

## **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 community's deer population, a Special Urban Deer Task Force (SUDTF) was convened in 2006. Task Force recommendations have included an annual survey of the 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. Under these rules, all participants must purchase a special tag and register with the Police Department. Participants must also pass a safety course and proficiency test, hunt only from tree stands situated at least 85 feet from trails, and limit shots to 75 feet or less.

In the 2009-2010 Task Force Report to the City Council, eight recommendations were put forth:

1. Publicize the program so both private property owners and bowhunters are more aware of the options.
2. Similarly, promote participation in the early and late season hunts which seem to have different character. Ensure that all license vendors, police staff, and others have accurate information about which tags can be used and the seasons.
3. Allow City property to be used to establish the 3 acre minimum if safe hunting can occur.
4. Allow the hunt administrator to waive the rules limiting how far from the trail or house a hunter must be if a private landowner chooses to enroll in the program and requests that the rule(s) be waived.
5. Request that the DNR allow a buck incentive—for every five antlerless deer taken, one buck tag may be available. Request this option and each antlerless deer harvested allows one entry into the draw for the buck tag.
6. Facilitate contact between eligible urban bow hunters and property owners. Facilitate hunter inspection of possible hunting locations in order to advise on the suitability of neighborhood actions.

7. Contact Iowa State University, Ames Community Schools, and other owners of large tracts of wooded land to invite participation in the program.

8. Continue to support and encourage perimeter deer hunting on city and private property.

Those Task Force members 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 as early as possible (September 11) 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 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 11 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.

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 11 to November 8

Weekends: No hunting until November 8

Daily beginning November 8, DNR legal hunting hours (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 11

### **PARKLAND AREAS**

#### **South River Valley Park:**

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 4 PM September 11 to October 22 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Weekends: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 8 AM, September 11 to October 24 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Daily beginning October 25 DNR legal hunting hours (following the conclusion of sport leagues)

**Gateway Park:** Restricted to the west timber

Daily beginning September 11: DNR legal hunting hours

**Homewood Golf Course:**

Daily beginning November 1 (following course closure for the season)

In addition, the Urban Deer Task 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 suitability of hunting on the proposed location and approve or deny the application. One or more signs will be posted at these locations and all other rules will apply.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve bow hunting within the park system, City property, and other eligible property as detailed in the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules as listed above.
2. Approve bow hunting only in the City locations specified in this proposal by the Special Urban Deer Task Force and do not allow additional properties to be considered.
3. Approve bow hunting in the park system, on City property and on other eligible properties, but do not allow any modification of rules for private property. This would prohibit any changes to the separation requirements between hunting locations and trails or buildings for private property.
4. Do not approve a continuation of 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, and Parks and Recreation Commission, along with staff members within Parks and Recreation, the Police Department and Animal Control, all support the continuation of the City's Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules. During 2009 the Department of Parks and

Recreation received no comments from the public or park users related to the Urban Deer Management Program.

Creating a process for designating additional hunting locations will provide a tool for private landowners and other public entities to participate in efforts to control the deer population.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the Council accept Alternative #1, thereby approving bow hunting within the park system, on City property, and on other eligible property as detailed in the Urban Deer Management ordinance and rules as listed above.