

**CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT
REGIONAL DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

OVERVIEW

An increasing population of Coast Black Tail Deer or Columbian Black Tailed Deer in urbanized areas has been identified as an ongoing issue in the Capital Region. In 2011, a number of reports responded to initial public concerns by better defining the issue, outlining the provincial position, providing detailed research and data analysis, including public input obtained through a dedicated e-mail address, and recommending steps to address the issue. All information to date on the history of the process, reports, data and research can be found at www.crd.bc.ca/deermanagement. Based on the preliminary input from the community thus far, the major deer-human conflict communities are Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay.

On November 9, 2011, staff was directed by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board to develop an action oriented terms of reference for a Regional Deer Management Strategy (RDMS) and report back to the CRD Board in early 2012.

A four step process for developing a deer management strategy and action plan is proposed.

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the terms of reference is to develop a RDMS that will guide the control of deer population in areas of conflict in the regional district.

The objectives of the process are to:

1. Prepare a deer management strategy that will address:
 - the impact of deer on agricultural crops which results in economic loss to producers;
 - public health and safety concerns related to deer-auto collisions and risk of aggressive deer-human or deer-pet interaction or transmission of disease;
 - deer encroachment on private urban residential properties resulting in vegetative loss and increased exposure to risk of deer aggression.
2. Engage citizens, government/private/non-profit experts, First Nations and farmers in preparing an action-oriented deer management strategy.
3. Gain public and local/provincial government support for the implementation of the resulting strategy.

A four step process is proposed to develop the RDMS. A proposed timeline with project tasks is attached in Appendix B.

STEP 1: Establish Expert Resource Working Group and Citizens Advisory Group and Proposed Management Options

Expert Resource Working Group (ERWG)

The proposed ERWG will be a body of individuals who have technical expertise to contribute to the RDMS. This group will provide technical and scientific expertise to the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG). Individual members will act as a liaison with their organizations and provide

knowledge and expertise to support the work of the CAG. Members of the working group will represent the following interests:

- Parks Canada biologist
- Canadian Wildlife Service
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Transportation
- Wildlife Veterinarian
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Forest, Land and Natural Resources
- CRD Parks
- CRD Regional Planning
- University of Victoria wildlife population researcher
- independent biologist
- Peninsula Agriculture Commission

The ERWG will be established based on the members proposed in Appendix A. These people have demonstrated technical expertise and experience with deer-human conflicts and many have expressed an interest in assisting with the RDMS. As part of Step 1, staff will contact each of them and confirm their willingness to serve as working group members.

The ERWG is expected to advise the CAG on the following:

- factors contributing to the over abundant population
- population estimates
- population annual rate of increase and projected growth with and without any intervention
- documentation of property, agricultural, or natural resource damage, as well as human health and safety concerns
- legal ramifications or jurisdictional issues – city bylaws, provincial and federal laws
- identified or suspected ecological, economic, sociological and political consequences
- efficacy of management options and geographic project scope for implementation
- development of a management option evaluation matrix
- contents of communications materials and surveys

Citizens Advisory Group

The proposed CAG will be the body that guides the development of the RDMS. The CAG will work within the scope of communications and consultation set out in the prepared framework and work with the ERWG. Effectively this committee will be tasked with preparing and recommending the management strategy and action plan to meet the objectives set out above and address the deer-human conflicts in the region.

A number of members of the public have indicated interest in their e-mail submissions in participating in developing a deer management strategy. A call for interest in appointment to the CAG will be circulated by e-mail and through media releases. The terms of reference for the RDMS and for the citizens' group will be circulated accordingly. Individuals will be requested to submit a letter of interest demonstrating willingness to work within the scope, purpose and objectives of the terms of reference. Citizens' Group appointments will be evaluated by staff, reviewed by the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee and recommended to the Board.

Efforts will be made to ensure representation from across the region with special regard to those most affected by deer as well as those implicated in publicly suggested management options. Input to date suggests representation from the following groups:

- agriculture
- citizens in areas where deer invasion is most acute, i.e. Oak Bay, Victoria, Saanich
- First Nations

CAG membership will be constituted as follows:

- Chair – appointed from CAG membership
- five members from the Core sub-region
- four members from the Peninsula sub-region
- two members from the West Shore sub-region

Regional Planning and Corporate Communications staff will provide administrative and communications support, including compilation and distribution of information and meeting materials, meeting arrangements, communications and consultation and reporting to the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee.

The CAG will work within the process set out in the terms of reference to consult on the draft RDMS through the online campaign and make final recommendations on the strategy and actions to the Board through the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee. The proposed terms of reference for the committee is contained in Appendix C.

This advisory group-based approach is based on a co-managed, community oriented process which is considered more efficient and equitable compared to more authoritative wildlife management approaches. The *British Columbia Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis Summary Report for Municipalities* notes that although this type of process is more time consuming, greater stakeholder participation and satisfaction will result.

Management Options

Also as part of Step 1, citizens' group and working group orientation is required. Information pertaining to the management options to be considered for the RDMS will be compiled with the assistance of the working group and distributed to the CAG, public and media.

A number of short and long term strategies are required to address current, immediate conflict issues and long term population levels. Each of these strategies requires inter-governmental cooperation to achieve results. The *British Columbia Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis Summary Report for Municipalities* (the Hesse report) emphasizes management of expectations by balancing management strategies that reduce the conflict problem.

