

DEER MANAGEMENT PILOT PROGRAM DEBRIEF

March 28, 2024



After Action Report
& Improvement Plan

Deer Management Pilot Overview

Purpose	City of Pittsburgh Deer Management Pilot Program
Approval Timeframe	Deer Management Pilot Program Legislation approved by Pittsburgh City Council September 6, 2023, in cooperation with the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services Team.
Program Scope	The City of Pittsburgh's Deer Management Pilot Program was enacted for Frick and Riverview Parks to assist with the overabundance of deer. The program lasted from 9/30-12/9 and 12/26-1/27 excluding all Sundays.
Management Plan	The overabundance of deer in Pittsburgh has historically gone unchecked and unmanaged. With increasing reports of deer over browsing, vehicle-deer collisions, and loss of natural fear, the urgency to enact a management plan was essential.

Timeline: Then and Now

A timeline was established during the pilot phase of the city's Deer Management Program to ensure a seamless implementation. Adhering to the dates set forth made it possible for all tasks to be completed in 2023. Therefore, the designed schedule should be adopted to ensure all tasks and responsibilities of the City are completed. This does not include community outreach opportunities or additional engagement with internal city departments.

Pilot Phase Dates

- Jan - Mar 2023:** External Protect your Parks & Gardens Community Group formulated and connection with the City of Pittsburgh Park Rangers.
- March 2023:** Early conversations with USDA APHIS WS team
- June 2023:** Conversations and early proposals to Pittsburgh City Council Began
- September 6, 2023:** Passed by Pittsburgh City Council
- September 7, 2023:** Archers selected from lottery
- September 10, 2023:** Archer Accuracy Examination 1
- September 21, 2023:** Archer Accuracy Examination 2
- Sept 30 - Dec 9, 2023:** Archery Season One Begins
80 deer harvested | 47 deer donated
(1,920 lbs venison, 7,680 meals)
- Dec 26, 2023 - Jan 27, 2024:** Archery Restarts
Finals Harvest Results: 108 deer harvested, 59 donated
(2,360 lbs venison, 9,440 meals)
- January 18, 2024:** City Park Rangers Debrief with USDA Wildlife Technicians Brian & Thomas
- March 20, 2024:** "Posted: No Hunting" signs created for posting in Schenley, Emerald View & Highland Parks
- March 26, 2024:** Hunting Zones created & revised for five Allegheny Regional Asset District (ARAD) Parks (Frick, Riverview, Schenley, Emerald View & Highland Parks).

Schedule Moving Forward

- March 27, 2024:** Debrief with Pittsburgh City Council
- April 2024:** USDA Contract to be approved and first dues paid
- April 2024:** Schenley Park to be posted with 30 "Posted: No Hunting" signs
- April 2, 2024:** Debrief with Community Stakeholders & Mayors Office
- May 2024:** Emerald View Park to be posted with 30 "Posted: No Hunting" signs
- May 1, 2024:** Announce Lottery Sign Ups starting 5/13
- May 13, 2024:** Open Sign-Ups for Lottery System (two weeks)
- May 24, 2024:** Close Sign Ups
- June 3, 2024:** Select Archers from Lottery
- June 2024:** Highland Park to be posted with 30 "Posted: No Hunting" signs
- July 2024:** 125 "Notice of Archery Signs" to designed and printed on plastic.
- July 14, 2024:** First Archery Qualifier
- July 24, 2024:** Secondary Archery Qualifier
- August 2024:** 25 "Notice of Archery Signs" to be posted in each ARAD Park.
- September 2024:** Archery to begin

Strengths

1. **Managing the deer overabundance** in a sustainable, controlled manner with authorized, vetted, accurate archers.
2. Allowing residents of Pittsburgh to hunt in their local park with **an opportunity to harvest their own food**.
3. **Providing 9,440 meals** for those suffering from food insecurities from donated venison.
4. The Post Archery Program Completion Survey provided great feedback with positive remarks. **100% of survey participants would be interested in returning.**
5. Resident Benefits:
 - a. Reduced risk of vehicle-deer collisions
 - b. Increase fear of humans
 - c. Reduced risk of tick-borne illness
6. Ecosystem benefits from deer management piloted parks:
 - a. Greater increase in plant regeneration resulting in a healthier understory, reduced storm water run-off, and increase in food sources for deer.
 - b. Reduction of deer that could suffer or spread Chronic Wasting Disease or Hemorrhagic Disease.

Improvements

1. Minor adjustments and requirements of **onboarding archers to include an age minimum of 18 years old** and no enrollment in other deer management programs.
2. Minor adjustments to the rules of the program to include:
 - a. A formal substitution policy for archers that can no longer participate including for reasons such as injury, time constraints, and/or out of tags.
 - b. Require all participants to label arrows in addition to their tree stands and game camera with their identification number.
 - c. Recommend all archers hunt with a tarp to assist with removal of the deer to prevent public upset.
 - d. Decrease number of archers per park to ten archers.
3. Install one field dressing station that archers in the program can utilize during the program.
4. Simplify the post-hunt summary and require all archers to submit reports within 24 hours.
5. Evaluate options for local butchering which would lessen the time allotment needed to donate their harvest.
6. Hunting from the ground was requested for archer safety and concerns of tree stands being stolen.
7. The City of Pittsburgh Deer Management Plan is still limited to large parks and greenways excluded in 2024-2025 plans including Hays Park.
8. Expand the EngagePGH page with updated information and more resources about archery in urban environments.

Appendix A: Improvement Matrix

#	Area of Improvement/Category	Corrective Action	Responsible Party	Status	Estimated Completion Date
1	Onboarding Adjustment Criteria	Adjust criteria on lottery sign up page	PGH Park Rangers I&P	Not Started	5/1/2024
2	Rule Adjustments	Adjust PowerPoint for selected archers with corrected stipulations	Thomas (USDA)	Not Started	7/24/2024
3	Installation of a Field Dressing Station	Work with DPW & AC&C to designate a space with maintenance plan	PGH Park Rangers DPW ACC	In Progress	9/1/2024
4	Adjust Post Hunt Summary	Erica to simplify questionnaire for post hunt summary to make data management easier	PGH Park Rangers I&P	Not Started	9/1/2024
5	Adopt a written deer management plan	Work with the External Community Groups and USDA to adopt a written management plan to ensure longevity of the program	External Community Groups PGH Park Rangers USDA	In Progress	12/2024
6	Expand the Deer Management EngagePGH Page	Update 2023-2024 numbers, provide additional information on archery, and discuss future steps of the program	PGH Park Rangers Mayor's Office	Not Started	5/1/2024

Appendix B: After Action Report Participating Departments

Internal (City of Pittsburgh)

- Office of the Mayor
- Office of Management & Budget
- Department of Public Safety
 - Park Rangers
 - Animal Care & Control
- Department of Parks & Recreation
- Department of Public Works
 - Parks Division
- Department of Mobility & Infrastructure

External

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services (APHIS WS)
 - Thomas Wilson
- Protect Our Parks & Gardens Coalition
 - Alison Keating & Martha Isler