

**2017 DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR  
UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY  
WATCHUNG RESERVATION  
LENAPE & NOMAHEGAN PARKS  
PASSAIC RIVER PARK  
ASH BROOK RESERVATION  
OAK RIDGE PARK  
HAWK RISE SANCTUARY**

Adopted 12/8/16

**PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

**INTRODUCTION**

- The Watchung Reservation encompasses 2065 acres (3.2 square miles) in the Townships of Berkeley Heights, Scotch Plains and Springfield; the Boroughs of Mountainside and Watchung; and the City of Summit.
- Passaic River Park spans 287 acres (0.45 square mile) in the Township of Berkeley Heights, Borough of New Providence and City of Summit.
- Lenape and Nomahegan Parks cover 480 acres (0.75 square mile) in the Townships of Cranford, Springfield, and Union; the Borough of Kenilworth; and the Town of Westfield.
- \* The Ash Brook Reservation encompasses 667.45 acres (1.04 square miles) in the Townships of Clark and Scotch Plains. Oak Ridge Park includes 166.14 acres (0.26 square mile) in the Townships of Clark and Edison.
- \* The Hawk Rise Sanctuary and Linden Municipal Landfill cover 181 acres (0.28 square mile) on municipal property in the City of Linden.
- \* Forest ecologists recommend that white-tailed deer populations in Northeast hardwood forests should not exceed an overwintering density of 20 deer per square mile in order for deer browse to not impair forest health. In areas where the forest health is already compromised, deer density needs to be as low as 5 per square mile.
- \* The results of spotlight counts conducted in April, 2016 suggest 2016-2017 overwintering densities of 47 deer per square mile in the Watchung Reservation, over 200 per square mile in and around Lenape and Nomahegan Parks, 154 per square mile in and around Ash Brook Reservation and Oak Ridge Park, and 110 deer per square mile in the Hawk Rise Sanctuary.
- \* The County of Union will utilize the assistance of community-minded licensed hunters with a proficiency in marksmanship to reduce the populations of white-tailed deer in the Watchung Reservation, Lenape and Nomahegan Parks, the Summit portion of Passaic River Park, Ash Brook Reservation, Oak Ridge Park and the Hawk Rise Sanctuary.
- \* The goals of this program are to prevent overbrowsing of native vegetation in the park areas and allow forest regeneration, minimize browsing of residential landscaping surrounding the park properties, and minimize the incidence of deer-related motor vehicle accidents.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM**

- \* The County of Union will remove deer from various County and municipal park properties during the winter of 2017 in an attempt to bring the population densities down to levels that are more in balance with the ecosystems, with a specific goal density of 20 deer/square mile or less.
- \* Such removal will be accomplished through the efforts of selected hunters, acting as agents of the County of Union, shooting over baited sites.
- \* Forty agents will be selected from among experienced, licensed hunters who have demonstrated a proficiency in marksmanship and many of whom have participated in this program in the past.
- \* Agents will take part in this program on a voluntary basis.
- \* This program is designed to address a problem of population control; it is not intended to provide sport or recreational opportunities.
- \* The number of agents to be utilized and the number of days of operation are based on a goal to remove 60 deer from Watchung Reservation, 40 deer from Lenape and Nomahegan Parks, 5 deer from the Passaic River Park in Summit, 75 deer from Ash Brook Reservation and Oak Ridge Park, and 15 deer from the Hawk Rise Sanctuary.

## PERMITS

- \* If authorized by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, hunters selected for this program will hunt deer in the subject parks during the Permit Shotgun Season of January 7 to February 11, 2017.
- \* The County of Union, through its Department of Parks and Recreation, will administer and conduct all deer management activities defined in these Guidelines.
- \* Hunting in this program will be conducted under the regular hunting season format.
- \* Hunters selected for this program will be required to purchase a 2017 hunting license, at their own expense.
- \* Hunters who are selected and approved for participation in this program will also be required to purchase, at their own expense, a Permit Shotgun Season permit for the zone(s) in which they will hunt – Zone 13 for the Watchung Reservation and Passaic River Park and Zone 36 for Lenape Park, Nomahegan Park, Ash Brook Reservation, Oak Ridge Park and Hawk Rise Sanctuary.
- \* If a hunter wishes to hunt for an antlered buck, then he or she must also purchase an Antlered Buck Shotgun Permit.
- \* Use of any permits must conform strictly to the statutes, rules and regulations as promulgated and administered by the State of New Jersey through the Division of Fish and Wildlife.
- \* Specific details of this deer control program may be adjusted as field conditions necessitate while conforming to statutory law and NJDFW policy and maintaining the highest standards of safety.

## PROGRAM LENGTH

- \* Hunting in the subject parks will be conducted simultaneously on one day per week during the 5-week period of the Permit Shotgun Season from January 7 to February 11, 2017. Generally, hunting will occur on Mondays; if weather or a holiday precludes hunting on a Monday, the program will be rescheduled for that week only to Wednesday or Friday.
- \* Hunting will be confined to the number of days and date ranges just defined. The program will not extend past those dates.
- \* The park units of the Union County Park System are otherwise closed to traditional hunting at all times.

## HOURS OF PROGRAM OPERATION

- \* Agents may be in the field between 5:00 am and 8:00 pm in separate morning and afternoon shifts.
- \* Shooting will occur only during daylight hours, which are defined as ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset. Sunrise and sunset change daily, and will be determined by the U.S. Naval Observatory.
- \* Each shift begins with the deployment of agents into the field and ends after all deer taken on that shift have been processed for transport to a butcher.

