



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Community Services Area

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Date: February 1, 2016

To: Tom Crawford, Interim City Administrator

From: Larry Collins, Interim Community Services Area Administrator

RE: City of Ann Arbor Deer Management Plan Update

On August 17, 2015, City Council approved the establishment of a deer management program for the next four years in the City of Ann Arbor, including culls on City of Ann Arbor parks or natural areas beginning in the winter of 2016. As stated in the resolution: The goal of Ann Arbor's deer management program is to decrease the deer population in Ann Arbor in order to reduce deer-human negative interactions and support biological diversity in natural areas.

Ensuring public safety remains a top priority as staff implements this policy. The deer management plan being implemented has many layers of decisions in it that are part of ensuring public safety.

Implementation Plan

Because we are half-way through the program implementation, I wanted to provide you with an update. To date, USDA-APHIS has removed 26 deer from designated parks and nature areas. It's important to note, that as a result of cull location assessments, city staff determined that deer cull activities would be carried out in 14 of the 24 original designated parks and nature areas. In addition, city and USDA staff have fully committed to adhering to all MDNR permit guidelines, which has resulted in a compressed timeframe. As a result, there may be impacts to achieving the original target of removing up to 100 deer. At this time, city staff believes it is necessary for designated parks and nature areas to remain closed the duration of the MDNR permit, which ends on March 1.

Below are some statistics summarizing the status of the implementation to-date:

Number of safety incidences related to cull activities	0
Number of deer removed	26
Number of deer processed	26
Number of calls to police believed by the caller to be related to cull activities: (all unfounded or not in A2 jurisdiction)	5
Number of formal police reports generated related to cull activities	0
Number of incidents requiring police intervention to clear a closed park	0
Number of park closure signs posted	125

City staff, USDA and local law enforcement will continue to work in close coordination with state and local officials to ensure public safety. It should be noted that park closure signage is only one of several layers of protocol that ensure public safety. City staff and the AAPD will also continue its due diligence to review and investigate citizen reports of illegal cull or hunting activities as appropriate.

Transparency

Along with safety, transparency has long been a goal of this program. Hundreds of hours have been spent developing a comprehensive public engagement program, including project website, FAQs, Deer Management hotline and email and providing frequent media and citizen updates as program changes occurred. With the exception of specific operational details, the city, MDNR and USDA personnel are forthcoming with information and respond daily to questions. Going forward the City will update its deer management website each Monday (www.a2gov.org/deermanagement) to reflect the weekly MDNR deer removal figures until program completion. However, as a result of litigation, information flow of other items may not be as timely as some would like due to necessary legal review.

To date, there have been a few situations followed up by city staff and Police. One such incident was a deer carcass recently found on the Leslie Park golf course. No connection to cull activity was found. The city's internal examination revealed that USDA personnel were not near this site prior to the discovery of the carcass, which appears to have been mauled by coyotes. All deer culled the prior evening were recovered. In another frequently cited instance, it was alleged that USDA marksmen were possibly drinking in a park while culling deer. This is absolutely unfounded: The location cited, according to AAPD, is a well known local gathering spot. The USDA personnel were not in this area. We will continue to investigate concerns when appropriate and answer questions with factual information in FAQs.

Responsiveness to Citizen Feedback

The implementation plan was modified a few times to reflect council direction and citizen feedback, including keeping designated parks open all weekend, removing 12 parks from the closure list, modifying signage to include translations, and adding a deer management hotline and email. Staff continues to receive emails from residents who do and do not support the deer management plan. Where appropriate, staff will continue to respond to concerns, although not all residents have been satisfied with information provided.

In conclusion, I'm pleased with the operational progress we have made in the first year of the plan's implementation. While I recognize there are passionate views on both sides of this topic, I believe city staff is diligently working to implement Council policy while keeping safety a top priority. We will continue to gather feedback and collect information necessary for future program evaluation. Staff will continue to implement the program within the next four weeks as defined.

A complete report to Council will be provided after cull activities are complete. A Deer Management Assessment Report will be provided in May, which will include results from an A2 Open City Hall survey that will be conducted in April.