

# 2008 DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR SOUTH MOUNTAIN RESERVATION ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Revised 11/02/07

## PROGRAM GUIDELINES

### INTRODUCTION

- The South Mountain Reservation encompasses 2047 acres (3.4 square miles) in the Townships of Maplewood, Millburn and West Orange.
- A March, 2006 master plan for South Mountain Reservation estimated a population of white-tailed deer in the park that exceeded 300 animals (about 90 deer/square mile).
- The County of Essex has received recommendations that it should maintain the deer herd in the South Mountain Reservation at or below an overwintering density of 20 deer/square mile (68 deer).
- Achieving that goal density would curtail overbrowsing of native vegetation in the South Mountain Reservation and allow forest regeneration, minimize browsing of residential landscaping surrounding the South Mountain Reservation, and minimize the incidence of deer-related motor vehicle accidents.
- To begin work toward that goal, the County of Essex will solicit the assistance of community-minded licensed hunters with a proficiency in marksmanship to reduce the population of deer in the South Mountain Reservation.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

- The County of Essex will make an initial attempt to reduce the size of the South Mountain Reservation deer herd over the course of ten days in January and February, 2008.
- Such removal will be accomplished through the efforts of selected agents, shooting over baited sites.
- 15 agents will be selected from among experienced, licensed hunters who can demonstrate a proficiency in marksmanship and some of whom have participated in a similar program in the Watchung Reservation in Union County.
- 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.

### PERMITS

- Any or all of three municipalities (Maplewood, Millburn and West Orange) will seek to obtain a Special Deer Management Permit from the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW). The County of Essex, through its Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, will administer and conduct all deer management activities on behalf of those municipalities in the areas of the South Mountain Reservation encompassed by those jurisdictions.
- As agents of the County, participants will not be required to purchase hunting season or zone permits.
- Agents selected for this program will be required to purchase a 2008 hunting license prior to participation.
- Specific details of the 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

- The shooting program will occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the five-week period starting January 29, 2008 and ending February 28, 2008.
- The program will occur on those ten days only, weather permitting.
- There is no limit on the number of deer to be removed.
- The number of agents to be utilized and the number of days of operation are based on a goal to remove 150 deer.
- The South Mountain Reservation is 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, the hours of which vary as sunrise and sunset change daily.
- 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.

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## **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 or All-Around Sportsman License;
  - possess a valid 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 five years successful experience in hunting white-tailed deer with a shotgun;
  - be able to demonstrate an expertise in marksmanship; and
  - be available and willing to contribute voluntary service to the program for a minimum of eight shifts.
- Agent Applications must be returned in person or by mail to the Essex County Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, 115 Clifton Avenue, Newark, NJ, 07104, by Monday, November 26, 2007 no later than 4:30 PM.
- Applications may be sent via FAX to (973) 481-5302 before the deadline, but the original must follow by mail.
- The 15 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 Deer Management Program in Union County from 1996 to 2007, and 2.) all new applicants.
- Applicants in the first category will be evaluated with respect to their hunting proficiency, availability, and adherence to program ethics and objectives.
- Based on the evaluation and the number of applicants, up to 8 agents will be selected from among the applicants in the first category.
- The remainder of the available agent positions will be filled with hunters chosen by lottery from the category of new applicants. Essex County residents will be given preference in the lottery process.
- The applicants selected as agents who have not previously done so will be required to pass a marksmanship proficiency test, and all agents will be required to attend an orientation program.
- All agents will be informed by November 28, 2007 that they have been selected, via telephone call, letter or e-mail.

## **SCHEDULING OF AGENTS**

- Applicants are required to indicate their availability for program activities on the Agent Application.
- The program is scheduled to occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the five-week period starting January 29, 2008 and ending February 28, 2008.
- A schedule, assigning hunters to particular days and shifts, will be set and distributed to all agents, based on the availability of agents as indicated on their applications.
- In the event of inclement weather, program activities will be cancelled for that day. There is no provision for rescheduling to another day.

## **PROGRAM OPERATION**

- Baiting stations will be set up in a multitude of locations throughout the South Mountain Reservation.
- 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. Agents must provide their own stands, and demonstrate a willingness and comfort with climbing at least 20 feet above the ground during the orientation.
- In order to achieve a reduction in population size as quickly as possible, a bias for the taking of deer will be established in the following order – does, fawns, antlerless bucks, antlered bucks.
- The antlers of any antlered buck that is killed will be cut off and retained by the County or destroyed.
- Up to 10 agents may be deployed into the South Mountain Reservation at any one time.
- Agents will not be restricted as to the number of deer each individual can harvest.
- Some park roads (Crest Drive and Valley View Road) and the access drives to some park areas (Mayapple Hill, Turtle Back Rock, Dog Park and Girl Scout Camp) will be closed during shooting activities.

## **DISPOSITION OF DEER**

- Harvested deer will be transported to a County-operated, NJDFW-supervised check station at a location within the South Mountain Reservation 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.
- All deer will be transported by the County to a USDA- and NJDOH-approved butcher for processing.
- Any agent who completes at least 8 shifts of voluntary service to this program will receive 40 pounds of dressed venison at the conclusion of the program.

- The remainder of the venison will be distributed to the needy and the homeless through the Community FoodBank of New Jersey.