

Burnsville Deer Management Program 2008 Annual Report

Introduction

The City of Burnsville (City) prepared a Natural Resources Master Plan in 1999 which identified the need for a citywide deer management program, especially for areas where woodland restoration or regeneration is a high priority objective. This, along with concerns regarding the biological integrity of the City's natural areas, increasing complaints about nuisance deer, car/deer crashes and concern over the long-term health of the deer herd, initiated the preparation of a deer management program for Burnsville.

The Burnsville Deer Management Program (Program) was adopted in September 2001 to minimize conflicts between deer, habitat and residents. The Program provided recommendations in four key areas: education, monitoring, population control and feeding ban.

This annual report has been prepared to document the progress of Program implementation in 2008. This report also provides recommendations for the remaining portion of 2009.

Education

The Program made a number of recommendations regarding education—including use of the City's website, City's newsletter and a neighborhood workshop. The intent of the education component is to disseminate information to the community regarding the Program, feeding ban and other deer management topics, and to provide residents with tools to cope with deer on their property.

Program information continues to remain linked to the City's website (www.ci.burnsville.mn.us), and can be found under the Natural Resources Department, Wildlife section. Information regarding the Program and feeding ban is periodically included in the City's newsletter, *Burnsville Bulletin*.

Based on the low turn out for the "Living with Wildlife" workshops in 2002 and 2003, a workshop has not been held in subsequent years. The City will consider holding future workshops or preparing other information that can be shown on the local cable channel or published in newsletters, as warranted by public interest.

Monitoring

This annual report, the deer population, car/deer crashes, depredation complaints and habitat diversity are all key components to managing the deer population within the city. The following section presents the monitoring data collected during 2008 and early 2009.

Aerial Counts

An aerial deer count was performed by the City on February 23, 2009. The aerial count was conducted after the fall 2008 archery hunts, but before the winter 2008/2009 sharpshooting was completed (see Population Control). Snow conditions were good at the time of the count, with minimum snow depths of six inches throughout the city.

The aerial count observed 198 deer within the city limits. A summary of the 2009 aerial count by management unit is provided in Table 3. Figure 1 shows the distribution of deer observed during the flight. Also shown on this figure are deer observations reported to the City throughout 2008 by local residents; these represent periodic observations only, and were not used in the total population count.

Three Rivers Park District (District) also conducts annual aerial deer counts in and around Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve, which includes the Southwest Management Unit of Burnsville. The District performed an aerial count on February 2, 2009. Their count for the Southwest Management Unit was 45 deer, which is comparable to the City's count of 54 for the same unit. The data demonstrates the importance of cooperating with adjacent jurisdictions, given the movement of deer from nearby habitat outside the city.

In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), periodically collects aerial count data for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, which includes the northern portion of the Northeast Management Unit. Recent survey efforts have been focused in other areas of the refuge, outside the limits of Burnsville.

Crash Data

Car/deer crash data for 2008 was collected from the Burnsville Police Department and the State of Minnesota. Nineteen (19) known car/deer crashes were reported to the City. The Burnsville Police Department initiated a new computer program a few years ago, which has made it more difficult to track deer collisions; therefore, the actual number of car/deer crashes reported to the City may be higher. The State of Minnesota identified four car/deer crash records, with two records overlapping the City's data. It should be noted that the State's crash data for 2008 has not been fully compiled (the data is expected to be finalized in May 2009); therefore, the actual number of car/deer crashes reported to the State may be higher. Dakota County forwards all car/deer crash data to the State; thus, the County's crash data is included in the State's records.

In addition to City and State car/deer crash data, report forms from the City's animal control contractor were collected, documenting each deer carcass retrieved during 2008. The data provided by the animal control contractor included 12 deer carcasses removed from the city, two of which did not have complete location information. One of the collected deer overlaps the City's crash data. Table 1 shows the age and gender information recorded for each deer.

Table 1: 2008 Animal Control Carcass Collection Records by Deer Age and Gender

Age	Female	Male	Unknown	Total
Adult	5	4	0	9
Yearling	2	1	0	3
Fawn	0	0	0	0
Total	7	5	0	12

The total minimum number of car/deer crashes for 2008 was 32 (total includes non-overlapping carcass removals). This is six fewer car/deer crashes than in 2007. A summary of the 2008 crash data by management unit is provided in Table 3. Figure 2 shows the distribution of car/deer crashes and deer carcass removals.

