



Catoctin Mountain Park White-tailed Deer Management Plan Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get a copy of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)?

The plan can be accessed via the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/CATO> or the Catoctin Mountain Park website at <http://www.nps.gov/cato/parkmgmt/planning.htm>. Printed copies are available for viewing at local libraries (Frederick, Thurmont, Hagerstown and Smithsburg) or the Catoctin Mountain Park visitor center and administrative office. If you would like your own printed copy, the Park has a small quantity of plans available at the Park viewing locations.

What is the current status of the plan?

The Environmental Protection Agency will publish a Notice of Availability of the Catoctin Mountain Park White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS in the Federal Register on December 12, 2008. A 30-day no-action period will follow the publication of this Notice. After the 30-day period, a Record of Decision can be signed by the Regional Director, National Capital Region, which will document NPS approval of the plan and identify the selected alternative for implementation. At that point the Park will move forward with implementing the Plan.

Why does the National Park Service prefer the plan alternative that calls for directly reducing the deer herd?

The National Park Service has selected Alternative C as the environmentally preferred alternative in the White-tailed Deer Management Plan. This alternative would best protect the biological and physical environment by ensuring an immediate reduction in deer herd numbers that could be sustained with proven methods over the life of the plan. Based on years of extensive research the actions proposed, including the direct reduction of the deer herd, are most likely to meet the objectives set forth in the deer management plan. (Page 95 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS)

The National Park Service Preferred Alternative calls for the direct reduction of deer. When will that happen?

Any action by the NPS will take place beginning in Fall 2009.

If the Park Service decides to reduce deer population, who will do the herd reduction?

Qualified federal employees or contractors would be utilized to directly reduce the deer herd. (Page 258 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS)

Will the National Park Service allow public hunting?

No. A managed public hunt was considered as a preliminary alternative to reduce the deer population. A public hunting alternative was not carried forward for further analysis because it would be in conflict with existing laws, policies, regulations, and case law regarding public hunts in units of the National Park System. For a more detailed explanation on this topic please refer to Page 86-88 and Appendix H, Page 388-394 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS.

Will the National Park Service donate the meat to charity?

If a deer herd reduction takes place, the plan is to donate as much of the meat as possible to local food banks. Any meat that is not suitable for donation would be left in remote areas on open ground to be naturally scavenged and/or decompose. Should chronic wasting disease be found in the deer herd, the park would follow US Public Health Service guidelines for disposal of deer infected with the disease. Chronic wasting disease has not been found in Maryland, but if it is, donations would be suspended. (Page 62 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS)

How many deer will be removed?

If a deer herd reduction takes place, the goal is to reach a population level of 15 to 20 deer per square mile. The deer population in Catoctin Mountain Park has been estimated through spotlight surveys to between 75 and 105 deer per square mile over the past three years (75 in 2005, 88 in 2006, and 105 in 2007). The park is approximately nine square miles, which means that between 495 and 756 deer would need to be removed for the park to reach the goal of 20 deer per square mile. These deer would not all be removed in one season. It is anticipated that it will take at least three years to reach the goal. Also, this number will be adjusted based on the regeneration of the forest vegetation to the reduction of the herd. The park will monitor the vegetation to gauge the ultimate goal: successful tree regeneration. When there is sufficient tree regeneration, herd reduction will stop at that level. (Page 63 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS)

Will it be safe to visit the Park when deer are being removed?

Any deer herd reduction will be conducted during fall and winter from dusk until dawn, when Park visitation is typically low. To assure visitor safety, certain areas of the park will be closed during reduction activities. (Page 258 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS)

How will Naval Support Facility (NSF) – Thurmont be affected?

The action proposed by the National Park Service will support forest regeneration, and provide for long-term protection, conservation, and restoration of native species and cultural landscapes. While reducing the deer herd may have the effect of slightly increasing the vegetative screening around NSF-Thurmont, the National Park Service is proposing this action to improve forest regeneration and restore native species and cultural landscapes consistent with its policy and management objectives. (Page 3-5 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS)

What if I have a question that is not addressed here?

Please feel free to email us at: CATO_Superintendent@nps.gov or by writing to:

Superintendent
Catoctin Mountain Park
6602 Foxville Road
Thurmont, MD 21788