

For Immediate Release

County of Berks Press Release

Antietam Lake Deer Management Program to begin September 18 with controlled hunt

Reading, PA— 9/9/2021 — The County of Berks is preparing for the start of the Antietam Lake Park Deer Management Program, based on recommendations from the Antietam Lake Natural Resource Stewardship Plan that was prepared for the entire park property in 2018. The Antietam Lake Park Deer Management Program is a joint venture between the Berks County Parks and Recreation Department and USDA Wildlife Services that was approved by the Berks County Commissioners in April 2021.

The overarching goals of the program is to reduce park land and forest property damage, minimize the threat of disease, reduce deer-related accidents and balance the ecosystem. The white-tailed deer is one of the most influential wildlife species in Pennsylvania's forested ecosystems. However, when their population is out of balance with their habitat, deer can negatively affect County forests and parks by over-browsing tree seedlings, shrubs and wildflowers. Over-browsing alters the diversity and habitat for other forest mammals and birds, eliminates the shrub layer, greatly reduces the diversity of forest-floor plant species and creates a flooding risk.

For these reasons, the County of Berks has instituted a Deer Management Program to protect and enhance the Antietam Lake Park Properties based on needs identified through studies by the USDA. The first step of the program is a controlled, nonpublic hunt that will begin September 18, 2021, and end on January 29, 2022. The intention of the controlled hunt is to reduce deer populations until the negative impact to our parks is alleviated, and then maintain deer populations as needed to ensure a balanced ecosystem.

All hunting through the first phase of this program, as coordinated by the USDA, will be with archery equipment by experienced archers only, following all Pennsylvania Game Commission rules. For this first phase, hunters were selected by the USDA in a closed application process and were required to pass a proficiency test and attend an orientation that covered safety and hunting ethics. These approved hunters will also carry a hunting permit for identification purposes. They were also required to purchase the necessary doe permits since only does will be harvested during this hunt to better control the population. Hunting is permitted to take place from 30 minutes before sunrise and continue until 30 minutes following sunset. No hunting is allowed within the Parks without authorization from USDA Wildlife Services with a valid permit.

This is the first phase in the deer monitoring program. It will be followed by an inventory of the population and any future deer control programs will be determined based on that information. More information about the Deer Management Program can be found in the attached information sheet from the Berks County Parks and Recreation Department.

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