URBAN DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

WHEREAS, natural habitat for deer in DeForest and in surrounding areas is being continuously reduced; and

WHEREAS, the Village of DeForest is an urban environment with substantial wildlife habitat and this landscape creates the potential for conflict between residents and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, high deer populations may cause car/deer accidents, destruction of landscaping and yard plantings, which have a negative impact on the ecosystem of the Village and an increased likelihood in deer malnutrition and diseases, like chronic wasting disease (CWD); and

WHEREAS, goal of the Village board is to create an acceptable environmental balance that will facilitate the co-existence of citizens and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the Village Board has solicited and received recommendations from a study group and public informational meetings established to assess current conditions regarding an Urban Deer Management Plan,
WHEREAS, the Village Board finds the terms of the Urban Deer Management Plan to be fair and reasonable and in the public interest;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Village of DeForest Board of Trustees does hereby adopt the proposed Urban Deer Management Plan and Appendixes.

HISTORY AND PROBLEM

1. Issues and Concerns: The issues listed below were brought to the Village of DeForest attention starting again early in 2023 by its citizens. The geographic locations of these concerns are subdivisions and high traffic roads throughout the village. Based on a deer population inventory completed by Village of DeForest Public Services Department. The Village will hold public informational meetings, establish a dedicated Urban Deer Hotline, an urban deer email account, and a poll for collecting input from citizens regarding concerns and possible directions using social media interactions.

a. Human Health and Safety – The potential number of car/deer incidents within the village and those of close proximity to the village, but under other jurisdictions, is concerning. The potential for deer interactions with humans or pets is deemed high in subdivisions that exist in the Yahara River and Token Creek area. The growing deer herd increases the human risk of deer-tick borne diseases such as, but not limited to, Lyme disease, and ehrlichiosis, as well as other diseases affecting the health of the deer like CWD. This also introduces the possibility of predators to the landscape which can cause concerns for humans and pets.

b. Private Property Damage – In addition to possible damage incurred with car/deer accidents, residents have complained of destruction of landscaping and gardens.

c. Habitat Impacts – Over-grazing of native flora by deer allows non-native plants to gain a foothold in forested areas. Once native plants have been forced out by competition with the non-native species, native fauna (birds, insects, small mammals, etc) are also forced from these habitats. The process to re-establish native species can take many years if it can be done.

d. Herd Health – Relative herd health is the condition of a white-tailed deer population relative to the ability of the habitat to support it. Herd health is an important component in any deer management scenario. At any point in time there is a finite supply of nutritional resources available to support deer. If the nutritional needs of the population exceed the habitat's ability to provide for those needs (i.e., a state of overpopulation), then both herd health and habitat quality or land health are compromised.

2. Control Methods or Abatements: There are two options of abatement, lethal and non-lethal, and both provide several options for dealing with urban deer populations. In most situations, non-lethal abatement should be tried before lethal. Urban deer control is a long-term commitment or management. Some forms of abatement may be not viable under current DNR regulations or too costly at this time for the village to justify their use. Some lethal or non-lethal methods would require a special DNR permit. Staff will provide additional public education, access, detailed releases, and any future management options to the public.

a. Non-Lethal

i. Habitat Modification

(1.) Gardens and/or plantings can be screened or fenced (Note the use of electric fencings is prohibited in the Village of DeForest)

(2.) Vegetation that is less desirable for browsing by deer should be planted in place of other landscaping alternatives.

(3.) Deer Feeding must be prohibited.

ii. Scare Devices

(1.) Motion Activated Sensors attached to sprinklers or sound devices

(2.) Dogs

iii. Repellents – are designed to repel deer via their sense of smell or taste when applied to vegetation. Repellants can be either commercial or non-commercial general home products.

iv. Birth Control – Is not legal according to current DNR regulations.

v. Trapping & Relocating – Is not legal according to DNR regulations.

Studies show that some of these non-lethal considerations may be viable only for short periods of time. Deer become habituated to modifications or devices and can adjust their daily activities.

b. Lethal

i. Sharp Shooting – The use of paid shooter contractors is an effective, safe, and efficient method of deer removal. Deer are coerced into areas that are laid out in safe shooting zones and shot from elevated platforms. At the time of this plan, the estimated cost is $100 and up per animal removed. Usually, the deer carcasses are donated to area food pantries.

ii. Trapping & Removal – Commercial operators are hired to trap and bait target deer and dispatch the captured animals with bolt guns and remove the carcasses.

b. Lethal (Cont.)

iii. Hunting – Is the most cost-effective removal abatement option. The Village may lose some control with this option. The Village cannot assure that controlled hunts be done safely on both private and public lands due to the involvement (private parties) and possible conflict with the general public. This option is not viable or permitted in proximity to major interstate and state highway corridors and residential developments or walking trails. We have ordinances in the village that require a minimum of 100 yards from any residential building and trails that run through most of our parks which would severely limit safe and compliant hunting in Village parks.

Resolve that the Board and/or its designee be authorized to implement the Urban Deer Management Plan including, but not limited to, the following elements:

1. The Village may continue to assemble resources that provide residents with information on deer and offer guidelines for limiting localized deer damage using repellents, screening, alternative plantings, and/or other techniques. Educational materials may be available at Village Hall, the Public Library, and on the Village Web Site and social media accounts:

https://www.engagedeforest.com/

2. The Village may continue to work with the WiDNR to further the control of the deer population for the welfare of DeForest residents, and the health of the deer herd and our natural areas.

3. In accordance with the guidelines of this report, the appropriate village officials may implement a deer population reduction program using sharp shooters whether hired or from Police Department and staff. Once authorized, these sharp shooters will be allowed to remove deer from public holdings during designated timeframes. The removal activity dates and times will be noticed. Trails and other areas will be closed.

4. The Village may also encourage the Village's large private landholders, and adjoining municipalities and townships to support the DeForest efforts to control the deer population. The Study group recognizes that deer herds migrate throughout the region and population control success will be limited without support from surrounding jurisdictions and private lands.

5. The Village may continue to compile data for deer management, including, but not limited to, information about vehicle-deer accidents, citizen comments, volunteer surveys, and may include future aerial deer counts to keep the deer population under control. Periodic natural community inventories may be done to assess the impacts on the ecosystem.

6. The appropriate Village officials shall periodically evaluate the effectiveness of this Urban Deer Management Plan and file a written annual report with the findings of the evaluation with the Public Services committee for forwarding to the Village Board for review.