According to the report, management options can be categorized into four areas:

- conflict reduction
- population reduction
- fertility control
- administrative options

Conflict reduction options focus on keeping animals away from susceptible properties, minimising damage and conflicts using methods such as landscaping, repellents, and fencing. Population reduction programs are ongoing with an initial reduction phase followed by a maintenance phase after localized population densities are reduced. Community specific management decisions are required to inform control details. Fertility control options are very limited due to the lack of approved fertility control drugs for ungulates in Canada. Immunocontraceptive vaccines are most promising but are only approved for experimental research purposes. Long-term study results are not yet available. Most researchers suggest populations be lowered using lethal control, then, once lowered, introduce fertility controls.

Finally, administrative options include amending municipal bylaws or provincial regulations to permit lethal control options and other measures. The administrative options are actually not a management strategy in and of themselves, but rather how the other measures would be implemented and the results monitored. A more appropriate fourth category would be 'status quo', or learning to live with deer perhaps through such measures as public education.

It is proposed that the CAG will consider all of these management options, specifically including the following measures:

Conflict Reduction

- hazing and frightening techniques
- repellents
- landscaping alternatives
- fencing
- ungulate vehicle collision mitigation

Population Reduction

- capture and relocate
- capture and euthanize
- controlled public hunting
- sharpshooting

Fertility Control

- immunocontraception

Status Quo

- public education

STEP 2: RDMS Preparation and Communications/Consultation Strategy

RDMS preparation will involve:

- agreeing on goals and objectives for the strategy
- confirming an understanding of the management options and measures under consideration
- identifying whether additional management options or measures should be considered
- identifying implementation requirements for each management option under consideration
- identifying and addressing data/information gaps
- scoping geographic areas where measures are most warranted
- developing evaluation criteria and designing an evaluation matrix
- agreeing on the format and content of the RDMS

In considering the management options and measures, evaluation criteria would be developed, with the assistance of the ERWG, including but not limited to:

- public acceptability
- efficacy in addressing documented deer-human conflict
- short and long-term implications
- geographic scope of applying various measures
- implementation considerations such as amending bylaws, provincial statutes or regulations, licensing, monitoring, education
- duration of recommended actions
- cost

The CAG, the ERWG and Regional Planning staff will prepare a draft RDMS.

Communications and Consultation Strategy:

Early and ongoing communications and consultation regarding the deer management strategy will consist of:

- A more robust online campaign using the CRD website and dedicated e-mail address to communicate progress and accept input, by:
 - using this medium for recruiting CAG members;
 - providing opportunities for the exchange of information by building awareness and understanding of what issues exist in the deer population in the capital region and options for inclusion in the RDMS;
 - an online forum established through a discussion board on the CRD's website that will provide regional residents with key messages and engagement questions regarding the evolving deer management strategy for discussion and input. The discussion board will be moderated by CRD staff.
- Dedicated correspondence and sharing of key messages and engagement questions regarding the RDMS with senior government, CRD directors and municipal councillors so that they can monitor the process and provide input.

Use of the online campaign has several benefits, including:

- moderated format to allow for ongoing public discussion
- available through the CRD website
- users can be anonymous
- introduces subsequent stages of the consultation process
- provides opportunities for participants to have questions answered
- solicits feedback
- structured so that feedback is constructive and solution focused

The online campaign will be initiated upon approval of the terms of reference by the Board and supported through earned media opportunities and social media over the duration of the process. Input/feedback received via the online campaign will be provided to the CAG by staff.

STEP 3: Finalize Regional Deer Management Strategy

Based on the totality of input from the communications and consultations of Step 2 as well as professional judgement of the ERWG and the CAG's direction, staff will finalize the RDMS and prepare a transmittal report to the Board via the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee for consideration.

The Board may wish to conduct a regional survey by an organization like Ipsos Reid or Malatest. This will provide a statistical approach to determining public opinion on the recommended management options and measures. The same survey can be posted online over the survey period, in order for those interested but not selected in the survey sample to weigh in; results will be tabulated separately.

STEP 4: Implementation

Implementation is dependent on the approved recommendations of the RDMS. No regional resources are currently allocated to implementation. Several options for implementation will be considered, including implementation by municipalities.

Project Management and Support Resources

This project will be managed by the CRD, with Jeff Weightman, Planning Analyst, as project manager, who will coordinate the ERWG and CRD Corporate Communications and Regional Planning staff support. Regional Planning will provide administrative and project coordination services as well as support for online and media campaigns and the public survey in conjunction with Corporate Communications.

Budget and Sources of Funding

As previously indicated, no external cash funding source has been secured to assist with the development of the RDMS. In-kind support will be sought from the agencies listed in Appendix A to contribute expertise and guidance to this process as part of the ERWG. Also, volunteer time and effort will be contributed by the CAG members toward the RDMS.

In-kind support will be made available from the Regional Planning division through dedication of the planning analyst as project manager for the duration of the project and administrative support provided by the administrative clerk. The senior manager and the general manager will also contribute time and guidance to the process. Additional resources are required to fund CAG information, meeting and reporting needs as well as the online campaign, earned media and social media promotion. A single supplementary requisition to the Regional Planning budget of \$20,000 is required for this work.

Should the statistical public survey approach be undertaken, at the Board's direction, to canvass the public on the recommended management options and measures, an additional \$20,000 is required through a single supplementary for this purpose. In total, the proposed approach to the RDMS requires a single supplementary to the Regional Planning 2012 budget of \$40,000.

Timeline

The RDMS will be completed between March and July 2012, with implementation anticipated thereafter, pending the Board's approval. Appendix B contains a more detailed timeline.