

MEMORANDUM

Joint City of Bloomington-Monroe County Deer Task Force
Thursday, 31 March 2011, 5:30 PM
McCloskey Room (#135)
City Hall, 401 N. Morton St.

Present:

Task Force Members: Keith Clay, Stefano Fiorini, Bob Foyut, Judy Granbois, Josh Griffin, Thomas Moore, Laurie Ringquist, Dave Rollo (Acting Chair) and Susannah Smith

Staff: Stacy Jane Rhoads (City Council Office) and Dan Sherman (City Council Office).

I. Welcome & Introductions

Rollo welcomed all to the sixth meeting of the Joint City of Bloomington-Monroe County Deer Task Force. Everyone present introduced themselves.

II. Minutes for Approval

- **7th December 2011 & 17th February 2011:**
 - The group approved these minutes, incorporating changes offered by Griffin.

III. News

- Communication with Fairfax County, Virginia
 - Griffin reported on communication he has had with Doug Guggenstaff, an employee of the Fairfax County Virginia Police Department Wildlife Services Department. This department has been working on urban deer management issues in the Washington D.C. area for some time. The County has an area of 400 square miles and has implemented numerous deer management tactics, including browse line studies, census counts, quarter-line transects of the deer population, pellet counts, shotgun and archery hunts in 11 parks and sharpshooting.
 - The last census count revealed they have approximately 60,000 deer in the County, which equates to 150 deer per square mile. Within the 11 parks in the County, the deer population is roughly 400 deer per square mile, which is a deer every 1.6 acres. This is far more deer than anywhere in Indiana.
 - The County initiated shotgun hunts but these proved to be ineffective. Hundreds of hunters signed up for the initial hunt but they only harvested 6 deer. Guggenstaff said this was a learning experience for how to organize and set up hunts. The County now has special archery hunts in the 11 parks, which harvested 856 deer last year from 11 park hunting

days. These hunts occurred in areas with high human densities, such as beaches, parks and suburban areas.

- The County also has a team that sharpshoots deer on three nights during the year. They bait an area for 7-10 days before conducting the shoot. This costs the County \$16,000, which comes out of their \$42,000 budget for the year. The rest of the money in the annual budget goes towards paying consultant fees, conducting annual population studies, paying administrative costs and setting up hunts.
- Griffin stated that Fairfax County provides a good example of the scale that deer management can reach. Bloomington and Monroe County do not have this many deer, but by doing nothing the situation could head in that direction. The Fairfax County Deer Task Force convened in 1998 and still exists today. They harvest between 800-900 deer each year and still have many deer per square mile.
- Rollo asked whether they initially used relatively ineffective management options. Griffin confirmed that the initial shotgun hunt was ineffective, as it only harvested 6 deer. The first hunts were very difficult to set up and organize (especially in the parks). They met a lot of resistance with archery hunting but have had no accidents or incidents to date.
- Rollo also asked whether they used any other management techniques, such as capture and release or contraception. Griffin responded that they studied these options but did not employ them.
- Moore asked whether the sharpshooting was successful. Griffin responded that administrative costs, overhead, and the logistics of setting up the hunt all limit the effectiveness of sharpshooting, while the actual shoot, once set up, is quite effective and easy.
- Clay asked Griffin to repeat how many deer are harvested per year, stating that the reproduction rate of deer would far surpass the rate of harvest. Griffin clarified by noting that the 856 deer were harvested during special hunts in the parks and did not include regular hunting harvests or harvests during sharpshooting.
- Granbois asked whether the County is making any progress in managing the deer population. Griffin responded by noting that Guggenstaff described the archery hunts as “wildly successful” while also acknowledging that the County still has an ongoing problem. They do not foresee it going away anytime soon.

- Smith inquired whether the County encouraged hunters to harvest does. Griffin assumed they were encouraging antlerless harvests. Smith then asked what the County did with the deer harvested during the sharpshooting. Griffin said he did not know, and that Guggenstaff provided so much information he could not write it all down. Griffin said he may be in contact with Guggenstaff again and could get more information.
- Clay noted that Angie Shelton, who works at IU, is doing a pellet count at several locations in Monroe County, including Griffy. Rollo mentioned that she should come up with a number. Clay agreed, but pointed out that the data will be applicable to natural areas, not suburban areas. Griffin said that the data will at least provide some baseline.
- Foyut asked what kind of environmental degradation had occurred in Fairfax County. Griffin responded that all 11 parks had a 5-foot browse line. Foyut also asked about the health of the deer herd in the context of such a high population. Griffin stated they had not discussed that, but he imagines the deer were relatively healthy.
- Rhoads asked whether Fairfax County conducts pellet counts, browse line studies and census counts every year. Griffen responded that they do not use each tool every year, but have employed different measurement tools over time. Guggenstaff is now contacting people all over the country to compare how different communities manage deer. Once he compiles this information, Griffin may be able to get his results to share with the group.
- Fiorini inquired whether Fairfax County has instituted a feeding ban. Griffin responded that they may have tried, but feeding bans are difficult to enforce.
- Clay pointed out that Fairfax County has a much higher human population than Monroe County, which means they must be more suburbanized. This means they have less space for hunting. Griffin agreed that this is the case, and added that Monroe County has one of the highest proportions of public forested land among counties in Indiana. Rollo confirmed that the population of Fairfax County is over 1 million people and that they have between 4,000-5,000 deer/auto collisions per year.
- Fiorini asked why hunting has not been more effective. Griffin answered by saying that hunters had limited access to hunting space which limited their effectiveness.
- Rhoads clarified that Guggenstaff had contacted Griffin because Fairfax County has had some success, but they are looking for more options.

