

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. The Task Force is required to submit an annual report to the City Council. 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. An aerial survey was conducted this year. The survey showed four of the seven urban survey areas had densities below the 30 deer per square mile threshold. Deer densities exceeded 30 deer/square mile in the remaining three 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. The trend toward higher concentrations in west Ames continued to be evident in this survey.

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 endorsed two categories of private property hunts. 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. 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. During 2015, there were 25 tags purchased and 15 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 significant change in deer counts or deer related issues. 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. The recommendations and votes of the task force members are:

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 areas 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.

Following last year's approach 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 17 to November 4

Weekends: No hunting until November 12

Daily: beginning November 5, 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 17

PARKLAND AREAS

South River Valley Park:

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 4 PM September 19 to October 21 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Weekends: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 8 AM, September 17 to October 23 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Daily: beginning October 24 DNR legal hunting hours (following the conclusion of sport leagues)

Gateway Park: Restricted to the west timber

Daily: beginning September 17: DNR legal hunting hours

Homewood Golf Course:

Daily: following course closure for the season (Anticipated closure is November 6)

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.

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. Continue to 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 and do not allow additional properties 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, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1 and thereby approve bow hunting in designated locations including the park system and City property as detailed above in the Urban Deer

Management ordinance and rules. Continuing a process for designating additional hunting locations on private property will provide a tool for private landowners and other public entities to participate in efforts to control the deer population. Additional notice requirements and signage will continue to ensure that any consideration of hunting in residential areas includes formal notification of neighboring property owners.

Ames Aerial Deer Survey Results
2015

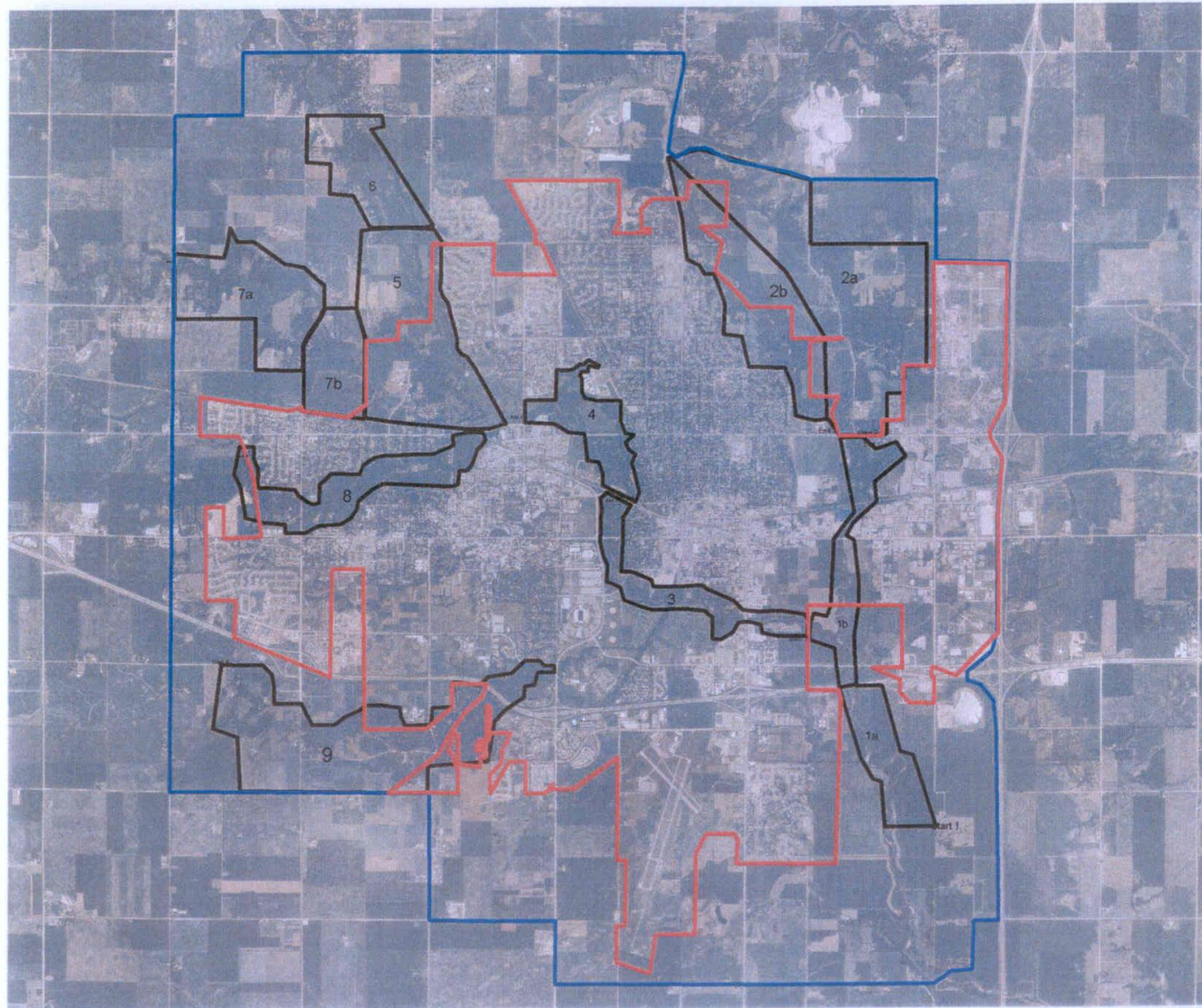
The table below shows results of deer observed by helicopter survey on February 15th, 2016 using a Robinson R44 helicopter. Observers were Bill Bunger and Andy Kellner. Conditions for the survey were good in all habitat types flown. Snow depth was 4” and some beds were observed. The sky was overcast and wind was light from the southwest at 5-10mph. Temperatures started at 32 and rose to near 40 degrees. Overcast skies created good sighting conditions, eliminating shadows. Most deer were bedded but some moved at the helicopter’s presence. The areas surveyed were flown along the contour or with transects and areas were circled if necessary when deer were spotted.