Monitoring Report Forms

The City created a Deer Monitoring Report Form in October 2001 to provide supplemental information on the deer population, expanding the type of information recorded by the previous complaint records. The monitoring form includes four categories for reporting information—including deer depredation (i.e., damage to vegetation), general observation of deer presence and behavior, carcass and crash/collision, and an “other” category. The “other” category has included past comments regarding the Program, feeding ban violations, offers to provide hunting access and miscellaneous information related to deer management.

In 2008, four report forms were submitted to or recorded by the City from three different individuals (or sites). All of the forms indicated more than one category of information, resulting in a total of eight records. There were four general observation records and four reports of depredation. The number of records received for each category is listed in Table 2 (refer to Table 3 for a summary of the 2008 depredation complaints by management unit). The monitoring reports were from the West Central and Northeast Management Units, with four records (one site) located near preferred deer habitat. The approximate locations of the 2008 general observations are shown in Figure 1; depredation occurrences are shown in Figure 3.

Table 2: 2008 Monitoring Report Forms by Category

Number of Sites	Number of Records	Depredation	General Observations	Carcass/Crash/Collision	Other
3	8	4	4	0	0

Exclosure Data

During 2008, the City and S.T.O.P. (Stewards to Our Parks) continued to monitor the exclosure areas in Terrace Oaks Park. Deer have been excluded from the monitoring areas for eight winter seasons. The data for the 2008 monitoring season was not available at the time this report was prepared.

Monitoring Data Comparison

Table 3 compares the monitoring data collected during 2008 and early 2009 with the previous six years of data.

Table 3: Comparison of Annual Monitoring Data for 2002 through Early 2009

Units	Aerial Counts						
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 ^a
NW	15	23	14	10	0	46	26
WC	24	0	1	2	14	16	18
SW	89	66	66	21	50	39	54
NE	54	38	78	111	78	107	75
EC	46	27	34	2	29	36	22
SE	11	0	16	5	9	1	3
Total	239	154	209	151	180	245	198

Units	Crashes ^b						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
NW	5	1	3	3	2	1	2
WC	9	9	9	10	6	4	4
SW	27	25	10	11	11	13	6
NE	16	4	12	12	10	5	6
EC	21	23	26	14	13	5	10
SE	6	11	11	8	13	5	2
Total	84+2^c=86	73	68+1^c=69	58	55	33+5^c=38	30+2^c=32

Units	Depredation Complaints						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
NW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WC	1	0	1	0	0	1	2
SW	7	3	0	0	0	0	0
NE	1	1	0	0	2	0	2
EC	15	5	3	0	0	0	0
SE	0	2	4	0	0	0	0
Total	24	11	8+2^d=10	0	2	1	4

^a Represents the actual counts as shown in Figure 1. Later in Table 7, the counts are adjusted to represent the population after sharpshooting occurred.

^b Crash numbers include non-overlapping carcass removals in addition to reported crashes.

^c Indicates Carcass Collection data that could not be identified by location due to incomplete information.

^d Indicates Depredation Complaint data that could not be identified by location due to incomplete information.

Population Control

The Program approved two primary population control strategies, archery hunting and sharpshooting. Based on the January 2008 deer counts and projected population for November 2008 (as presented in the 2007 Annual Report), between 102 and 152 deer were recommended to be removed through a combination of these methods.

Archery Hunting

In an effort to make the archery hunting program as effective as possible, changes to the City's firearms ordinance were made in 2003 as suggested in the adopted Program. This ordinance modification allows opportunity for more private landowners in the southwestern portion of the city to archery hunt on their property per current DNR hunting regulations. The ordinance states that the discharge of a bow must be 200 feet from a property line, rather than the previous 500 feet. At this time, neither the City nor DNR has a method of tracking the number of deer taken within the city by hunters on private property.

In 2008, the City sponsored archery deer hunts on public land within the city. The Burnsville Archery Hunts were conducted over four periods between October 16 and November 8 in Black Dog Park and Kelleher Park (formerly named Cam Ram Park). The Minnesota Bowhunters Resource Base coordinated the four hunt periods. A total of 11 deer were harvested from the two parks as shown in Table 4. Of the 11 deer harvested, nine were female (five adults and four yearlings) and two were male (one adult and one yearling).

