

# Montgomery County Deer Management Program



## Annual Report and Recommendations FY 2011

Prepared by  
Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group  
Rob Gibbs, Chair  
July 2010

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### The Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group

Maryland Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Service,  
M-NCPPC, Montgomery County Department of Parks  
Montgomery County Cooperative Extension  
Montgomery County Police Department  
USGS, Biological Services Division, Patuxent Wildlife Research Station  
U. S. National Park Service  
Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

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## **Montgomery County Deer Management Program Annual Report and Recommendations FY 2011**

### **Introduction**

The Comprehensive Management Plan For White-tailed Deer in Montgomery County, MD, (Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group, 1995) calls for the Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group (DMWG), on an annual basis, to review deer-impact data and present a list of recommendations for the upcoming year. Recommendations are submitted to and implemented by County, State and Federal agencies and private landowners as appropriate.

This report briefly reviews the current status of the County's Deer Management Program, makes recommendations for FY 2011 (July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011) and describes the rationale upon which these recommendations are based.

Information on all aspects of the County's Deer Management Program is available on the Internet at [www.parksdeermanagement.org/](http://www.parksdeermanagement.org/). The website includes data from the past 15 years on deer-vehicle collisions, impacts to natural ecosystems, damage to agricultural crops, local deer populations and other pertinent information about the program including locations and application procedures for managed hunts on County Parkland. Comments and specific questions regarding this report can be addressed to Rob Gibbs at [rob.gibbs@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:rob.gibbs@montgomeryparks.org) or 301-962-1341.

### **Citizen Notification and Comment Periods for Proposed Managed Hunts on County Parkland**

A new method of notifying citizens about M-NCPPC managed hunts and receiving public comments was initiated in 2005 and will be continued. Instead of holding public meetings, which had very low attendance in previous years, M-NCPPC will publicize this information through press releases to local newspapers, planning board agendas, and the Internet. Following these public announcements there will be a comment period during which citizens can submit comments through the mail, e-mail, or by telephone. While some public meetings may be held in areas where management is expected to be very controversial, it is felt that this new approach will provide greater and more convenient opportunities for citizens to learn about and comment on deer population management actions that are proposed on parkland throughout the county. Information will be provided at [www.parksdeermanagement.org/](http://www.parksdeermanagement.org/).

### **Goal and Objectives**

The goal of Montgomery County's deer management program is to reduce deer-human conflicts to a level that is compatible with human priorities and land uses. The deer management plan lists four objectives for attaining this goal.

1. Reduce, on a countywide basis, the number of deer-vehicle collisions (DVCs).
2. Reduce depredation on agricultural crops and home landscapes to levels acceptable to county residents.
3. Reduce negative impacts of deer on natural communities to preserve native plant and animal diversity.
4. Continue a countywide education program to provide residents with information on deer, deer problems and how to minimize or prevent deer-human conflicts.

### **Overview of Deer Management Program**

The Deer Management Program has been in operation since 1995. During the past 15 years many deer management actions have been implemented and progress has been made in addressing many of the negative impacts associated with high deer populations. The following sections outline the actions and accomplishments of the program to date and the current status of the various deer impacts including problems that still need attention. For those interested in additional data related to the program visit [www.parksdeermanagement.org](http://www.parksdeermanagement.org) and click on "Deer Plans & reports" and then "Deer Data 1996-2007"

## **Deer Program Accomplishments**

### FY2010

- In response to recommendations from the DMWG, the Montgomery County Division of Solid Waste Services (DSWS) completed the process of initiating deer population management on the approximately 800 acres of County owned property that they manage in the Dickerson area between Martinsburg and Wasche Roads. The goal of this effort is to help reduce impacts to agriculture in the area. Management is scheduled to begin in Fall of 2010.
- In response to recommendations from the DMWG, the Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) is working to re-implement deer population management on the Northwest Branch Golf Course in cooperation with M-NCPPC's deer management program.
- The M-NCPPC continued its deer population management program in 19 parks covering over 15,000 acres. Despite several weather related cancellations management goals were exceeded.
- Seneca Creek State Park continued deer management in the day-use area of the park which was re-implemented last year in response to recommendations from the DMWG.
- The brochure titled, "Living with White-tailed Deer in Montgomery County Maryland" was reprinted however the main distribution now is through the internet See: <http://www.parksdeermanagement.org>
- The County Cable TV show, "Rural Montgomery County," aired two episodes on Lyme Disease in 2009, providing important educational information to the public on this important topic.

