

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: URBAN DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM-BOW HUNTING

BACKGROUND:

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. 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 not conducted this year since appropriate aircraft were not available on days with weather suitable for the count. In the previous count, deer densities met or exceeded 30 deer/square mile in five of the eleven areas surveyed. 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. These higher concentrations have shifted toward west Ames in recent years.

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 proposed that two classes of private property hunts be created. 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 after meeting the criteria. 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 a couple of private wooded/agricultural tracts approved for hunting, there were no residential properties approved for hunting last year. During 2014, there were 34 tags purchased and 12 deer were harvested. 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 since there was no aerial deer count to consider. Information regarding collisions and hunter activity was shared by email and Task Force participants were invited to vote on five items continuing the status quo. Comments from Task Force members continue to illustrate the broad range of public attitudes toward deer and deer hunting. One perspective supported bowhunting of deer as a safe intervention that allows property owners in specific neighborhoods or locations to address a problem with deer concentrations. Others felt that deer hunting is unnecessary and fails to control the population of deer causing problems within the city. These recommendations and votes of the task force members are as follows:

1. Continue the city hunt locations (city properties).

Favor (5) Oppose (1) Abstain (0)

2. Continue current city rules (regulating hunting methods and locations).

Favor (5) Oppose (0) Abstain (1)

3. Continue the current private property process distinguishing wooded/agricultural from residential with additional consensus required for hunting in a residential area...

Favor (5) Oppose (1) Abstain (0)

4. Continue to request the buck incentive to encourage hunter participation and harvest.

Favor (5) Oppose (1) Abstain (0)

5. Continue the annual helicopter population survey.

Favor (6) 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. It should be noted that in addition to the votes, the feedback included thoughtful commentary, both pro and con, regarding the benefit of urban bow hunting. Comments in opposition to these recommendations included the view that sport hunting, as well as urban hunting are entirely unacceptable.

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 19 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.

Subject to City Council action 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 19 to November 8

Weekends: No hunting until November 14

Daily beginning November 9, 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 construction area):

DNR legal hunting hours beginning September 19

PARK LAND AREAS

South River Valley Park:

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 4 PM September 21 to
October 24 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Weekends: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 8 AM, September 19
to October 25 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Daily beginning October 26 DNR legal hunting hours (following the
conclusion of sport leagues)

Gateway Park: Restricted to the west timber

Daily beginning September 19: DNR legal hunting hours

Homewood Golf Course:

Daily following course closure for the season (Anticipated closure is
November 2)

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.

PRIVATE PROPERTY AREAS

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 Non-Park/Public Areas, Park Land Areas, and Private Property Areas as detailed in this Council Action Form.
2. Approve bow hunting only in the Non-Park/Public Areas and Park Land Areas specified in this Council Action Form and not allow any Private Property Areas 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, staff recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1.