



February 1st, 2010

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

Why did the Park develop a Deer Management Plan?

When Catoctin Mountain Park was established in 1936, it is likely that no white-tailed deer existed within its boundaries. Since that time, however, deer populations throughout the country have rebounded and are now higher than at any other time in their known history. By the 1970s, problems related to an overabundance of deer in the Park were suspected. The National Park Service and other researchers have conducted multiple studies to document the size of the park's deer population, as well as plant growth in the understory of the mature forest canopy. Data indicate that forest regeneration is nearly absent within the majority of the park due in large part to high deer numbers, resulting in adverse changes to the forest structure, composition, and wildlife habitat. Excessive deer browsing in Catoctin Mountain Park could adversely affect the natural distribution, abundance, and diversity of native species throughout the Park, including species of special concern, and has impacted native shrubs, trees, and forest systems that comprise the natural vegetation component of the Camp Misty Mount and Camp Greentop cultural landscapes. This plan addresses declining forest regeneration and ensures that natural processes (including the presence of deer) support native vegetation, wildlife, and the cultural landscape.

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 if you would like your own printed copy, the Park has a small quantity of plans available. Call (301) 416-0536 and leave your name and address and a copy can be sent to you (paper copy or on CD).

What is the current status of the plan?

The Environmental Protection Agency published 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 followed the publication of this Notice. Well after the 30-day period, the Record of Decision was signed by the Regional Director, National Capital Region, on April 17, 2009. This documented NPS approval of the plan and identified the direct reduction alternative as the selected alternative for implementation. The Park is now implementing the Plan.

What actions does the plan call for?

The plan calls for continuing actions that the Park has been taking for many years including limited fencing, repellent use around landscaped areas, deer and vegetation monitoring, and data management and research. In addition, two lethal actions will be used in combination to reduce and control deer herd numbers. Qualified federal employees will conduct sharpshooting to reduce the deer population and individual deer may be captured and euthanized in certain circumstances where sharpshooting is not appropriate.

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

The National Park Service had selected the alternative that includes direct reduction (Alternative C) as the environmentally preferred alternative in the White-tailed Deer Management Plan. This alternative best protects 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 direct reduction of the deer herd, is 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?

The deer reduction will occur periodically from December 2010 – March 2011.

Who will do the herd reduction?

The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services Program is working with the National Park Service to directly reduce the deer herd.

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?

Yes, the Maryland Food Bank has agreed to accept deer meat from the herd reduction. Any meat that is not suitable for donation would be left in remote areas on open ground to be naturally scavenged and/or decompose. Chronic wasting disease has not been found in the park. 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. (Page 62 of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan / FEIS)

What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is in the family of diseases that include scrapie in sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease), and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in humans. Chronic wasting disease causes brain lesions that result in progressive weight loss, behavioral changes, and eventually death in affected deer and elk. There is currently no evidence that the disease is transmissible to humans or domestic livestock; however, the disease could limit populations of deer and elk and could result in profound impacts on the recreational value of these species. The disease is known to occur in Allegany County, Maryland, Hampshire County, West Virginia, and Frederick County, Virginia. The Park will test all deer culled in 2011 prior to donation.

How many deer will be removed?

The goal of the herd reduction is to reach a population level of 15 to 20 deer per square mile. The deer population in Catoclin Mountain Park was estimated through spotlight surveys done in November of 2009 to be 123 deer per square mile. The park is approximately nine square miles, which means that 927 deer would need to be removed for the park to reach the goal of 20 deer per square mile. These deer will

not all be removed in one season. In 2010, 233 deer were removed from the park. 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).

Many visitors come to the Park to see the deer. Will they still be able to see deer?

Yes, there will continue to be deer in the park. Maintaining a deer population in the park is one of the objectives of the plan/EIS. Additionally, reducing the deer population is also expected to restore other species habitats, creating opportunities to see a more diverse array of wildlife.

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

Yes, the safety of Park visitors and staff will be the primary concern during deer reduction activities. Deer herd reduction will be conducted during the winter when Park visitation is typically low. To assure visitor safety, certain areas of the park will be closed during reduction activities. Closure maps are available on the Park website and closed areas will be clearly posted. Several additional safety measures will be taken, which are summarized in the FEIS (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?

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