitoring program. In the short-term, in an effort to establish baseline data on deer impacts in natural areas, the City contracted with Dr. Jacqueline Courteau, who is a local ecologist with extensive expertise and experience monitoring deer impacts in southeastern Michigan. Dr. Courteau was contracted to assess browse damage in wooded City parks beginning in October 2015, the results of which won't be available until November 2016. Also called bioassays, the method consists of planting sentinel (or "sacrificial") red oak tree seedlings at select locations in the field and assessing them for deer browse damage over time. This pilot study can serve to establish a protocol that can be repeated annually or biannually in the future to track deer browsing trends in conjunction with deer management practices.

### **LETHAL IMPLEMENTATION:**

Throughout the development and implementation of the program, staff heard from the community that safety was a priority for all lethal activities implemented. City staff, USDA APHIS and local law enforcement worked in close coordination with state and local officials throughout culling efforts to ensure public safety. The plan included layers of activities for safety, including recurring block closures of designated areas, signage, social media releases, and direct mailings to adjacent parcels. The ultimate layer of safety rested with USDA APHIS and their professional and expert protocol before deciding to shoot. Approximately 30% of the removals were from a stationary marked vehicle and 70% from stationary blinds.

### Challenges:

- Several key City staff involved with developing the plan changed during the course of the project which created continuity and implementation challenges.
- The MDNR permit wasn't issued until Dec. 23, 2015, so it was difficult for USDA APHIS and City staff to finalize plans, communicate to residents, and implement the plan as originally anticipated.
- The sporadic presence of individuals in/around the designated parks during times that parks were closed resulted in suspension of nightly activities.
- USDA APHIS staff intentionally staggered visits to reduce the potential of educating deer and interactions with opponents of location-specific activities.
- The reduction in the number of designated parks/nature areas (from 26 to 14) to conduct removals significantly reduced the opportunities for deer removals.
- USDA APHIS suggested the illegal feeding of deer by residents *may* have impacted the effectiveness of approved bait sites.
- Most opponents shared their disagreement with the policy in a respectful manner, but a few did not and some perpetuated unsubstantiated or inaccurate

facts causing unnecessary alarm among residents and requiring staff time to correct misinformation.

- The milder/drier weather limited the aerial deer survey to only one instead of the two that were planned. Aerial surveys can only effectively be done when there is a consistent snow cover.

Successes:

- No injuries from cull activities were reported
- 63 deer were removed
- 1,817 pounds of venison was donated to a local food bank. The donated venison equaled 1,514 meals served.
- One aerial deer count was completed

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND OVERVIEW:**

Number of injuries related to cull activities: **0**

Deer removal permit limit: **100**

Final number of deer removed: **63**

Number of deer processed: **63**

Pounds of venison donated to local food bank: **1,817**

Number of deer wounded but not recovered: **0**

Number of removed deer testing positive for Chronic Wasting disease: **0**

Number of calls to police believed by the caller to be related to cull activities: **5**  
(all unfounded or not in City of Ann Arbor jurisdiction)

Number of police reports generated related to cull activities: **0**

Number of incidents requiring police intervention to clear a closed park: **1**

Number of park closure signs posted: **125**

City staff and the AAPD used due diligence to review and investigate the few citizen reports of alleged poaching or hunting activities. There was nothing substantiated to support any of these reports.

**Location and Number of Deer Removed by USDA Wildlife Services in Ann Arbor, MI, 1/19/16 - 2/29/16.**

Township, Range, Section	<i>Males Removed</i>	<i>Females Removed</i>
T2S, R6E, sec. 21	3	11
T2S, R6E, sec. 17	-	9
T2S, R6E, sec. 35	5	5
T2S, R6E, sec. 20	4	2
T2S, R6E, sec. 15	2	11
T2S, R6E, sec. 16	-	7
T2S, R6E, sec. 26	1	3

### **NONLETHAL IMPLEMENTATION:**

The approved deer management program authorized pursuit of both lethal and nonlethal deer management methods. City Council implemented a deer feeding ban, and City staff provided public information about ways to manage deer garden damage and avoid deer collisions. These materials were made available online and via pamphlets at City Hall. In addition, Council resolution directed City staff to continue to explore a deer fertility-control program. The resolution specifically states,

“The city will work with local stakeholders, MDNR, willing institutions of higher education, and/or the Humane Society of the United States to design and, if practical and cost-effective, implement a doe sterilization and/or contraceptive program in areas where a deer cull is impermissible, unsafe, or ineffective, beginning in winter FY2017.”

