



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

DATE: February 1, 2018

SUBJECT: **Winter 2018 Deer Management Program Completed Safely**

REFERENCES: December 4, 2017 Memorandum to City Council regarding the Winter 2018 Deer Management Plan

PURPOSE: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the preliminary results from the recently completed “in-field” activities of the Winter 2018 Deer Management program. The program involves a number of measures and initiatives, including a survey and data collection, which are still “in-process”, so complete results won’t be available for several more months (See timeline below).

BACKGROUND: The scope and implementation of the 2018 program was described in the December 4, 2017 memorandum to City Council. The program involved three strategies including education, sterilization and the lethal removal of deer. The educational program activities started in 2017 and are on-going. The sterilization program ran from January 2 through January 6. The lethal program ran from January 7 through January 31.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Program Goals:

Attached to this memo is a summary of program metrics with the preliminary results and estimated dates for the remaining activities.

A couple of notable results are 18 female deer were sterilized versus a maximum of 26 under the MDNR special research permit and 115 deer were lethally removed versus an objective of 250. There were a number of challenges the lethal program faced which contributed to the removal rate. These included the inability to access areas where deer are located (such as 1,000 foot restriction from public schools under federal law), weather patterns, and to a lesser extent interruptions from protestors.

Where access and weather permitted White Buffalo to operate, there were some important successes for the program. White Buffalo’s preliminary conclusion is that some areas in Wards 1 and 2 may only require monitoring and maintenance going forward. These areas will be identified more clearly in a final assessment report available in June. As noted, this timeline allows for the completion of the deer

management survey by MSU and the deer browse study data collection. In addition, White Buffalo demonstrated it could successfully and safely operate on private property. Each year the program has used its data collection efforts to improve the effectiveness of the program. The final report this year will also identify potential strategies for getting the remaining portions of Wards 1 and 2 to a monitoring and maintenance status.

Budget Impact:

The program budget for the deer management program includes all costs incurred including contractors, city employees, professional services, and materials/supplies. The 2018 program was initially funded at \$260k for FY 2018 and \$260k for FY2019. After the objectives for the 2018 program were finalized, \$110k was brought forward from FY2019. The resulting final budgets were \$370k (FY2018) and \$150k (FY2019). Based on this year's results, the 2018 program will underrun its budget and staff will likely request the underrun be re-applied to FY2019 as efforts continue to achieve maintenance levels in all areas in Wards 1 and 2 as quickly as possible. Exact budget amounts won't be available until late in the fiscal year after all efforts and invoices are completed.

Policy Advocacy:

City staff was involved and is planning to remain involved with the State legislature to retain sterilization as an option for MDNR to have in circumstances where culling is not viable due to urban density and/or other reasons.

NEXT STEPS:

Resident Survey (Feb/April) – resident survey by MSU will be conducted over the next couple of months.

White Buffalo Report (March) – White Buffalo will issue a report which is shared with the MDNR describing the research results from its 2018 activities.

Deer Browse Damage on Public Property (May) – results from Dr. Courteau's deer browse studies are anticipated in May.

Resident Survey Results (May 31) – results of the survey and assessment are due by May 31.

Staff Report (June/July) – After all the data is collected from the 2018 activities, staff will publish a final summary report along with lessons learned and potential strategies for 2019.

1 Attachment

1 – 2018 Deer Management Plan – Preliminary Results

2018 Deer Management Plan - Preliminary Results

PROBLEM:

- Deer browsing is adversely impacting beyond the tolerance level of a portion of the City’s residents, the bio-diversity and sustainability of plants/animals/insects in the City’s natural areas.
- Deer browsing is adversely impacting beyond the tolerance level of a portion of the City’s residents, the residential and commercial gardens/ landscaping on private land.
- The number of deer/vehicle accidents averaged 62 over the past five years versus 41 over the five years before that.
- A segment of the City’s residents has a higher tolerance for deer, views them in a positive light, and is advocating for a change in the deer management program that includes non-lethal methods, education, and/or no action all.

<u>MEASURES OF SUCCESS</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Long-term Objectives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of firearm related injuries associated with the deer management program is 0. 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of deer/vehicle crashes reduced to 40 per year, and percent of vehicle crashes involving deer reported in the legal boundaries of the City of Ann Arbor reduced to 1.3%, assuming no major changes in total vehicle crashes. 	Published in June/July
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce deer browse damage in the City’s natural areas to a sustainable range of 15% to 30%, as measured by NatureWrite’s field study. This measure will be regularly re-visited to reflect the latest information available. 	Results not in yet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain community-based education program about the role of deer in the local ecology and identify options for residents to manage potential deer impacts on their private property. 	Initiated and growing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community acceptance of herd impact - when 75% of surveyed residents in a Ward respond that damage to their landscape or garden plants is at an acceptable level on private lands. Recognizing there will be variability of this measure over time, a trend towards 75% is desired. 	Results available in June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community acceptance of deer management program - when 75% of surveyed residents in a Ward respond that the City's strategy of managing the deer population is acceptable. Recognizing there will be variability of this measure over time, a trend towards 75% is desired. 	Results available in June
Sterilization Program:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain an amended permit from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for a deer sterilization program. 	Obtained
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterilization of at least 98% of the female deer in the original research areas 1 and 2. 	Results in February

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterilize at least 95 percent of the female deer in a new third zone, such that the cumulative sterilizations for all three zones are not more than 80. 	Results in February
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortality rate associated with sterilization less than 2 percent. 	0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate with University of Michigan if there are appropriate locations for sterilization. 	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a written update on the scientific results to-date on the sterilization efforts. 	Results in February

Lethal Program:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of firearm related injuries associated with cull activities is 0. 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove 250 deer. 	115
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of public park closures is acceptable to at least 75 percent of surveyed residents. 	Results in June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with University of Michigan to increase the number of available locations for the deer management program. 	Achieved

Education:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the city's "Fencing" ordinance and existing deer signage locations. Recommend and implement changes and improvements. 	Signs Phase I Completed. Fencing on hold.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and publish an expanded deer education component to the city's deer management website, including a deer-resistant gardening campaign. 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an interactive information/mapping tool. 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and hold a public forum designed to address questions related to the city's deer management program. 	Considered for Spring 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an on-going education program. 	See above actions.