

Whitpain Township  
Deer and Wildlife  
Management  
Committee

January 12, 2023

6:00 PM



# The Team

- William Armstrong - Whitpain Township Police Department
- Kurt Baker - Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Director
- John Ferro - Wissahickon Trails
- Edgar David - Whitpain Township Shade Tree Commission
- John Elliot - Whitpain Township Parks and Open Space Board
- Alex Simon - Whitpain Township Parks and Open Space Board
- Mike Richino - Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation

# The Mission

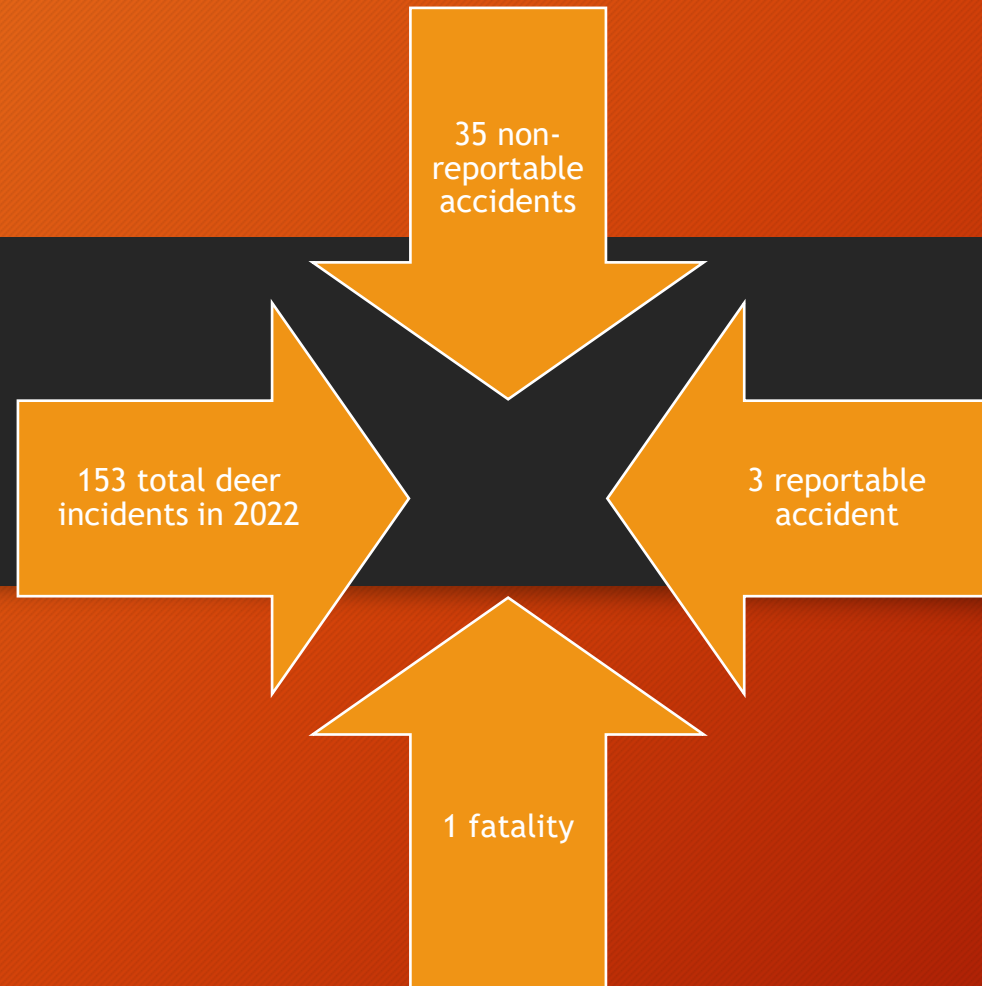
To study the impact of the deer population in Whitpain Township and determine if some form of deer management is necessary. If it is deemed necessary to recommend the type of management program based on best practices.



# The Process

- Starting in 2021 meetings were held by the Whitpain Township Deer and Wildlife Management Committee where we reviewed the following:
  - Statistics of deer crashes reported to the Whitpain Township Police Department
  - The current deer management program in use by Wissahickon Trails
  - Alternative methods of deer management
  - The impact of deer population on trees and vegetation in Whitpain Township
  - Local municipalities that currently hold deer management programs
  - Best practices of deer management based off of Delaware Valley Wildlife Management
  - Areas within Whitpain Township where deer management might be possible

# The Findings



# The Findings cont.

- In a healthy population, female deer can breed as fawns (6 to 7 months of age) producing young at 1 year of age. Average pregnancy rate of doe fawns in developed areas is 40 percent.
- Healthy adult does most often produce two fawns annually.
- Removing deer from a healthy population will NOT increase reproductive rate for adult does in developed areas in Pennsylvania is 1.8 fawns/adult doe with 15 percent producing one fawn, 79 percent producing twins and 6 percent producing triplets. Reproduction in females is already close to maximum.
- Deer can live up to 18 years.
- Deer populations can double in size every 2 to 3 years.

