



Legislation Text

File #: 16-1577, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Approve a Contract with NatureWrite, LLC for Monitoring and Assessment of Deer Impacts in Ann Arbor Natural Areas (\$33,000.00), Amend the FY17 Budget and Appropriate Necessary Funds (\$15,750.00) **(8 Votes Required)**

Approval is requested to appropriate the necessary funds to contract with NatureWrite, LLC for monitoring and assessment of deer impacts in Ann Arbor Natural Areas. As noted in Dr. Courteau's presentation to Council at its October 24, 2016 work session, the vegetation impact study will include both oak seedlings and wildflowers.

Budget/Fiscal Impact: It is necessary to appropriate additional funding for the recommended expanded vegetation impact study. Funds are available in the City's General Fund fund balance.

When City Council decided to implement a deer management program last year, the program began with monitoring the impacts that deer were having to the vegetation in our park natural areas. In the short-term, in an effort to establish some level of baseline data on deer impacts prior to initiating a cull in winter 2016, staff contracted with a local researcher and deer expert (Dr. Jacqueline Courteau) to conduct browse damage in 10 wooded City parks beginning in November 2015. This consisted in planting sentinel red oak tree seedlings at selected locations in the field and assessing them for deer browse damage over time. This method is referenced in Cornell University's recent Deer Management Study. Due to the need for high-quality, defensible, scientifically valid data, staff chose to contract with Dr. Jacqueline Courteau, a local consulting ecologist with extensive experience in southeastern Michigan monitoring the impacts to vegetation from deer browse. She did her doctoral work at UM looking at "*Direct, Indirect, and Interacting Effects of Overabundant Deer and Invasive Autumn Olive on Native Vegetation.*" She has previously worked as a consultant to the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (HCMA) on their deer issues, and is currently working with the Washtenaw County Parks Commission on similar issues.

The first year of vegetation monitoring is nearing completion, and has proven to be an informative pilot study. Based on what we have learned from this first year of research, City Administration is recommending that Dr. Courteau's oak seedling study be expanded to include additional park natural areas, at a cost of \$17,250. Having more study areas will help us better identify specific areas in the city where deer are having the greatest impact to oak regeneration in our park natural areas.

Additionally, in order to gain a more complete understanding of the impacts that deer are having to our city's natural ecosystems, it is recommended that a wildflower component be added to the study, rather than just focusing on oak tree seedlings. Although oak regeneration is important to the overall long-term health of our city's natural areas, the presence of a healthy ground flora with diverse wildflowers is also important, especially for the health of pollinators, songbirds, and other forms of wildlife. The City initiated a pilot project with Dr. Courteau in a few natural areas in spring, 2016 to begin monitoring these impacts to our wildflowers. Now that the proper protocol has been field-tested, we propose to expand this research into additional natural areas across the city, at a cost of \$15,750.

NatureWrite, LLC complies with the City's non-discrimination and living wage ordinance requirements.

Prepared by: David Borneman, Deputy Manage, Parks & Recreation Services, Natural Area Preservation and Mary Joan Fales, Senior Assistant City Attorney

Reviewed by: Tom Crawford, CFO/Finance and Administrative Services Area Administrator

Approved by: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

Whereas, Ecological concerns about the impact of deer on natural areas have a broad impact on the City as a whole;

Whereas, Determining whether deer damage is affecting biodiversity in City natural areas and potential long-term changes in ecological habitats was identified as a goal of the City's deer management program;

Whereas, Dr. Jacqueline Courteau, NatureWrite, LLC, conducted a pilot study on red oak seedlings in Ann Arbor natural areas in 2015-2016 to obtain a standardized measurement of browse intensity and deer impacts across a range of sites in the City;

Whereas, Dr. Courteau presented her findings to City Council her findings to Council in October 2016 and recommended continuing and expanding vegetation impact monitoring using both oak seedlings and additional wildflower plantings which are both preferred by deer but also provide food and habitat for pollinators and songbirds;

Whereas, Funding is available in the City's General Fund fund balance;

Whereas, NatureWrite, LLC complies with the City's non-discrimination and living wage ordinance requirements;

RESOLVED, That City Council approve a contract with NatureWrite, LLC. for monitoring and assessment of Deer Impacts in Ann Arbor Natural Areas in the amount of \$33,000.00;

RESOLVED, That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to execute the above contract subject to approval as to substance by the City Administrator and approval as to form by the City Attorney; and

RESOLVED, That City Council amend the approved FY17 Community Services Administration expenditure budget by \$15,750.00 with funding of the \$15,750.00 from a one-time use of the General Fund fund balance, to be expended without regard to fiscal year in accordance with the terms of the NatureWrite, LLC contract.