

**USDA APHIS WILDLIFE SERVICES
ACTIVITIES SUMMARY REPORT
2014 WHITE-TAILED DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
TOWNSHIP OF UPPER ST. CLAIR
(July 2014)**

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) was requested by the Township of Upper St. Clair (TOWNSHIP) to conduct white-tailed deer culling throughout the TOWNSHIP. The operational control program to reduce deer densities was first implemented in 2005 and has been continued in the subsequent years. In addition, deer culling is conducted to decrease the amount of property damage, nuisance complaints, and deer-vehicle collisions throughout the TOWNSHIP, with special emphasis along the State Route 19 corridor. WS conducted operations under a PGC Special Use Permit for deer control issued to the TOWNSHIP to achieve program objectives. The following report includes program methods, results, analysis, and recommendations.

METHODS

Public and private properties are utilized in the TOWNSHIP as part of WS operational control in cooperation with the TOWNSHIP and PGC. Written permission is obtained from private properties each year before control operations take place. Each property is examined for potential baiting sites that allow a clear line of site from a shooting position and sufficient backstop. Bait is placed to draw deer from dense cover and position them in safe locations for shooting.

Direct control operations utilized mobile units equipped with a suppressed .243 rifle and a suppressed 300 Whisper. Frangible and controlled fracturing ammo are used to minimize the passage of rounds through deer. Each mobile unit consisted of three members assigned specific roles to accomplish safe and effective removal of deer (driver, spotter and shooter). Hand-held Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) units and night vision goggles are used to locate deer without the aid of spotlights. Once located, mobile units moved into a safe shooting position and observed the deer with a spotlight. The use of the spotlight allows the shooter to observe any obstructions or debris between them and the deer. When determined the shot is safe, the deer is removed via sharpshooting with a quick-kill shot. Upon removal, the deer's age, sex, tag number, location and injuries are recorded and the deer are taken to a processor for distribution to local food banks.

The order in which deer are removed is determined by the availability of safe shots, age, sex and injuries. Ultimately adult does and injured deer are ranked highest in priority while juveniles and antlered deer are taken last; all depending on availability of safe shots. This allows the reduction of the breeding population and also aids in the removal of juveniles within the same group. Large bucks and uniquely identifiable deer such as albino and piebald deer are not targeted for removal to leave opportunities for archery hunters and the general public to view them. Deer removal consisted of multiple nights between February 4, 2014 and March 18, 2014.

RESULTS

WS successfully removed a total of 154 deer from the TOWNSHIP during the 2013-2014 deer management program. Deer were harvested on both public (120) and private properties (34)(Table 1), and were comprised of 45 (29%) adult females, 46 (30%) adult males, 35 (23%) juvenile females, and 28 (18%) juvenile males. Of the 154 deer culled, 46 (30%) were taken from the properties selected due to their proximity to State Route 19 (i.e. Gilfillan Park, Wiltshire Park, Boyce ball field, the tennis bubbles, pump station, Township building and fire station). Four (3%) of the 154 culled deer had injuries consistent with automobile encounters.

Approximately 6,160 pounds of venison was processed and distributed to citizens in Western Pennsylvania via soup kitchens, shelters, and PGC personnel.

ANALYSIS

WS has culled 1,403 deer (850=adults, 553=juveniles) from the TOWNSHIP since the inception of the deer management program in 2005. The program successes experienced to date are largely due to an expansive baiting program and private property access (Figure 1). One particular private property new in 2013 accounted for 14 (10%) of the deer removed in 2013 and 18 (12%) of the deer removed in 2014.

Historically private properties have always been critical to the success of the management program. Figure 2 shows the extent of how many deer are taken from private properties, that otherwise would have not been accessible since the inception of the program.

Table 1. Number of deer culled during 2014 by property in the Township of Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania.

Property	Number Of Deer Culled
Baker Park	3
Boyce Park	7
Byrnwick Park	7
Clair Park	1
Fire Station	3
Fort Couch Park	2
Gardens	2
Gilfillan Park	20
Hays Park	12
Johnston Park	5
Mayview	16
Morton Park	1
Mulch Piles	16
Private	34
Pump Station	16
Ravine Park	3
Tustin Park	6

Figure 1. Number of private properties by area in cooperation with WS in 2014 for deer management in the Township of Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania.

