

**EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP
DEER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 25, 2008**

The East Goshen Township Deer Management Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, February 25, 2008 at 7pm at the East Goshen Township Building. In attendance were: Chair, Jim McRee and members Walter Wujcik, Bob Huebner, Steve DiAntonio, Matt Keating and Linda Polishuk, along with Mike Merwin (Township Building Inspector), Jack Yahraes (Municipal Authority) and Marty Shane (Board of Supervisors). Also present were Brian Hoover & Walter Senkow (Deer Management Professional of Southern Pennsylvania), Jim Benoit (Main Line White Tail Organization), Tim Wisecarver (Landowner-Sportsman Alliance), and Randy Casperson (Wallis Deer Management Group).

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairman Jim McRee called the meeting to order at 7pm and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. No one is recording the meeting.

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of December 3, 2007 were reviewed and corrected. Linda moved that the amended minutes of December 3, 2007 be approved. Walter seconded the motion. There was no further public comment or discussion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- A. Jim thanked all the deer management groups for attending their meeting tonight and announced that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) has approved the development of the township hunting program as part of the 10-year management plan.
- B. The BOS 100% approved the Tick program, ordering (10) 4-Post Feeders to be placed around the township; volunteers are needed to help with the installation. Several hundred dollars were saved by picking up the feeders versus having them shipped. The feeders will treat ticks on deer. The BOS also approved the tick tubes. Tubes are \$3 or \$18/6pk. and will be ordered next week and be ready for March/April. Tubes treat ticks on mice.
- C. Three deer-related traffic accidents were reported to police in 2008. For the last six months of 2007, there were 39 deer pickups, plus 10 pick-ups in January 2008. The next step is to plot out the locations of pickups and identify high-impact areas. The BOS requested additional research and tangible evidence.
- D. The BOS approved the educational initiative via the internet and newsletter.
- E. Hunting the township open space, and forging partnerships with private landowners, was approved by the BOS 3:2, with no opt-out option.
- F. A summary of the program was submitted for the spring newsletter.
- G. The BOS ranked the goals and objectives of the DMC in priority order.

B. NEW

- A. 4-Post Feeders – Ten bait stations have been ordered and approved for placement on township property. Placement near hunting areas could be cooperative approach. Because of liability issues, no stations will be placed in Hershey's Mill, although Hershey's Mill can pursue purchasing stations on their own. The stations are the responsibility of the township although no additional staff has been hired to support the program so they are looking for volunteers to help set-up and maintain the stations. Bob is willing to help but is unsure about the time commitment

involved. Steve and Matt are also willing to help. Jim Benoit with QDMA offered assistance with determining the best placement of the stations. They would need to evaluate the areas and consider:

- a. No obstruction to homeowner's views
- b. Out of children's area and potential vandalism
- c. Identify high deer concentrated areas.

Jim Benoit could support the township through volunteers from QDMA. Steve agreed that as a board member for QDMA, this would serve as an excellent community service project for their organization and they would like to be involved with the maintenance. Jim McRee said Mark Miller has been assigned to oversee the project and will appreciate the help

- B. Walking Tour – Last year members of DMC walked several open spaces including Bowtree and Supplee Valley. It was an excellent educational opportunity to learn about the deer populations and impact in these areas. To best consider residential concerns and ideal locations for hunters, Jim recommended the committee walk the open spaces again, starting with Grand Oak and Millcreek. Members agreed to meet at the township building on Saturday, March 1st at 8am (raindate: Sunday, March 2nd @ 1pm). Members should wear appropriate shoes and tours are open to the public.
- C. E-mail – Communication is important and in an effort to improve the flow of information, the email address deer@eastgoshen.org has been established to receive feedback from residents regarding the program by sending in their name, address and comments. Residents can also sign up to receive notices about public meetings, including the agenda. Information will continue to be included in the newsletter. Jim will initially monitor the email account. The goal is to tabulate percentages of residents for/against the program and tailor a program that can be modeled by other municipalities. Linda said additional input on the hunting program was unnecessary but Bob said it could be positive feedback come next fall.
- D. Refine the Hunting Program – The draft of the hunting program was approved by the BOS but a full program still needs to be developed including administrative duties. Members reviewed a “Population Growth Model” developed by Jim McRee & Don McConathy and based on an annual 6% growth rate, they would need to harvest about 35 deer per year to reduce the number of deer in the township. Bob pointed out that mortality rates would probably drop as deer were harvested. Jim agreed that the formula is very complicated and not fixed. Linda said that according to the Willistown Conservatory, an unmanaged deer herd can double in two years; the goal of their program should be to bring the herd in balance with the amount of land in the township. Jim said they should aim for a herd size around that of 1995's 157 deer. Bob asked for feedback from the hunters. Steve agreed that 35 deer is an excellent starting point based on their analysis over the past year but hunt-able areas and hours need to be discussed with the deer management groups to determine if it is achievable.

