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National Park Service Donates Venison to D.C. Central Kitchen

WASHINGTON – The National Park Service has donated 600 pounds of venison to D.C. Central Kitchen, a Washington, D.C. non-profit organization that prepares meals for homeless shelters and other organizations serving low-income city residents.

The venison, delivered April 30, came from a deer culling conducted in March as part of Rock Creek Park's White-tailed Deer Management Plan. To assure the safety of the food, the National Park Service tested for Chronic Wasting Disease, a neurological disease that is fatal to deer but not known to be transmitted to humans.

“We’re pleased to be able to provide venison to people in need in Washington, D.C.,” said Tara Morrison, superintendent of Rock Creek Park. “We hope to be able to donate venison in the future as we work to protect Rock Creek Park’s forests.”

The Rock Creek Park White-tailed Deer Management Plan involves the use highly trained marksmen from the United States Department of Agriculture, working under the direction of National Park Service. Over the last 20 years, the park's white-tailed deer population has grown so large that the deer are eating nearly all tree seedlings, preventing forest sustainability. The plan calls for reducing the deer population to support the long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native vegetation and to allow for the forest to regenerate.

In accordance with the park's approved White-tailed Deer Management Plan, thinning operations will resume in the fall of 2013, as the park works towards reducing the deer population to a level will allow the forests of Rock Creek Park to regenerate. Once the deer population is reduced to this level, management efforts will focus on maintaining a sustainable deer population.

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