Interim City Administrator Tom Crawford and other City staff had an initial meeting with several local nonlethal advocates/stakeholder groups. In February and March, City staff met with members of Ann Arbor Residents for Non-lethal Deer Management and Friends in Ann Arbor Wildlife in Nature at their request to listen to ideas about nonlethal methods and explore how these efforts could move forward with MDNR approval. It is recognized that currently there aren't any MDNR-approved sterilization or contraceptive methods and that any plan involving these methods will require approval by the MDNR, as the agency delegated the statutory authority to manage the deer population. Although specific nonlethal program details have not yet been identified, discussions are anticipated to continue.

## COSTS RELATED TO JAN-FEB 2016 CULL

	Est. Cost	Proj. Actual
Vegetation Impact Study with Oak Seedlings	\$ 12,570	\$ 12,570
USDA, APHIS Wildlife Services	35,000	30,000
Aerial Deer Survey	6,300	2,100
Materials and Supplies:		
Bait	500	549
Trail Camera & Accessories	100	111
Signs	30	57
City staff time charged to budget		42,000
Pickup food donation for local Food Bank	-	274
Other	35,500	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 90,000</b>	<b>\$ 87,661</b>

**Memo:**

In addition to the above costs which require appropriations, the communications staff and legal staff provided support via staff time, materials/supplies/minor professional services. Communications staff required approx. 80% of 1 FTE be allocated during Jan & Feb, plus \$3,500 of materials, supplies, etc. Staff believes the second year of implementation would be less.

In FY2015 Professional Facilitation Services were used for some community meetings and cost \$19,860.

### LITIGATION:

Opponents of the deer cull filed lawsuits against the City, State of Michigan, and United States Department of Agriculture in U.S. District Court seeking a preliminary injunction and restraining order to stop any cull activities. In addition, a second lawsuit was filed in Washtenaw County Circuit Court that was ultimately dismissed by the Court on agreement of the parties with no relief provided to the plaintiff. The City Attorney's office vigorously defended the City and its legal authority to conduct the cull activities as part of its deer management program, and successfully defended against all attempts to restrain cull activities. The federal court action is pending final order.

### CONCLUSION:

City staff believes the first year of the City of Ann Arbor's Deer Management Plan was successful for the following reasons:

- The MDNR permit allowed for up to 100 deer to be removed, and 63 deer were removed safely. Safety was a priority of the City and USDA APHIS personnel.

Maintaining and ensuring safety during all cull activities was more important than removing the maximum number of deer designated by the permit. USDA APHIS staff did not take shots that were even potentially unsafe, infringed on the 450-foot setback zone, or reduced the integrity of the safety precautions put in place.

- Throughout the cull implementation, City staff and City Council kept lines of communication open with the public. This allowed for program and communication adjustments to be made. A notable example is the reduction in the designated parks/nature areas from 26 to 14. Some additional adjustments are listed below:
  - Keeping the dog park and the border-to-border trail open
  - Keeping all parks open on the weekends
  - Translating closure signage into multiple languages
  - Implementing a deer management hotline and email notification system to better answer questions from residents
  - Meeting with stakeholder and homeowner groups throughout the process
- Contracting with USDA APHIS enabled cull activities to be performed by professional, highly skilled and dedicated personnel who are committed to safety, absent any financial incentive to compromise safety for higher removal numbers.
- Maintaining an active project management team of City staff to ensure that MDNR permit guidelines were followed and close coordination of activities between USDA APHIS and Ann Arbor Police Department personnel was achieved.
- Successfully defending the City's legal authority to conduct a deer management program.

#### **LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2017:**

- Continue to contract for lethal deer removal with a contractor that's highly-skilled, professional, focused on safety, and not paid by the number of deer removed.
- Continue to provide, and expand where possible, educational materials and online resources to citizens regarding nonlethal measures to minimize negative deer interactions, such as deer/vehicle collisions and damage to landscaping and gardens.
- Work with the MDNR and submit permit application in October to enable the City to bait before January 2, 2017.
- Explore ways to reduce the amount of time parks/nature areas are required to be closed for deer removal.