C. DEER MANAGEMENT GROUPS

Brian Hoover & Walter Senkow with Deer Management Professionals of Southern Pennsylvania, Inc. (DMPSP) – Mr. Hoover said, as a founding member of DMPSP and years of experience, he would like to help the township develop a plan to manage the deer population but first they need to radically reduce the number of deer. Harvesting 35 deer would maintain current deer levels but if they are looking to reduce property damage to residents they need to do more. Mr. Hoover distributed information on their organization and provided a background. He explained that they have tailored programs for various organizations including Tyler Arboretum and Westtown School. They have developed a website that allows their hunters to sign-up and move among the hunting locations with good management and records. When they started 15 years ago, over 80 man-hours

go into harvesting a single deer. Through time management, today they have reduced that number to 40-44 hours. Their efficient program allows them to know where hunters are at any given day/time.

A lot of time is invested by each of their hunters. They can offer their current base of 40 members, but are always looking to pick-up more people. They are a stringent organization with extensive requirements, including background checks, proficiency tests and certifications, to become a member. He explained that there are 650 huntable acres at Tyler Arboretum on which they harvested about 43 deer in 2007. Matt said this number seems low compared to the 108 township acres in East Goshen and a goal to harvest 35 deer. Mr. Hoover explained that it's a population issue. They have stabilized Tyler Arboretum and therefore harvest about 30-50 deer there annually. Likewise, Westtown School has 60 huntable acres. Two years ago Westtown School sponsored a sharp-shooting program that yielded 40+ deer. Last year they harvested 14 deer on the property. He said they could have two hunters posted there all day, every day of the season, but if the deer aren't there, you can't do anything about it; they are constantly moving. He also explained that they were more strict on time and locations at Westtown School. At Tyler they are more liberal, allowing them to be out of the woods by 9am and return by 2:30pm, during peak season.

Mr. Senkow explained that when they started at Tyler, vegetation was heavily destroyed; seeing the re-growth is a testament to the group's success. He is sure that all the deer management groups have good people in them but he believes they can offer an elevated program and provide positive references.

Linda asked about using different groups for different areas but Mr. Hoover countered that restricting hunters to small parcels may stop hunters from coming if they don't see the deer; hunters want to find deer and enjoy what they are doing. Steve pointed out that the DMC has not defined how many groups they want to work with and need to examine the programs offered by each.

Jim Benoit, Main Line White Tail Organization – Explained that he represents a much smaller group of only 5-7 hunters, working small parcels effectively. He agrees that the township needs a radical harvest for several years. If assigned a parcel, they would perform a trail survey and get an idea of the number of deer using that area. They are currently managing 114 acres in Gavin where they took 47 deer in 2007. They are still seeing large herds and believes they will need 2-3 more years before the understory returns. After evaluating a specific parcel, he would be able to give a recommended harvest amount over a 3-year period.

They do their spreadsheets by hand but maintain daily logs via email. They also have hunter/archery certification and proficiency tests and adhere to quality management. They can determine the sex and age from the hoof while in the field. Although the weather and the moon phases affect deer movement, he is confident long term benefits will be seen. As a rule they do not say how many deer need to be taken before a mature buck is harvested but they are willing to adhere to any limits set by EGT.

Bob asked the groups what was done with the meat harvested and Mr. Benoit said they use a large amount personally; nothing goes to waste. Mr. Senkow said they donated 550 lbs. of meat in 2006 and 750 lbs. in 2007 to food banks. Mr. Hoover also pointed out that it costs about \$100 per deer to harvest. Mr. Benoit said the ideal member of his or any group is an "alpha" hunter who is willing to put in the time and money and have the commitment to keep hunting beyond two deer.

Matt said, combined with the private landowner's hunting programs, they are expecting to harvest 80 deer, 35 of which come from the township properties. Matt asked how many deer could be harvested from any given 10-acre parcel. Mr. Benoit and Mr. Hoover agree that it depends on layout, patterning, bedding, time of year and number of hunters. Mr. Benoit recommends short quick hunts to be effective.

