



SUBURBAN WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS, LLC

2022-2023 ARCHERY FINAL REPORT

WHITEHALL BOROUGH, PA

February 24, 2023



Introduction

Whitehall Borough, like many cities and towns throughout the country, recognizes the negative impact on the community created by an overabundant deer population. In 2015, Whitehall established the Whitehall Wildlife Management Committee to address conflicts with wildlife in the community. Committee members worked with the Mayor and staff to examine issues presented by the growing deer population in the borough. In addition, the committee assessed the feasibility of management strategies to address this issue.

In 2021, Whitehall Borough and Suburban Wildlife Management Solution (SWMS) initiated a plan to address the growing deer population. The primary objective was to reduce the number of deer-related vehicle accidents in the borough. Additionally, the program was aimed at minimizing other negative impacts an overabundant deer population can have on the community.

Suburban Wildlife Management Solutions (SWMS), LLC is a wildlife management and population control company developed in 2016 with the goal of assisting communities address conflicts with native wildlife species. Specializing in whitetail deer population control, the owners of SWMS have over 20 years of experience in the development and implementation of multi-faceted, community-based deer management programs. The foundation of our approach is the utilization of managed hunting and sharpshooting to decrease negative interactions between deer and the community. SWMS has extensive experience working with local municipalities to produce the most effective and efficient deer management programs available.

Property Assessment

Private property owner involvement is essential to the overall success of the management program. During the initial year of the program SWMS staff spent considerable time meeting with Whitehall residents and assessing the feasibility of deer management locations. All private properties were first assessed via overhead mapping. Following the initial assessment, representatives of SWMS contacted property owners and, if warranted, met on site to identify all potential safety hazards at a particular location. Additionally, we explained the deer management program goals with residents, addressed any of their concerns, and discussed applicable game laws and regulations (i.e. safety zones, permitted equipment, etc.), program strategies, as well as property owner specific guidelines including hunting dates, times, parking, deer recovery, etc.



During the 2022-2023 archery season, SWMS contacted and received hunting permission from 41 private property owners in the borough. Following our initial assessment of each property we determined only three (3) properties could be safely utilized for the archery hunting program. The other properties were disqualified for various reasons including population density, volume of vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic, or proximity to neighboring homes, businesses, and roadways.

Borough properties used for archery hunting included a small parcel adjacent to the public works facility and approximately 5.7 acres in the Steeplechase neighborhood.

Selection Process for Qualified Archers

Applicants were required to complete the SWMS Archer Application. In addition, they submitted to a background check which includes reference contacts and a PA criminal history check. Background checks were waived or adjusted for active or retired law enforcement officers possessing a Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Certification or similar certification.

SWMS assessed all applicant's past hunting or deer management experiences as well as their availability. This also ensured applicants had a good understanding of the program goals as well as the expectations of the community, borough managers, elected officials, and law enforcement.

Proficiency testing was conducted to determine an archer's accuracy and ability. The testing included a series of shooting scenarios meant to replicate realistic hunting scenarios and determine skill level of an applicant.

Successful completion of a Pennsylvania Game Commission's Successful Bowhunting Program was also a requirement.

Prior to hunting, applicants were required to complete a General Release from Liability and / or waiver from liability form(s)

Hunter deployment was dependent upon the number of viable hunting properties.

Sixteen (16) potential applicants contacted SWMS regarding the program and were provided instruction on how to proceed. SWMS received nine (9) completed application packets including all required paperwork and training. One applicant was eliminated due to their criminal history and one applicant was disqualified during proficiency testing. As a result, seven archers passed all testing and were approved to participate in the program.



Results

SWMS archers safely removed 22 deer from Whitehall Borough during the 2022-2023 archery season.

Private property harvest consisted of 14 deer (64%) while the remaining 8 (36%) were taken on public property.

Demographics of the 22 deer harvested included 16 female (73%) and 6 (27%) male. The female harvest consisted of 13 adult or yearling female and 3 juvenile female. The male harvest consisted of 1 yearling or adult male and 5 juvenile male.

Eight (8) deer were donated to local families in need through Hunters Sharing the Harvest, an organization that facilitates the distribution of venison to local families in need.

Discussion / Recommendations

Whitehall Borough presents a very complex and challenging area to conduct deer management. The high population density combined with the very few public properties for hunting greatly limited the effectiveness of the archery deer management program. In order to be successful moving forward, we must establish a program that addresses the deer population across the borough. It is our assessment that this cannot be accomplished through archery hunting alone. While archery hunting may reduce deer-related vehicle accidents in areas with viable hunting locations such as along the Weyman Road corridor, it will not address the problem borough-wide.

In addition, we found many deer spent the overwhelming majority of their time in the neighborhoods among houses and in areas that could not be hunted. This greatly affected the ability of archers to be successful in wooded areas suitable for hunting. We can attribute this to multiple factors including the presence of people and domestic animals, specifically dogs entering the wooded areas; food sources in the neighborhoods; and the presence of coyotes in small wooded areas. Multiple coyote sightings in the small, huntable areas generally resulted in little or no deer sightings in the following days.

Based on the above factors and our experiences in other communities, it is our opinion that a multi-faceted deer management program is necessary to accomplish the goals of the borough. Therefore, it is our recommendation that the borough consider the implementation of a sharpshooting program in addition to the already established archery program. Through our interactions with the community, we believe the residents recognize the challenges we are faced with and are willing to assist in accomplishing the



deer management goals. The importance of their cooperation cannot be understated. In building our relationship with Whitehall residents we have currently identified and obtained preliminary permission to conduct sharpshooting from multiple private property owners throughout the borough. These private properties, combined with available public properties would allow us to disburse management activities at a relatively even rate and obtain the greatest level of effectiveness given the population density.