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**Montgomery County Department of Parks
Deer Population Management Program**

FACT SHEET

Background

In 1993, responding to citizen concerns about deer-related problems, the Montgomery County Council established a citizen task force to study white-tailed deer management. As a result of this group's recommendations, the Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group (DMWG) was established to develop a deer management plan for the county and to oversee the implementation of a countywide deer management program. The DMWG, a multi-agency committee with representatives from the Montgomery County Department of Parks, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fish, Heritage & Wildlife, the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service, the Montgomery County Police Department and the U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division, devised a plan with the goal to "reduce human-deer conflicts to a level that is compatible with human priorities and land uses," so that citizens and white-tailed deer can live in harmony, with deer remaining a cherished part of the county's natural landscape.

In 2006, Montgomery County identified white-tailed deer as the number one threat to the future of agriculture and forest preservation. Environmental impacts of white-tailed deer include overbrowsing of native plant, shrub and tree species that lead to habitat composition changes and declining forest and wildlife species; and soil disturbances caused by trampling, rooting and defecation which leads to propagation of non-native plant, shrub and tree species, soil erosion and water quality concerns.

With no natural predators and restrictions on hunting, deer populations have increased dramatically in the past decade. The result has been an increase in deer-human conflicts including deer related automobile accidents, damage to agricultural crops and residential gardens and concerns about Lyme disease. If left unchecked, deer populations can more than double every two years.

About the Department of Parks Deer Population Management Program

- The Montgomery County Department of Parks first implemented managed hunts in county parks in December 1996 at Little Bennett Regional Park in Clarksburg. These managed hunts in select parks have been conducted annually ever since.
- Today, deer population management using managed shotgun hunts and Park Police-based sharpshooting occurs on over 13,000 acres of county parkland—approximately 40 percent of the department's over 33,000 acre park system.
- To date, the department has conducted managed deer hunting programs in nine county parks, during the months of October through January, with exceptional results.
- Where deer population management is occurring, the Department of Parks strives to maintain deer densities at a level in balance to best suit the needs of the ecosystem and surrounding land uses. Deer density goals range from fifteen to fifty deer per square mile dependant of the ecological value of the habitat and land use.

- **Public safety is paramount** in the design and implementation of the department's deer population management program. Since its inception there have been no serious injuries to hunters or the public.
- Managed shotgun hunters in the department's program meet stringent requirements to participate and are supervised throughout by the department's wildlife experts. Participants are required to follow strict safety and procedural guidelines. Safety buffers are established to meet and exceed state and county ordinances and hunting sites are selected to use terrain, distance and habitat to enhance safe weapons discharge. Many sites are inspected and approved by the Montgomery County Police Department.
- Weapons discharge is directed into the ground and/or other suitable backdrops from an elevated position. A variety of harvest strategies have been employed using all weapons legal in the county. However, most programming requires participants to use rifled shotguns to harvest deer. On dates when managed hunting is occurring, the park is closed to the public.
- The department also utilizes highly trained and qualified Park Police officers to reduce deer populations via sharpshooting with high-powered, small caliber rifles—at night while parks are closed to the public.
- Deer harvested through the department's Park Police based sharpshooting program is processed, packaged and donated to charity for distribution through area food banks. Each deer results in approximately thirty-five pounds of high-quality meat made available to feed the needy in our community. On average, approximately 20,000 pounds is donated per year from this program.

Department of Parks Deer Harvest Data

- From 1996 – 2007, 4,222 total deer have been harvested through the department's managed shotgun hunting program
- From 1999 – 2007, 2,389 total deer have been harvested through the department's Park-Police based sharpshooting program.
- This year (2007 – 2008), the department anticipates harvesting a total of about 850 deer.
- Total harvest numbers from previous seasons are as follows:

From Managed Hunting:

- 1996 – 1997: 180 deer
- 1997 – 1998: 252 deer
- 1998 – 1999: 251 deer
- 1999 – 2000: 228 deer
- 2000 – 2001: 457 deer
- 2001 – 2002: 355 deer
- 2002 – 2003: 408 deer
- 2003 – 2004: 458 deer
- 2004 – 2005: 515 deer
- 2005 – 2006: 623 deer
- 2006 – 2007: 495 deer

From Park-Police Based Sharpshooting:

- 1999: 19 deer
- 2000: N/A
- 2001: 258 deer
- 2002: 214 deer
- 2003: 164 deer
- 2004: 399 deer
- 2005: 450 deer
- 2006: 535 deer
- 2007: 350 deer

For more information

For more information on the Department of Parks' deer population management program, please contact Parks Wildlife Ecologist Bill Hamilton at (301) 949-4149 or Bill.Hamilton@mncppc.org.