

The Deer Management Report - Board of Health - May 10, 2024

On January 13th at Bergen County Mayoral Meeting, the topic Deer/Human Conflict was discussed. From Ramsey, Councilwoman Sara Poppe; Board of Health member, Dr. Chris Haas; Ramsey Police Chief, Brian Lyman; Borough Administrator, Bruce Vozech; Council President, Peter Kilman; and joined Mayor Deirdre Dillon to attend the New Jersey Dept. of Fish and Wildlife presentation regarding the latest research and thinking on deer population management.

Their comprehensive research examined a number of areas such as deer birth and development rates, survival rates, natural and predation death rates, human caused deaths from car strikes, fence entanglements to legal hunting, they covered deer trapping and relocation, deer overcrowding sickness and disease, birth control and surgical sterilization methods, as well as monitoring immigration and emigration rates between municipalities.

A lot of material was presented and discussed, including the effectiveness and the cost of each approach. For the sake of time, we will jump ahead to their conclusion and that was that lethal deer management, that being legally controlled hunting by professional licensed Bowhunters saw the most significant and measureable results. It came as no surprise. Year after year, the lethal approach has proven to be the most successful and least costly to cull growing deer populations.

In particular, the *United Bowhunters of New Jersey* presented to the group and explained the approach. This group is the only State Hunting Organization named in the NJ State Community Based Deer Management Law, they work closely with the NJ Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, and are fully insured. Their Bow Hunters must pass stringer qualifications and background checks, and exhibit expert Bow Shot placement expertise. Saddle River has used them over the past 3 years with a degree success. And the venison is provided to programs that feed those in need through a program call *Hunters Helping the Hungry*.

Over the past several years, Mayor Dillon has regularly brought this topic up to other Mayoral meetings in Bergen County, however, to date consensus on a workable solution could not be reached. It's a sensitive topic, but the voices of residents have grown increasingly louder requesting municipalities for an effective deer management process to protect home ornamentation, gardens, fear of diseases carried by ticks, and there are reports of deer - unafraid of humans - becoming

antagonistic to people and dogs on a homeowner's property. Not to mention commercial nurseries are not only losing business but they are also being decimated from hungry deer.

Following that January, Mayor Dillon has asked Dr. Chris Haas on the Board of Health and Council President, Peter Kilman to spearhead this effort with the goal of developing a workable approach that we would potentially commence this autumn.

To date, after much due diligence and investigation, primarily in Bergen County and in some areas of the state, the reality is that the only effective options for reducing the deer population are the least popular to Bergen County residents, and the popular options have little to no affect in reducing the deer population.

Most residents polled in other municipalities do not want hunters killing deer within their municipality for a number of reasons. In one case, legal action has resulted by animal activists against killing deer, period.

At this time, to the best of our knowledge, there is no other municipality in Bergen county looking to implement a hunting-type option for the very reasons we found, although hunting was recognized by the NJ Fish and Wildlife Association as the most effective way to reduce the deer population.

As a result, for 2024, we will not be recommending a bow-hunting option. Killing dear within the Borough of Ramsey (which is only 5.5 square miles in size), like the other municipalities of Bergen County, remains a very sensitive topic, and one that we will not be implementing at this time.

We continue to implore the County to help coordinate a workable solution across Bergen County municipalities that will reduce the deer population. One municipality working alone will not make a difference. Deer don't recognize borders.

Dr. Chris Haas, Ramsey Board of Health

Peter Kilman, Ramsey Council President