### Other Deer Management Actions Implemented to Date

- A comprehensive educational program on deer, their impacts and remedial methods including: informational brochures and publications, library materials, phone numbers for help, the seasonal use of Public Service Announcements about deer-vehicle collisions, local Cable TV Programs on deer management in the county, programs on deer through County nature centers.
- The DMWG working with other local government agencies through the Council of Governments (COG) completed and released an educational video on preventing Deer-vehicle collisions. This program began being aired on Montgomery Cable TV during the peak seasons for deer vehicle collisions and is available for use in local government and private driver education programs.
- County deer information Internet web page ([www.parksdeermanagement.org](http://www.parksdeermanagement.org)) with educational information, phone numbers for reporting deer damage and receiving helpful information (301-962-1341/1342 or 1-877-463-6497).
- An extremely successful program of workshops for homeowners on protecting their property from deer damage. Well over 1600 county residents and landscape professionals have attended. Community groups can schedule a program by calling 301-590-2809 or 301-962-1341.
- Wildlife reflector systems and experimental warning signs were tested at eight locations along County roads identified as having high numbers of deer-vehicle collisions. These signs have proven to have no effect in reducing DVCs and are no longer being employed.
- Improved data collection for deer-vehicle collisions and other impacts using GIS system mapping.
- Program to identify and monitor impacts to natural vegetation on County Parkland.
- Cooperative effort with County and State road agencies to better address deer-vehicle collisions (DVCs) through roadway design.
- Cooperative effort with M-NCPPC Transportation Planning Office to review projects that include bridges that cross wildlife corridors in order to allow for safe passage of wildlife under roadways.

- Cooperative effort with Washington area Council of Governments (COG) to reduce DVCs regionally.
- Cooperative effort with County and State park officials to initiate deer population management in parks where high deer populations were contributing to high numbers of DVCs, and other impacts.
- Cooperative effort with MD Department of Natural Resources to adjust hunting regulations to help increase antlerless deer harvest in order to reduce deer populations in areas open to hunting.
- Changes were made to County Code in early 2003 to allow for use of 8-foot deer fencing in residential side and backyards and all types of fencing on agricultural properties.
- The Department of Economic Development (DED), working closely with the DMWG, conducted a successful workshop for Agricultural growers in 2004 on implementing effective deer population management program. DED continues to work with farmers to reduce deer damage to crops
- The DED, working closely with area farmers, has established two refrigerated storage facilities – one in Poolesville and the other near Laytonsville - to facilitate the ability of farmers to better manage deer on their property and donate the meat to charity. Several local farmers coordinate the program.
- M-NCPPC initiated a workshop in 2007 of local and regional government agencies and wildlife experts, who are currently conducting deer population management in this and other regions, to assess the state of the art of this work and develop new strategies for addressing non-traditional deer population management in suburban settings.
- In late 2007 changes were made to County Code firearms regulations related to hunting to better match state regulations and facilitate deer management on private land.
- A Lyme Disease Awareness Task Force in 2008 developed a citizen awareness program to promote better understand of the disease, its causes and prevention. The effort included new educational materials, a website, and educational signage in park areas. The effort continued in 2009.

**Deer-vehicle Collisions**

After six years of a slight decline in annual deer-vehicle Collisions (DVCs) countywide (see table 1 and figure 1), the count for 2009 was 1,945 DVCs showing a small (+5%) increase over 2008 (1,841). Numbers still remain over 8% below the highest accident rates that occurred in 2002 and 2003 despite the fact that total vehicle miles traveled in the County increased by approximately 10% between 2000 and 2010 ([www.marylandroads.com/oppen/Vehicle\\_Miles\\_of\\_Travel.pdf](http://www.marylandroads.com/oppen/Vehicle_Miles_of_Travel.pdf)).

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**Table 1.** Deer-vehicle Collision Data 1994 - 2009

