

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: URBAN DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM-BOW HUNTING

BACKGROUND:

Over the past decade, Ames has experienced citizen complaints about deer damage, car-deer collisions, and other issues associated with high concentrations of whitetail deer within the city. In an attempt to address these concerns, a Special Urban Deer Task Force (SUDTF) was convened in 2006. The city ordinance establishing the SUDTF requires an annual report to the City Council. **Previous Task Force recommendations to the City Council have included an annual survey of deer populations, a ban on deer feeding, public education efforts, and limited urban bow hunting of deer.**

Urban deer hunting has been conducted in a limited number of locations under special rules administered by the Police Department. All participants must purchase a special tag and register with the Police Department. Rules also require participants to pass a safety course, proficiency test, hunt only from tree stands situated at least 85 feet from trails, and limit shots to 75 feet or less.

An aerial count of deer is generally conducted by the DNR under a cost-sharing arrangement with the City. The aerial survey was conducted this year on February 14, 2019. **Overall, the survey showed an 18% decline in total number of deer counted.** The DNR noted that the riparian areas continue to show a great deal of variability in year to year counts. Some of the larger variations this year can be explained by the severity and length of winter weather as deer yard up near available food sources. **The survey (attached) showed four of the seven urban survey areas within the City had densities below the 30 deer per square mile threshold (2b, 3, 4, 5, and 8).** Deer densities exceeded 30 deer/square mile in the remaining areas surveyed (1, 2a, 6, 7, and 9). Perimeter areas six and seven also exceeded the 30 deer/square mile threshold. Densities exceeding 30 deer/square mile are generally thought to be the most likely to have human-deer conflict at a level where intervention is warranted. **The trend toward higher concentrations in west Ames continued to be evident in the survey and in hunter feedback.**

Again last year, hunting was allowed on private property if there were three or more acres available and hunting was supported by adjacent property owners. Because of the broad array of views in the community, the Special Urban Deer Task Force had endorsed two categories of private property hunts. In the first category, hunts on wooded or agricultural tracts are reviewed by the Police Department and, if the property met the program criteria, it could be approved for

hunting. In the second category, locations that were primarily residential properties would be reviewed by the Police Department and then publicized in a manner that would seek additional input from other residents in the neighborhood. **While there were two private wooded/agricultural tracts that continued to be approved for hunting, there were no residential properties approved for hunting. During 2018, there were 14 tags purchased and seven deer were harvested in the urban zone. Additional licensed hunting occurred in the perimeter zone around Ames, but outside the city limits.**

The Urban Deer Task Force did not meet this year. Information was shared by email and Task Force participants were invited to vote on five items continuing the status quo. Comments from Task Force members came primarily from wildlife or conservation management staff. These comments supported continued bow hunting since even the limited harvest contributes to population control. This perspective also supported bow hunting of deer as a safe intervention that allows property owners in specific neighborhoods or locations to address a problem with deer concentrations. The representatives who typically voiced concerns about urban hunting did not comment or vote this year. The recommendations and votes of the task force members are:

1. Continue the City hunt locations (City properties).
Favor (5) Oppose (0) Abstain (0)

2. Continue current City rules (regulating hunting methods and locations).
Favor (5) Oppose (0) Abstain (0)

3. Continue the current private property process distinguishing wooded/agricultural from residential areas with additional consensus required for hunting in a residential area.
Favor (5) Oppose (0) Abstain (0)

4. Continue to request the buck incentive to encourage hunter participation and harvest.
Favor (5) Oppose (0) Abstain (0)

5. Continue the annual helicopter population survey.
Favor (5) Oppose (0) Abstain (0)

A majority of the Task Force members support the continuation of hunting in designated City locations. Dates for these locations were recommended by the Parks and Recreation staff.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) establishes 'legal hunting hours' (one-half hour before sunrise that continue to one-half hour after sunset) and the 'dates' (September 14 to January 10) for the City of Ames. However, the

City can modify these hours and dates as long as they fall within the overall DNR timeline as noted above.