- Look for opportunities to expand the number of locations for deer removal (in part by partnering with other organizations/members of the community).
- Continue to keep the border-to-border trail, commuting routes, and dog parks open during removal activities.
- Explore ways to increase community/visitor awareness of park closures.
- Consider increased enforcement of park closure violators.
- Present lethal and nonlethal implementation plans to the public before December 2016 to allow program modifications to be considered based upon community feedback.
- The length of time parks/nature areas are required to be closed may be reduced if individuals are not in/around the designated closed areas during closed times.
- The level of City staff time and effort to implement the cull was substantially more than anticipated and impacted staff's ability to work on other assignments. Although City staff anticipates the second year to be less time intensive, this may not happen.
- Existing City Council resolution requires staff to explore implementing a nonlethal deer management effort in addition to the lethal operation, reflecting a portion of the community's interest as illustrated in prior survey results and information provided to Council.
- Concerns regarding poaching should be forwarded to and responded to by the MDNR.
- If there are a large number of individuals who raise a question or concern, City staff cannot respond to each individual, but may rely on aggregating similar questions/concerns and forwarding questions as necessary to other agencies, such as the MDNR or USDA APHIS.

**Addendums:**

1. Deer Management Plan City Council Resolution
2. USDA After Action Report



# City of Ann Arbor

## Council Action

Resolution/Public Hearing: R-15-277

301 E. Huron St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
<http://a2gov.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

File Number: 15-0990

Enactment Number: R-15-277

Resolution to Establish a Deer Management Program within the City of Ann Arbor

Whereas, In May 2014, City Council tasked the City Administrator with evaluating options for deer management in Ann Arbor;

Whereas, In August 2014, City Council directed the City Administrator to develop a community-supported deer management plan;

Whereas, Between October 2014 and April 2015, City staff conducted a review, evaluation and community engagement process including interviews with stakeholders, an online citizen survey (537 respondents), three public meetings, and two deer count flyovers which collectively provided the basis for the staff report delivered to City Council May 7, 2015 "**Recommendations for Deer Management in Ann Arbor**";

Whereas, The May 7, 2015 report found, in part, that:

- the large majority of deer - about 80% in the two aerial counts - are found in or near the boundaries of Wards 1 and 2
- city residents report increased deer in parks, along streets, and in residential neighborhoods; 65% of the Ward 1 and 2 survey respondents reported an increase in deer in their neighborhoods the last three years
- damage from deer browsing has been documented in residential neighborhoods in all sections of the City; 73% of the Ward 1 and 2 survey respondents reported damage to their plants and/or landscaping
- botanical damage from deer browsing has been documented in public parks, including damage to deciduous and evergreen native tree seedlings
- residents express concern about automobile accidents involving deer (majority in Wards 1 & 2) as well as infectious diseases and tick-borne illness within the deer herd;

Whereas, In May 2015, the City Administrator presented City Council with a deer management plan that recommends decreasing the deer population to reduce deer-human negative interaction using several methods, including the following:

- Implement a series of annual culls on City property in Wards 1 and 2 beginning in 2016
- Implement a city wide deer feeding ban as soon as possible
- Conduct annual flyovers to provide an indication of the number of deer in and close to the City

- Conduct an annual survey via A2 Open City Hall
- Provide residents deer management material and resources
- Develop a process to measure environmental impact of the deer on the City's natural areas;

Whereas, The FY16 establishes a budget for deer management of \$90,000 based on the initial cost estimates in the May 7, 2015 report; and

Whereas, City Council held a working session in July 2015 to learn more about contraception, sterilization, and culling of deer in municipalities;

RESOLVED, That the City conduct an annual survey via A2 Open City Hall to gather resident perceptions regarding deer-human interactions within the City;

RESOLVED, That the City develop deer management information and resources and provide this information to the public by February 2016 and in each subsequent February;

RESOLVED, That the City conduct annual flyovers in each of the next four years to gauge deer numbers in the City;

RESOLVED, That the City report on City's deer management efforts, including results from A2 Open City Hall survey, flyovers, deer/vehicle crash data, in May of each year;

**[Approach A - Cull Only]**

RESOLVED, That the City plan and implement a deer cull within Ann Arbor in each of the next four years, beginning in Winter 2016 in Wards 1 and 2;

RESOLVED, That the 2016 cull be approximately 100 deer and that the number of deer culled in the future be adjusted based upon survey and flyover results;

RESOLVED, That Staff shall be authorized to implement a temporary moratorium of City ordinances and regulations to allow the discharge of firearms by the deer cull contractor selected by the City during time period necessary for the cull; and

RESOLVED, That the City coordinate the Ann Arbor cull with the University of Michigan, if the University chooses to participate in the deer management program.

