



RESOLUTION # 24-5/07

TO: HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LA CROSSE COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ITEM # 22/5

BOARD ACTION

Adopted:
For: 27
Against: 3
Abs/Excd: 5
Vote Req: _____
Other Action: _____

**PUBLIC WORKS &
INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE
ACTION**

Adopted: 5/7/07
For: 7
Against: -
Abs/Excd: -

RE: APPROVAL OF GOOSE ISLAND DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN & MANAGED DEER HUNT FOR 2007

WHEREAS, in early 2006 a Task Team was formed with representatives from US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, La Crosse County, and the Town of Shelby to implement a Goose Island Deer Management Plan to alleviate negative impacts of an over abundant deer herd in the Goose Island Park; and,

WHEREAS, Goose Island Park consists of approximately 1 square mile of wildlife habitat and the winter deer population was estimated at 80-92 which will likely increase with fawning this spring and a transient deer population which may utilize the island during certain parts of the year; and,

WHEREAS, with the approval of the La Crosse County Board and all of the above agencies, a 2006 managed hunt was held on Goose Island resulting in the harvesting of 37 total deer by physically challenged participants; and,

WHEREAS, the Task Team agrees that the deer population in Goose Island is still well above goals and objectives and therefore the Task Team recommends another managed hunt closely following the 2006 Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the North American Squirrel Association (NASA) has been recommended by the Task Team as the non-profit organization to develop such a management hunt; and,

WHEREAS, the goal of the Task Team is to effectively manage the deer herd at Goose Island to provide safe viewing opportunities of healthy deer while trying to limit negative impacts associated with the current over population and the information gathered during the 2007 managed hunt will be significant in developing a comprehensive deer management plan for the following year.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the La Crosse County Board does hereby approve the Goose Island Deer Management Plan for 2007.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the La Crosse County Board does hereby authorize the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other agencies that form the Task Team to conduct a managed deer hunt at Goose Island Park on December 8 and 9, 2007, utilizing NASA to find and choose physically challenged hunters as described in the Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that La Crosse County Board does hereby grant exception to the prohibitions set forth in s. 19.03(1)-(3) of the County Code to permit the possession, use and discharge of firearms by the participants of the managed deer hunt at Goose Island Park on December 8 & 9, 2007.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Board Chair is authorized to sign, after review by Corporation Counsel, any permits required by the state and federal agencies in order to hold this hunt.

FISCAL NOTE: No cost to La Crosse County.

Date: 5/7/07

Date: 5/7/07

C. W. [Signature]
PUBLIC WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE CHAIR

Cheryl A. Stephen
RECORDING CLERK

Approved _____ Not Approved _____
C/A: SO 5/2/07
F/D: CF 5-2-07

Requested By: Facilities Department
Date Requested: May 1, 2007
Drafted By: Corporation Counsel

Adopted by the La Crosse County Board This 17 Day of May, 2007.

STATE OF WISCONSIN
COUNTY OF LA CROSSE

I, Marion I. Naegle, County Clerk of La Crosse County do hereby certify that this document is a true and correct copy of the original resolution required by law to be in my custody and which the County Board of Supervisors of La Crosse County adopted at a meeting held on the 17th day of May 2007.

Marion I. Naegle
Marion I. Naegle, La Crosse County Clerk

GOOSE ISLAND DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN for 2007

Purpose:

Implement a Goose Island deer management plan for 2007, including plans to continue herd reduction, to alleviate negative impacts of overabundant deer herd. Information gathered from the 2006 managed hunt and aerial population survey from early 2007 shows a need for further reduction to meet the goals of Task Team.

Background Information:

Goose Island area and County Park is located 3 miles south of La Crosse, WI off of Highway 35. The Island is owned in fee by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers (COE). Part of the island is leased by La Crosse County and was developed as a campground in the early 1960's. The remainder of the Island is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as part of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. Forest management activities on the island are carried out by COE staff. The COE, FWS, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), La Crosse County, and Town of Shelby have enforcement authority on the island. In early 2006 a Task Team was formed with all of the above agencies represented. The Task Team reviewed the information from the 2006 Managed Deer Hunt and 2007 population surveys and concluded the need for further reduction of the deer population: for a healthier deer herd, protection of the natural habitat and alleviation of negative social impacts associated with current population. The Team will continue to modify and update this management plan into the future, after reviewing new information gathered during management activities, to meet goals and objectives of the Task Team. All levels of government will then need to approve such management plans through their appropriate chain of command. The Task Team believes it is essential that all levels of government be involved in the decision making process to be successful.