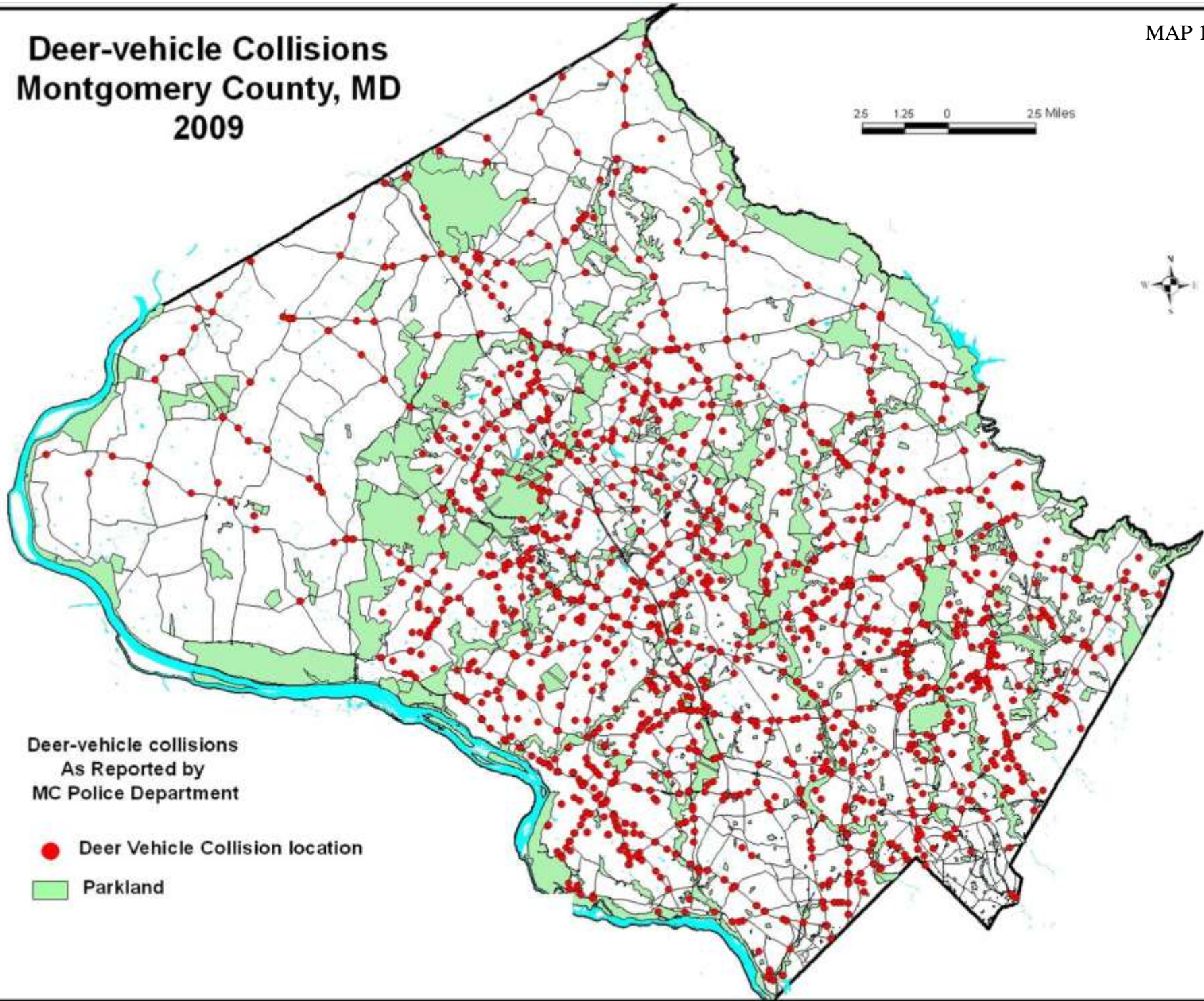
1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1,343	1,244	1,776	1,705	1,774	1,891	2,033	2,003	2,127	2,047	1,997	1,969	1,951	1,867	1,841	1,945

Data on DVCs are collected and maintained by the Montgomery County Police Department.

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Several approaches have been taken to reduce DVCs countywide including education, use of signage, structural design (e.g. designing bridges and fencing where possible to keep deer off roadways; see “Deer Program Accomplishments” above) and Deer Population Management (see that section below).

# Deer-vehicle Collisions Montgomery County, MD 2009



Deer-vehicle collisions  
As Reported by  
MC Police Department

- Deer Vehicle Collision location
- Parkland

Between 1996 and 2002, Montgomery County Police analyzed DVC data on roads surrounding several parks where deer population management was conducted. In each case, data showed a significant and sometimes dramatic decline in DVCs as deer populations were reduced. More recent DVC data suggest that this is the case at most deer population management sites.

While accidents have declined around parks where deer management has been employed, other areas have seen an increase. These are mostly more urban/suburban areas where conducting deer population management is more problematic and limited. See the sections below titled “Deer Population Management” and “Education” for more discussion on how these efforts impact DVCs. Data suggests that the small increase in DVCs in 2009 is the result of increases in the more urban/suburban areas offsetting the reductions in areas where deer management has significantly reduced DVCs over the past 15 years. The solution to this problem is to expand the deer population management program into these areas. This, however, is not likely to occur in the next year or two given the County’s current budget situation.

### **Agricultural Damage**

In 2004 the County’s agricultural community declared that deer overpopulation was the number-one threat to farming in the County. Consequently, agricultural damage has been a particular focus of the DMWG’s recommendations for the past several years and continues to be an important concern. The nationally acclaimed Agricultural Preserve is an important component of the County’s General Plan. It helps maintain open space and contributes significantly to the county’s character and quality of life. The existence of the Agricultural Preserve depends on the continued viability of agriculture.

A 2004 survey of County farmers indicated significant losses to agricultural crops due to deer browse. Thirty-six (36) farmers reported losses on corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. Thirty-four (34) producers reported losses on tree fruit, small fruit or vegetables. Twenty-seven (27) producers suffered losses on nursery, Christmas trees, grapes and other agricultural crops. In all, over 2000 acres of agricultural land has been removed from production due to deer crop damage and 2/3 of survey respondents believe crop damage from deer is on the increase.

Farmers are using a variety of strategies to attempt to minimize damage to their crops. Thirty-seven (37) have used fencing and/or cages around tree trunks to prevent rubbing damage. The farmers generally report that fencing as being effective in limiting damage to crops but at a significant cost to the individual farmer. Thirty-two (32) reported using deer repellents with very limited success. Nine (9) farmers were using scare tactics other than having dogs (i.e. noisemaking devises, motion activated lights, etc.). Forty-seven (47) have used dogs as deterrent with most indicating some success with this method. Deer control methods that rely on live dogs or noise making devices can be bothersome to neighbors. Possible effects on neighboring properties must be considered when considering options for deer management.

Over 100 landowners allowed hunting and/or used crop damage permits in an effort to control deer populations. Many feel higher deer harvest will help limit crop damage.

The 2009 Wildlife Damage Survey conducted by Maryland Agricultural Statistics indicated central Maryland farmers had sustained losses of over \$3.2 million due to deer browse. The central Maryland area includes Montgomery, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard and Washington Counties. Damage in the central Maryland region is reported to be much higher than in other areas. Higher crop prices in 2007, 2008 and 2009 have contributed to increased economic losses. Crop damage losses on corn and soybeans will exceed \$800,000 in 2009 with just a 5% crop loss across the entire crop. Field losses can range as high as 50 % in some areas. Some deer damage occurs in almost every field and on almost every crop. Overall, deer damage does not appear to have declined significantly despite more aggressive population control measures on both public and private land.

Many changes have been made to State and local regulations and educational programs have been offered to citizens and communities in recent years aimed at helping the agricultural community reduce deer damage to their products. These efforts have made an impact but crop damage by deer remains a problem for local farmers.

### **Impacts to Home Gardens and Landscaping**

Many residents are experiencing impacts to home gardens and landscaping. Though much work remains to be done, many citizens are taking advantage of the educational materials, workshops, and regulation changes that have been made to help reduce impacts to home landscapes.

Complaint calls have increased in the past year coming mostly from more urban areas in the County including: lower Rock Creek Stream Valley, Sligo Creek Stream Valley, the Paint Branch - Colesville area, Potomac, Rockville and Olney. Most come from fairly densely populated areas surrounding narrow strips of parkland or in some cases areas with few parks but where well forested housing lots provide habitat for deer herds. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, these areas pose a real challenge to safe deer population management. Various options are being explored.

Homeowners experiencing deer damage can call for information and to register their complaint at 301-962-1341/1342. Homeowner or Community Associations that would like a free workshop on controlling deer damage around the home can call 301-590-9650 or 301-962-1341. The Maryland DNR webpage lists various deer management options available to homeowners and communities at [http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Hunt\\_Trap/deer/deer\\_damage/ddmtintro.asp](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Hunt_Trap/deer/deer_damage/ddmtintro.asp)

### **Impacts to Natural Communities**

An overabundance of deer can have a profound impact on native vegetation and habitat for other wildlife. Park studies and observations have shown that where deer populations are high forest trees are not reproducing, the park understory of shrubs and wildflowers is being destroyed and rare plants are declining and in many parks have disappeared due to deer feeding habits. The only way to reduce damage to natural communities is to reduce deer populations within park areas. The Department has undertaken an aggressive program of deer population management – see section below titled “Deer population Management” for more details on this effort.

Even after deer populations have been reduced, recovery of vegetation may occur slowly over many years. Current staffing and funding has not permitted detailed studies to quantify the extent of vegetative recovery in parks where management is taking place. However, general observation by long-time naturalists and other qualitative information strongly suggest that understory vegetation and tree survival is increasing where deer populations have been reduced. A number of species, especially orchids and lilies that had not been seen for years are now blooming again as well, though in limited numbers. As discussed below under “Deer Population Management,” deer reductions are fairly local and new management techniques will be required to address impacts to the smaller, more urban park areas in the County.

### **Educational Program**

Education is a cornerstone of the Countywide Deer Management Program. In order to achieve the deer plan’s goal of reducing deer impacts to acceptable levels, two things must happen, 1) Deer populations must be managed – see more on this throughout this report and 2) just as importantly, County residents must become educated in how to live with deer and how to minimize their negative impacts. A long list of educational efforts is described under “Deer Program Accomplishments” and includes: homeowner workshops, brochures, educational programs at Nature Centers and on County Cable Television, a new DVD on avoiding deer-vehicle collisions, regular public service announcements and talks for local citizen groups. As citizens become more educated on ways to reduce deer impacts and begin to put this education into practice (e.g. adopt driving habits that help avoid deer-vehicle collisions, or use different

methods to protect their home landscaping or farm crops) they will lower deer impacts and raise their tolerance for deer in the landscape.

### **Lyme Disease**

Lyme disease is a bacterial illness transmitted through the bite of the Black-legged Tick. Early symptoms range from flu-like headache, fever, and general fatigue to joint and muscle pain. A circular rash may occur in 70-90% of individuals. If left untreated, the disease can become chronic and debilitating. Lyme disease continues to be a growing concern in the county.

Over the winter of 2007/2008, the County Executive established a Task Force on Lyme Disease Awareness, chaired by The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and declared May 2008 to be Lyme Disease Awareness Month. The County has developed a new brochure and website with the latest information on Lyme disease and its prevention. Warning signs have also been posted in park areas and on trails to remind users of the problem. The Task Force continues to meet periodically.

