

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: URBAN DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM-RESEARCH STUDY

BACKGROUND:

In an attempt to respond to citizen complaints about deer damage, the 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. Various sources of data have been used to estimate deer populations. The primary tool has been an aerial survey conducted in January each year.

Several weeks ago, the Task Force was approached by Professor Sue Fairbanks regarding the possibility of conducting a more detailed study of the urban deer population in selected areas. She supervises a senior class project in animal ecology. Another class had provided valuable data on deer densities and sex ratio for the Des Moines Metro area deer hunt using cameras to identify individual deer. The proposed study would combine browse surveys with the 'camera traps' to compare deer habitat in different areas and at different densities. None of the camera sites being considered are on City park property.

A more detailed study of the deer population structure, fall habitat use and travel patterns would assist the Task Force in understanding the deer dynamics and recommending future solutions. This study would also develop a study model that could be replicated in future years.

Conducting this study will require placement of cameras and infrared sensors in the study areas. The proposed study areas currently involve city-owned property. This request, if granted, will grant permission to place this study equipment on city-owned property during the fall of the year.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve placement of research cameras and sensors on city-owned property as part of an Iowa State University animal ecology research project.
2. Do not approve placement of research cameras and sensors on city-owned property as part of an Iowa State University animal ecology research project.

MANAGER’S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

In response to citizen concerns, the Iowa DNR, Special Urban Deer Task Force, Parks and Recreation Commission, staff members within Parks and Recreation, the Police Department and Animal Control Division have collaborated in the design and implementation of the Urban Deer Management program. Deer population data is critical to the development of recommendations from the Special Urban Deer Task Force.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that Council accept Alternative #1, thereby approving placement of cameras and sensors on City property to conduct research on the population dynamics of deer populations within the City limits.