

# City of Fridley Deer Management Plan

Approved September 2019



## Introduction

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are highly adaptable animals and occupy a broad range of habitats in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul Metro and the surrounding suburban areas. The City of Fridley is comprised of public and private property interspersed with parks, gardens, forests, wetlands and open areas that makes suitable habitat to support a population of White-tailed Deer.

The City of Fridley strives to maintain a sustainable population of deer within the City to allow for wildlife enjoyment by residents and to allow deer to play their natural role in our ecosystem.

A sustainable population would be defined as one that one that minimizes vehicle/deer collisions, limits damage to property and protects natural areas from over-browse while still providing suitable habitat and opportunity for a limited number of individual deer to thrive.

Deer populations are monitored through recording of deer/vehicle collisions, aerial surveys and citizen input. In the absence of deer management actions, the City of Fridley is likely to see an increase in negative human-deer interactions including deer damage to vegetation and increased deer-vehicle collisions.

## Deer Habitat and Population

The City of Fridley covers an area of approximately 11 square miles. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources recommends a deer population of no more than 15-20 deer per any square mile for our area. Generally, observed deer populations will be highly concentrated in areas of the City with forest cover and a natural water source such as the Rice Creek corridor, Mississippi River corridor and Springbrook Nature Center.

Deer population numbers are evaluated in terms of the wildlife management concept known as carrying capacity. Carrying capacity can be considered the number of deer an area can support considering biological and social/cultural factors. Deer densities are most often expressed in deer/sq. mi. In general, when a deer population is exceeding its carrying capacity, incidents of vegetation damage, citizen complaints and deer-vehicle collisions will increase.

## Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this deer management plan is to develop tools and strategies for managing deer in the City of Fridley that address damage and accidents associated with deer while acknowledging and respecting the non-consumptive benefits and appreciation of wildlife presence within the city.

The following are goals of the City of Fridley deer management plan:

- 1.) To educate residents about White-tailed deer and foster an appreciation for the species and their role in a healthy natural or suburban environment.

- 2.) To reduce the number of citizen complaints related to deer which are often related to vegetation damage.
- 3.) To recommend, where possible, the use of non-lethal methods to minimize deer damage which may include vegetation management, exclusion/fencing, repellents, harassing.
- 4.) To reduce the annual number of deer-vehicle collisions within the City of Fridley.
- 5.) To prevent damage to and maintain the health of native plant communities within Fridley's parks and natural areas.
- 6.) To actively monitor the Deer population within the City of Fridley through counts, citizen records, vehicle collisions and aerial surveys.
- 7.) Work with other State or Federal entities to maintain deer population levels at or under the recommended 15-20 deer per any square mile level or to utilize population management of deer to resolve areas where the deer population is determined to be above carrying capacity.

## Control Measures

The city of Fridley will contract deer herd management with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services Division (or equivalent agency). This agency utilizes trained sharp shooters that routinely operate in urban and suburban areas. Deer are baited and shot by sharpshooters who use noise suppression and night vision technologies.

Deer herd management activities will be held on City of Fridley property unless advance consent has been received by private landowners to authorize population control, including discharge of firearms, on their property.

The USDA Wildlife Services division routinely donates the harvested deer to those in need.

The City of Fridley Public Safety Department retains the right to utilize lethal control measures at their discretion for deer that have been severely injured or pose a risk to public safety.

## Population Monitoring

The City of Fridley will continue to track the number of deer-vehicle collisions and citizen complaints concerning deer. The city will also conduct winter deer aerial population surveys at a minimum of bi-annually.

## Approval Process

When aerial surveys, collision reports or citizen monitoring data show trends indicating higher than recommended population levels:

1. City staff will make a recommendation to the City Manager that population control measures are appropriate and recommend locations for management.

2. With City Manager approval, city staff will draft a memo detailing the population reporting and recommended management areas to be presented to the Fridley City Council for review consent at a public meeting.
3. If approved, city staff will apply for the necessary permits from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and proceed with contract negotiations with the USDA Wildlife Services division (or equivalent). Permits are typically issued for management activities to occur between the fall/winter months of November through March.
4. City of Fridley Public Safety will coordinate with the contracted agency to ensure that management activities are held in approved and appropriate areas and do not impact the safety of Fridley residents.
5. If written permission has been received from a landowner to conduct management activities on their property, written notification will be provided to neighboring property owners.

## Reporting Process

1. A written report will be attained from the contracted agency including a summary of management activities to include the number of deer removed from each location, the cost for management activities and reports of any incidents that may have impacted residents or neighboring properties.
2. A summary of management activities will be presented to the City Council on the consent agenda within one month of the conclusion of management activities and final billing/reporting.
3. City of Fridley staff will be available to answer any questions or provide a verbal summary of the management activities if requested.