Tim Wisecarver, Landowner Sportsman Alliance – founded this group to gain access to private land in Tredyffrin Township. They are a small group of 3 hunters and would like to be a resource for EGT. They are focused on not only the deer aspect but the people aspect and look for members who can listen to instructions and work within township or landowner restrictions. They have developed their own proficiency tests and carry a \$1 million insurance policy. They would like to help.

Randy Casperson, Wallace Deer Management Group – is made up of 12 members. They are in their 3rd year and manage mostly private residences (35 properties, 2-50 acres). Glenmoore Twp. also gave them exclusive rights to the township parks. They are not automated but call-in daily. All hunters' license plates are registered with the police and township. Good communication is key to their organization. They require proficiency tests, mandate number of does to be harvested, and can provide references. Mr. Casperson said he wants to learn more about how EGT intends on regulating the program, any restrictions, and public perception. He said all the groups seem to parallel each other and all the members have a passion for what they do – he needs to know how the program will be structured to be effective. Linda asked how they recruit members and Mr. Casperson said they advertise in the township newsletter but mostly it's word of mouth. Once a hunter is qualified, they can establish a membership.

Matt said it is clear that all the groups need to have stringent reporting and scheduling; gaining trust of the residents might be a challenge. Mr. Hoover said they could possibly create a port for EGT's website in which information could be accessed. If so EGT would become the proprietor and it would then be their responsibility to recruit and manage the hunters; if they select DMPS, they would do that for EGT.

Jim said the DMC has no spending authority and all expenses need approval by the BOS. Mr. Benoit suggested hiring a part-time biologist but Jim said it is unclear who will manage the program. Mr. Benoit suggested enlisting Tim Smail, QDMA, as a non-partisan oversight committee.

Bob asked the groups which time of day they would recommend as most effective. Mr. Hoover said different times of day present different opportunities but the majority of movement is during dawn and dusk. Mr. Benoit said during the "rut" they could hunt all day. Mr. Hoover agreed that flexibility is important as weather and time of year create various factors.

Ron Zeleski, 218 Lochwood Ln. – asked who paid for the deer when harvested and Mr. Hoover said all cost is on the hunter. Jim said one condition of the deer management program is to reduce the liability to the township; deer management groups provide the service to the township free of charge. Mr. Hoover also pointed out that they require their hunters to do community service to support the townships as well.

D. PROGRAM OUTLINE

Members reviewed the program outline as last revised 2/24/08 and covering reporting, procedures, land usage, groups, reservations and complaints.

- A. Land – Members discussed whether parcels should be “sub-divided” into areas and boundaries marked. Jim asked the deer management groups if there are any rules/guidelines for how clear a deer needs to be before shooting. Other than meeting township setback requirements, the average walker will scare off deer long before they get within 50 yards. Jim suggested marking entrance/exit and parking areas with signs. Members agree that a permit or sign in the hunter’s vehicle is sufficient. Wanting to be consistent, members discussed the names of the open spaces. Areas will include:
- Supplee Valley – Rockland Village
 - Clocktower – Bowtree
 - Grand Oak – Millcreek

The narrow area known as Wentworth could be added to the list after surveying the parcel for setbacks.

Ron Zeleski, 218 Lochwood Ln. – said he does not see any deer in the Rockland I & II wetland areas; he sees deer in his yard daily but they don’t bother anyone. He’s not sure where they got the deer count numbers. Jim said their report and research can be accessed on-line. Mr. Zeleski said he thought no hunting was allowed on the Rockland property but Jim said hunting requirements are based on setbacks – 150 ft. from an occupied dwelling. Private landowners can partner with neighbors to allow hunting and do not need to adhere to township setbacks on their property. If illegal poaching is going on, police should be notified immediately. The advantage of a deer management group would be that the group would help regulate any illegal activity.

Placement of the deer tick bait stations is allowed on public land because treating ticks is different from illegal baiting during hunting season.

- B. Deer Management Groups – Members discussed placement of the tree stands and agreed they should be determined by the deer management groups after surveying the parcels, so long as they are in a viable hunting spot. Steve asked if they still wanted to restrict tree stands to climbers and ladders, removed daily. Mr. Hoover said the majority of their stands are left in all season and their liability insurance does cover them. Mr. Benoit said limiting them to climbers would seriously restrict their interest because 1.) they damage trees extensively and 2.) it takes significant time to set them up and take them down. Because they are well camouflaged, the average person does not even notice them. Mr. Senkow added that leaving tree stands in allows hunters to enter an area quieter and not scare off the herds. Marty Shane said the most successful program will probably come from allowing the hunting groups to develop the hunting aspect of the program while the DMC focuses on the public welfare/safety issues.