Table 4: 2008 Burnsville Archery Hunts

Location	Hunt Period	Adult Female	Female Yearling	Adult Male	Male Yearling	Total
Black Dog Park	10/16 to 10/18	1	0	0	0	1
	10/23 to 10/25	1	0	0	0	1
	10/30 to 10/31	0	0	1	0	1
	11/06 to 11/07	0	0	0	0	0
Kelleher Park	10/16 to 10/18	0	4	0	1	5
	10/23 to 10/25	1	0	0	0	1
	10/30 to 11/01	2	0	0	0	2
	11/06 to 11/08	0	0	0	0	0
Total	---	5	4	1	1	11

Winter 2008/2009 Sharpshooting

The City of Burnsville contracted with Superior Whitetail Management, Inc. (SWM) to remove deer via sharpshooting within the city limits. The removal effort occurred January 31 through March 31, 2009. Sharpshooting was conducted within Black Dog Park, Cliff Fen Park and the Waste Management facility (located within the Northwest Management Unit). Fifty-five (55) deer were harvested as shown in Table 5 (Note: 42 deer were removed after the February 23, 2009 aerial count). Of the 55 deer harvested, 36 were female (24 adults and 12 yearlings) and 19 were male (15 adults and four yearlings). SWM noted in their summary report that 44 fetuses were also removed with the adult female deer.

Table 5: Winter 2008/2009 Sharpshooting

Location	Adult Female	Female Yearling	Adult Male	Male Yearling	Total
Black Dog Park	2	1	0	1	4
Cliff Fen Park	6	0	9	1	16
Waste Management	16	11	6	2	35
Total	24	12	15	4	55

Population Control Efforts by Other Jurisdictions

Three Rivers Park District held a Special Permit Archery Hunt at Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. The hunt was conducted November 14 through 16, 2008, and harvested 32 deer from the park. The District also held a Special Permit Shotgun Hunt on November 29 and 30, 2008. This hunt harvested 38 deer. Much of the regional park is located outside the limits of Burnsville, thus it is likely that only a small portion of the 70 total deer taken during the hunts was within the city.

The USFWS periodically performs deer removals within the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. No deer removals were conducted in the Burnsville portion of the refuge in 2008.

Population Control Summary

The total number of deer removed from each management unit within the city by archery hunting and sharpshooting is summarized in Table 6, along with the target removal goals established in the 2007 Annual Report.

Table 6: 2008/2009 Removal Results

Units	Recommended Fall/Winter 2008/2009 Harvest ^a	2008 Archery Hunting	Winter 2008/2009 Sharpshooting ^b	Total Deer Removed in Fall/Winter 2008/2009
NW	42-50	0	35	35
WC	0	0	0	0
SW	10-27	8	0	8
NE	50-71	3	20	23
EC	0-4	0	0	0
SE	0	0	0	0
Total	102-152	11	55	66

^a Based on adjusted 2008 deer counts, projected population for November 2008 and program goal of 15-25 deer per square mile of preferred habitat (as presented in the 2007 Annual Report).

^b Forty-two (42) deer (seven from Cliff Fen Park and 35 from the Waste Management facility) were removed via sharpshooting after the February 23, 2009 aerial count.

Feeding Ban

A feeding ban ordinance was approved by the City on September 17, 2001. The purpose of the feeding ban is to discourage residents from placing corn or other grains in amounts and locations that would attract deer to the area.

Since adoption of the feeding ban, the City received (via the monitoring report form) two comments regarding individual landowners feeding deer in 2001, one in 2002, three in 2003, one confirmed in 2004, five in 2005, and one in 2007. All of the complaints have been in different areas, and further complaints in these areas have not been received since. No feeding ban violations were reported in 2008.

Recommendations for the Remainder of 2009

Education

Based on low turnout in both 2002 and 2003, no further workshops are planned. Deer management information from past workshops can be provided to individual citizens as requested. It is recommended that previous efforts put into the workshops be redirected into providing additional information via the website, newsletters and local cable channel. Information regarding the City's monitoring report program and feeding ban, including reasons for the ban, seems to be a priority.

Monitoring

It is recommended to continue collecting annual aerial counts, crash data, exclosure observations and monitoring report forms, and to continue generating and exhibiting annual reports. It is also recommended that carcass removal data continue to be collected from the City's animal control contractor on an annual basis. The carcass removal data helps identify car/deer crashes, which are typically under-reported.

The availability and use of the monitoring report form should be periodically discussed in the City's newsletter in order to further promote resident feedback on the Program and current conditions. This information is helpful when reviewing aerial counts, crash and carcass data, and exclosure observations. It can also aid in identifying additional access points for hunters during population control efforts and potential feeding ban violations.

