

# CRD Regional Deer Management Strategy Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, June 19, 2012 – 4:00pm

Activity Room, Burnside-Gorge Community Centre, Victoria

## Meeting Notes

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### **Present:**

Jocelyn Skrlac (Chair)  
Richard Christiansen  
Wendy Fox  
Lisa Kadonaga  
Sol Kinnis (arrived at 5:00pm)  
Terry Michell  
Robert Moody (arrived at 6:00pm)  
Patrick O'Rourke

### **Regrets:**

Robin Bassett  
Phil Tom  
Kerri Ward

### **Staff:**

Jeff Weightman (Deer Management Project Manager, CRD Regional Planning)  
Corey Burger (Recording Secretary, CRD Regional Planning)  
Jan Pezarro (Facilitator)

J. Skrlac called the meeting to order at 5:04pm when quorum was achieved.

#### **1. Approval of Agenda**

P. O'Rourke moved approval of the agenda. R. Christiansen seconded

**CARRIED**

#### **2. Review and Approval of Minutes of June 12, 2012**

W. Fox moved approval of the minutes. R. Christiansen seconded.

**CARRIED**

#### **3. Correspondence**

J. Weightman noted that there were no additional correspondence items this week.

#### **4. Facilitated Discussion**

J. Skrlac turned the meeting over to J. Pezarro. J. Pezarro began with the affirmation of the Principles, Goals and Objectives, indicated that there had been a two week period for the CAG to review and provide feedback. J. Pezarro asked if there were any comments or changes that the CAG wished to see.

The CAG discussed changing the principle of “Consideration for impacts on local food security” to “Consideration for opportunities and impacts on local food security”, noting that reduced deer-human conflict may allow farmers return fields to production. The CAG also discussed food security for the lower island and how it has significantly decreased in the last few decades.

J. Pezarro then asked the CAG about the two objectives and if they were comfortable with the order and wording. The CAG discussed reversing the order, to place the “decrease in human-deer conflicts” objective before the “information” objective. The CAG decided to list the objectives with bullets to demonstrate the equivalence and not to rank one above the other but noted that the information objective flowed from the management options they recommended.

The CAG discussed the wording of the information objective, noting that the current wording “To improve the level of information regarding impacts of deer human conflict (identify key factors)” mentioned only information directly related to specific measures and not broader information gathering and indicator development. J. Pezarro mentioned that the CAG has an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge base for all communities looking at deer-human conflicts.

The CAG further discussed a hypothetical status quo option, noting a need for monitoring information. J. Pezarro asked the CAG if they were comfortable with the term “indicators”. The CAG discussed the need for indicators that were measurable.

The CAG also discussed that they need information measures not associated with any specific metric such as measures of public support and public endorsement of various options. PezarroThe CAG discussed whether they had to develop the indicators or just mention that they need to be developed. The CAG also discussed how broad or specific the objectives need to be and J. Weightman replied that they should be as broad as the range of management options.

J. Pezarro then said the next steps included the evaluation of the management options using the developed criteria from last week. J. Pezarro noted that the CAG made good progress last week with the Hazing and Frightening option and today the CAG would start with the Fencing option which the CAG members were asked to develop between the meetings.

The CAG discussed the Fencing management option in the Agricultural geography. One of the agricultural representatives on the CAG gave an approximate total cost of fencing all of their properties given the fencing quotes that had been circulated amongst the CAG members by email. The agricultural representative noted the cost was prohibitively high. The CAG discussed the former Ministry of Agriculture subsidy program that covered fencing, noting that the subsidy would have been a small fraction of the cost mentioned by the agricultural representative.

The CAG discussed fence construction noting that treated wooden fence posts cannot be used on organic farms and one of the agricultural representatives noted that many organic farmers use metal fence posts.

The other two agricultural representatives also discussed fencing costs relating to their own properties in addition to information gathered from other local farmers, including the challenges with fencing such as soil type and vegetative cover some of which lead to higher costs.

The CAG then discussed effectiveness of Fencing, given that fencing properties likely displaces deer to neighbouring farms and noted that it was unfeasible to fence the entire region. The CAG also noted that the displacement of deer to neighbouring properties is the same for repellents, also forage pressure may increase in other locations as will other factors such as vehicle-deer collisions.

