

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

Present: **Task Force Members:** Stefano Fiorini, Bob Foyut, Josh Griffin, Sarah Hayes, Thomas Moore, Laurie Ringquist, Dave Rollo and Susannah Smith **Staff:** Stacy Jane Rhoads (City Council Office)
Public: Dr. Angie Shelton of the IU Research and Teaching Preserve, Dave Parkhurst representing gardeners and Mike Litwin from the City's Environmental Commission

I. Welcome: Rollo welcomed all to the eleventh meeting of the Task Force.

II. Approval of Minutes: The Task Force approved the following minutes

- June 30, 2011
- July 25, 2011

III. Public Comment: None

IV. Report from Task Force Members and Working Groups: None

V. Revised Draft Article on the Griffy Lake Area

- Shelton worked with Clay to revise the article based on previous Task Force feedback. The revision removes any recommendation for action. Shelton also mentioned that the focus of the article is on plant communities; however, she is currently conducting research on mouse and tick densities in the area.
- Griffin suggested changing mention the of "elimination of natural predators" to "reduction of natural predators." Coyotes, eagles and Great-Horned Owls will take fawns. Humans are also predators. Additionally, Griffin advised making clear that the problem is not the hunting of bucks *per se*; instead, it is the widespread hunting *preference* for bucks that has a limited effect on the deer population.
- Fiorini asked if part of the Griffy area is governed by the County. Shelton responded, "yes." The group agreed that the article should mention that IU and Monroe County also own portions.
- Shelton asked for feedback about how to handle attribution. Rollo asked the group if wants to officially endorse the piece. Hayes said that the Task Force should ask the authors what they want. Shelton said that she and Clay invite endorsement. She will check with the HT on how to handle attribution with a "This has been endorsed by..."-type of clause.
- Granbois mentioned that the article was outstanding. Everybody thanked Shelton for attending the meeting and for her research.
- The group voted to endorse the article with the above-mentioned changes and agreed the article can go forward as soon as it is ready.

VI. Policy Statement on Humane Treatment of Deer

At the last meeting, Ringquist, Hayes and Foyut agreed to develop a draft policy statement on deer welfare for the group to review. The three met and developed the following:

Humane Deer Management Position Statement

The joint City of Bloomington/Monroe County Deer Task Force supports responsible and humane deer management practices while adhering to the highest level of ethical and moral considerations regarding any actions that will have a man made impact on deer in our communities.

We recognize that the ongoing encroachment into deer habitat and lack of natural predators makes it inevitable that human deer conflict will arise and that the deer populations may require some management and control efforts. In such case, priority should be given to non-lethal mitigation strategies before resorting to lethal means.

Lethal management methods should be used as a last resort to alleviate suffering, protect human life, to prevent damage to the rest of the ecosystem or for the overall health of the deer population. If lethal means must be utilized, the most humane methods should be employed, causing an instantaneous and painless death. A decision to employ lethal methods should be based on sound evidence and data that a problem exists that is unlikely to be solved using a non-lethal method.

Rollo asked the group for feedback.

- Griffin said he thinks that it is important for the group to make it clear that deer welfare is being considered. He asked what the authors meant by “alleviating suffering” since deer are not at biological carrying capacity. Ringquist, Hayes and Foyut responded that suffering includes injury, disease or starvation.
- Moore said he really likes the first paragraph, but has concerns with the last. Specifically, the sentence “If lethal means must be utilized, the most humane methods should be employed, causing an instantaneous and painless death” eclipses some options the group has not ruled out yet. He asked if sharpshooting was instant and painless. Griffin responded that it is generally thought to be immediate and without pain. However, with bowhunting, there is a time lag between the time a deer is hit and when it dies. An experienced bowhunter can minimize suffering.
- Granbois suggested the last clause be stricken to read as follows: “If lethal means must be utilized, the most humane methods should be employed, ~~causing an instantaneous and painless death.~~”
- Ringquist pointed out that someone will still ask the Task Force: “What is the most humane method?” She relayed that trappers have told her that clubbing an animal to death is humane. She disagrees and pointed out that IDNR does not prohibit a trapper from such clubbing.

