

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: URBAN DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM – BOW HUNTING

BACKGROUND:

The community of Ames, like many other urban areas, has experienced an increase in its deer population. In 2006, an attempt to reduce the deer population in Ames began with the appointment of the Urban Deer Task Force (UDTF). Control efforts included an experimental urban bow hunting season within the park system under an Urban Deer Management Ordinance and related rules. In 2006, only three deer were harvested.

In July 2007, in conjunction with the Urban Deer Task Force, staff hosted a public meeting to gain insight on the UDTF/City staff's revised 2007/08 Urban Bow Hunting program goals as follows:

1. Increase the number of deer harvested
2. Minimize the impact to the general public within the park system
3. Expand the program to other viable areas

Those in attendance supported the above stated goals and expansion of the program into non-park, publicly-owned areas while also reducing the park areas where hunting is allowed.

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' (October 1 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 time frames noted above. The earliest start date proposed for these locations is October 12. This allows City staff time to hold an informational meeting for hunters, post signs in the affected areas and publicize information on the locations of these activities.

Operating within the DNR's established hours and closing dates, staff recommends the following locations, dates, and times for deer hunting in hopes of increasing the number of deer harvested while minimizing the impact to the residents of Ames.

NON-PARK / PUBLIC AREAS

Wooded City Property south of Hunziker Youth Sports Complex:

- DNR legal hunting hours beginning November 11 (after conclusion of the youth sports season)

City Property north of the Landfill in east Ames off Edison Street:

- DNR legal hunting hours beginning October 12

PARKLAND AREAS

South River Valley Park:

- Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 4 PM, October 12-31 (hours not used by sport leagues)
- Weekends: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 8 AM, October 12-31 (hours not used by sport leagues)
- Daily beginning November 1: DNR legal hunting hours (after conclusion of sport league season)

Gateway Park: Restricted to the west timber fringe outside the Disc Golf Course

- Daily: DNR legal hunting hours until 10 AM, beginning October 12

Homewood Golf Course:

- Daily: DNR legal hunting hours, beginning November 1 (course is closed)

Squaw Creek / East River Valley / Moore Memorial / McCarthy Lee and all other city parks not named:

- Closed to hunting

After consultation with the Task Force and other City staff members, no changes to the 2006-07 rules are being proposed other than the dates, times and locations listed above.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve bow hunting within the areas detailed in the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules listed above.
2. Modify the proposal to allow bow hunting within the City by changing the approved locations.
3. Do not authorize continued bow hunting within the City.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Special Urban Deer Task Force and City staff members within Parks and Recreation, the Police Department and the Animal Control Division, along with the Iowa DNR, have recommended the continuation of the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules.

While bow-hunting has raised concerns among some community members in the past, it is clear that efforts must be pursued to control the City's urban deer population. Staff

believes that by refining the locations, dates, and times within the park system and by expanding hunting options in non-park public locations, additional deer may be harvested and the public should be less affected by the program. Park areas with large numbers of other users have been removed from the program this year. Therefore, the City Manager recommends the approval of Alternative No. 1, thereby allowing bow hunting within the City as detailed above and in a manner consistent with the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules.