

Deer Population Mitigation

Hillsborough Board of Commissioners

January 8, 2024

1

Why I Am Here

- Urban Wildlife Management
 - Historically not a priority for wildlife managers
 - Primary efforts focused on nuisance control
- Urbanization of rural areas (continued growth and development)
 - Destroys natural habitat for wildlife; predators and prey
 - Forces wildlife into urban areas
- Increasingly dangerous interactions with wildlife in urban areas
- Management plan to address growing wildlife populations

2

Over Population of Deer in Hillsborough

- Recent studies
 - There are now about 30 million deer in North America
 - 100 times more deer than there were 100 years ago
- Anecdotal Evidence
 - Herds as large as 12 roaming neighborhoods
 - Not uncommon to see 3 or 4 groups of 4-8 deer on a morning walk through town
 - 8-point buck grazing in my backyard
 - Browsing and rubbing damage all over town
 - Deer scat deposited all over town
- Empirical Evidence
 - Neighbor hit a deer causing thousands in damage
 - Dead deer on Churton St

More is not always better; sometimes more is just MORE!

3

Problems with Deer Over Population

- Competition for food sources
 - Public parks
 - Private home landscapes
- Deer populations are no longer held in check by their natural predators, and humans are creating perfect deer habitat in yards and parks
- Natural predators
 - Bears, wolves, bobcats, coyotes, etc.
 - Humans
- Danger to cars and people
- Deer ticks, Lyme Disease, and scat everywhere
- Also known to carry Q fever, chlamydiosis, leptospirosis, campylobacteriosis, salmonellosis, cryptosporidiosis, and giardiasis

4

Deer Damage

- Browsing
 - Deer will eat almost anything under 1" in diameter up to 6' from the ground
 - As food gets scarce in winter the "almost anything" becomes "almost everything"
- Antler Rubbing
 - Male deer rub their antlers on young, small trees to remove velvet during breeding season
 - Damage and shred the bark around the trunks
 - If cambian layer is sufficiently damaged the tree will die

Deer in Hillsborough are EXTREMELY destructive to gardens, landscapes and orchards.

5

Damage Consequences

- Destroying the undergrowth and natural habitat for small animals
- Decimating all desirable plants leaving room for undesirable plants to grow i.e., Japanese Stilt Weed
- Adding expenses and frustrations for residents
- Bee City USA
 - Deer eating native plants
 - Deer destroying pollinator habitats
- Tree City USA
 - Deer damaging saplings

6

Homeowner Mitigation Options

- Deer resistant plants are effective if deer are not hungry or there are nearby options they prefer
- Deer repellants are effective for short periods but require constant reapplication and alternating sprays as deer adapt to the deterrents
- Fence barriers around individual plants may work but when deer are desperate enough they will just knock them over
- Fencing the entire property may work
 - Deer can jump up to 8'
 - Historic District limits fencing to 6'

All homeowner options are expensive!!!

7

Deer Mitigation Options

- Regulated hunting
 - Preferred method by state agencies
 - Homeowners prefer archery, gun, and crossbow hunting
 - Venison used by hunters and property owners
 - Should be done annually for best results
- Sharpshooting
- Euthanasia
- Trapping and relocation
- Immunocontraception

8

Just Leave the Deer Alone?

- Deer population continues to grow
 - Increased pressure on food sources
 - Increased presence in town
 - Increased damage to public and private property
 - Continued damage to natural habitats for small animals and birds
- Unhealthy for deer
 - Sickly and underfed deer
 - Increased spread of disease within deer population
- Do NOT feed the deer
 - Impacts their ability to browse and forage to survive
 - Brings normally solitary, or small group, animals into unnatural concentrations and close contact
 - Provides ideal conditions for disease (e.g., bovine TB, bluetongue, hemorrhagic diseases) to more easily spread in high density deer populations

