



# FREMONT Michigan

*“NOW AND ALWAYS -- A Fine City • A Great Community”*

## LONG-TERM COMMUNITY DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

### PURPOSE:

The white-tailed deer herd in and around the City of Fremont has reached a level that is unsafe for the deer herd as well as causing significant damage to both public and private property. In response to numerous complaints and a petition from community residents and property owners, the City Council established the Deer Management Task Force. The Task Force has met regularly since January 2007 and proposes the following measures to manage the deer herd.

### RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS:

1. The City of Fremont, in cooperation with the Task Force and the MI Dept. of Natural Resources (MDNR) will develop an educational program that will provide residents with information on deer habits and guidelines for limiting localized deer damage using screening, alternative plantings and other techniques. The City's Long-Term Deer Management Plan will be included. Educational materials will be distributed through a variety of methods including public informational meetings, pamphlets, neighborhood or targeted area mailings, the City's website and the City Beat Newsletter. These materials would present information such as the following:

- Describe efforts to determine estimates and locations of significant numbers of deer. Could include the desirability of having property owners provide initial and on-going data & observations of deer numbers & damage through the use of logs, notifications to Task Force, etc.
- Listings of landscape plants (bushes, trees, annuals, perennials, etc.) that are susceptible to deer browse and those that are typically not attractive to deer. This would encourage both existing & new property owners to modify their landscapes to make them less subject to deer damage.
- Discuss the challenges brought about by the recreational feeding of deer, including the artificial support for increasing deer numbers, transient browsing, disease & damage to adjoining properties.
- Determine if the issue of reducing or eliminating recreational feeding should be approached as an educational, peer pressure or legal (ordinance) issue.
- Describe the many other types of deterrents or protective devices that could be used to protect property, such as:
  - habitat modification
  - natural or chemical repellents
  - temporary netting or partial barriers around plants
  - permanent fencing in rear & some side yards (woven wire, multiple-strand, electrical, rope, etc.)
  - motion-activated lights or even sprinklers
  - hazing, noisemakers & frightening techniques & devices
  - use of dogs as deterrents
  - roadside warning signs & reduced speed limits in problem accident areas.



2. The City will evaluate the need for and, where appropriate, install or petition the State or County to install on roadways under their jurisdiction warning signs and/or reflectors that may reduce the

likelihood of vehicle/deer collisions (VDC's). The City Police Department will periodically review VDC location information to analyze the effectiveness of the signs and/or deer culling operations. In addition, thoughtful consideration will be given to deer migratory paths as transportation improvement projects are approved by the Planning Commission and City Council.

3. In order to prevent irreparable damage to the ecosystems in Fremont and to prevent significant injury or damage to persons or property, the City Council has set the maximum deer population density to be twenty-five to thirty-five (25-35) per square mile of habitat (not per square mile of the entire City or DMA). Estimates of numbers are to be collected from multiple data sources, which may include the following:
  - Aerial count w/ a fixed-wing aircraft during winter when snow is present
  - MDNR annual data on deer herd estimates by county or area
  - MDNR annual data on reported hunting success during all seasons for the area
  - MDNR issuance of other "Damage & Nuisance Animal Control" permits in the area
  - Observation & reported sightings of deer, their numbers, the time of day & their location by City staff, residents, volunteers, law enforcement officials, etc.
  - Observation & severity of deer browse damage to property.

The MDNR currently estimates a deer herd size in Newaygo County of approximately 35-45/sq. mile. Initially culling approximately 10/sq. mile could lower this number down to the preferred initial density of 25-35/sq. mile of deer habitat.

4. The Task Force will coordinate a regular program to contact and encourage farmers w/ documented animal crop damage to secure MDNR "Deer Management Assistance" permits (formerly "crop damage block permits") for lands within the DMA, but mostly outside of the corporate limits of the City. Particular efforts and emphasis will be made to enlist the participation of farmers & landowners in those areas adjacent to Deer Management Units that have exhibited high population and extensive deer browse damage.
5. With the combined efforts of the City, the Fremont Police Department, the Task Force, local sportsmen and the MDNR, attempt to implement long-term deer population and density limits to better manage the deer herd. The initial goal would be to reduce the deer herd by ten antlerless deer per square mile over an eight-square-mile area in and around the City of Fremont (see attached DMA Map.) This would require an initial reduction of approximately 80 antlerless deer.

The City will initially utilize private hunters hunting on private lands (or public if open to hunting) to reduce the number of deer in each DMA to the population threshold. By the end of the initial reduction plan, it is projected that the deer population will be to a level that requires annual maintenance rather than aggressive reduction. The City will strongly encourage use of non-lethal methods to maintain deer numbers but recognizes that killing of deer may be necessary to maintain the population goal.

The Task Force offers the following recommended steps to implement the deer management goals:

- The City would acquire and coordinate the issuance of the proper "Damage and Nuisance Animal Control" permit from the MDNR for up to 80 antlerless deer. Permits would have to be used in accordance with ALL State hunting laws.
- Duration of the controlled hunt would be from October 1, 2007 (beginning of bow season) through January 2, 2008 (end of late archery season.)
- The Task Force would solicit interest from local sportsmen to include their name, address, proposed hunting location and the number of deer they desire to remove. Attempts would be

made to spread the permits around the community on a geographic basis and to those areas experiencing heavy deer population numbers and significant deer damage reports.

- The City would notify those local sportsmen chosen to receive the special permits to be used within the proposed eight-square-mile DMA or adjacent lands. The City would issue the permits for a limited time of fourteen (14) days, in blocks of no more than two (2) permits per applicant or property owner at any one time. If the applicant were to fill the two permits before the 14-day deadline, they would be eligible to receive additional permits; again, in lots of two and with a new 2-week deadline. Those applicants that do not fill one or both of their initial permits would be required to return the permit(s) to the City, which could re-issue them to other applicants.
- All permits would be returned initially to the City with a designated form that outlines the bio-data of deer killed (sex, age, weight), the date & location of the kill and the shooter's information and permit number. In turn, these permits and the kill data would be forwarded to Jeff Greene of the MDNR.
- Deer killed by sportsmen must be used for human consumption.

Should the initial actions of the sportsmen w/ special permits and the nearby farmers w/ crop damage permits fail to remove the desired number of antlerless deer, then the City may consider the possible use of Police Department sharpshooters to complete the removal. The location(s) for such removal may require a review and amendment of City Ordinances that prohibit the discharge of firearms in the City limits (except for law enforcement officers) and/or within City parks. All meat would be donated to a local food bank.

6. The Deer Task Force would convene each spring to review educational material, deer population numbers (current and projected), management options, and to recommend methods to kill deer if determined as necessary. Any or all legal lethal methods available (including sharpshooting and bow and arrow hunting) may be utilized after the initial reduction plan if the method(s) meet the following criteria: a) public safety; b) community acceptance; and c) effectiveness in maintaining the desired number of deer.
7. To aid in the implementation of the Long-Term Deer Management Plan, the Task Force would submit an annual plan to be adopted by the City Council following a public hearing. Annual plans as approved by the Council will be forwarded to the MDNR for authorization to implement.

5/15/07 Initial Draft Plan Prepared by Deer Management Task Force  
6/18/07 Initial Draft Plan Reviewed by City Council  
6/19/07 Final Plan approved by Deer Management Task Force  
7/02/07 Final Plan approved by City Council

### **Leopold's Vision for Wildlife Management**

"The real problem of wildlife management is not how we should handle the animals... the real problem is one of human management."

- Aldo Leopold

"The inevitable fusion of (the human and ecological dimensions of wildlife management) will, perhaps, constitute the outstanding advance of this century."