- Reintroduction of elk in Kentucky
 - Clay informed the group of a news story he saw involving the reintroduction of and subsequent problems with elk in Kentucky. Griffin mentioned that the IDNR has been petitioned at various times to reintroduce elk in Indiana, but has decided against it due to the lack of land mass to sustain them.

- Multiple management options in Missouri
 - Granbois referenced a story in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* about Town and Country, Missouri as an example of a community using multiple management options.
 - In this case, the community allows residents to write checks of \$700 for either a deer sterilization fund or a sharpshooting fund. Griffin asked if residents have to write a check. Granbois responded that they do not have to, but they have the option to support whichever option they believe is right and back up their beliefs with money.
 - Rhoads noted similarities between this case and the approach taken at Cornell in Ithaca, NY. Cornell uses an integrated management approach by using multiple tactics – sterilization in the urban core and hunting on the rural perimeter. Griffin expanded on this by saying that they have a control zone in which no management occurs, sterilization on the grounds of Cornell, and hunting on the outlying areas of the community.
 - Granbois said Town and Country has 60 deer per square mile and last year sharpshooters killed 112 deer and sterilized another 100. The City paid \$150,000 for these efforts. Rhoads mentioned that Town and Country has had a deer task force since the 1980s. Griffin and Granbois noted that the management efforts seem to be exclusively paid for by contributions from the public.

IV. Updates on Contraceptives

- Rhoads and Griffin provided information on the contraceptive Gonacon.
- Rhoads clarified that during the group’s initial review of management options, the contraceptives PZP and GNRH were listed as unsafe for human consumption. Recently, the EPA has said that Gonacon is safe for human consumption. The bioaccumulative effects of Gonacon are unknown.

- Griffin expanded by saying that the USDA Wildlife Services, the EPA and the IDNR may be willing to try and utilize Gonacon if they had somewhere to try it and someone who wanted to fund the effort. Despite this, the position of all these agencies is that Gonacon alone cannot control a deer population. It may be used in conjunction with other management strategies to control population levels once reduced.
- Griffin summarized Gonacon by saying it is ineffective, expensive, does nothing to help the current population problem, may or may not bioaccumulate, and must be hand-injected, which can cause myopathy, or undue stress, in deer.
- Rollo asked Griffin to repeat the position of the IDNR. Griffin answered by saying that while the IDNR may not endorse Gonacon, they would consider using it if someone wanted to pay for a research study. They would not endorse it for population control.
- Rollo asked if Gonacon has to be administered annually. Granbois responded that there are booster shots which have to be administered every five years.
- Fiorini inquired whether the IDNR predicts that the deer population will level out in Indiana. Griffin said that the IDNR wants to stabilize or slightly decrease the population, depending on the geographic area in question
- Rollo pointed out that using Gonacon essentially sterilizes the deer. It lasts for 5 years and the deer don't live much longer than that. Griffin agreed, noting most deer do not live past 6 years in the wild, but he went on to explain the difficulty of tracking and marking the deer to know which ones have already been given shots. Otherwise, Gonacon is completely ineffective.
- Griffin confirmed that the shots given every five years apply to deer in a closed environment and that for free-ranging deer populations, shots must be given approximately every two years.
- Rhoads restated that Gonacon appears to have research value, but not practical value.
- Moore wanted to clarify the language of "endorsed," noting the IDNR does not say a person cannot use Gonacon when they say "not endorsed."
- Clay asked if the frequency of twins was related to the health of the deer or food quality. Griffin said it is related to the genetics and maturation of the deer, as the likelihood of twins increases with each new set of offspring.

V. Other

- Rhoads pointed out that an article from the Sassafrass Audubon Society mentions the work of the Task Force.
- Rhoads gave the group an update on edits being made to the frequently-asked-questions, noting that the document is continually evolving and the group can make revisions as they go along.
- Rhoads is working to get a map from the GIS department to map auto accidents and to map accidents against current “deer warning” and “deer crossing” signs.

VI. Management Options

- Rhoads updated the group on revisions to the list of management options to be posted on the website. Changes include a number of stylistic revisions as well as minor language revisions.
- Clay and Griffin discussed the option of reintroducing predators, noting historical examples and concluding that this option is not viable for the foreseeable future.
- Griffin also noted that IDNR’s position on sterilization is similar to the IDNR’s position on contraceptives: they do not endorse it but may be willing to try it in a research capacity.