Population Control

As noted earlier, an aerial deer count within the limits of Burnsville was completed in February of 2009. Based on the aerial count results, adjustments for the timing of sharpshooting efforts, age and gender data collected during the archery hunts, sharpshooting, and carcass removals and typical reproduction/mortality factors, a population projection was calculated for November 2009. The population projection was then used to establish a fall/winter 2009/2010 removal goal. The DNR evaluated the City's deer population projection and removal goal and found them to be reasonable.

Table 7 provides a breakdown (by management unit) of the Program's deer management goal, the results of the 2009 aerial count, the population projection and removal recommendation for fall/winter 2009/2010.

Table 7: Additional 2009 Population Control Recommendations

Units	Management Program Goal (15-25 deer/mi ²)	2009 Count (February) ^a	Adjusted 2009 Count ^a	Projected 2009 Population (November)	Calculated Harvest ^c	Minimum Recommended Fall/Winter 2009/2010 Harvest ^e
NW	11-19	26	0	0	0	0
WC	3-6	18	18	23	17-20	17
SW	25-42	54	54	68	26-43	26
NE	31-52	75	68	85	33-54	33
EC	12-20	22	22	28	8-16	8
SE	4-7	3	3	4	0	0
Total	86-146	198	165-9^b=156	208	62-122^d	84

- ^a The aerial count was conducted during the sharpshooting effort; forty-two (42) deer were removed after the count. Prior to calculating projections for November 2009, counts were adjusted by subtracting out the post-count sharpshooting results.
- ^b Negative number accounts for movement of deer between the Northwest Management Unit and surrounding areas (35 deer were removed from the Northwest Management Unit after the aerial count).
- ^c Based on adjusted 2009 deer count, projected population for November 2009, and program goal of 15-25 deer per square mile of preferred habitat.
- ^d This range is based on subtracting the total management program goal from the projected 2009 population (208 minus 146 and 208 minus 86). The harvest ranges for the management units in the column above do not add up to the total calculated harvest range because the projected populations for the Northwest Management Unit and Southeast Management Unit are equal to or less than the corresponding program goal. Zeros replace negative numbers that would have resulted if the program goals for these units were subtracted from the projected populations.
- ^e Removing deer based on the calculated ranges for the management units could result in a total 2009/2010 deer population that is less than the overall program goal. Therefore, the lower end of the calculated harvest range for each management unit is recommended in order to stay within the target program range.

The archery hunting strategy used in Black Dog and Kelleher Parks in 2008 was successful. The goal of the archery hunts is to reduce the herd size. It is recommended that the archery hunting strategy as outlined in the Program be continued in the fall of 2009; the primary focus should be in the Southwest and Northeast Management Units. The guidelines and polices of the hunts will be refined based on the observations and suggestions made during the 2008 archery hunts.

It is also recommended that sharpshooting in the West Central, Northeast, and East Central Management Units be conducted in the winter of 2009/2010.

Between archery hunting and sharpshooting, the goal for fall/winter 2009/2010 should be to harvest 17 deer in the West Central Management Unit, 26 deer in the Southwest Management Unit, 33 deer in the Northeast Management Unit and eight deer in the East Central Management Unit. An additional 38 deer should be removed if funding allows; the additional harvest should be implemented as allowed by opportunity within these management units.

Three Rivers Park District is planning to conduct an archery hunt in 2009 (scheduled for November 14-16), as well as a shotgun hunt (TBD), within Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. Archery hunting and sharpshooting activities in the Southwest Management Unit should be coordinated with the District. The USFWS periodically performs deer removals within the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Deer removal efforts by the City in the Northeast Management Unit should be coordinated with the USFWS.

Feeding Ban

No changes to the deer feeding ban are recommended. Continue to provide information to the public, and continue to monitor and follow up on feeding complaints as they occur.

Program Costs

Each year the annual budget will be adjusted based on the estimated deer density and removal needs, funding availability, and the goals of the overall program. Table 8 provides an adjusted estimate of costs for the implementation of the Program in 2009.

Table 8: Estimated Cost to Implement Recommendations

Recommendation	Adjusted 2009 Costs
Education	
Website Updates, Newsletter Articles, Cable Programs Video Production	City Staff \$ 2,000
Subtotal	\$ 2,000
Monitoring	
Aerial Counts Monitoring Coordination Deer Reporting Statistics/Figures, Program Update	\$ 2,400 City Staff \$ 400 \$ 8,000
Subtotal	\$ 10,800
Population Control	
Archery Program Coordination Sharpshooting	City Staff \$ 22,000
Subtotal	\$ 22,000
Feeding Ban Ordinance	
Administration	City Staff
Subtotal	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 34,800