## SELECTION AND QUALIFICATION OF AGENTS

- \* Applicants must meet the following qualifications:
  - be at least 21 years old;
  - be able to speak and understand the English language;
  - possess a valid New Jersey Firearm Hunting License and New Jersey Firearm Purchaser Identification Card;
  - have not been convicted of any firearms violation, in any state, in the last 10 years or of any fish and game code violation in the last 5 years;
  - have at least 5 years successful experience in hunting white-tailed deer with a shotgun;
  - be able to demonstrate an expertise in marksmanship;
  - possess and be comfortable with using a portable tree stand at a height of 20 feet or more; and
  - be available and willing to contribute voluntary service to the program for at least seven of the scheduled hunting shifts.
- \* Applications must be returned to the Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Union County Engineering Building, 2325 South Avenue, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076, by Tuesday, December 6, 2016, no later than noon.
- \* Applications may be sent via FAX (908-789-3674) or e-mail ([dbernier@ucnj.org](mailto:dbernier@ucnj.org)) before the deadline, but the original must follow by mail.
- \* The 40 agents will be selected in the following manner:
  - Applicants will be divided into two categories – 1.) those who participated as an agent in a Watchung Reservation or Union County Deer Management Program from 1996 to 2016, and 2.) all new applicants.
  - Deer program staff will evaluate applicants in the first category with respect to their performance in previous years. The evaluation will consider hunting proficiency, availability, and adherence to program ethics and objectives.
  - Based on the evaluation and the number of applicants, up to 32 agents will be selected from among the participants of the 2016 program.
  - At least 6 applicants will be chosen by lottery from the category of new applicants. Union County residents or those who are employed within Union County will be given preference in the lottery process.
  - Two of the remaining available agent positions may be filled with applicants selected from among the participants of any prior year's program, based on the performance evaluations.
  - All applicants will be informed of the selection process results via letter or e-mail.
  - All of the successful applicants will subsequently be required to pass a marksmanship proficiency test developed

in consultation with the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife and administered by the Union County Police, unless they have already been similarly tested as part of a NJDEP-permitted Community Based Deer Management Program or similar deer management program in the last 25 months.

- All participants will be required to attend an orientation program.
- If information about one or more agents is requested by the general public, the agents' names, addresses, and other personal identifiers will be redacted by the County of Union from all requested documentation. The County of Union has a responsibility and an obligation to safeguard from public access a citizen's personal information with which it has been entrusted when disclosure thereof would violate the citizen's reasonable expectation of privacy.

## **SCHEDULING OF AGENTS**

- Applicants are required to indicate their availability on the Agent Application.
- All selected agents will generally be scheduled for all shifts for which they have indicated their availability.
- The park or parks in which the agent will hunt will be assigned at the discretion of the Administrator of the Deer Management Program.

## **PROGRAM OPERATION**

- \* Baiting stations will be set up in a multitude of locations in the various subject park units.
- \* Baiting stations will be carefully selected to provide the shooter with a clear and open view of the deer.
- \* Agents must utilize 10, 12, 16 or 20 gauge shotguns with telescopic sights, shooting only slugs.
- \* All shooting will occur from tree stands, shooting near or over bait, with the tree stand base secured at a height of at least 20 feet above the ground.
- \* No shots may be taken from ground level or across roads or paths.
- \* Shots are limited to 40 yards.
- \* Agents must provide their own portable stands and remove them from the park daily. Ladder stands are not acceptable.
- \* Safety harnesses must be worn.
- \* Hunters are required to wear at least 200 square inches of fluorescent orange.
- \* In order to keep age and sex ratios balanced, there will be no bias for or against the taking of antlered deer, as long as the hunter's permit status allows for that.
- \* At any one time,
  - \* up to 15 agents may be deployed into the Watchung Reservation;
  - \* up to 11 agents may be deployed into Lenape and Nomahegan Parks;
  - \* up to two agents may be deployed into the Summit portion of Passaic River Park;
  - \* up to 9 agents may be deployed into the Ash Brook Reservation and Oak Ridge Park; and
  - \* up to 3 agents may be placed in the Hawk Rise Sanctuary.
- \* Agents will not be restricted as to the total number of deer each individual can harvest.
- \* Although there will be no daily bag limit, the hunter must report any deer killed to the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife through its Automated Harvest Report System, and must be authorized by that system before killing more than two deer.
- \* Nomahegan Park may be closed during deer management activities; the other park units will not be closed. However, some portions of the parks may be closed or restricted during program operation as safety or operational needs dictate.
- \* The County will provide notification to park users, adjoining homeowners and the community at large through signage, press releases, and printed literature.

## **COSTS**

- \* The County of Union will purchase any bait required for the conduct of this program.
- \* The County will pay the fees for butchering deer carcasses not kept by hunters, which is expected to be approximately 20% of all deer killed in this program.
- \* The agents will be responsible for the cost of licenses and permits, personal equipment, ammunition, and butchering of deer kept by them.

## **DISPOSITION OF DEER**

- \* All harvested deer will be transported to a secure site within the Union County Park System where agents will eviscerate the deer and complete reports about the age, sex, and weight of the deer, the disposition of all shots fired, and the number of volunteer man-hours expended.
- \* If an agent wants to keep the carcass of a deer that he killed, he or she may do so. He can butcher the carcass himself or have it butchered professionally, at his own expense. The hunter can have the carcass processed by the butcher contracted by the County, at the hunter's expense, at a price negotiated by the County.
- \* All other deer harvested through this program will be transported by the County to a NJDOH-approved butcher contracted by the County.
- \* Venison derived from those deer will be distributed to the needy and homeless through the Community FoodBank of NJ.