VII. Communication:

- Guest Editorial
 - The group discussed utilizing a guest editorial to communicate with the public. Such a media piece would allow the group to proactively address public concerns and dispel any misconceptions of the group and their work.
 - Rollo listed a few of the things the group may want to include in such an editorial, such as information about the group, the state of their research, community outreach information, management options, and eventually issuing the Task Force’s report.
 - Granbois has volunteered to be in charge of communications. She will draft an editorial and submit it to the group for review.

- Seasonal Tips

- The group discussed the possibility of including seasonal tips in the paper to inform the public of relevant, timely information regarding interactions with deer. Granbois will talk to Bob Zaltzberg about including these tips in the paper.
- They also discussed listing information and a phone number people can call to inquire about possible abandoned fawns. Foyut said Wild Care has something similar to this already set up and the group may want to coordinate with them before writing the guest editorial.
- In response to a question about stores selling salt blocks, Griffin gave information about the use of salt blocks and the rules associated with them. You can not use them as bait, and must remove the blocks from an area 10 days before hunting in that area.
- Rollo mentioned the possibility of including information on the radio, or appearing on radio shows. Rhoads said Councilmember Tim Mayer is often asked about deer when he appears on radio shows and may be willing to share information. The group will communicate via email to see if they want to pursue this further.

- Community Outreach Meetings

- The group discussed plans to hold outreach meetings to provide the public with information as well as solicit feedback from the public.
- Rollo pointed out that not every Council District has experienced problems with deer. He stated that District III and District IV would most likely need to hold meetings. Rollo and Rhoads stated these meetings would be open to anyone but that the goal of the meetings would be to include people from the respective districts so that the group may tease out geographic information and feedback.
- Clay suggested holding a City-wide public meeting so that no one is excluded.
- Fiorini suggested having meetings geared towards specific interests rather than basing meetings on locations.
- Rollo noted the difficulties of holding numerous public outreach meetings. He suggested holding a few meetings at first to see how the

public responds. Rollo said he would begin to schedule the meetings and search for venues.

- Fiorini asked if they could possibly limit the number of attendees. Rhoads responded by noting that they had considered doing this in a number of ways, but they also want to be sure to attract enough feedback from the community.
- Fiorini also pointed out that by organizing smaller meetings, the group can better engage the neighborhoods in a discussion and a free exchange of ideas. He suggested that smaller meetings would attract stakeholders and interested people. He said that the group could pass out a survey at the end of these smaller meetings, which would allow for direct feedback. Rhoads noted that this strategy may backfire, if the group received feedback and then issues recommendations that go against the public opinion.
- Rollo will find a meeting venue, contact neighborhood leaders and set a meeting for May. By the April Task Force meeting, the group should have a draft powerpoint, which will eventually be sent to neighborhood email lists and provide a link to the website so that the public will be informed.

VIII. Developing a Timeline for the Task Force

- Rollo noted that the group has been meeting for 7 months and has had six meetings.
- The group may or may not want to pursue a deer count.
- Rhoads said that the group may want to sketch out a timeline for the coming months. Rollo agreed, saying that they could set up an online survey to see what task force members consider a reasonable timeline for the next few meetings.
- Rhoads said that to expedite the process, the Task Force may want to set up working groups to fully study different topics and then report back to the whole group.
- Fiorini asked about potential deadlines for implementing certain management options, such as hunting. Griffin said that implementing an urban deer zone could take between 9 and 12 months to set up, after the group decided on that management option, and would involve coming up with certain guidelines and rules relating to hunting in urban deer zones.
- Rollo said he is sensitive to the public and media's questions on how long the group will take to come up with recommendations. He said that the group might aim for wrapping up sometime in the fall. Others in the group agreed that is a good goal.

- Rollo discussed how the group might go about actually deciding on management options, including how Task Force members can express their support or objections to certain methods.
- Granbois brought up the possibility of minority reports, which Rollo said are a possibility. He pointed out that these would provide context for members' support or lack of support. Griffin pointed out that minority reports can be used by the media to create controversy. Granbois said that she does not necessarily support minority reports but despite this, the group may want to include any discussion of management options, just to be more informative.

IX. Working Groups

- The group discussed organizing various working groups to divide up the work of the task force. To start, the group agreed to form working groups for Outreach and Griffy.
- Clay, Smith and Granbois will serve on the Griffy working group.
- Foyut, Rollo, Fiorini, Moore and Rinqvist will be on the Community Outreach working group. Moore may serve in this working group as well.
- Griffin will provide support to both working groups as needed.

X. Public Comment

- Dave Parkhurst expressed his concern about the lack of attention being paid to the west side of town. Rollo commented that this is not the case, and in fact the task force will be in contact with Councilmember Chris Sturbaum about deer in his district.
- Parkhurst also asked whether people in Fairfax County, VA were able to grow gardens and Griffin noted they most likely have fences or exclosures.

XI. Next Meeting

Tuesday, 26 April 2011, 5:30pm, McCloskey Room

XII. Adjourn

The Committee adjourned at 7:32pm