9

North Carolina Urban Archery Program Background

- The intention of the Urban Archery Season is to enable cities, towns and villages to reduce urban deer populations through increased hunter opportunity. Hunting during the Urban Archery Season is allowed ONLY in participating municipalities.
- Each city, town and village will decide if hunting is allowed on public property and restrictions, if any, for hunting on private property within the city, town and village limits.
- Hunters wishing to hunt in an area participating in the Urban Archery Season should call the participating city, town or village or visit its website to obtain a map showing lawful areas to hunt and additional information on specific restrictions that may apply to each area.
- The Urban Archery Season does not obligate private landowners to allow hunting on their property, nor does it eliminate the ethical requirement for obtaining permission from the landowner before hunting. Hunters are legally required to obtain written permission to hunt on posted property.
- Season bag and possession limits for both antlerless and antlered deer, including Bonus Antlerless Harvest Report Cards, that apply to the general archery, blackpowder, and gun deer seasons also apply to the Urban Archery Season.
- Antlered and antlerless deer may be harvested in participating areas during the Urban Archery Season.

10

North Carolina Urban Archery Program Application Procedures

- [Deer Regulations - North Carolina Hunting | eRegulations](#)
- The Urban Archery Season is available for cities, towns and villages that submit to the Wildlife Resources Commission by April 1 of each year a letter of intent to participate in the season.
- A map (no larger than 11" X 17") clearly defining the area included in the season should also accompany the letter of intent.
- Interested municipalities should call the Wildlife Management Division at 919-707-0050 and request to be contacted by a district wildlife biologist.

11

North Carolina Urban Archery Program 60 participating cities, towns and villages

Deer Hunting in Chapel Hill

- In North Carolina, each municipality has the option to determine whether it will allow hunting on public property and to establish restrictions for hunting on private property within the municipal limits. Current Town of Chapel Hill ordinances prohibit the discharge of firearms within the Town limits and no hunting of any kind is allowed on publicly held property, including land owned by the University. There are no Town ordinances that specifically limit the ability of individuals to hunt with bow and arrow on their own property or on other properties with permission of the landowner.
- Bow hunting is regulated by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. The statewide bow hunting season, including inside the Town limits of Chapel Hill, typically runs from early September through January.
- Since 2010, the Town has participated in the Urban Archery Program administered by the Wildlife Resources Commission. The Urban Archery Program extends the bow hunting season inside participating towns and cities and typically runs from the end of the bow hunting season through early February.
- **2023-2024 Season Date:**
 - Urban Archery Only (January 13 – February 18, 2024)
 - Urban Deer Season (open in participating cities only; see [regulations digest](#) for list and contact information)

12

North Carolina Urban Archery Program

60 participating cities, towns and villages

Deer Hunting in Chapel Hill

- **Property owners CAN...**
 - Hunt for deer with a bow and arrow on their own property with a proper hunting license and during Central North Carolina's deer season as determined by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.
 - Apply to NC Wildlife Resources Commission for a Depredation Hunting Permit. This permit allows property owners to hunt on their own property outside of regular and urban archery seasons with certain restrictions and regulations.
 - Report illegal or unsafe hunting to the Wildlife Resources Commission and/or Chapel Hill Police Department.
- **Property owners CANNOT...**
 - Use firearms within the Town limits.
 - Hire professional hunters to eliminate the deer on their property.
 - Track a wounded deer onto adjacent property while hunting without the permission of the adjacent property owner.
- **Regular hunters can ...**
 - Hunt deer with bow and arrow within the town limits on private property with permission from the land owner.
 - You may **NOT** hunt on town owned property or park land, or any other publicly owned or University owned land.

13

Action Requested

- Board recognize there is an issue that needs to be addressed
- Town Staff contact Wildlife Management Division on details to participate in Urban Archery program
- Town staff contact Chapel Hill and/or other local communities to ascertain how they manage the program
- Apply to participate in 2024 – 1 April deadline
 - Hillsborough can always decline to participate
 - Hillsborough cannot later decide to participate if we do not apply
- Look at other options

14

Resources

- NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- “Impacts and Management of White-Tailed Deer in Urban Landscapes: A Review” May 4, 2023, Dewayne Holley, North Carolina State University (a review and summary of 35 research articles and studies on deer management in urban areas)
- US Forest Service
- Multiple Wildlife Organizations