Results from Public Meetings and Comments:

Multiple public input meetings and contacts with government agencies occurred in 2006 and 2007 in the development of the 2006 and 2007 Management plans. The vast majority of respondents stated that they want to observe healthy deer instead of high numbers of deer on the Island. The Task Team will evaluate public inputs along with scientific evidence to achieve a deer population for the Island that combines the social, economical, and ecological interests of all parties involved. Numerous comments from participants, public, and government officials were received on the 2006 Managed Hunt, with the vast majority being positive and supportive.

2006 Managed Hunt Results:

There were 28 physically challenged participants on 12/09/2006, harvesting 18 deer. On 12/10/2006 there were 21 physically challenged participants harvesting 19 deer. Thirty seven total deer were shot with 29 being antlerless (Does or fawns) deer. Eight adult males were harvested with four (50%) of them having already shed their antlers. Typically most males do not shed antlers that early in the year without additional stresses being present. The WDNR

retained all antlers from harvested deer. Participant's averaged 20.5 deer seen per hunt, and rated their experience from 1 to 5 at 4.8 with 5 being the highest rating. There were no conflicts or safety issues reported during the managed hunt and the Task Team viewed the hunt as a success. All harvested deer were sent through a general field health screening and 28 adult deer were tested for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), all tests concluded no presence of CWD. Eighteen (50%) of the deer were infested with liver flukes (parasite). Reviewing scientific literature there has been some comparison with deer densities correlation to the prevalence of liver flukes, but more information would be needed to make a scientific statement. Comparing the live weight of the deer harvested to the average live weight of deer in the Midwest Agricultural Region, (White-tailed Deer Ecology and Management; pg. 431), 90% of deer harvested were under average weight for their age class. Fifty percent of males were 30 pounds or greater under the average weight per age class, with 2 bucks being greater than 60 pounds under the average live weight. Females harvested were well under the average weights per age class, with some extreme examples of 50 and 62 pounds under the average live weights. General conclusions show large portions of the deer herd are mal-nourished and developing health complications, which may lead to disease outbreak and/or death. Another interesting note is four deer had serosis of the liver and others had cysts on internal organs at which time no further necropsy work was done but should be planned for in the future.

2007 Deer Population Surveys and Results:

There were two main surveys or census conducted on the deer population of Goose Island: road surveys (indices) and a helicopter survey. The road counts were conducted prior to the 2006 managed hunt with counts well above 100 deer and after the hunt with counts of over 80 deer, but gradually decreasing as winter progressed. The helicopter survey was conducted on March 6, 2007 with mostly ideal weather conditions, overcast and 8 to 10 inches of fresh snow cover. Reviewing numerous scientific literatures on aerial surveys ranging from habitat type, topography, observer's experience, weather conditions, and after consulting with other wildlife professional an observation rate of 70 to 80% was suggested. Most literature states that 80 % is the highest observation rate that can be obtained with perfect survey conditions. There was **64** deer observed on the island which would give a population estimate of **80 to 92** deer over wintering. This population is likely to increase with fawning in the spring. Another factor that may play a role in population dynamics is transient deer population which may utilize the island during certain parts of the year. There is a need to gather more information on birthing rates, sex ratio, and mortality to develop a sound fall population estimate, but more than likely the population will increase.

Other General:

La Crosse County amended their ordinance to allow hunting within Goose Island County Park. The Corps and Service were able to use the 2006 deer management plan to amend their lease and hunt plans. The County also passed an ordinance to ban feeding deer on the Island which the Task Team believes will help to achieve mutual goals. The Task Team and many of the public viewed the hunt as a success and a good first step in proper management of the deer population on the Island.

Task Team Recommendations for 2007:

More communities are developing deer management plans to deal with the growing and/or overabundant deer population in their respective communities. Most if not all that develop plans use some form of herd control such as managed hunts. Many of these management plans fail to meet objectives or goals, because they discontinue harvest of the surplus animals on a yearly basis and may take a year or two off. This leads to the deer population quickly rebounding to initial levels or above and no ground being gained on meeting the goals or objectives of the management plans. The Task Team agrees the deer population is still well above such goals and objectives. Just as a population example, the state of Wisconsin through public input develops population levels based on ecological, economical, and social issues for deer management units (DMUs) and DMU 74A has an over winter population goal of 20 deer per square mile of deer range (Goose Island has just over a square mile of deer range). The team also discussed what would be the right number of deer on the Island to meet goals and decided that at this time a specific number may not be the most appropriate. Instead we would like to continue for this year with another managed hunt closely following last year plan and use the information from the harvest and other indicators to help develop a population level that meets objectives/goals. The Team's goal is to effectively manage the deer herd to provide safe viewing opportunities of healthy deer while trying to alleviate negative impacts both environmentally and socially by the over abundant deer population (loss of biodiversity/habitat, car/deer collisions, safety, property damage, and health of overall deer herd). Because the managed hunt just occurred late in 2006 we need this year to pass to compare car/deer collisions along Hwy 35 with previous years. The team also recommends some educational tools be developed to inform the public, this may include a deer proof enclosure and handouts about the management plan. The flat terrain and accessible roads/trails on Goose Island provides an ideal opportunity for physically challenged (disabled) hunters. The North American Squirrel Association (NASA) has been recommended as an organization to develop such a managed hunt. NASA is a non-profit organization formed to assist individuals with physical disabilities and elderly enjoy outdoor activities. NASA can obtain a list of willing participants in a managed hunt and, along with the task team has developed a safety plan and will administer the hunt.