Jim asked what the difference was between certified hunting groups and hunting clubs. Mr. Hoover said there are no regulations on hunting groups and EGT needs to evaluate each one individually. Mr. Casperson said most groups carry \$1 and \$2 million policies. DMC members agree that any group needs to carry insurance. Members agree that the name/contact information of hunters will be required to be provided to the township once a group is selected to participate in the program. Deer management groups were affable to providing this information. Jim said they will need to review proposal content and contact references before a decision is made.

- C. Reservation Procedures – Jim said residents expressed an interest in knowing when and where hunting will take place. Mr. Hoover said it is almost impossible to reserve a space more than 3 days in advance because of all the variables. The DMPSP website monitors the schedule and locations, with hunters logging in for AM or PM shifts. Jim said it is undecided how many groups they will select for the program or how parcels will be divided among them. Jack Yahraes said having two groups share an area means having multiple tree stands. Jack asked about groups' experience with the public opposition. Groups shared different experiences but Mr. Senkow said for the most part they do not run into much adversity; depending on the degree of harassment, there are laws to protect the hunters.
- D. Hunting Procedures – Members discussed the minimum amount of hunting time that should be required by groups. Mr. Benoit said the DMC needs to be sympathetic to the fact that deer are constantly moving and if they are not around, hunters will go to another location; Mr. Hoover agreed it is not practical. Steve said deer are sensitive to hunted areas and the DMC should leave the tactics up to the group. Mr. Hoover cautioned that once an area is pressured, deer can leave for up to a week at a time, therefore if you divide parcels up into too many areas, and limit the areas one can hunt, you will diminish the return.
- E. Applications – Linda asked if May 31st was too late to accept applications from the deer management groups. Mr. Hoover said doe licenses go on sale the first week of August so people need to know what they are doing so preparations can be made. Jim said the BOS wants to approve the final plan in April; if it goes later than June, the season will be missed. Linda said they need a rapid response from the BOS so groups can be notified. Matt said all the groups who attended the meeting have good information and approach the program slightly different but it seems they already have commitments to other areas, so how do they know they will even be able to participate in an EGT program. Mr. Benoit said they are in maintenance mode on three properties and looking for another. All deer management groups were open to allowing EGT residents to be part of the hunting program so long as they met and passed their proficiency and membership requirements.

E. TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE

It was agreed that the groups need to go on site walks to each of the parcels to see deer tracks and huntable areas. Marty said a joint effort to walk the open spaces is ideal. Afterwards, the deer groups could fashion a program and the DMC could make recommendations to the BOS. By seeing the parcels, groups will see the assets and difficulties of the properties, along with private land that could be integrated into the program, and propose a achievable program. Jim is concerned about the administrative aspect of a program. Marty agreed that orchestrating multiple groups will be a challenge for the DMC. Interested groups will walk parcels on their own or join the DMC members on March 1st @ 8am.

Last year it was suggested that they develop a program for private landowners but it is agreed that they will focus on township open spaces right now. Marty said Chester County is aware of their efforts and if EGT is successful, he believes it will enhance opportunities for other areas to follow. Jim will work on getting detailed maps of the open spaces for the deer management groups.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday March 17th but recommends meeting on March 10th as well, but it is unclear how quickly deer groups can put together an outline of a program. Mr. Senkow said they could use the EGT program as a guide, survey the parcels and map out a program. Mr.

Benoit was looking for assurances of his involvement before investing a lot of time and effort into developing a program but Steve said “It is what it is.” After walking the properties, they might need to refine the proposed program and they are looking to the groups to help define it. Matt sympathized with the groups and asked for broad concepts – number of recommended hunters on a particular parcel and number of potential deer harvested – without committing to resources right now.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ron Zeleski, 218 Lochwood Ln. – said Rockland Village parcel is too rocky and probably unsafe for hunters but Jim pointed out that they walked the parcel last year and saw 3-4 herds so there may be opportunities at this location and it will have to be evaluated by the groups first.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Bob made a motion to adjourn. Walter seconded the motion. There was no further discussion or public comment. The meeting adjourned at 9:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by: _____
Tracie Hill, Recording Secretary