

## ***Draft Document***

# **City of Wildwood White Tailed Deer Management Plan**

### **INTRODUCTION**

While the white-tailed deer is highly valued by many residents of the City of Wildwood, as the deer and resident population of Wildwood have continued to grow over the years, the number of conflicts and subsequent complaints to City Hall has increased as well. The concern over the increasing deer population in the City of Wildwood, and resultant damage to landscaping, and increased vehicle-deer collisions, has been on the agenda of the Board of Public Safety on numerous occasions. This has led to consultation with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), about the issue. The MDC has provided much support, technical expertise and specific recommendation to living with deer and controlling the population. More recently, with encouragement from the MDC, the City completed a deer density study, which was completed by the Wildwood Precinct Police during March 2018. That study found that the deer density within a 5.5-square mile area of the City was about 80 deer / square mile, which is much higher than desirable.

After evaluation the results of the deer density study, the Board of Public Safety approved a motion to forward a recommendation to the City Council in September 2018, requesting that the City Council appoint a citizen committee to develop a deer management program for the City of Wildwood, with the goal of reducing the deer population from approximately 80 deer / square mile to a safer level over several years. This request was considered by the City Council at their meeting on September 24, 2018, however, at that meeting, a motion was approved that the deer management plan be prepared by a subcommittee of the Board of Public Safety. Thus, the Deer Mangement Subcommittee of the Board of Public Safety was formed in 2019 to prepare the plan.

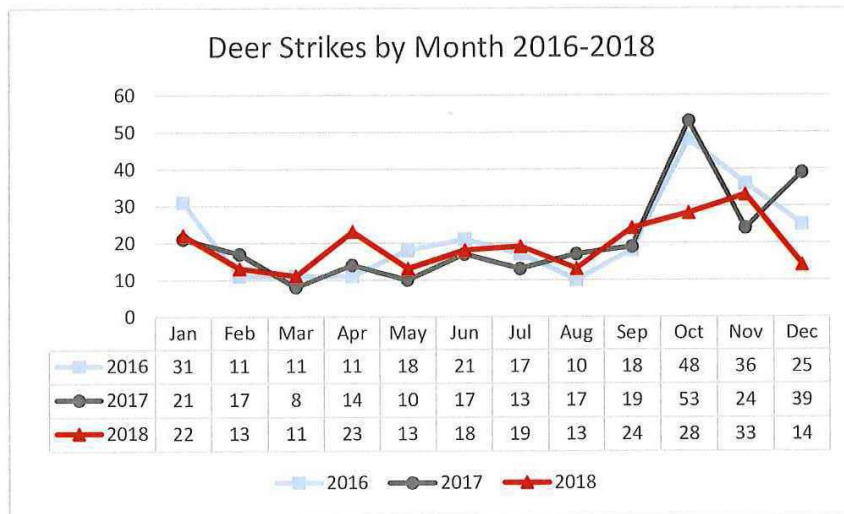
### **PROBLEM**

Historically, Wildwood's deer density has been around 15-20 deer per square mile. However, based on the City's 2018 survey of deer density, the deer population has been estimated to be 81.6 deer per square mile within a 5.5 square mile of the city. (This assumes a confidence interval of 59-112 deer per square mile.) Studies have shown that a deer population density of this magnitude will result in an increase in human-deer conflicts, increased resident complaints, damage to landscaping, as well as other negative environmental consequences, such as a suppression in the regeneration of oaks, hickories, and spring ephemerals, due to deer browsing.

Another direct indicator of deer population is the number of deer-vehicle incidents recorded in the City of Wildwood. In 2018, the Wildwood Precinct Police reported that there were 231 deer - motor vehicle strikes within City limits. These strikes pose a direct threat to the safety and welfare of motorists traveling throughout the City of Wildwood.

