



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Valley Forge National
Historical Park

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Valley Forge National Historical Park - News Release

For Immediate Release

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Valley Forge National Historical Park Successfully Concludes Deer Management Actions for Winter 2010-2011

VALLEY FORGE, PA – Valley Forge National Historical Park completed the first year of the lethal reduction phase of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (plan). The plan addresses browsing of tree and shrub seedlings by an increasing deer population over the last two decades which has prevented the ability of native forests to grow and mature and has reduced habitat for a range of native wildlife species.

Park staff worked with the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services on 16 nights between November 2010 and March 2011, to remove 600 deer from the park. Meat resulting from this action was donated to the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and provided to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other organizations across 21 counties in Pennsylvania. A total of 18,330 pounds of venison was donated during winter 2010-2011, including 3,000 pounds of venison donated locally in Chester County.

This action included extensive measures to ensure a safe, humane, and successful operation, such as using highly qualified and experienced marksmen familiar with the park's geography and with conducting reduction activities in a highly suburbanized environment, conducting population reduction actions only when the park is closed, observing safety zones, using bait to attract deer to safe removal locations, shooting from an elevated position with an adequate backdrop, and utilizing special, non-lead ammunition that is safe for use in urban areas and in the environment. An operational evaluation conducted by a independent, third party observer, concluded that this operation "met or exceeded all expectations" related to safety, professionalism, communication and record keeping, coordination and cooperation, and the humane treatment of deer. The NPS closely coordinated all activities with township and state law enforcement officials and with the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

A total of 271 deer were also tested for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), a fatal, neurological disease that has been detected approximately 200 miles from the park boundary. All of these deer tested negative for the presence of CWD.

During the lethal reduction phase, sharpshooting and capture and euthanasia will be implemented over four years to reduce the deer population from an estimated 241 deer per square mile (1,277 deer) to the initial density goal of 31-35 deer per square mile (165-185 deer). This operation will continue each winter until the initial target deer density is achieved. The number of deer removed

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each year will be based on the results of annual deer population monitoring conducted in the spring. Subsequently, the park will maintain the park deer population level through reproductive control, once an acceptable agent becomes available.

For additional information please contact Kristina Heister, Natural Resource Manager, Valley Forge NHP via email at kristina_heister@nps.gov. You may also visit the park website at www.nps.gov/vafo.