While Lyme disease is often linked to deer management in the mind of the public because it is transferred through the bite of the so-called deer tick (the new accepted name is the black-legged tick), it is widely accepted that reducing deer numbers cannot effectively control the spread of the disease. Black-legged ticks feed on many species of mammals and birds and most often pick up the disease by feeding on infected mice and chipmunks, not deer. For these reasons, Lyme disease is best viewed as a public health issue.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) tracks cases of Lyme disease and provides education for the public and health professionals. Increased surveillance by HHS beginning in 2005 resulted in a dramatic increase in cases from 39 in 2004 to 216. Cases in 2006 and 2007 were 228 and 238 respectively. In 2008, the CDC changed the case definition for a Lyme disease case. The number of cases was expected to drop based on the new case definition. In 2008, the number of cases of Lyme disease reported to Montgomery County was 247 (confirmed and probable), with an additional 210 "suspect" cases. The number of cases reported for 2009 was 74 (staff not available to do surveillance follow-up). The number of positive labs reports for Lyme disease sent to MCDHHS Disease Control Program was approximately 1500 for 2008 and 2300 for 2009. The increase in lab tests being done is an indication that the medical community is more aware of the symptoms of Lyme disease and labs are being done more often to assist in diagnosis. Although our case numbers have been increasing (up to 2009), case rates per 100,000 residents in Montgomery County (46.1) are lower than most other counties and about average for the State (see chart 1).

Education to the medical community is key to increasing diagnosis and early treatment for Lyme disease. When caught early Lyme disease is usually easily treated with antibiotics. The disease, however, can be difficult to diagnose because many tests are unreliable and the symptoms resemble those of other ailments including the flu and arthritis. Some in the medical community feel that when left untreated, Lyme disease can become chronic resulting in long-lasting and debilitating health problems. This most often results when it is not diagnosed and treatment is delayed for an extended period of time. The increased education efforts directed at the public and doctors should help ensure that the disease is detected and treated more quickly.

Additional efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services to address Lyme disease include:

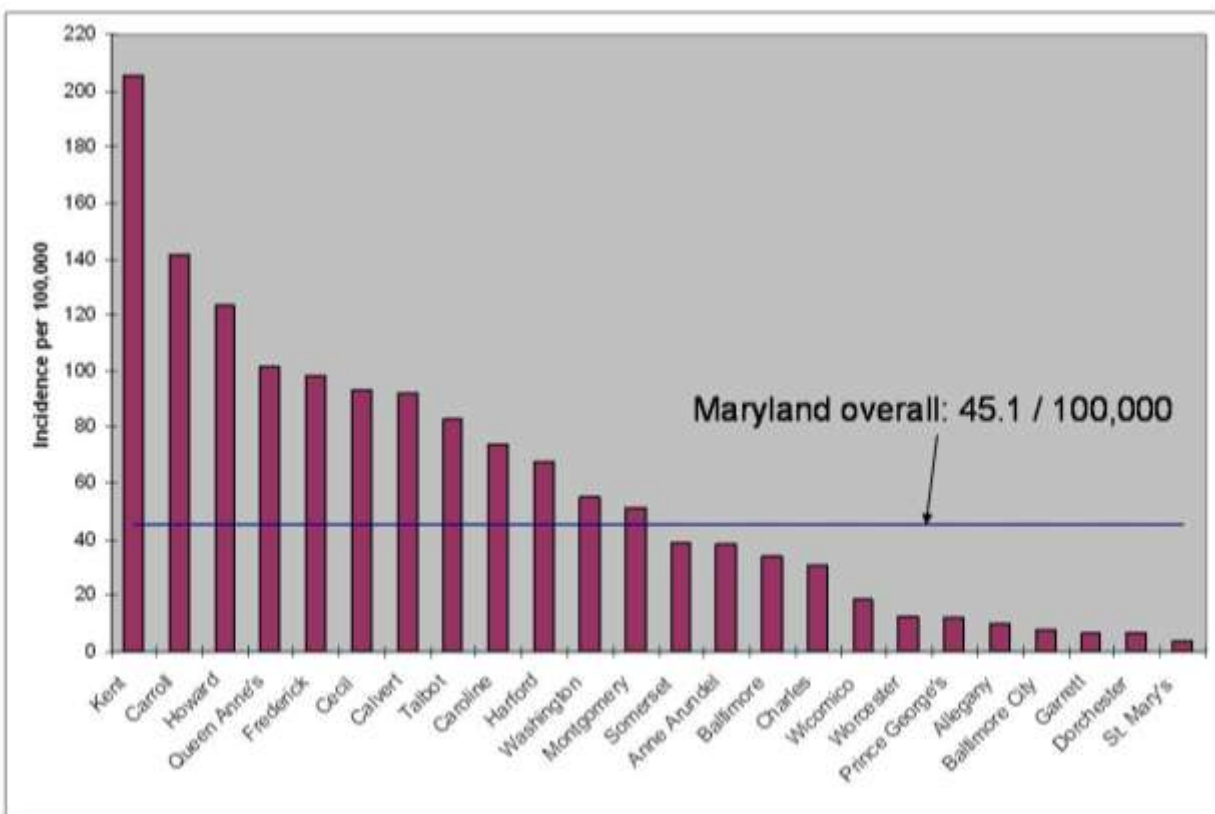
- Presentations in the community
- Distribution of literature on Lyme Disease prevention
- Counseling of individual patients on prevention
- Surveillance on positive lab slips to identify true cases
- Referrals to physicians for diagnosis and treatment