- Shelton asked if “instantaneous and painless” could be replaced with “quick death with minimal pain.”
- Griffin said that the group has discussed all along a possible menu of choices for the community. This type of statement would go counter the idea of providing the community with a menu of choices.
- Hayes responded that the community is looking to the Task Force for guidance; they want to know what the Task Force thinks is best. At some point, the Task Force has to make some definitive statements and go through the options and decide collectively what is humane.
- Smith said that she thinks the passage might be fine if it was framed as an if/then statement.
- Rhoads said that the policy statement uses the word “humane,” but does not define it. Since people have different understandings of what the term means, a definition might help the group dispel an ambiguity.
- Griffin pointed out that the American Veterinary Medical Association has guidelines for the euthanasia of wildlife. Maybe the Task Force could look at AVMA definitions?
- Rhoads responded that, looking at AMVA would be instructive, but the Task Force might not agree with all of AMVA’s positions. For example, the AMVA considers “Trap and Euthanasia” humane. As IDNR has advised, deer do suffer from capture myopathy in the trapping phase.
- Foyut said it might be a good idea for the group to come up with its own definition.
- Moore asked if other task forces define “humane.” Ringquist responded that the reports she looked at, such as Iowa City and Grand Haven, MI don’t define or have a policy statement on “humaneness,” but do include “humane” as a category in their decision matrices.
- Granbois questioned whether a definition advances the group’s cause. It might be more instructive to define “humane” by example, by going through each management option to discuss what is or is not humane.
- Moore said that he is torn on the definition issue. At some point, the group has to be pragmatic and just move forward. On the other hand, he worries that the group may not be on the same page.
- Hayes asked Smith if there are statements in the hunting world about being sportman-like, fair chase, etc. If so, it would be helpful for Smith to relay those statements to the group. Smith said she would look into the issue.
- Ringquist pointed out that the “humane” lens is just one of many. She said that she found a good example of a decision matrix from Grand Haven. The Grand Haven

table analyzed each management option according to: humanness, effectiveness, cost, major pros and major cons.

Since the group is shifting into what it will recommend, Ringquist suggested that it might be helpful to start filtering the management options through each of the lenses, rather than getting bogged down by the humane category. Ringquist suggested that it would be a good exercise for the group to collectively walk through each of the management strategies and review them according to the group's stated criteria.

- ▶ The group agreed this would be a good next step.
- In the interest of making the meeting as productive as possible, Ringquist suggested that each task force member do his/her homework by filling out the matrix in advance of the meeting so everybody comes to the meeting prepared. Ringquist will e-mail the group the Grandhaven example and a blank form to fill in.

VII. Indices and Measurement

- Fiorini said that if "humane" needs to be defined, so too should terms such as "suffering" and "ecological damage." These terms are not self-apparent. He asked if it is possible to come up with indicators. To justify a lethal approach, the group has to associate the recommendation with some sort of metric. He said it would be useful to see if other communities use indicators.
- Griffin responded that Clay and Shelton likely have indicator species at Griffy. He added that it is problematic to compare a yard with a natural area, like Griffy.
- Moore added that the scientist in him wholeheartedly agrees with the statement that any decision to employ lethal methods "should be based on sound evidence and data that a problem exists." However, it has been his experience that when it comes to wildlife, decision-makers almost never have the data they need. Data collection can take up to 2-3 years. This statement could serve as a block to doing anything.
- Ringquist said that she was impressed with the Iowa City report. The report was data-based. The City set an acceptable number of deer/square mile and conducts an annual helicopter count. If the recommended density is exceeded, they recommend a cull; when the density is under the threshold, they don't. In her opinion, Ringquist said lethal action is easier to justify in that sort context, rather one in which 800 people are mad that deer are eating their hostas. She said that from her personal perspective, she would not be willing to invest City resources to hire sharpshooters if the City did not have hard numbers documenting population size.
- Moore suggested that a recommendation for a census could be made part of the report.
- Granbois pointed out that the group does have data from the Griffy Lake Nature Preserve.

- Griffin said that the group also has accident data. Moore added that he likes the idea of using accident data as a measure.
- Rhoads said that accidents have been mapped 2008-present. She is working with City Engineering to figure out how to separate traffic volume to get some sort of sense of accidents/million miles travelled.
- Granbois offered that the group might just simplify the statement on humane treatment by saying that, "Lethal means should be used as a last resort." Rollo said that begs the question of what constitutes a "last resort."
- Rollo relayed that there is still a lot to get through on the Agenda. The issue of the statement and the need for a definition will have to be revisited at a future meeting.

VIII. Other Media Pieces

Rhoads distributed a draft article on why feeding deer is a bad idea. In the interest of time, she said Task Force members should e-mail her their feedback.

IX. Other

- Rhoads distributed a summary of literature on strategies that help reduce deer-auto collisions. The take-home is that the iconic yellow, diamond "Deer Crossing" signs are so common anymore, that they become background and drivers don't really notice them. More effective are temporary and conspicuous signs posted during the spring and in the fall during rut – the season when most accidents occur.
- Rhoads reminded the group she is working on: summarizing other task force reports, feeding ban legislation from other communities and wildlife displacement rules re: new development. The public opinion survey closes on the 16th. The group should let her know what other information they need.
- Rhoads presented a possible timeline. Griffin questioned whether the group could actually wrap up by December. Rollo said that year's end is a good date to strive for.

X. Next Meeting: Monday, 26 September, 2011, Council Chambers

XI. Adjournment: The Committee adjourned at 6:58 pm