The CAG discussed the various types of fencing, including electric as well as natural barriers such as hedgerows. The CAG discussed the time criteria, noting that with agricultural areas there is a short time frame to install fencing due to the planting season. The CAG then discussed cost before finally agreeing to score Cost in agricultural areas as 1 (cost rating works inversely, a score of 1 indicates high cost and therefore low desirability).

The CAG then discussed Effectiveness, noting the issue of displacement of deer, the CAG split the effectiveness criteria to Effectiveness for the Individual and Effectiveness at addressing the root cause. The CAG discussed how they had scored effectiveness and some of the CAG members said they had been guided by the farmer survey the CAG has received as part of their information package as well as its relative effectiveness to hazing. The CAG also noted that unlike other management options such as repellents, fencing does not need continuous application. The CAG also discussed displacing deer out of fenced areas onto the road, noting that while fencing can be effective for a specific individual it doesn't address the root cause. The CAG then agreed to score Effectiveness for Individuals as 3 and Effectiveness at addressing the Root Cause as 1.

Pezarro

J. Pezarro then asked the CAG to score Fencing for Feasibility. The CAG discussed the high level of variability, noting that there are many factors involved in fencing that are very property-specific and might decrease feasibility. The CAG also discussed the issue that many Peninsula farms extend into the road allowance, which cannot be fenced. The CAG agreed on a score for Feasibility of 1.5.

The CAG then discussed the Capability of Fencing, noting that there might be an issue of supply of fencing material but that farms could order in large quantities. J. Weightman suggested that if the demand was present the fencing suppliers would have no problem with supply. The CAG also discussed fencing bylaws that restricted total height of fencing. One specific example was in Central Saanich height is restricted to 6 feet. The CAG discussed whether or not 6' was enough to exclude deer and that farmers would need to request an amendment of the bylaw to fence to the appropriate height of at least 8 feet. The CAG also

noted that bylaws could be changed if requested. The CAG agreed on a score of 2 for Capability.

The CAG then discussed Time, noting that fencing was relatively fast, assuming cost was no obstacle. The CAG noted that time was a relative factor before agreeing on a score of 2.5 for Time.

J. Pezarro then asked the CAG about Support and Enthusiasm. The CAG anticipated that support would be high but that aesthetic factors likely reduced the support as some people may object to the aesthetics of having to fence entire properties on the Saanich Peninsula. The CAG agreed to score Support and Enthusiasm as a 2.

J. Pezarro then noted to the CAG that Community Factors should read Community Impacts.

The CAG then discussed the environmental aspect of Community Impacts specifically with regards to plastic fencing and how environmentally friendly large quantities of plastic deer fencing was. The CAG also noted that the issue of displacing deer onto the road or into parks would also reduce the score. The CAG then agreed on a score of 1 for Community Impacts.

The CAG then moved the discussion of Fencing to the Rural geography. J. Weightman reminded the CAG of the definition of rural. The CAG discussed the two effectiveness criteria, noting that as with agricultural geography, fencing solved the individual issue without solving the root causes. The CAG agreed to score Effectiveness with Individuals as 3 and Effectiveness in solving the Root Causes as 1.

The CAG then discussed the Feasibility of Fencing. The CAG discussed deer displacement from the rural geography, and where would be the next most likely geography deer migrate to? The CAG also discussed rural property fencing, smaller areas would need to be fenced, primarily gardens and high value vegetation. The CAG discussed one member's specific experience with fencing their rural property. The CAG also discussed whether the presence of deer could be considered part of the rural experience. The CAG agreed on a score of 2.5 for Feasibility.

The CAG then discussed Capability, agreeing it was the same as for the agricultural geography. The CAG agreed on a score of 2 for Capability.

The CAG then discussed Cost. The CAG discussed the differences between farmers being able to write off fencing as a tax expense versus most rural land owners that cannot. The CAG noted that the cost is very relative and that fencing is a privatized solution and therefore hard to rate. The CAG noted that the actual per foot cost of fencing is the same regardless of geography but that the total cost might be lower for rural properties due to comparatively less area to fence. The CAG discussed the costs of other landscaping relative to the cost of fencing. The CAG also discussed the cost of Fencing rural versus urban areas. The CAG agreed to score Cost as 1.5.

