

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: URBAN DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM-BOW HUNTING

BACKGROUND:

The community of Ames, like many other urban areas, has experienced damage due to high concentrations of whitetail deer within the city. In an attempt to reduce the deer population in Ames, a Special Urban Deer Task Force (SUDTF) was convened in 2006. Task Force recommendations have included an annual survey of deer population, a ban on deer feeding, public education, 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. In 2006, three deer were harvested. Five deer were harvested in 2007 and seven in 2008. 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.

In the spring of 2009, in conjunction with the Special Urban Deer Task Force (SUDTF), staff hosted a public meeting to gain insight on the SUDTF/City staff's 2008/09 program goals as follows:

1. Continue to increase the number of deer harvested
2. Minimize the impact to the general public

Those in attendance continue to support the above stated goals and the continuation of hunting in designated City parks (South River Valley, and Gateway Parks and Homewood Golf Course) and non-park/public locations (landfill in east Ames off Edison Street and the city property south of Hunziker Youth Sports Complex). Task Force members recommended that the season begin September 12 in locations where conflict with other park users can be minimized or, where necessary, at a later date recommended by the Parks and Recreation staff. The Parks and Recreation Commission approved hunting within the designated parkland locations at their July 18th meeting.

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 12 to January 31) 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.

Based on all of the input received, staff, along with the Urban Deer Task Force, are recommending the following locations, dates, and times for deer hunting.

NON-PARK / PUBLIC AREA

Wooded City property south of the Hunziker Youth Sports Complex:

DNR legal hunting hours beginning in November 10, following the conclusion of the youth sport season

City property north of the landfill in east Ames off Edison Street:

DNR legal hunting hours beginning September 12

PARKLAND AREAS

South River Valley Park:

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 4 PM September 12 to October 31 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Weekends: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 8 AM, September 12 to October 31 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Daily beginning November 3: DNR legal hunting hours (following the conclusion of sport leagues)

Gateway Park: Restricted to the west timber

Daily beginning September 12: DNR legal hunting hours

Homewood Golf Course:

Daily beginning November 3 (following course closure for the season)

In addition, staff is supportive of the Urban Deer Task Force's recommendation that a process be created that will allow private property or other non-city, public property to be considered for approval as urban deer hunting locations. The process of establishing eligibility would require 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 suitability of hunting on the proposed location and approve or deny the application. All other rules will apply.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve bow hunting within the park system, city property, and allow the addition of other eligible public and private property after review by the Police

Department. All other hunting rules including those regarding tags, proficiency and reporting shall apply to these locations.

2. Approve bow hunting only in the locations specified by the Urban Deer Task Force and do not allow additional properties to be considered.
3. Do not approve bow hunting as detailed in the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules listed above.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Iowa DNR, 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. During 2008 the Department of Parks and Recreation received no comments from the public or park users related to the Urban Deer Management Program.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1 thereby authorizing bow hunting in designated locations including the park system and city property as detailed in the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules. In addition, support for this alternative will create a process for property owners to obtain approval for deer hunting sites.