Deer Related Incidents by Year					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Deer Euthanized	37	55	45	40	50
Hunting Related Incidents	0	0	0	2	0
Deer Struck- No Crash Report	187	187	156	193	178
Deer Struck- Crash Report	44	48	58	59	53
<b>Total Deer Struck</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>231</b>

FIGURE 21



**DEER SURVEY**

To assess Wildwood resident opinions and attitudes regarding the deer population in the City of Wildwood, an opinion survey was conducted online during December 2019 – January 2020.

The online survey requested residents to answer and comment on thirteen questions. A total of 958 responses were received to the survey. Of the responses received, 72.6% stated the deer population within the City of Wildwood is too high and 70% were in favor of the City of Wildwood adopting either a sharpshooter program or trap and euthanize program to control the deer population. A sample of the survey and the tabulated results have been included with this plan.

## **BACKGROUND ON DEER POPULATION MANAGEMENT**

The City Wildwood, through the adoption of a deer management plan, can take steps to minimize the negative impacts of deer overpopulation. This can be accomplished by controlling or reducing the deer population to an acceptable level through strategies which provide a variety of methods (including both lethal and non-lethal) to mitigate the risk of deer-human conflicts, property damage, and environmental degradation.

It is important for the deer management plan to include measures which assess the current deer population. The plan should also propose a population goal, strategies to achieve the population goal, and a method to continue to monitor the population response. Ultimately, there can only be three desired deer population management objectives: either increasing the deer population, maintaining the population, or reducing the population. Therefore, population status can be simply stated as having too many deer, about the right number of deer, or too few deer.

The challenge in establishing population goals is to balance the social and biological demands given that there are variable deer densities, habitat conditions, and resident attitudes toward deer within the City of Wildwood. Methods for establishing population reduction should consider all potentially affected interests within the City. In the end, resident attitudes toward deer and perceptions of the population will determine the success or failure of the deer management program in the City.

Recreational hunting is the preferred method for managing the deer population and the associated deer-human conflicts. However, promoting traditional hunting practices will not always be feasible, effective, or desirable. For that reason, providing alternatives to traditional hunting practices is critical to the success of this plan.

## **DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN**

This white-tailed deer management plan was developed to provide strategies for deer management in the City of Wildwood over the next 10 years. By clarifying the deer management goals and objectives of the City of Wildwood, this plan provides an opportunity for critical input from Wildwood residents and the elected officials of the city on the direction of deer management in the city.

This plan outlines many activities that are already occurring, but also proposes new strategies to be developed during implementation of the plan. It does not outline specific operational details for strategy implementation, nor a specific timeframe or priority to the stated strategies. The specific operational details (e.g., the specific wording of a proposed ordinance change, specific population goal, detailed methodology to measure deer density, or details of proposed managed hunts), and development of priorities will be subsequently reviewed and

developed by the Deer Management Subcommittee of the Board of Public Safety. This effort will be based on the expertise of the MDC and resident feedback obtained through community engagement. These details will be evaluated, reviewed, and approved by the Board of Public Safety, and in most cases, the City Council. Therefore, assuming adoption of the plan, regular reporting on the status of the plan to the City Council is recommended.

This plan outlines the following two (2) primary goals that incorporate the current priorities for deer management in the City of Wildwood:

- 1) Proactively Manage the Deer Population in Wildwood; and
- 2) Educate, Communicate, and Engage with the Public Regarding the Deer Management Plan

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## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**Goal 1: Proactively Manage the Deer Population in Wildwood** - Proactively manage deer populations within the City to achieve densities at or below the biological and social carrying capacity and at a level which is acceptable to Wildwood residents.

The negative impacts of deer overpopulation can be reduced by reducing the deer population to acceptable levels. This can be achieved by providing a variety of strategies, that can be lethal or non-lethal alternatives, to mitigate damage risk.

**Objective A** – Annually Assess and Monitor the Deer Population in the City.

While conducting deer surveys is not a necessary component of managing suburban deer (unless there is a bait-and-sharpsshoot program), surveys can be useful in justifying management actions and evaluating progress toward meeting deer population reduction goals. The following strategies will be developed in consultation with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC).

- Strategy 1 – Include annual budget appropriations for the Wildwood Precinct to complete annual or as needed assessments of the deer population. (What is cost?)
- Strategy 2 – Wildwood Precinct Police will work with MDC to complete deer surveys during the appropriate time of year and report the results.

**Objective B** - Establish a Deer Population Goal for the City of Wildwood.

- Strategy 1 – Work with Erin Shank/Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) to develop an appropriate long-term goal for the deer population in Wildwood.

**Objective C** - Reduce the Deer Population Within Wildwood

Most of the strategies under this objective involve supporting and encouraging safe recreational hunting, as that is the preferred method for managing the deer population.

- Strategy 1 – Consider City ordinance modifications which support deer management efforts.
  - Propose a “No Feed Ordinance”.
  - Develop an ordinance change to allow combining of properties to reach the 3-acre limit for archery hunting, subject to HOA approval if applicable and subject to existing hunting restrictions.

- Propose additional ordinance changes to promote safe archery hunting such as
  - Require marking of arrows by bow hunters.
  - Provide advance notice to neighboring property owners of permission and intent to hunt on adjacent property.
  - Provide advance notice to Wildwood Precinct of permission and intent to hunt on private property.
- Strategy 2 –Support and encourage expanded opportunities for archery hunting on private property in Wildwood.
  - Develop a program to match licensed hunters with interested private property owners.
    - Wildwood Precinct could check that hunters are licensed as required.
    - Identify and recruit key landowners, including HOA/common ground properties, to participate in the program.
  - ~~Develop an ordinance change to allow combining of properties to reach the 3-acre limit for archery hunting, subject to HOA approval if applicable, and subject to existing hunting restrictions.~~
- Strategy 3 – Support managed deer hunts in the City of Wildwood.
  - Recommend and request to St. Louis County that a managed hunt be held within Greensfelder County Park.
  - Support and promote managed hunts on other public lands (Babler Park, Rockwoods Reservation).
    - Promote awareness of and raise interest in existing managed hunts through the City’s social media and website.
  - Develop and recommend a managed hunt(s) on City or private properties working with MDC. What is the cost and/or options?

- A managed hunt could provide an additional opportunity for licensed hunters in Wildwood.

**Objective D. Reduce the Deer – Vehicle Incidents on Roadways Within Wildwood**

The Wildwood Precinct Police currently track deer-vehicle incidents on an annual basis. That effort is part of the Wildwood annual crash reporting and is a low-cost method to track trends in human-deer conflicts.

- Strategy 1 – Monitor and report the number and location of deer strikes on public roadways within Wildwood on an annual basis.
  - Evaluate deer strike data for areas that warrant consideration for additional traffic control measures or to locate priority areas for future harvest.
- Strategy 2 – Consider the implementation of new technologies which may be able to reduce the number or severity of deer strikes.

**Goal 2: Educate, Communicate, and Engage with the Public Regarding the Deer Management Plan**

Provide information to the public about all aspects of deer management in the City of Wildwood and create opportunities for additional public engagement in the implementation of the plan.

**Objective A. Educate residents on the deer management plan.**

- Strategy 1 – Develop promotional flyers or materials to educate residents on the deer management plan and how best to live with deer.
- Strategy 2 – Complete an annual social media campaign to promote the deer management plan.
- Strategy 3 - Promote the deer management plan through City of Wildwood website, Wildwood E-Newsletter, etc.
- Strategy 4 – Promote and educate residents on the use of deer damage prevention techniques including fencing, repellants, scare tactics. Deer damage control methods are an important component of managing human-deer conflict. Providing this information on the City website and promoting it through our E-Newsletter will help promote these efforts.

**Objective B.** Ensure resident engagement in deer management plan decisions and clearly communicate outcomes.

- Strategy 1 – As necessary, engage various residents through surveys, public meetings/open houses, and or other appropriate public input venues to ensure resident interests are considered.

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