

Deer Overabundance: Stakeholders, Obstacles, and Decisions

In order to increase awareness of the complicated issue of deer overabundance for all stakeholders, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space created visual representations of the various priorities, obstacles, and decision involved. We categorized behaviors by their impact on deer overpopulation. Each either relieves or sustains deer overabundance.

All of us have created the deer overpopulation problem in how we live and utilize the land. It is our hope that all stakeholders will do their share to relieve extreme deer impacts including deer-vehicle collisions, Lyme disease, agricultural losses, landscape planting losses, and degradation of natural areas.

Read the slides as follows:

The Priority (blue box) is a simplified description of the stakeholders' highest priority although each stakeholder has many interests and competing priorities.

The Obstacles (yellow box) provides a simplified interpretation of topics that keep stakeholders from fully participating in implementing or supporting effective deer management - this varies among individuals of any particular stakeholder group but is provided as a generalization.

Actions that Relieve Overabundance (green box) are examples of actions suited to particular stakeholders that can mitigate deer overabundance.

Actions that Sustain Overabundance (orange box) generally include conflicting priorities that maintain or exasperate deer overabundance.

Stakeholder List

- Landowners
 - Open Space Landowners
 - Private Landowners
- Agricultural Community
 - Farming Organizations
 - Farmers
- Government, Industry & Advocates
 - Municipal and County Government
 - Car Insurance Industry
 - Animal Welfare Advocates
- Hunting Community
 - Fish and Game Council and the NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife
 - Recreational Hunters
 - Management Hunters
- Members of the Public
 - General Public
 - Recreational Land Users

Landowners

Open Space Landowners

Definition: Land trusts and government entities

Priority: Acquire and preserve open space lands

Obstacles: Staff costs of maintaining a deer management program
Limited availability of management hunters
Ambivalence about hunting from membership constituents

Relieve overabundance:

- Fund staff to implement deer management programs
- Recruit reliable management hunters
- Educate membership and public about deer overabundance to increase support
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction

Sustain overabundance:

- Limit allocation of resources to deer management
- Prioritizing charging hunter fees or stewardship assistance over harvesting deer; Deny hunting access
- Tolerate continued degradation of natural areas

Private Landowners

Definition: Individuals who own parcels large enough to allow hunting

Priority: Enjoy ownership of natural lands

Obstacles: Lack of knowledge about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
Time and financial costs of hunting
Established relationships with recreational hunters
Limited availability of management hunters

Relieve overabundance:

- Learn about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
- Recruit reliable management hunters
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction

Sustain overabundance:

- Prioritize charging hunter fees or stewardship assistance over harvesting deer; Deny hunting access
- Tolerate continued degradation of natural areas

Agricultural Community

Farming Organizations

NJ Farm Bureau, municipal and county agricultural entities

Definition: Organizations that support the agricultural community

Priority: Support farmers & agricultural profitability

Obstacles: Significant difficulties with farming (unrelated to deer)
Established state hunting rules and procedures
Limited availability of management hunters

Relieve overabundance:

- Advocate for methods to reduce deer population (e.g., easier depredation permit procedures)
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction
- Facilitate recruitment of reliable management hunters

Sustain overabundance:

- Tolerate damaged crops and restriction on planting more profitable crops

Farmers

Definition: Individuals who derive income from agricultural activities

Priority: Maximize crop production

Obstacles: Time and financial costs of hunting
Limited availability of management hunters
Nuisance complaints from neighboring landowners

Relieve overabundance:

- Utilize depredation permits
- Recruit reliable management hunters
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction

Sustain overabundance:

- Prioritize charging hunter fees or stewardship assistance over harvesting deer; Deny hunting access (especially on leased lands)
- Tolerate damaged crops and restriction on planting more profitable crops

Government, Industry, & Advocates

Municipal and County Government

(includes health departments)

Definition: Governments entities not associated with land management

Priority: Support a healthy and happy citizenry

Obstacles: Lack of knowledge about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
Ambivalence or fear about hunting
Concern of public perception if supporting deer management

Relieve overabundance:

- Support innovative deer management (e.g., paid hunters)
- Encourage residents to allow hunting
- Publicize information on deer impacts
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction

Sustain overabundance:

- Tolerate negative impacts of deer overabundance

Car Insurance Industry

Definition: Companies that provide car insurance

Priority: Provide quality profitable product to clients

Obstacles: Lack of knowledge about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
Ambivalence or fear about hunting
Concern of public perception if supporting deer management

Relieve overabundance:

- Financially support venison donation
- Inform policy holders of costs associated with deer-vehicle collisions
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction

Sustain overabundance:

- Transfer deer-vehicle collision costs to policy holders without providing information on deer impacts

Animal Welfare Advocates

Definition: Organizations that advocate for the protection of deer

Priority: Protect well-being of deer

Obstacles: Philosophical opposition to hunting
Lack of knowledge about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance

Relieve overabundance:

- Learn about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
- Consider not opposing management hunting as the best strategy when warranted

Sustain overabundance:

- Promote views that misinterpret deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
- Promote ineffective strategies such as birth control

Hunting Community

Fish and Game Council and the NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife

Definition: State government entities that regulate hunting activities

Priority: Maintain safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities

Obstacles: Limited sources of funding
Limited hunting access on large amounts of land

Relieve overabundance:

- Educate public on deer overabundance
- Seek additional sources of funding
- Develop financial incentives for hunters to reduce deer overabundance
- Facilitate increased use of Community-Based Deer Management and depredation permits

Sustain overabundance:

- Prioritize satisfaction of recreational hunters that prefer large deer herds
- Tolerate continued degradation of natural areas

Recreational Hunters

Definition: Hunters that do not prioritize herd reduction

Priority: Enjoy an outdoor hobby

Obstacles: Limited access to land
Ambivalence about taking antlerless deer (does)
Youth's ambivalence about hunting
Lack of knowledge about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance

Relieve overabundance:

- Increase harvest of antlerless deer (does)
- Learn about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance

Sustain overabundance:

- Prioritize harvest of bucks; excessive baiting of non-harvested does to attract bucks
- Pressure deer in ways that decreases future hunting success (e.g., nocturnal deer)
- Tolerate continued degradation of natural areas

Management Hunters

Definition: Hunters with a commitment to herd reduction

Priority: Reduce herd size to improve herd health

Obstacles: Personal time and financial costs of hunting
Limited access to land and lack of demand from landowners
Limited access to certified butchers / venison donation
Ambivalence about hunting from local community

Relieve overabundance:

- Prioritize high take of antlerless deer (does)
- Educate public on deer overabundance

Sustain overabundance:

- Avoid conflict with public by not asserting value of service

Members of the Public

General Public

(including gardeners)

Definition: Individuals who do not own parcels large enough to hunt

Priority: Reduce garden damage, Lyme Disease, and deer-vehicle collisions

Obstacles: Lack of knowledge about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
Desire to view deer up-close
Ambivalence or fear about hunting

Relieve overabundance:

- Learn about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
- Support local deer management efforts
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction

Sustain overabundance:

- Tolerate negative impacts of deer overabundance
- Do not support deer management

Recreational Land Users

Definition: Individuals that recreate on public and private lands

Priority: Enjoy hiking and other forms of recreation

Obstacles: Lack of knowledge about deer impacts and management of deer abundance
Ambivalence or fear about hunting

Relieve overabundance:

- Learn about deer impacts and management of deer overabundance
- Support local deer management efforts, even if it reduces recreational access
- Advocate for statewide deer herd reduction

Sustain overabundance:

- Do not support hunting if it reduces recreational access
- Tolerate continued degradation of natural areas