# The Findings cont.

- Deer eat about 5 to 10 pounds of food daily.
- Deer home ranges are relatively small in urban areas (100 to 300 acres).
- Current birth control practices are costly and ineffective in controlling free-ranging deer populations in large areas.
- Hunters can assist landowner at no cost.
- Landowners can impose additional hunting restrictions on their property.
- Homeowners can waive the 50-yard archery or 150-yard firearm safety zone.

# The Findings cont.

- Hunting does not increase deer-vehicle accidents. During fall, deer naturally move more due to increased activity associated with breeding season. Investigations have shown deer-vehicle accidents occur more frequently on Sundays when no hunting is allowed than on Saturdays (high hunter participation day) and one to four hours after dark, which is after hunting hours.
- Landowners who allow the use of their property without a fee are protected from liability.
- Typically, the removal of one adult doe during the hunting season equates to three less deer the following spring.
- All deer management programs require long-term maintenance.



# Wissahickon Trails FAQ

## Reasons for Hunting

Q. Why is deer hunting necessary? Shouldn't you be protecting the wildlife on these preserves?

A. Hunting is necessary because our state (and much of the country) has an overpopulation of deer, which means that forest health is at risk. Deer consume native plants (trees, but also flowers) and in doing so, eliminate important food sources and nesting sites for other wildlife, from birds and butterflies, to snakes and turtles. When there are too many deer, young trees do not reach maturity and forest regeneration is inhibited - that is, as mature trees die and fall (from age, storms, insects) nothing is there to replace them.

High deer populations also increase the chance of car accidents and death.

Q. Have you considered sterilization or contraception to manage the herds?

A. Research shows that sterilization and contraception are less effective and more expensive in managing deer populations.

# Wissahickon Trails FAQ

## Safety Considerations

Q. Do they use guns or is it archery?

A. Archery only

Q. Will me/my family/my dog be safe?

A. Yes, our program involves a very small number of approved archers (usually around a dozen each year) who are all vetted and have to complete an orientation with both the Pennsylvania Game Commission Hunter/Trapper Education Course and the National Bowhunter Education Foundation Safety Course. They are also required to prove proficiency through a field exam during which they fire at targets at varying distances and must hit with high accuracy in order to pass.

Q. Do I need to wear anything different? Or, do anything different?

A. It's not necessary, but orange or other bright colors are sensible to wear when in the woods during the hunting season.

Q. When will they be out there? (time of day, season dates)

A. Hunting takes place early in the morning and late in the day, when deer are most likely to be active. The deer hunting season runs from September through January

Q. Where will they be? (specific preserves, off trail)

A. Hunting takes place at Armentrout Preserve. Stands are located off of the trail and hunters only discharge their bows at targets below them.

# Wissahickon Trails FAQ

## Safety Considerations cont.

Q. How will I know if they're allowed to be hunting there

A. Please contact us

## Program Questions

Q. Can anyone with a license hunt?

A. No, only approved hunters

Q. Can I hunt there?

A. This is a deer management program, if you are interested in being a part of the program, please contact us.

Q. How do you know if the program is successful?

A. Studies have shown that similar deer management programs are successful in stopping the expansion of the deer population.

# Recommendation

Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors,

The Whitpain Township Deer and Wildlife Management Committee held several virtual meetings in 2021 to research and discuss various methods of deer management. Research included, but was not limited to:

- What other local municipalities do regarding deer management (Abington and Upper Dublin both have management programs. Warrington is investigating the possibility).
- The success rates of various methods of deer management (management through hunting has proven to be more successful and economical than other methods). \*
- Statistics relevant to vehicular accidents and nuisance calls to the Whitpain Police Department regarding deer (an average of 176 accidents/incidents per year for the last 5 years). \*
- Best practices employed by Delaware Valley Wildlife Management and Wissahickon Trails. \*



# Recommendation cont.

After careful consideration it is the position of the Deer and Wildlife Management Committee to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that Whitpain Township adapt a deer management pilot program consisting of the following:

- The pilot program would take place on the Armentrout preserve, adjacent to the Wissahickon Trails property that already hosts a management program. This pilot program would be evaluated after a year to determine if the program should continue as is, be expanded or be discontinued.
- The pilot program would be run in a manner consistent with how Wissahickon Trails manages their existing program. (see attached) and allow only for archery with a focus on managing the population of doe.
- Also attached is a position paper from the Whitpain Township Shade Tree Commission which advocates for a deer management program within the township.
- Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Any questions regarding the proposed deer management program can be addressed to Mike Richino, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation or Kurt Baker, Director of Parks and Recreation.

Sincerely,

Whitpain Township Deer and Wildlife Management Committee

Q & A