

City of Rochester Hills

DEER MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN for 2010



October 2009

2010 RECOMMENDATION #1 FEEDING BAN ORDINANCE

The Rochester Hills City Council passed an ordinance in September 2008 preventing the feeding of wild animals other than birds. This feeding ban is intended to reduce the current travel patterns of deer from their natural habitat into subdivisions where feeding stations and bait piles were provided.

The supplemental feeding of wildlife is disruptive to their natural feeding habits. While some residents enjoy recreational viewing of deer; this action is detrimental to the animals, attracts predators and nuisance species (raccoons, coyotes, rats, etc.); and can draw deer seeking food to cross heavy traffic areas, causing deer-vehicle accidents. This ban is to continue for 2010.

Safety Issues

The implemented feeding ban should help reduce the concentration of deer at any single location, help prevent nose-to-nose contact resulting in the spread of disease (i.e. bovine TB, Lyme disease), and possibly reduce the number of deer-vehicle collisions in Rochester Hills.

Costs

Clerical and ordinance enforcement costs related to answering complaints for noncompliance and staff time related to the prosecution of repeat violators. No overtime hours are currently anticipated, but total time would be entirely dependent on the volume of incidents.

Effective Herd Reduction

There may be a small decrease in the fawn birthrate as available food becomes limited to surrounding habitat. Potentially, a small increase in the actual existing herd could be realized due to lessening of the deer mortality rate by fewer accidents.

City Commitment

The city will continue to educate residents of the need and purpose of the new ordinance through various sources: cable TV, Hills Herald publication, notes on water bills, etc.; publicly defend the feeding ban as a means of reducing deer-vehicle accidents, property damage, and potentially lowering the birthrate; send public reminders to residents to ensure awareness of the ordinance; and strongly enforce the ban to ensure compliance.

2010 Action Plan

An article is scheduled to appear in the Fall Edition of the Hills Herald, information on the ban will be shown on Channel 55/10 and placed on the city's

website, and a note will be put on water bills to remind residents of the city's deer feeding ban. Any reports of deer feeding within the city will be investigated and enforced by Ordinance Enforcement.

2010 RECOMMENDATION #2 EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT

The city will expand the information and programs available to residents on the deer problems in our city and provide additional information on fencing, plants rarely damaged by deer, deer repellents, as well as offer other suggestions, references, and guidelines to homeowner associations and individual residents on effective means to limit the nuisance deer and damage to their property and on avoiding deer-vehicle accidents.

- The city will target their educational focus on the peak deer activity months of September through December and the hours of dawn and dusk.
- The city will designate October as "Deer Awareness Month."
- The city will offer more homeowner tactics, seminars, and programs on dealing with the city's deer population.
- The Parks & Forestry Department will report to the Mayor and City Council in June 2010 on the status of the educational components, aerial flyover results, and SEMCOG deer/vehicle crash (DVC) data.
- The city will disseminate updated deer information on its website and cable station and provide a range of deer resources for residents. The website will provide a link to SEMCOG's "*Don't Veer for Deer*" program.
- The city will continue to seek developing information on deer/vehicle crashes and deer count surveys.
- The city staff will keep a log of deer calls/complaints and include that information in future reports.

Safety Issues

There are no safety issues associated with increased education of the issues.

Costs

- City staff time during normal working hours for classes, presentations, or inquiries as well as video production time for cable programs or DVDs on effective deer deterrents and general information.
- Printing and mailing costs for brochures on Deer Management (estimate: \$6,700).

Effective Herd Reduction

Educating the public on all the measures of the city's deer management plan could be the most important factor in reducing deer complaints, property damage, and deer-

vehicle collisions. Following and maintaining all these measures over the years will help to attain the goal of increasing the “social carrying capacity” of Rochester Hills' residents toward the deer.