The CAG then discussed Time and noted that in the rural geography time was less critical as there wasn't the need to complete fencing before planting season. The CAG also discussed how fencing relates to other management options, finally scoring Time as 3.

The CAG then discussed Support and Enthusiasm, noting that the aesthetics remain an issue for the rural geography. The CAG agreed to a score of 2.

The CAG then discussed Community Impacts, noting the same environmental impacts of plastic fencing and displacement deer onto roads existed as with the agricultural geography. The CAG agreed to a score of 1.

The CAG then moved to discuss Fencing in the urban geography. The CAG discussed Effectiveness, noting that the two effectiveness scores were the same as both agricultural and rural geographies due to the same set of issues. The CAG agreed to score Effectiveness for Individuals as 3 and Effectiveness for Root Cause as 1.

The CAG then discussed Feasibility including negotiations with neighbours over fencing types and the closer proximity to neighbours. The CAG also noted that most of the urban geography municipalities have bylaws restricting fencing height. One of the agricultural representatives mentioned that for their farming operations, of all of the management options, fencing was the most feasible. The CAG agreed on a score for Feasibility of 2.5.

The CAG then discussed Capability noting that bylaw issues are substantial. The CAG also discussed the challenge of the restricted ability to fence front yards, noting that issues such as road allowance and boulevards that affect farmers also affect urban property owners. The CAG then further discussed opportunities and barriers before deciding on a score of Capability of 1.5.

The CAG then discussed Cost, noting that the urban geography has a higher aesthetic standard which may increase costs. The CAG agreed on a score of 1 for Cost.

The CAG then discussed Time, noting that it was same as for the rural geography, scoring Time as 3.

The CAG then discussed Support and Enthusiasm. The CAG noted that there are more issues with support in the urban geography. The CAG also discussed the differences between standards for new developments compared to retro fitting existing neighborhoods and the relative levels of support. The CAG then discussed the issue of immediate neighbours as well as displacement of deer without addressing underlying issues. One of the agricultural representatives spoke about their experience in Oak Bay and the relative level of discomfort by residents with fencing and the high number of deer in Oak Bay. The CAG also discussed one member's experience with replacing fencing noting that it increased neighbour interactions and friendliness. The CAG agreed on a score of 1.5 for Support and Enthusiasm.

The CAG then discussed Community Impacts, noting that a letter received by the deer management email was concerned with risk from deer blindly jumping fences. The CAG agreed on a score of 1.

J. Skrlac then read from notes one of the absent CAG members had sent in, outlining three specific points regarding the Fencing management option. The first spoke about the need for a cost/benefit analysis regarding farm fencing and when farms would recoup their outlay. One of the CAG's agricultural representatives indicated that with costs they had outlined to the CAG earlier they would not expect those costs to be recouped in their lifetime. The second point was a recommendation to the CRD for farm fencing subsidies, including restarting the Ministry of Agriculture farm fencing program. The third point was to look at grant funding including lowering of property taxes for fenced areas. J. Pezarro mentioned that these points can be tabled for when the CAG moves to the recommendation phase after it finishes evaluating the management options.

The CAG then moved to discussing Landscaping Alternatives. The CAG noted that Landscape Alternatives had no applicability to the Agricultural geography.

J. Pezarro wondered why this was proposed as an option and J. Weightman replied that the CAG was to examine all management options and that deer resistant plants were available in the region, however, the ERWG noted that any plant, deer resistant or not that is watered and fertilized will become attractive to deer and that this option should be bundled with other options.

The CAG discussed deer browsing on flowers including the large daffodil farms on the Saanich Peninsula in addition to native plantings to reduce deer browsing.