Following last year's approach and taking the DNR established hours and dates into consideration, staff recommends the following locations, dates, and times for deer hunting.

NON-PARK / PUBLIC AREA

Wooded City property south of the Hunziker Youth Sports Complex:

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise and ending at 11:00 AM, September 14 to November 15

Weekends: No hunting until November 19

Daily beginning November 19, DNR legal hunting hours (following the anticipated conclusion of the youth sport season)

City property north of the landfill in east Ames off Watt Street (does not include Water Plant or adjacent construction areas):

DNR legal hunting hours beginning September 14

PARKLAND AREAS

South River Valley Park:

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 4 PM September 16 to October 25 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Weekends: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 8 AM, September 21 to October 27 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Daily beginning October 28 DNR legal hunting hours (following the conclusion of sport leagues)

Gateway Park: Restricted to the west timber

Daily beginning September 14: DNR legal hunting hours

Homewood Golf Course:

Daily following course closure for the season (Anticipated closure is November 3)

Inis Grove Park

Daily beginning after the close of Homewood Golf Course-limited locations designated by Parks and Recreation staff.

All dates are subject to adjustment by the Ames Police Department for safety related issues. Hunting may be temporarily suspended by the Ames Police Department in any location for safety-related reasons.

In addition, the Urban Deer Task Force recommends continuation of the process allowing private property or other non-city, public property to be enrolled as urban deer hunting locations. The process of establishing eligibility requires the owner or lawful agent in control of the property to submit a written request for participation to the Police Department. Requests must include owner/agent permission for at least three contiguous acres, a map of the property, and a listing of any additional rules or restrictions being proposed. This may include limitations on who may hunt on the property. The City Hunt Manager (Police Department) will evaluate the property and treat it as one of two types:

1. **Wooded/agriculture property** will be reviewed to ensure the suitability of the proposed location, proximity to adjacent properties, and any special hazards or concerns.
2. **Residential locations** will receive a similar initial review by the City Hunt Manager, followed by notification of adjacent property owners. This will be done by the property owner or hunter(s) using city forms. For residential locations to be approved, neighbors within 200 yards of the stand must approve of the hunting. This will involve the signature of one owner or resident of the affected property. Neighbors within 400 yards of the stand must be notified of the proposed hunt.

One or more signs will be posted at these locations and all other rules will apply.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve bow hunting within the park system, City property, and other eligible property as detailed in the current Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules as listed above.
2. Approve bow hunting only in the City locations specified in this proposal and do not allow additional properties to be considered.
3. Do not approve bow hunting as proposed in the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules listed above.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Iowa DNR, Special Urban Deer Task Force, Parks and Recreation Commission, staff members within Parks and Recreation, the Police Department and Animal Control all support the continuation of the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager recommends the approval of Alternative 1; whereby the Council would approve bow hunting in designated locations including the park system and City property as detailed in the current Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules. Continuing a process for designating additional hunting locations on private property will provide a tool to control the deer population.

Ames Aerial Deer Survey Results
2019

The table below shows results of deer observed by helicopter survey on February 14th, 2019 using a Hughes OH-6 helicopter—this helicopter was much more efficient and resulted in drastically reduced survey time. Observers were Andy Kellner and Jenny Swanson. Conditions for the survey were good in all habitat types flown. Snow depth was 6”-8” and some beds were observed. The sky was fair and wind was increasing from the west and north. Temperatures were right around 32 degrees. Some shadows were present but observation conditions were fair. Most deer were bedded but some moved at the helicopter’s presence. The areas surveyed were flown along the contour or with transects and areas were circled if necessary when deer were spotted.