- Education of community physicians on Lyme Disease diagnosis and treatment

Montgomery County promotes personal protection from ticks and awareness of the symptoms of the illness as the best defense against Lyme disease. General information is available at:

- The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services - [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/lymedisease](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/lymedisease) or 240-777-1755
- The Centers for Disease Control – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).
- The Lyme Disease Foundation - [www.lyme.org](http://www.lyme.org); 24 hour information line at 800-886-5963.
- The National Capital Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Association has information and offers local support groups - [www.natcaplyme.org](http://www.natcaplyme.org) or (703) 821-8833.
- The American Lyme Disease Foundation, [www.aldf.com/fourPoster.shtml](http://www.aldf.com/fourPoster.shtml) - has information on a product to help reduce the number of ticks in an area called the four poster feeder.

**Chart 1 Lyme Disease Case Rates by Select Jurisdictions, Calendar Year 2007**



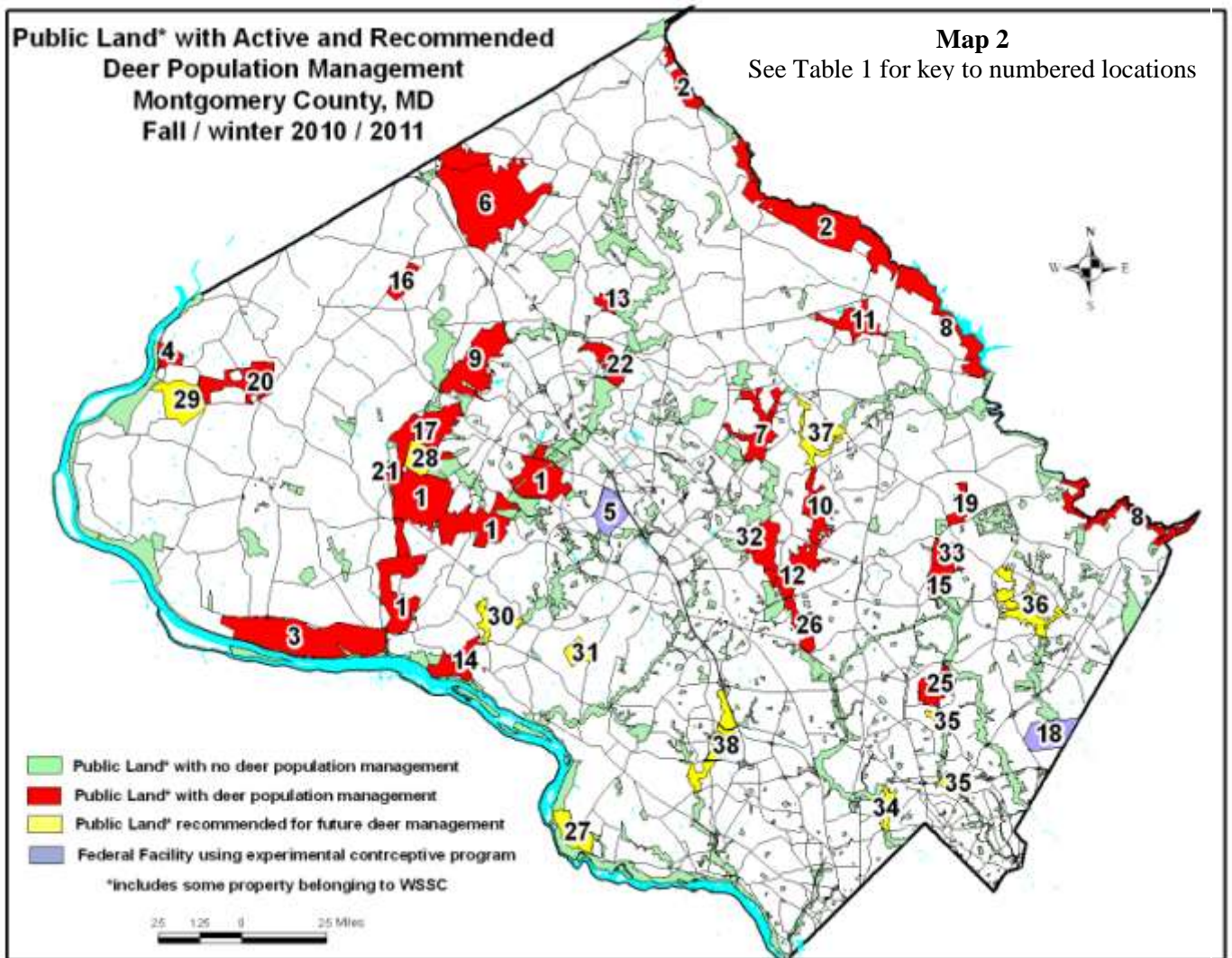
### Deer Population Management

Based on trends in deer hunting harvest data for the county, DNR believes that deer populations are stable or declining within areas of the county where hunting occurs. DNR has significantly liberalized antlerless bag limits during the past decade that promote the harvest of female deer which effectively limits population growth. Much of the County has only limited hunting opportunities, however, due to development density and firearms restrictions and DNR notes that as urbanization of the county continues, regulating the deer population will become even more difficult, as lethal management via hunting often is not an option in urban and suburban settings.