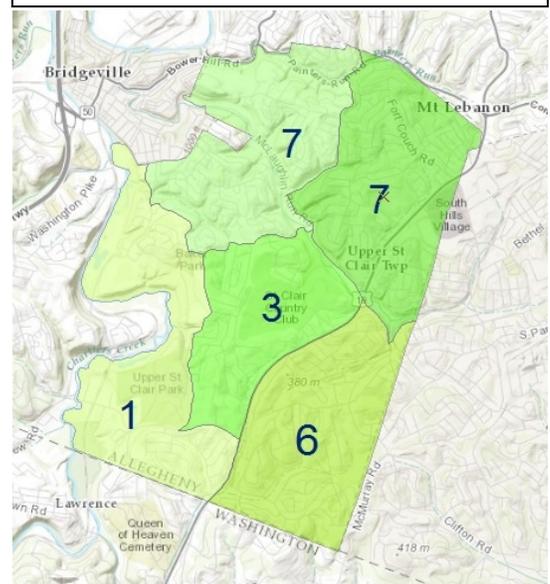
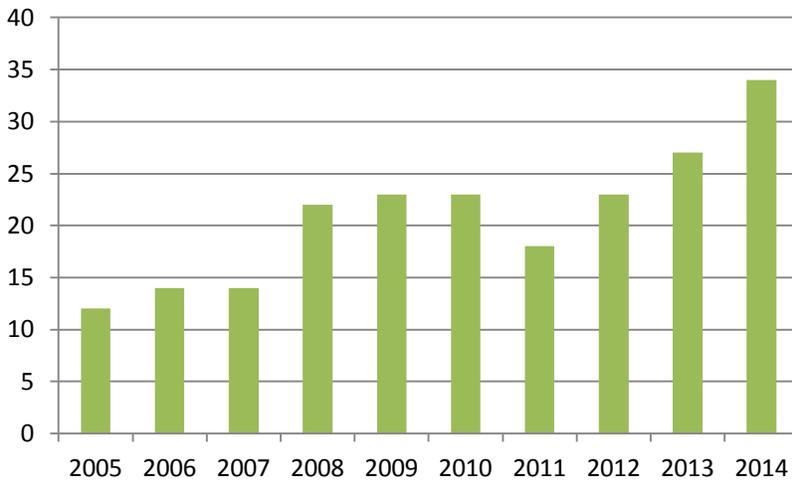
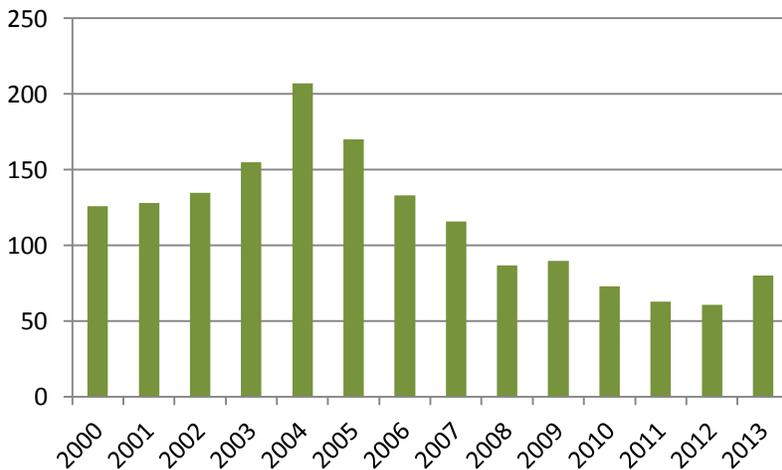


Figure 2. Historical numbers of deer taken from private property by WS in the Township of Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania.



Archery hunting within the TOWNSHIP is continuing with increasing harvest numbers each season. The last three seasons have seen an increase in harvest between 7 and 10 deer per year. Archery hunting is an important recreation opportunity for hunters in Allegheny County and also the most cost-effective management tool. If harvest numbers continue to increase each year, archery once again can be an effective management tool for the TOWNSHIP.

