

Urban Wildlife Management
Grand Haven Public Meeting
January 22, 2007

Sara Schaefer
DNR Wildlife Division
Wildlife Supervisor
Plainwell OSC
621 N. 10th St.
Plainwell, MI 49080
269-685-6851 ext 114
schaefer@Michigan.gov

G. Nik Kalejs
DNR Wildlife Division
Wildlife Habitat Biologist
Muskegon State Game Area
7600 E. Messinger
Twin Lake, MI 49457
231-788-5055
kalejsg@Michigan.gov

Role of the Michigan DNR

- Advisory
- Provide technical assistance
- Help with education
- Issues special wildlife control permits (if needed).

Why is the DNR involved in Wildlife Management with the city of Grand Haven?

DNR Wildlife Division Mission Statement:

"To enhance, restore, and conserve the state's wildlife resources, natural communities, and ecosystems for the benefit of Michigan's citizens, visitors, and future generations."

- It would be desirable for the city of Grand Haven to develop a wildlife management plan to cover all species of interest inside the city limits.
 - To maintain the ecological integrity of the parks and open spaces.
 - To prevent disease issues associated with wildlife over abundance.
 - To minimize socially negative human/wildlife interactions.
 - To be prepared to make future decisions that may involve urban wildlife in the city.
- The city has decided to start with the portion of the plan that covers deer management because it is a current issue that requires a timely response.
- Eventually, the plan will be expanded to include other species of interest.

Deer Management

- Recommended reading: The Science of Overabundance, deer ecology and population management. Edited by William J. McShea, H. Brian Underwood, and John H. Rappole. 402 pp.
 - Provides a history of deer research and issues, addresses the consequences of high densities of deer and examines the influence of deer on their local environment.
- *“Common knowledge too often serves as the bible of management decisions. Enhanced by anecdotes and accumulated lore, speculative ideas or hypotheses become transformed into dogma that is extremely resistant to change. There is, perhaps, no research endeavor that contains more common knowledge than the study of deer. All who have hunted deer, observed on in their yard, or seen an animated film on the subject consider themselves experts. There is something about the species that allows everyone a clear insight in to the mysteries of deer biology. In many cases, the ideas expressed reflect the perspective of the individual. When foresters, wildlife biologists, hunters, and animal welfare activists discuss deer, one might be hard pressed to acknowledge that they are all talking about the same animal.”*
- **Density** – problematic when talking about deer.
 - Deer move around seasonally.
 - Deer do not utilize a given area evenly across the landscape.
 - No static number of deer per unit area can provide an accurate reflection of the dynamics of the system.
 - Changes in deer abundance over a broad scale (county estimates) do not necessarily reflect what is happening within specific refuges (urban areas).
- **Overabundance** – is a value judgement – has clear meaning only when placed in a specific context.
 - Are the deer a threat to human life?
 - Are the deer depressing the densities of favorable species?
 - Are the deer a threat to themselves (disease, health)?
 - Are the deer a threat to ecosystem function?
 - Are the deer above social tolerance levels?
 - Are the deer at higher levels than they have been historically?

Answers to those questions will assist managers in determining if the deer population should be reduced. Don't concentrate on any one question unless the situation is severe.

Options to deal with deer overabundance will be discussed in greater detail later tonight, however, here is a simplified list of potential action:

- Do nothing.
- Protect vegetation from over-browsing.
- Reduce negative human/deer interactions.
- Actively attempt to reduce the deer population by decreasing the survivability of female deer.