**[Approach C - Cull + Contraceptive Exploration]**

RESOLVED, That in addition to the measures identified in Approach A above, that the City work with local stakeholders, MDNR, willing institutions of higher education, and/or the Humane Society of the United States to design and, if practical and cost-effective, implement a doe sterilization and/or contraceptive program in areas where a deer cull is impermissible, unsafe, or ineffective, beginning in winter FY2017.

Sponsors: Council Members Briere, Lumm, and Mayor Taylor

**As Amended by Ann Arbor City Council on August 17, 2015**

At a meeting of the City Council on 8/17/2015, a motion was made by Jane Lumm, seconded by Sabra Briere, that this Resolution/Public Hearing R-15-277 be Approved as Amended. The motion passed.

- Yeas:** 8 Councilmember Kunselman, Councilmember Anglin, Councilmember Briere, Councilmember Lumm, Councilmember Warpehoski, Councilmember Eaton, Councilmember Krapohl, and Councilmember Westphal
- Nays:** 1 Mayor Taylor
- Absent:** 2 Councilmember Kailasapathy, and Councilmember Grand

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# City of Ann Arbor Deer Management 2016 Project Report

Prepared by:  
USDA APHIS-Wildlife Services

USDA APHIS  
Wildlife Services



## **Introduction**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services (WS) program was contacted by the City of Ann Arbor in September of 2015 seeking information on deer removal operations. Ann Arbor has a growing deer population, resulting in increasing concerns about damage to private property, disease risks, and vehicle-deer collisions. On November 19, 2015 a site visit was conducted to further discuss deer management and visit city-owned properties where deer removal was being considered. The City of Ann Arbor signed a Cooperative Service Agreement with WS in November of 2015 to formalize WS involvement with the deer management project. The City of Ann Arbor completed and submitted a Damage and Nuisance Animal Control Permit application to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The permit was granted on December 23, 2015 to remove a maximum of 100 deer effective January 2, 2016 through March 1, 2016.

## **Summary of Operations**

The City of Ann Arbor, with assistance from WS, identified areas with evidence of deer activity and locations where deer could be safely removed. Initial discussions identified 26 city-owned lands designated for deer removal during an anticipated 3-month permitted period. After receiving the MDNR permit and through further discussions about management sites, the number was reduced to 14 city-owned properties for a period of two months. The City of Ann Arbor employees began baiting at specific locations within these city-owned parks as soon as the permit became active.

Recommendations for baiting were developed between the City of Ann Arbor and WS to facilitate effective use of field visits. This strategy was continuously evaluated and adjusted to account for deer activity and movement. A protocol between law enforcement and WS was developed including the notification of Ann Arbor Police, MDNR Report-All-Poaching hotline, and central dispatch to ensure a consistent and safe transfer of information during removal operations.

After baiting commenced, time was needed to habituate deer to bait locations, determining which locations would be most effective. WS and City staff also conducted a trial run to review protocols and ensure public safety. WS staff conducted necessary preparatory activities on receipt of permit authorization to proceed with the cull and conducted management visits between January 19, 2016, and February 29, 2016. A total of 63 deer were removed and delivered to the pre-approved meat processor by WS during this timeframe (Table 1). Approximately 30% of removals were taken from a stationary marked vehicle and 70% were removed from stationary blinds. All deer were tested by the MDNR for

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD); results were negative for all deer removed (Appendix 1).

**Table 1. Location and Number of Deer Removed by USDA Wildlife Services in Ann Arbor, MI, 1/19/16-2/29/16.**

Township,Range, Section	<i>Males Removed</i>	<i>Females Removed</i>
T2S, R6E, sec. 21	3	11
T2S, R6E, sec 17	-	9
T2S, R6E, sec. 35	5	5
T2S, R6E, sec. 20	4	2
T2S, R6E, sec .15	2	11
T2S, R6E, sec .16	-	7
T2S, R6E, sec. 26	1	3

### **Operational Challenges**

While WS was able to safely remove 63 deer, there were several factors outside of our control that hindered operations. First, the presence of visitors to the parks, after they were closed, limited the number of deer that could be removed. During every management visit, individuals were observed in closed parks at the same time deer were being observed and the operation had to be suspended. During several visits, individuals opposed to the City's deer management plan were observed protesting; thus causing disruption to the operation. Second, the reduction of one month for management operations by MDNR, hindered flexibility and opportunities to remove deer. WS field staff intentionally staggered visits to reduce the potential of educating deer and protestors to the management activities. Third, the reduction of property locations available to WS to conduct removals played a significant role in reducing the effectiveness of the management. Fourth, the illegal feeding of deer by residents may have impacted the effectiveness of approved baiting sites.

