

**WATCHUNG BOROUGH  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE(WB-WMAC)**

**COMMUNITY BASED DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

**RECOMMENDATION FOR THE 2014-2015 FALL AND WINTER**

The reintroduction of the white tailed deer into New Jersey some 30 years ago, has transformed much of the State's woodlands, from lush areas that supported ample underbrush and new tree growth, to a State having rapidly disappearing normally forested areas, which wind up supporting more the growth of tall grasses than trees. An example of such a location, on Elsinore Drive in Watchung is depicted in the attached photographic image. The image shows the ever increasing clumps of tall grass encroaching areas that were totally covered by lush underbrush 40 years ago. There is now an absence of any saplings to replace felled trees and evidence of ruts from eroded soil, including the exposure of tree roots due to depleted soil levels.

The State of New Jersey Division of Environmental Protection (DEP) has recognized this increasing level of devastation, brought on by excessively large deer herds, and has increasingly added additional deer herd management measures designed to manage the size of the herd. They range from (1) increasing the length of the hunting season (2) less restrictions on the number of deer culled per hunter (3) the reduction of the distance from a culling site to an inhabited structure from 450 foot to 150 foot for bow hunting and (4) the introduction of cross bow hunting. A measure of such significance, that its use was previously limited, by the DEP, to only handicapped individuals.

The State Legislature, The Governor, and DEP has approved the use of these deer culling measures for all citizens of New Jersey, because they realize the gravity of the devastation wrought on the New Jersey environment by excessive deer populations. Our neighboring Somerset County Communities of Bridgewater and Warren have also chosen to not interfere with New Jersey State deer culling regulations and grant their citizens the right to protect the environment on their property via the use of cross bow hunting.

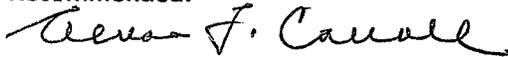
For some unspecified reason, possibly such as the belief of the inadequacy of the State's Hunting Statutes, a previous Watchung Borough Council had deemed it necessary to counteract the New Jersey DEP's regulations regarding the management of the township's deer population by banning bow hunting. As a result, denying residents the right to protect the environment on their private property, and severely limiting the ability of the township to manage the herd on public land by banning the use of the cross bow.

With the significant body of available information indicating the major environmental destruction caused by excessively large deer herds, and the response of the New Jersey Legislature and Executive Branch leaders to that data; the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (WMAC) is at a loss to understand the lack of action by the current Watchung Borough Council to amend the existing ordinance to bring it in line with N.J. State regulations.

Therefore, for the 2014-2015 Watchung Borough Deer Management Program, the WMAC recommends: (1) Continue the existing Community Based Deer Management Program using a designated Sports Hunting Club employing firearms as in the past as well as adding the use of the cross bow. (2) The Borough Council amend the Municipal Ordinance covering the discharge of firearms and bow hunting to bring it in line with N.J. State Statute and grant Watchung Resident's the right to employ the use of the cross bow in order to protect the environment on their property.

Should the Borough Council choose not to take action on amending the Municipal Ordinance granting Watchung Residents the N.J. State granted right to protect the environment on their property by using the cross bow, and given that over the last 10 years as measured by Resident Deer Surveys (2003, 2008, 2013) over 75% of respondents to the Survey indicated a belief that "The Deer Population is Overabundant" and there is "A Need For A Managed Harvest". The WMAC would also recommend that the Borough Council issue a public statement to local residents about information they possess or that may not be available to the DEP that would call for local Watchung policy to override policy developed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for State wide use. Therefore, advising residents of the circumstances the Council believes to be different in Watchung from those of the State in general, and that those circumstances override the need to achieve the "Managed Harvest", residents have endorsed, for the last 10 years, to reduce the size of the herd.

Recommended:



Alan Carroll, Committee Member



Paul Michaelis, Committee Member



Richard Wellbrock, Committee Member



Philip Whitting, Committee Member



Hans Juette, Committee Chairman

Date: 8/19/2014