City Commitment

The city will continue an ongoing program informing residents of deer management procedures, and offer helpful recommendations. The city will provide further information through programs, cable programming, on its website, on its cable channels, etc. The Administration and City Council should also show unified support for this Deer Management program and its various components and continue to monitor its effectiveness and make any appropriate modifications. (See: *Additional Recommendations for 2010, Citizens Resource Group, page 9.*)

2010 Action Plan

The Mayor and City Council have designated October as “Deer Awareness Month.” The city’s website placed a link to SEMCOG’s “Don’t Veer for Deer” information. The EEC is compiling a master list of volunteers and will dispatch 2-3 volunteers to talk with homeowners that call with deer complaints. After appropriate city training, these volunteers will provide information, suggestions, and samples of repellents to those residents who are having problems with deer in their yards. All resident calls on deer (nuisance deer and dead deer) will be documented and forwarded to the EEC. Dead deer on county roadways will be forwarded to the Oakland County Road Commission for resolution. Dead deer on private property remain the responsibility of the property owner, while dead deer on city roadways will be forwarded to and handled by the Department of Public Service.

2010 RECOMMENDATION #3

IMPROVED SIGNAGE AND ROADSIDE DETERRENTS

Improving the signage on city and county roads warning motorists of deer crossing areas could potentially reduce deer-vehicle collisions. The city will continue to examine current signage and countermeasures to identify any needed modifications and could test new cutting-edge innovations or deterrents. The change to higher visibility signs in hot spot areas was completed by mid-October 2009.

In addition,

- The city should identify areas alongside major roads where high growth brush clearing would be helpful to increase visibility and notify the property owners with recommendations on how they could improve the sites and reduce DVC’s.

- The city should identify areas alongside major roads where deer fencing could be an effective deterrent to DVC's and notify property owners on how that could help reduce accidents. This could possibly be a good program for donations or grants.
- The city should identify high deer/vehicle crash areas and increase public awareness of these areas.
- The city will consider emphasizing deer signage during the peak deer/vehicle crash months of September through December and will consider using flashers (similar to school crossing signs), lights, or flags during the peak times of 5-8 am and 5-8 pm to make them more effective. This could also be a good idea for a grant or study program.
- The city should continue to partner with Oakland University to consider brush removal along the high deer/vehicle crash areas adjacent to their property.

Safety Issues

MDOT and RCOC regulations for sign placement and construction would be followed. All policy recommendations should go through the Advisory Traffic and Safety Board for comments, questions, and concerns.

Costs

- Costs per sign multiplied by the number of signs plus the costs of installation would range from \$250 - \$3,000 per sign.
- MDOT, RCOC, grants, and SEMCOG could share some or all of the costs on roads under their jurisdiction.

Effective Herd Reduction

Although it would not cause an actual reduction in the deer population, this component could help reduce the number of deer-vehicle collisions in our city.

City Commitment

The city would construct, install, and maintain the signs placed along the city's major roadways. City staff would also assess any newly tried signage or countermeasures for their effectiveness.

Other state and county agencies are encouraged to upgrade their existing signage or try innovative countermeasures to reduce accidents on roadways under their jurisdiction as well.

2010 Action Plan

Engineering Division is working with the Oakland County Road Commission to bring in portable signs and we will determine the best locations for placement based on the most recent deer-vehicle crash data. These movable signs will warn

motorists during the fall rut to be on the lookout for increased deer activity and to remind them to be cautious and to drive with care. The city will continue to work with Oakland University and other landowners to identify and modify areas of excessive brush along major roads to increase visibility and reduce deer-vehicle crashes.

**2010 RECOMMENDATION #4
RECREATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BOW HUNTING BAN**

The city will continue to ban recreational bow hunting in Rochester Hills. In addition, the city will not permit qualified bow-hunting businesses on public or private property in 2010.

Safety Issues

There are no safety issues associated with continuing the bow hunting ban for 2010.

Effective Herd Reduction

There would be no impact on the deer herd numbers in Rochester Hills if the ban is continued.

2010 Action Plan

Information on the recreational and professional bow hunting ban will be placed on the city's website and on Channel 55/10.

**2010 RECOMMENDATION #5
AERIAL DEER COUNT SURVEYS**

In an effort to monitor the deer population in the city, annual aerial deer count surveys should be continued. These surveys aid in evaluating the effectiveness of the city's Deer Management program as well as contribute valuable data for future decision-making regarding this program. The data from the aerial surveys will be available for review by an outside agent.

Safety Issues

There are no safety issues associated with continuing the aerial deer count surveys for 2010.

Costs

Previous surveys have cost the city around \$725 - \$825. With current higher fuel prices, these costs could rise. Costs would also be greater if more acres are surveyed.