Several strategies have been taken over the past 14 years to help reduce deer populations in areas where traditional hunting is limited including parkland and suburban/urban areas. These include managed hunts on State and County parkland and property managed by the Washington Suburban Sanitary

Commission (WSSC). Sharpshooting (shooting of deer at night by specially trained marksman under very safe conditions) is being employed in some county parks where hunting, the most effective option, is not possible. Regulation changes to facilitate population management on private properties include, changes to County weapons laws as well as State hunting regulations.

Deer population management was conducted on 25 parcels of public land in FY09 totaling over 27,000 acres. These included 19 County parks, 3 state park/wildlife management areas, 2 federal facilities, and WSSC property. Population management efforts are now in place on most large parcels of public parkland in the county (see figure 2 and table 1). Populations are being reduced and associated deer impacts are declining. However, due to the small home range of deer, the effects of these efforts remain localized. Outside of these areas deer populations remain high or are increasing due to lack of population controls and as a result of continued development forcing deer into smaller and smaller areas.



Many acres of parkland in narrow stream valleys, small local parks, and in highly populated areas are not currently being managed. Effective deer population management in these smaller urban areas can be very difficult, costly, and in some cases not feasible at all. Efforts are underway to explore new methods to address these locations.

Deer population management on private properties continues to be an important part of countywide management efforts. However, despite liberalized bag limits and regulations that have increased the hunting of antlerless deer, many parcels of privately owned land are not being hunted efficiently enough

to significantly reduce deer numbers. Educational efforts targeting both landowners and hunters in more effective management techniques will be continued and expanded. As already mentioned, population management becomes more difficult as you move from rural to more suburban and urban parts of the county. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for some communities to manage deer populations within their neighborhoods where the community can reach agreement on the methods. For assistance in developing community deer management plans contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 301-432-4307.

**Table 1 Public Land with current and proposed deer population management programs – See Map 2**

	<b>Park Area</b>	<b>FY initiated</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>
1	Seneca Creek State Park	1997	Continue population mgt
2	Patuxent River State Park	Prior to 1994	Continue population mgt
3	McKee-beshers Wildlife Mgt Area	Prior to 1994	Continue population mgt
4	Dickerson Conservation Park	Prior to 1994	Continue population mgt
5	Nat Institute of Standards and Tech.	1994	Continue population mgt
6	Little Bennett Reg. Park	1997	Continue population mgt
7	Ag/History Farm Park	1997	Continue population mgt
8	WSSC Reservoirs	1999	Continue population mgt
9	Black Hill Regional Park	2001	Continue population mgt
10	Northbranch SVP	2001	Continue population mgt
11	Rachel Carson Cons. Park	2002	Continue population mgt
12	Rock Creek Regional Park	2002	Continue population mgt
13	Goshen Recreational Park	2002	Continue population mgt
14	Blockhouse Point Cons. Park	2003	Continue population mgt
15	NW Branch Recreation Park	2004	Continue population mgt
16	Bucklodge Forest Cons Park	2004	Continue population mgt
17	Hoyles Mill Cons. Park	2004	Continue population mgt
18	White Oak Federal Facility	2004	Continue population mgt
19	Woodlawn Special Park	2004	Continue population mgt
20	Woodstock Special Park	2005	Continue population mgt
21	Little Seneca SVP unit 1	2005	Continue population mgt
22	North Germantown Greenway Park	2006	Continue population mgt
23	Great Seneca Stream Valley Unit 2	2006	Continue population mgt
25	Wheaton Regional Park	2006	Continue population mgt
26	Rock Creek Stream Valley Unit 7	2008	Continue population mgt
27	C&O Canal NP Goldmine Tract	Future	NPS currently has no plans to manage deer
28	SHA purchase future Hoyles Mill CP	Future	Investigate mgt for FY12
29	DSWS Property in Dickerson	Expected 2011	Implement population mgt
30	Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park	Future	Investigate mgt for FY12
31	Serpentine Barrens Conservation Park	Future	Investigate mgt for future mgt
32	Rock Creek Golf Course	2002 to 2006	Re-initiate population mgt
33	Northwest Branch Golf Course	2004 to 2006	Re-initiate population mgt
34	Rock Creek Stream Valley Unit 2	Future	Investigate future mgt
35	Sligo Creek Stream Valley Unit 4,5	Future	Investigate mgt for FY12
36	Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Pk	Future	Investigate mgt for future mgt
37	North Branch Stream Valley Unit 4	Future	Investigate mgt for future mgt
38	Cabin John Regional and SV parks	Future	Investigate future mgt