Proposed 2007 Managed Hunt:

General:

- The managed hunt will utilize class A, Long term B, and C permit holders (25-30 persons) who apply through NASA. NASA will then conduct a random drawing (Preference may be giving to those not selected or did not harvest a deer in last years hunt) to select participants and alternates to harvest up to 60 white-tailed deer at Goose Island.
- The managed hunt will be held on December 8th and 9th which correlates with the current statewide December herd control hunt. The hunt will occur on lands held in fee title by the COE and managed by the FWS and the land leased by the county.
- A safety plan has been developed that includes stand locations with safe shooting lanes, closure of the island for public use during the managed hunt, and other safety hazards.

- All deer harvested during this hunt may if needed be registered on the island and transferred to Badger State Sportsman's Club at N3530 Mohawk Valley Rd. for a mandatory health screening, and disease testing (CWD and TB).
- All government agencies listed and organizations will have representation present or be available to administer and coordinate the managed hunt and assist in decision making if issues arise.
- Following the managed hunt, the task team will evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the managed hunt and will be utilizing the information along with winter population surveys to develop future deer management plans.

Details of the Managed Hunt:

- NASA will be responsible for finding and choosing participants for this managed hunt. NASA will advertise this opportunity (approximately September 1) and select hunters through a random (preference may be giving to those not drawn in 2006 or did not harvest a deer) drawing. For a participant to be eligible for this hunt they must possess a Class A, Long term B, and C disabled permit, a Wisconsin hunting license, and abide by Wisconsin hunting regulations. Eligible applicants will apply directly to NASA, submitting a letter of interest and filling out an application form. Approximately one month later (September 30) NASA will stop accepting applications. At this time NASA will randomly select 25-30 participants and 10 alternates through a random drawing. Selected participants will be notified shortly after the drawing, and NASA will confirm the interest and availability of the participant. An able bodied mentor either provided by NASA, Badger State Sportsman's Club or chosen by the participant will accompany every successful applicant to assist in the hunt. Each mentor must be at least 18 years of age and have passed a hunters education course.
- The managed hunt will be conducted on December 8th and 9th. A landowner/lessee authorization to remove or destroy animals causing damage or nuisance will be issued by the WDNR and signed by the county, FWS, and COE for the hunting permits at Goose Island (see form WDNR 2300-109).
 - Friday (Dec.7th) before the scheduled management hunt there will be a mandatory safety meeting for the hunting participants and their partners. This meeting will cover safe shooting zones, arrival and departure from the island, specifics on how the hunt will start and end, encouraging an antlerless harvest for herd control. Registration process and our blaze orange requirements (must follow state regulations and must have a blaze orange article (vest, flagging tape, ect.) above all blind sites that are visible from 360 degrees). Hunting locations will also be assigned, and the participants will have an opportunity to visit stand sites to familiarize themselves with their shooting lanes and clear obstructions.

