



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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## Valley Forge National Historical Park - News Release

Release Date: December 19, 2008  
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### **Valley Forge National Historical Park Announces Release of the Draft White-tailed Deer Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for Public Review and Comment**

**VALLEY FORGE, PA** – Valley Forge National Historical Park is pleased to announce the availability of the *Draft* White-tailed Deer Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public review and comment. The purpose of the plan is to develop a deer management strategy that supports long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native vegetation and other natural resources.

A substantial increase in the number of deer in the park over the past two decades seems to be correlated with significant changes in the species composition, abundance and distribution of native plant communities and alteration of natural processes such as forest regeneration. A deer management plan is needed at this time to address: (1) Browsing by an increasing number of deer over the past two decades and resulting changes in the species composition, abundance, structure, and distribution of native plant communities and associated wildlife; and (2) Removal of tree seedlings caused by deer browsing and the inability of forests to regenerate into the future.

Work began on the White-tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS in 2006. Extensive public involvement, including a project web-site, brochure, two public meetings, and over 50 briefings to civic organizations, local elected officials, etc. led to the development of four conceptual deer management alternatives. These alternatives have been fully developed using the best available science and their impacts evaluated.

Development of the plan has followed the required environmental planning process outlined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality. The *Draft* White-tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS for Valley Forge includes identification of the purpose and need for action, identification of alternatives, analysis of the impacts of alternatives, and identification of a preferred alternative for deer management. It is expected that this plan will be finalized and implemented in 2009. NEPA also requires that the public be involved and informed in a diligent way throughout the planning process.

All alternatives (including the no-action alternative) include response to chronic wasting disease (CWD) due to the elevated risk of CWD and because the direct relationship between the White-tailed Deer Management Plan's objectives, alternatives, and impact analysis and the goals,

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response strategies, and environmental impacts of CWD response make integration both feasible and cost-effective. Response to CWD was developed cooperatively with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and a full CWD Response Plan is provided as an appendix. A cooperative approach to CWD response was necessary due to the scale of the management area identified as necessary to address CWD (minimum 79 mi<sup>2</sup>) relative to park size (5.3 mi<sup>2</sup>).

**Alternative A**, the no action alternative, would continue the existing deer management activities of monitoring deer population size and vegetation, small scale fencing of selected vegetation, removal of deer killed on roadways, public education, coordination with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and continuation of limited CWD surveillance. No new deer management actions would be implemented.

**Alternative B** would combine several non-lethal actions including large-scale rotational fencing of 10% to 15% of the park's forested area and reproductive control of does to gradually reduce deer population in the park. CWD surveillance would include live testing (via tonsillar biopsy) and removal of CWD-positive individuals.

**Alternative C** would directly reduce the deer population in the park through sharpshooting and through capture and euthanasia, where appropriate, utilizing qualified federal employees or contractors. CWD response would include rapid reduction of the deer population to the target deer density and the potential for a one-time reduction action to not less than 10 deer per square mile through sharpshooting and capture and euthanasia. These actions would be taken for the purpose of assessing disease presence, prevalence, and distribution. These actions may also minimize the likelihood of CWD becoming established, minimize the likelihood of amplification and spread if the disease is introduced, and promote elimination of CWD, if possible.

**Alternative D** is the NPS Preferred Alternative. It would combine actions of Alternative C to directly reduce the deer population and reproductive control of does as under Alternative B to maintain population levels. CWD response actions would be the same as described for Alternative C.

The 60-day public comment period for review of the *Draft White-tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS* was initiated on December 19, 2008. The NPS will accept comments regarding the draft plan from the public until February 17, 2009. Interested parties may obtain an electronic version of the draft plan and/or submit electronic comments through the Planning, Environment and Public Comment website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. The plan is also available for public review at the Chester County Public Library, Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library, Phoenixville Public Library, Tredyffrin Township Public Library, and Lower Providence Community Library. A hard copy (limited availability) or CD may be obtained from: Superintendent, Valley Forge NHP, 1400 North Outer Line Drive, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406. Written comments may be submitted to that address.

Two public meetings will be held in January 2008 to present the plan and solicit input. Meetings will be held on January 14, 2009 from 6:00pm to 9:00pm at the Tredyffrin Township Building and on January 15, 2009 from 1:00pm to 4:00pm at the Valley Forge NHP Education Center.

For further information please contact Kristina Heister, Natural Resources Manager, Valley Forge NHP, 1400 North Outer Line Drive, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406 or [kristina\\_heister@nps.gov](mailto:kristina_heister@nps.gov). You may also visit the park website at [www.nps.gov/vafo](http://www.nps.gov/vafo).

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