Survey	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	Segment	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	% Change From 2014-16
	Deer	Deer	Deer	Deer	Deer	Deer	Deer	Deer	Deer		Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	Deer/Square Mile	
Segment	Observed	Observed	Observed	Observed	Observed	Observed	Observed	Observed	Observed	Area (Sq. Mi.)	Mile	Mile	Mile	Mile	Mile	Mile	Mile	Mile	Mile	Mile
Segment 1	70	39	53	37	41	38	21	4	10	0.82	85	48	65	45	50	46	26	5	12	140%
1a**	59	28	37	26	18	20	18	2	10	0.39	151	72	95	67	46	51	46	5	26	420%
1b**	11	11	16	11	23	18	3	2	0	0.43	26	26	37	26	53	42	7	5	0	-100%
Segment 2a	143	100	104	85	77	61	117	49	92	1.7	84	59	61	50	45	36	69	29	54	86%
Segment 2b	26	26	31	20	19	5	1	22	13	0.93	28	28	33	22	20	5	1	24	14	-42%
Segment 3	11	9	28	11	21	2	8	7	3	0.4	28	23	70	28	53	5	20	18	8	-56%
Segment 4	24	14	39	23	6	3	1	7	10	0.38	63	37	103	61	16	8	3	18	26	44%
Segment 5	47	58	64	79	57	23	76	51	74	1.57	30	37	41	50	36	15	48	32	47	47%
Segment 6	23	15	22	63	39	35	33	27	41	0.49	47	31	45	129	80	71	67	55	84	53%
Segment 7	44	23	39	1	41	41	40	53	56	0.73	60	32	53	1	56	56	55	73	77	5%
Segment 8	25	26	25	75	53	46	40	57	46	0.57	44	46	44	132	93	81	70	100	81	-19%
Segment 9	50	71	76	62	63	22	45	63	66	1.48	34	48	51	42	43	15	30	43	45	5%
Totals	463	381	481	456	417	276	382	340	411	9.07	51	42	53	50	46	30	42	37	45	22%

Results from this year’s aerial survey showed a 22% increase in numbers across all survey areas compared to 2014. Looking at the urban survey areas, 4 of the 7 are below the goal of 30 deer/sq. mile. Of the three urban areas exceeding this goal 2 are located in the southwest portion of the city, (8 & 9). This pattern has been a long standing situation. In the northwest quarter of town, deer observed in zone 5 were up from 2014, while deer observed in the nearby rural zones (6 & 7) were also up slightly from 2014. The northeast quarter of town (zone 2a especially) saw an increase in numbers. It seems that the location of the aerial zones on the north side of town, and the extension of riparian areas that project out into the countryside from these zones, may have some unpredictable annual influences on the deer wintering in Ames.

In the urban zone, 25 of 50 licenses were sold, down 10 licenses from last year. 12 does and 3 buttons were registered as harvested. These harvest numbers are similar to last season. In the adjacent perimeter zone, 47 of 50 licenses were sold and 7 does and 6 buttons were harvested. This is five more deer than last year. A few more deer may have been harvested on regular season deer licenses, which cannot be separated at this level. The harvest of 169 does, in both the urban and perimeter zones, over the last 10 years has reduced potential deer numbers by over 1100 animals over that time. It is likely that not all of these deer would have been permanently associated with the city of Ames, but this reduction has kept deer numbers down and reduced the growth of the herd.

Ames area deer survey segments.



-  Ames incorporated zon
-  Ames perimeter zone
-  Amesseg1.shp
-  Amesseg2.shp
-  Amesseg3.shp
-  Amesseg4.shp
-  Amesseg5.shp
-  Amesseg6.shp
-  Amesseg7a.shp
-  Amesseg7b.shp
-  Amesseg8.shp
-  Amesseg9.shp