- On the Saturday of the hunt, volunteers and agency representatives will set up blinds and patrol for unauthorized persons on the island. As the participants come to the island they will be granted access to the island via a window sticker or letter, and their name checked off a checklist. Participants will then head to designated headquarters for final directions and then to their respective stand sites. The hunt will begin when each participant is in their stand site and agency representatives give permission to start hunting via a radio transmission. Each hunter will have the opportunity to harvest two deer. No other wildlife is allowed to be shot. Once a hunter decides to leave their stand site, they need to notify shelter 1 (head quarters), so that other hunters can be made aware of the potential unsafe conditions. They are not allowed to return to their stand sites once they have decided to leave. At 11 a.m. the hunt is over and participants must begin cleaning their sites, gathering any harvested deer, and return to the headquarters (shelter 1, see attached map) regardless of success. After checking in with the headquarters, participants are to proceed to Badger State Sportsman's Club (Badger) located at N3530 Mohawk Valley Rd. At Badger, any harvested deer will go through a health screening, and disease sampling. There will be a luncheon provided by volunteers for the hunt participants at Badger following the hunt. Goose Island will officially open to public use at 12 p.m. if agreed by agencies involved that the island is safe for entry.
- The Sunday hunt will be conducted in a similar fashion. The hunt will again end at 11 a.m. unless the quota of 60 deer has been met, in which case the hunt participants would be notified via radio contact that the hunt is over. Once again, public use of the park may begin at 12 p.m. if agreed by agencies involved that the island is safe for entry.
- Safety issues for those participating in the hunt, agency representatives, volunteers, and the general public are a large concern while the managed hunt is in progress. Park closure signs will be placed at strategic places throughout Goose Island to remind the public of the islands closure. During the hunt there will be road closed signs approximately one half mile on, Hwy 35, each side of the entrance to Goose Island. Barricades will be placed on the entrance road to Goose Island (see attached map) to remind people of the islands closure and provide a turnaround site. A town of Shelby police officer and a Conservation Warden will be stationed at the gate to Goose Island allowing access to the island. Participants, volunteers, and representatives will have window stickers to help the officers identify which vehicles will be granted access to Goose Island. At the gate, the officers will also check each person's name off a checklist before they enter the island. Other law enforcement may be present or called as needed. During the hunt, agency representatives will be patrolling the boat docks in case of open water.

Strategic stand sites have been selected and approved by the task team (see attached map). There are a total of 25-30 stand sites selected with safe shooting lanes. An additional ten stand sites were selected in case of inclement weather or as options if certain stand sites were not productive on the first day. There will be radio contact

between all hunters and agency representatives. Each hunting pair (hunter and mentor) will be asked to carry a cell phone and given the number of a main cell phone at shelter 1. This number will be in case of emergency only. Med link will be notified by NASA in advance of the hunt in case of any emergencies during the hunt. In case of an extreme emergency the main boat landing (see attached map) will serve as a helicopter pad.

- All deer harvested on the Island may if needed be registered at headquarters (shelter 1) or transported and registered at Badger State Sportsman's Club at N3530 Mohawk Valley Rd. Every harvested deer will go through a health screening. The health screening will consist of a live weight measurement, a general field necropsy (suspect animals may be retained by DNR for further necropsy work), and a field dressed weight (after the entails are removed and disposed of). In addition, every suspect deer will be sampled for CWD, TB, and possibly bone marrow for any deer showing signs of malnutrition.
 - The DNR will retain and dispose all heads and antlers from CWD sampling of all deer harvested during this hunt.

Volunteers from Badger State Sportsman's Club and other willing volunteers will assist in any needed logistics for the managed hunt

- All government agencies and organizations will have representation present or in contact to administer and coordinate the managed hunt and assist in decision making if issues arise.
 - The DNR will be providing a Warden to regulate the barricade at Goose Island. Wildlife biologists will be present to conduct disease sampling, health screening, deer registration, media contacts, and administrative decisions.
 - The COE will have law enforcement abilities within the island if a situation arises. A representative will also be present to talk to the media and make administrative decisions.
 - The FWS will have a representative to make administrative decisions and meet with the media. They will also help the DNR biologists with health screening, disease sampling, and provide transportation of people and equipment throughout the island.
 - NASA as stated earlier will be responsible for hunter selection. They will also provide hunting blinds, radios, and help with transportation throughout the island. A representative will also be available to talk with the media and help with emergency situations.
 - A town of Shelby officer will be stationed at the gate to regulate admittance onto Goose Island and to help out as needed.

- La Crosse County will have an officer patrolling south La Crosse county, and representatives present to help make administrative decisions and talk with the media.
- Following the managed hunt the task team will evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the managed hunt and will be utilizing the information along with winter population surveys to develop future deer management plans.
 - To evaluate the safety of the hunt, and prepare for any future hunts team members will gather information from participants about their experience or suggestions on improvements. Any incidents will be discussed and evaluated by the task team.
 - The effectiveness of this hunt will be gauged on several aspects: deer harvested, deer response, and participant satisfaction and will be discussed by the Task Team for a future management plans.
 - Population surveys will be conducted to develop future harvest limits.
 - Evaluating the helicopter survey along with the effectiveness and safety of the hunt will be used in creating a future deer management plan for Goose Island. The results of health screening and disease sampling of harvested deer will also go into the development of a deer management plan. The task team will develop a best management strategy for the sustainability of a healthy deer herd at Goose Island: with the above mentioned factors, the amount of habitat destruction, and the social impacts.

Goals:

The Goal of the task force is to effectively manage the deer herd at Goose Island to provide safe viewing opportunities of healthy deer while trying to limit negative impacts associated with the current over population. The information gathered during this year's managed hunt will be significant in developing a comprehensive deer management plan the following year.