Typically we join in with Oakland County; they set up the bid process and select the company. Approximately 12 hours of park staff time would be required for each survey.

Effective Herd Reduction

The surveys would not be directly responsible for any deer herd reductions, but would be used as a tool for evaluating the implementation of the various deer reduction methods.

2010 Action Plan

The EEC will work with Oakland County to coordinate an aerial deer count survey of the same parcels as last year for comparison. The information will be given to the Deer Management Advisory Committee for review and to note any trends.

2010 RECOMMENDATION #6 MONITORING DEER-VEHICLE COLLISIONS

Monitoring the number, locations, and time of deer-vehicle collisions is an important step in obtaining qualitative information needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the various components of the Deer Management program. Tracking this information can be used for comparison purposes with previous years to determine which components were most effective. The city should continue monitoring the deer/vehicle collisions as provided by SEMCOG and encourage more timely reports even if the data is only preliminary numbers. The final audited (by Michigan State Police) report should be included in the Parks report to City Council in June 2010.

Safety Issues

This information can contribute to the safety of city motorists by identifying accident hot spots and making motorists aware of these locations so extra caution can be used.

Costs

This monitoring would require minimal cost to the city since members of SEMCOG can access this information free of charge. City staff time would be needed to compile this data, but this task should be completed during normal working hours.

Effective Herd Reduction

This would not be a deer herd reduction tool, but would aid in the decision-making process regarding the effectiveness of deer reduction methods used.

City Commitment

The city would need to remain a SEMCOG member (\$9,250 membership fee) to access their data and would need to commit staff time to compile this data.

2010 Action Plan

The EEC will work with SEMCOG to obtain information on deer/vehicle collisions in Rochester Hills. This information will be given to the Deer Management Advisory Committee to note any trends and will be shared with Engineering to assist with determining which roads should have portable signs placed.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION – SHARPSHOOTING

A proposal in 2008 offering assistance from the Oakland County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) to remove deer was adopted and a limited program was implemented in the winter of 2009. A sharpshooting program, when successful, is an effective means of immediately removing deer from the population. However, due to the apparent reduction of the deer herd identified by the January 2009 flyover and recent SEMCOG DVC data, the city will not use sharpshooters or any other lethal culling methods in 2010 to reduce the deer herd in Rochester Hills. The city should continue to monitor SEMCOG's deer/vehicle accident rates with the understanding that if the trend increases and reaches the 200 annual DVC number and if the previous annual aerial survey trends up by 20% or more, the city should seriously reconsider the use of lethal methods or reassess solutions to reduce the deer population and implement a plan accordingly.

2010 Action Plan

No lethal methods of culling will be used in Rochester Hills in 2010 to decrease the deer herd. This option will be reviewed after the deer/vehicle collision numbers and aerial count surveys are received. This option will be reconsidered for 2011 if deer/vehicle collisions exceed 200 and if the aerial deer count survey trends up by 20% or more.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2010

Deer Management Advisory Committee

City Council has expressed interest in continuing the Deer Management Advisory Committee in 2010 to meet prior to the June Report to review the numbers of deer/vehicle crashes and aerial counts and make any recommendation to City Council for future modifications to the Deer Management Plan. The purpose and charge of this committee for 2010 will be to review all current data and make recommendations for 2011 Deer Management Plan action items.

Citizens Resource Group

The city will form a Citizens Resource Group of qualified volunteers to assist residents in implementing helpful practices for dealing with landscaping problems due to nuisance deer. Interested volunteers will need to attend a brief training session prior to assisting with the Citizens Resource Group. The EEC will keep a master list and will dispatch 2-3 volunteers to individual home locations to share with homeowners “best practice” information, websites, and free samples provided by suppliers of deer deterrents. Follow-up questionnaires will be used to track the impact and satisfaction levels of this 2010 program.

Regional Wildlife Management Committee

The Mayor’s office and the Parks & Forestry Department will initiate contact with the surrounding member communities, Oakland University, and other wildlife management agencies to indicate their level of interest in forming a standing regional Wildlife Management Committee to help coordinate suburban wildlife management policies throughout the area and to make “best practices” information available to our residents. The goal will be to maintain a healthy and diverse wildlife and wildlife habitat that can be sustained and to instruct residents on how best to live with the existing wildlife found throughout our region.