The CAG then discussed Landscaping Alternatives in the urban geography. The CAG discussed browsing pressure and how higher deer volumes lead to higher browsing pressure. The CAG also discussed the increased viability of Landscaping Alternatives as a management option in the future as browsing pressure decreased. The CAG then discussed the issue of food production, noting that fenced food production in back yards with deer-resistant plantings in the front might be an option. The CAG then agreed on a score for Effectiveness for the Individual of 2 and Effectiveness of dealing with the Root Cause of 1.

The CAG then discussed Feasibility. The CAG discussed a hypothetical scenario whereby the urban geography as a whole was planted with deer resistant plants. The CAG discussed that deer will switch their browsing patterns as food becomes scarce and that starving deer are likely to be fed by local residents despite any deer feeding bylaws. The CAG discussed the potentially large amount of public buy-in over the long term, but noted the requirement of willingness from individuals. The CAG discussed the browsing pressure on James Island including deer consumption of Scotch broom, an unusual behaviour. The CAG discussed the overall promotion to plant more fruit trees and edible plantings in public boulevards and the potential clash with deer foraging. The CAG eventually agreed on a score for Feasibility of 1 .

The CAG discussed Capability, noting that deer-resistant plants are readily available in the region. The CAG agreed on a score of 3 for Capability.

The CAG discussed the issue of plant replacement cost and the potential need for residents to retrofit gardens with deer-resistant plants. The CAG also discussed a scenario where residents live with plant loss in specific areas of their property. The CAG agreed on a score of 1 for Cost (indicating a high cost, therefore low desirability).

The CAG further discussed Cost, noting overall higher landscaping costs for new developments may result in a higher score due to not incurring the cost of replacement. The CAG also discussed what percentage of Oak Bay and Gordon Head are actually new developments.

The CAG then discussed Time and that while planting is relatively fast, some time to take root is required, so they scored Time as 2.5.

The CAG then discussed Support and Enthusiasm with the differences between required planting programs and voluntary planting programs. The CAG noted that requirements would make the support low and noted certain commercial ventures may be unable to follow, using the example of Butchart Gardens.

The CAG discussed the issue of Victoria being marketed as a city of gardens. The CAG then discussed the issue of displacing deer from property to property as deer found more palatable plantings along with the issue with back yard food gardens. The CAG also discussed the different levels of support between new developments and established neighbourhoods. The CAG agreed with a score of 2 for Support and Enthusiasm.

The CAG then discussed Community Impacts noting that requiring deer resistant plantings might clash with the goals associated with increasing the number of native plants. The CAG noted that native plantings tend to require less water, which has a positive environmental impact and that they can recommend both native species and non-native species. The CAG also noted that it could further the objectives of the various invasive plant efforts. The CAG agreed on a score of Community Impact of 3.

The CAG then re-discussed Effectiveness and the information from the Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis report. The CAG also discussed the issue of comparing the Plantings option to the Fencing alternative. J. Pezarro replied that they don't need to go into the exact comparisons between the various management options yet. The CAG also discussed that there are non-plant landscaping options such as hard surfaces.

## **7. Next Steps and Outstanding Items**

The CAG then discussed the next steps and how many meetings they had left. The CAG agreed to take away four options for discussion at the next CAG meeting: Repellants, Deer/Vehicle Collisions, Capture & Relocate, and Capture & Euthanize.

J. Weightman brought up the issue of correspondence and asked the CAG to keep the majority of the discussion at the meetings and only use email to circulate information before a meeting.

J. Weightman also discussed the types of information being circulated, in addition to the need to qualify the opinion based information compared to empirical science-based, which has been vetted with experts, versus personal opinion. J. Weightman did note that any member of the CAG is more than welcome to ask questions or ask to have opinion based information vetted through the ERWG.

J. Weightman then mentioned that he is going to expand on the Evaluation Criteria and bring it back to the CAG for the next meeting for approval and posting for public input.

The CAG asked if the ERWG could provide some information regarding use of repellents on food plants. The CAG noted that there are additives that you can add to the soil that you cannot put on food plants.

**ACTION:** CRD Staff to ask the ERWG about the use of repellents on food plants

## **8. Next Meeting**

The CAG then discussed the next meeting, deciding on moving it to Wednesday, June 27 from 4 – 8pm at the Burnside Gorge Community Centre if available.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm