

Morgantown Urban Deer Committee
Final Report and Recommendations to City Council
May 18, 2010

In January I was asked to chair this committee, with the charge being to analyze the deer situation in the city limits and if problems exist, to suggest ways to assist citizens. I used the list of people who volunteered to serve on that committee and added Mark Wise from BOPARC, Randy Hudak from WVU, 2 bowhunters who were leaders in the Greystone control program, citizens Ray Swager and Karl Yagle, and Mark Trump a city policeman. We conducted meetings with every neighborhood association, examined letters and emails sent to council and our committee, talked to people involved with similar situations in other cities and towns, examined the scientific literature on non-hunting and control options, met with the BOPARC board, and met with people from the University.

Our conclusion is that there is a definite problem with deer in certain parts of the city, and that if nothing is done, it will certainly get worse. Know that a great deal of time and research went into the non hunting options that some citizens presented. Hundreds of communities have debated these and almost all came to the conclusion that non hunting options such as fences and repellents just do not work for a community. Some work for individuals, but not for a larger area. There are materials in the Appendix of this report that discuss these.

After many hours of thought, review, and discussions, we recommend the following.

1. That the city adopt a regulation to stop feeding deer within the City limits. There is no question that feeding deer is part of our problem. Though feeding does not draw deer into the city, those that have home ranges that are totally within the city limits, and those that border the city limits, utilize these feeders and in so doing do lots of damage to neighboring properties. There was almost unanimous sentiment expressed at the neighborhood association meetings to do this. These can be written to allow feeding birds and squirrels (see Appendix C).
2. We support the development of materials on things that might help citizens deal with deer and placing them on a separate section of the cities website. If you vote to control deer, we support placing the rules, dates, maps, etc. for such a control program on the website. Several citizens and I will help develop materials for this purpose.
3. We suggest that BOPARC build at least one small deer enclosure each in White, Marilla, Whitmore, and Krepps Park, and Dorsey Knob, for the purpose of education. We believe that local students, Boy or Girl Scouts, garden clubs, etc. could help with this project. The committee believes that deer have seriously eroded the natural ecology of our parks and enclosures would show that. Many parks around the country have these, and materials on construction and the value are attached in the Appendix F.
4. Implement a regulation (s) that would allow bows to be used inside the City limits to be used in a control program. This program would follow strict guidelines (see Appendix I), and would take place on specified city and private properties that are at least five acres in size, but that meet

terrain, and assurance of safety guidelines. Hunting on private property would only be done with the landowners approval. All decisions on exactly where to bowhunt will be evaluated by a special Control Hunt Task Force of those with experience in bowhunting and control hunts. Safety is the main concern. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of such control hunts in cities and towns all over the United States each year and there has never been an accident involving a non hunters. This is because of stringent requirements on who hunts, how they qualify, and where they hunt. Attached are requirements for bowhunters. It is hoped that this first control hunt can take place this fall.

5. We believe that it would be a good idea to provide funding to process 100 deer with the meat being donated to area 'soup kitchens.' We've found a local butcher who will do this for \$50 per deer, reduced from his normal charge. Such a donation would be very good publicity relative to this control hunt.

6. A number of citizens indicated the need to know how many deer live within the city. We suggest that council consider doing a thermal imaging deer count next winter. The committee does not believe that such a count will persuade those most opposed to controlling deer, that a control is necessary no matter how high the number. However, as a part of the entire process of controlling deer, it may be useful. There are several options we've uncovered that would allow this to be done. One is using local and WVU experts, and another involves a private firm that has a lot of experience with deer counts. One option is considerably cheaper than the other. We could work with the city manager on this idea, and it can only be done when there is snow on the ground.

Appendix A. *Information sheet on common questions and answers* relative to the deer problem in Morgantown. This was *used as a basis to give information* to and get responses from citizens at each neighborhood association meeting.

Appendix B. *General materials* from states on Recommendations for Deer Management, and Managing Urban Deer.

Appendix C. *Information on banning the feeding of deer*. In some states (actually more all the time) it is illegal to feed deer statewide. Here are rules and comments from some of those states; Wisconsin, New York, Virginia, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Mankata (MN), and several other towns. Also one example of many brochures available on why feeding deer does “more harm than good.”

Appendix D. The type of *information and web sites* that could be presented on a separate section of the cities web site to educate citizens about ways to ameliorate their deer problems. “Comparison of Commercial Deer Repellents.”

Appendix E. The material relates to the problem of *Lyme Disease* in our town. There is debate over whether we even have such a disease, and whether deer are the problem. The County Health Dept does not list any cases for our county in 2009, yet the Communicable Disease Center notes that there were 238 cases in WV in 2009. At the heart of the debate are guidelines used by the Infectious Diseases Society of America to detect Lyme Disease. Also at issue is the fact that Lyme Disease is difficult to diagnose and it is difficult to test for. Thus, some local doctors (and doctors all over the country) do not test for the disease and patients go untreated. Based on CDC figures, cases in WV have gone from a low of 11 to 238 in the past years, with extreme growth in numbers since 2007.

Attached are three emails that I’ve gotten from people in our community that have Lyme Disease (several others with the disease spoke up at our neighborhood association meetings), and several emails from Dr. Erika Pallie, who works at Cheat Lake Physicians, and she has closed her practice to any more Lyme Disease patients because she has too many to deal with. Following those are documents concerning the guidelines for testing, materials on the tick ecology and the disease, and a journal paper showing that when you lower deer numbers you also lower the incidence of Lyme Disease.

Appendix F. Information on *deer exclosures*, their use in parks, and studies done on impacts of deer on wildflowers and other vegetation using deer exclosures.

Appendix G. Material showing the *damage* to vegetation. First is a letter from Marchetta Maupin outlining damage to a garden she planted in March 2009, at Dorsey Knob. Then a study done by WVU in 2002 showing damage to yards, gardens, flowers, trees, and automobiles, in five cities in WV, including over \$500,000 damage in Morgantown. Also some publications showing damage deer do to the ecology of our forests.

Appendix H. *Regulations passed by three cities* (two of which are in WV—Wheeling and

Bethlehem) related to *allowing the use of bows* to conduct a control deer hunt.

Appendix I. *General Rules* (Proposed Draft) for Morgantown Control Bowhunt and Rules the *Bowhunters Must Follow*.

Appendix J. *Urban Bow Deer Hunt Application form* used by Greystone. The Morgantown Control Deer Hunt has not prepared an application form yet, but will do so when the hunt is approved. The form will be similar to this form, with special adaptation to fit the Morgantown situation.

Appendix K. All bowhunters must take a *special 10 hr Urban Bowhunter Education Program*, with special instructors who have been trained under guidelines created and used by the National Bowhunter Education Foundation. There are such instructors in West Virginia who belong to the WV Bowhunters Assoc., and they have committed to assist us when the time comes. There is no charge for this course. The Appendix is a *Guide to Urban Bowhunting* created by the National Bowhunter Education Foundation, written by Fred Richter and Tim Reed from Wheeling, and commissioned to write this document by then President of the National Bowhunter Education Foundation, Dr. Dave Samuel.