### **Recommendations/Future efforts**

Overall, the project was a success in light of the various constraints and challenges. The following recommendations would help maximize the effectiveness of the deer management program and minimize park closure time.

- More effective enforcement of the closure order for parks and feeding would facilitate future operations. Reducing disruption from protestors and park visitors would increase effectiveness.

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This would decrease the overall time parks are closed and reduce the number of visits.

- The addition of property available to conduct operations would substantially increase the number of deer removed. One consideration that other cities have used is the addition of privately-owned lands where deer are concentrated and complaints are high.
- Baiting sites in the future should be established three weeks prior to the start of removal operations.
- The use of an approved meat processor and off-site field dressing should continue for future operations.
- Like most strategies in wildlife management, continued management with established regularity will promote success.
- Deer removal, combined with ongoing education and other non-lethal activities to minimize deer damage, will provide the best results for the citizens of Ann Arbor coexisting with deer.

WS would like to thank the City of Ann Arbor staff for their assistance through various phases of the project. Their help was invaluable, and greatly reduced the amount of time WS needed to be on site outside of the actual management activities. The success of this initial cull effort was due to the cooperation of all involved parties.

Appendix 1

## CWD Test Results for Deer Removed by USDA Wildlife Services in Ann Arbor, MI 2016

Count	Permit Tag #	Disease Tag #	CWD Result	Count	Permit Tag #	Disease Tag #	CWD Result
1	163915	403432	NEGATIVE	34	163933	402110	NEGATIVE
2	163914	403427	NEGATIVE	35	163934	402111	NEGATIVE
3	163913	403426	NEGATIVE	36	163935	402112	NEGATIVE
4	163912	403430	NEGATIVE	37	163936	402115	NEGATIVE
5	163911	403451	NEGATIVE	38	163937	402114	NEGATIVE
6	163910	403447	NEGATIVE	39	163938	402116	NEGATIVE
7	163909	403450	NEGATIVE	40	163939	402121	NEGATIVE
8	163908	403452	NEGATIVE	41	163940	402117	NEGATIVE
9	163907	403431	NEGATIVE	42	163941	402118	NEGATIVE
10	163906	403425	NEGATIVE	43	163942	402123	NEGATIVE
11	163905	403424	NEGATIVE	44	163943	402119	NEGATIVE
12	163904	403423	NEGATIVE	45	163944	402124	NEGATIVE
13	163903	403422	NEGATIVE	46	163945	402120	NEGATIVE
14	163902	403421	NEGATIVE	47	163946	402122	NEGATIVE
15	163901	403420	NEGATIVE	48	163950	402130	NEGATIVE
16	163900	403419	NEGATIVE	49	163952	402131	NEGATIVE
17	163916	403460	NEGATIVE	50	163953	402128	NEGATIVE
18	163917	403461	NEGATIVE	51	163955	402129	NEGATIVE
19	163918	403462	NEGATIVE	52	163947	403401	NEGATIVE
20	163919	403463	NEGATIVE	53	163948	402113	NEGATIVE
21	163920	403464	NEGATIVE	54	163949	402126	NEGATIVE
22	163921	403465	NEGATIVE	55	163951	402127	NEGATIVE
23	163922	403466	NEGATIVE	56	163954	403403	NEGATIVE
24	163923	403467	NEGATIVE	57	163956	402125	NEGATIVE
25	163924	403468	NEGATIVE	58	163957	403402	NEGATIVE
26	163925	403469	NEGATIVE	59	163958	403400	NEGATIVE
27	163926	403470	NEGATIVE	60	163959	403404	NEGATIVE
28	163927	403471	NEGATIVE	61	163960	403405	NEGATIVE
29	163928	403472	NEGATIVE	62	163964	403409	NEGATIVE
30	163929	403473	NEGATIVE	63	163965	403410	NEGATIVE
31	163930	402107	NEGATIVE				
32	163931	402108	NEGATIVE				
33	163932	402109	NEGATIVE				