Results from this year’s aerial survey showed a 18% decrease overall compared to 2018. Looking at the survey areas, 6 of the 9 are below the goal of 30 deer/sq. mile. The riparian survey areas 1, 2, 3, 4 still show a good deal of variability each year. Some of the larger variability this year can be explained by the severity and length of winter weather as deer yard up near available food sources.

In the urban zone, 14 of 50 licenses were sold. 6 antlerless and 1 buck were registered as harvested. These numbers are down from previous seasons. In the adjacent perimeter zone, 30 of 50 licenses were sold and 3 does and 1 button buck were harvested. A few more deer may have been harvested on regular season deer licenses, which cannot be separated at this level. The continued annual harvest of does, in both the urban and perimeter zones, reduces potential deer numbers directly and indirectly through abated recruitment of fawns. It is likely that not all of these deer would have been permanently associated with the city of Ames, but this reduction has kept deer numbers down and reduced the growth of the herd. There is some concern for continued downward trend in hunter participation. This may be due to outreach and education about the hunting zones.

Ames Aerial Survey Summary

Survey Segment	2007 Deer Observed	2008 Deer Observed	2009 Deer Observed	2010 Deer Observed	2011 Deer Observed	2012 Deer Observed	2013 Deer Observed	2014 Deer Observed	2016 Deer Observed	2018 Deer Observed	2019 Deer Observed
Segment 1	70	39	53	37	41	38	21	4	10	45	32
1a	59	28	37	26	18	20	18	2	10	5	30
1b	11	11	16	11	23	18	3	2	0	40	2
Segment 2a	143	100	104	85	77	61	117	49	92	12	61
Segment 2b	26	26	31	20	19	5	1	22	13	35	10
Segment 3	11	9	28	11	21	2	8	7	3	9	11
Segment 4	24	14	39	23	6	3	1	7	10	7	3

Segment 5	47	58	64	79	57	23	76	51	74	44	12
Segment 6	23	15	22	63	39	35	33	27	41	49	37
Segment 7	44	23	39	1	41	41	40	53	56	39	40
Segment 8	25	26	25	75	53	46	40	57	46	35	21
Segment 9	50	71	76	62	63	22	45	63	66	65	43
Totals	463	381	481	456	417	276	382	340	411	340	270

Ames Aerial Survey Summary

Survey Segment	Segment Area (Sq. Mi.)	2006 Deer/Sq Mile	2007 Deer/Sq Mile	2008 Deer/Sq Mile	2009 Deer/Sq Mile	2010 Deer/Sq Mile	2011 Deer/Sq Mile	2012 Deer/Sq Mile	2013 Deer/Sq Mile	2014 Deer/Sq Mile	2015 Deer/Sq Mile	2018 Deer/Sq Mile	2019 Deer/Sq Mile	% Change from 2016-18
Segment 1	0.82	16	85	48	65	45	50	46	26	5	12	55	39	-29%
1a	0.39		151	72	95	67	46	51	46	5	26	13	77	492%
1b	0.43		26	26	37	26	53	42	7	5	0	93	5	-95%
Segment 2a	1.7	49	84	59	61	50	45	36	69	29	54	7	36	414%
Segment 2b	0.93	57	28	28	33	22	20	5	1	24	14	38	11	-71%
Segment 3	0.4	43	28	23	70	28	53	5	20	18	8	23	28	22%
Segment 4	0.38	21	63	37	103	61	16	8	3	18	26	18	8	-56%
Segment 5	1.57	25	30	37	41	50	36	15	48	32	47	28	8	-71%
Segment 6	0.49	*	47	31	45	129	80	71	67	55	84	100	76	-24%
Segment 7	0.73	*	60	32	53	1	56	56	55	73	77	53	55	4%
Segment 8	0.57	60	44	46	44	132	93	81	70	100	81	61	37	-39%
Segment 9	1.48	25	34	48	51	42	43	15	30	43	45	44	29	-34%
Totals	9.07	31	51	42	53	50	46	30	42	37	45	37	30	-18%

Ames area deer survey segments.