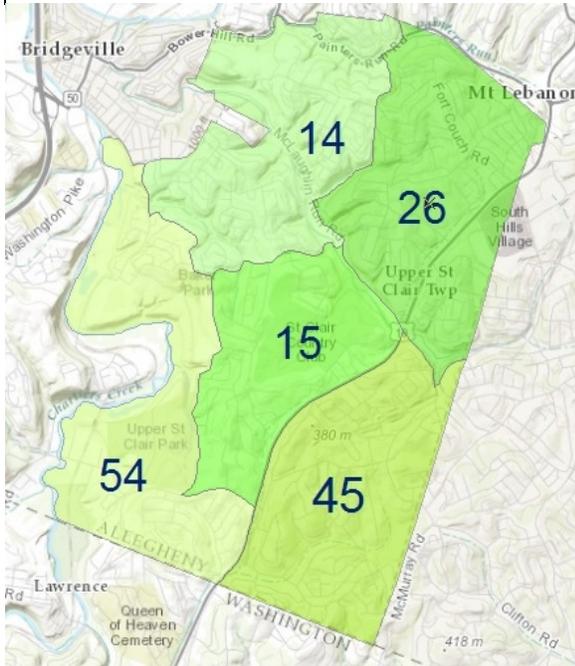
Figure 3. Historical numbers of roadkill in Upper St. Clair Township, Pennsylvania.



One of the goals of the TOWNSHIP is to keep deer/vehicle collisions at fewer than 100 per year. Currently the TOWNSHIP is in the 6th consecutive year in achieving that goal. Additionally, roadkill numbers have fallen steadily with the exception of two years since the inception of the deer management program (Figure 3). A total of 80 roadkills were reported in 2013. Deer complaints were also up from last year from 3 to 6 complaints.

Numbers of deer taken each year are based upon several factors. One of which is the number of deer observed on a nightly basis by the mobile unit. The number of deer culled in 2013 and again in 2014 increased due to the nightly sightings of a larger number of deer than were seen in recent years. Large herds were seen on numerous occasions crossing roads to and from properties which WS does not have permission to cull deer. Access to private properties is an essential part of successful removal of deer throughout the TOWNSHIP.

Figure 4. Numbers of deer removed by area in 2014 by WS in the Township of Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania



WS also analyzed locations in the TOWNSHIP where deer were being culled (Figure 4). The center area had a higher amount of deer culled in 2014 compared to last year. WS attributes this to the addition of a private property along Route 19. Deer removed from this site were a high vehicle collision risk, as they were often seen crossing 19 at this location. The highest numbers of deer were taken from the SW corner of the TOWNSHIP which consists of a large amount of public land. Access and the availability of safe shooting opportunities could explain the high number of deer removed from this area.

Based on the last two years roadkill, deer complaints, the number of deer seen nightly by mobile units and increased number of deer available to be culled, WS believes the management number be adjusted accordingly. Increasing the number of deer removed should help to stabilize local population growth once again. Increased traffic volume and decreased deer-vehicle collision rates for a decade suggests

that WS deer management activities are effective at reducing the deer population within the TOWNSHIP. Increased culling activities utilizing sharp shooting and archery hunting will be necessary to maintain deer-vehicle collisions at acceptable levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WS recommends revisiting and updating the TOWNSHIP'S Deer Management Plan. The original plan was written in 2004. Although it still contains valuable information a lot has been accomplished since the original plan.

WS recommends continuing the deer damage management program each year to establish and maintain deer-vehicle collisions below 100 per year and complaints at a minimum. WS recommends management activities consisting of at least ten nights, targeting 175 or more deer. However, the number of nights allocated to culling should incorporate the following factors: (1) nightly mobile unit observations of deer sightings; (2) weather events; (3) vehicle/deer collision rates; (4) impacts of over-abundant deer on local environments and; (5) available monetary resources.

WS recommends the addition of new private properties available to shooting. Green space becomes more limited each year, but deer still have access to neighborhood backyards. To continue to be able to cull over-abundant deer within neighborhoods, access is essential.

Finally WS recommends the continuation of an archery program within the TOWNSHIP. Every deer taken from the TOWNSHIP during archery season benefits the community. This year 10 deer were taken in the TOWNSHIP by archers. This is an increase over the last two archery seasons. If archery harvest numbers increase each year within the TOWNSHIP and the program flourishes to historical numbers, the number of deer taken by WS could be decreased.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wildlife Services would like to thank everyone involved with deer management in the Township of Upper St. Clair. Deer control operations have continued for a decade with great support from the community and its leadership. Wildlife Services would like to thank the community in the Township of Upper St. Clair. Without their support, a deer culling operation would not be possible.

Wildlife Services would also like to thank our private cooperators for allowing us to utilize their property and the entire Upper St. Clair Police Department for their outstanding contributions to a safe and efficient culling program. We would also like to thank the Pennsylvania Game Commission for their ongoing support for the program. All participants should be recognized for their support and assistance with the deer damage management program and be applauded for their contributions.