Contraception has the potential to be a useful tool in helping to address high deer populations in urban/suburban locations and other areas where the use of lethal methods are limited. Studies and testing of contraceptives for deer have been ongoing for many years. However, the development of effective drugs and cost effective methods of administering them to free roaming deer have proven extremely difficult. In 2009 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a product called GonaCon™, for use in free ranging white-tailed deer. GonaCon™ is an immunocontraceptive vaccine that limits the release of sex hormones causing deer to remain in a non-reproductive state as long as a sufficient vaccine level is present in the body. While this long awaited approval represents a step forward in deer contraceptives, GonaCon™ has significant limitations to its wide-scale use in free-

roaming deer populations. It must be hand-injected requiring that each animal to be captured and it must be re-administered every 2 to 3 years. For more information on this product and its potential applications see: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/nwrc/about/pdfs/faq\\_bc4deer.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nwrc/about/pdfs/faq_bc4deer.pdf)

### **Deer Management Recommendations for FY 2011**

In accordance with the Comprehensive Management Plan for White-tailed deer in Montgomery County, Maryland, the DMWG recommends the following actions for FY 2011. Agencies that should take lead responsibility for each recommendation are listed in parenthesis after that action. The final decision to proceed with any recommendation is up to the lead agency or agencies and it is expected that appropriate public input will be considered.

Many recommendations are on-going or require multiple-years to be fully implemented thus there is considerable overlap in recommendations from year to year. It is expected that all actions will be done in cooperation with the DMWG.

- 1. Continue public education efforts.** This includes educating the public about deer issues, particularly on available non-lethal methods to reduce deer damage to personal property.
  - a. Continue the very successful Homeowner Workshop Program. Update program and publicize better to increase number of programs. Coordinate workshops with DNR education efforts. (MNCPPC, Montgomery County Cooperative Extension [MCE])
  - b. Continue efforts to expand educational efforts via the Internet, Educational DVDs the County Fair and County Cable TV. (MCE, County Cable Montgomery [CCM], M-NCPPC)
  - c. The County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should continue their increased efforts to enhance surveillance, educate the public and doctors on the prevention, early detection and treatment of Lyme Disease. A concerted effort to get educational materials to all doctors should be a priority. (HHS)
  
- 2. Continue efforts to improve road fencing, signage and design to reduce deer-vehicle collisions.**
  - a. The Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), in coordination with the DMWG, should continue to evaluate roadway hotspots and examine accident mitigation methods. (DMWG, MCDOT, SHA)
  - b. MCPD and MCDOT should investigate utilizing variable message boards, when they are available, as a way to remind drivers about watching out for deer during Fall and Spring when the highest number of DVCs usually occur.
  - c. SHA should implement a program to inspect and repair the wildlife fencing along the entire length of 270, 495 and other fenced roads, at least once per year. Fences with holes can create a situation where deer that happen to wander through the hole become trapped on the road. (SHA)
  - d. MCDOT should install wildlife fencing along Shady Grove Road in the vicinity of where the Inter County Connector (ICC) will cross it to reduce the potential for Deer Vehicle Collisions. (MCDOT, DMWG)
  - e. Keep current and, where possible, cooperate with other studies that investigate methods of reducing deer-vehicle collisions. (MCDOT, M-NCPPC, SHA, DNR,)

- f. Continue to work with appropriate agencies on new and retrofit road projects to better design roadways and bridges for wildlife passage (MCDOT, SHA, M-NCPPC)

**3. Continue to monitor progress in the use of contraception to regulate deer populations.**

- a. Continue to monitor on-going efforts at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) being conducted by The Humane Society of the U.S. as well as other study sites around the country. (DNR, DMWG)
- b. Investigate the potential use of the newly approved contraceptive, “GonaCon™”, as part of the County’s Deer Management efforts. (DNR, DMWG, USDA)
- c. Continue to monitor progress and approval of other contraceptive drugs. (DNR, DMWG, USDA)

**4. Continue to encourage more community involvement in deer management efforts.**

In many cases it is incumbent upon a community to work together and address neighborhood concerns regarding deer. Several approaches to reducing deer damage to home landscaping and gardens may have a greater effect when applied on a community level. Neighbors or communities can work together in their use of fencing, vegetation management, and repellents. Adjustments to community covenants that reduce fencing restrictions or enactment of “no deer feeding” policies are examples of cooperative efforts. Communities, in many cases, may be better able than the County or State to fund and/or implement other local management efforts such as installation of fencing, localized efforts to reduce tick populations to prevent Lyme disease or even a community based managed hunting program on private lands. Any of these efforts will involve a high level of cooperation, organization and communication within the community as well as coordination with appropriate County or State agencies.

- a. The County and State should continue to provide information and assistance to communities that express a desire to address local deer impacts. These might include local public meetings, educational workshops, literature and recommendations on specific management efforts that could be undertaken by the community. DNR provides technical advice for communities on deer management issues. (M-NCPPC, DNR, MCE)
- b. Continue to promote the DNR website for available community-based deer management options at [http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Hunt\\_Trap/deer/deer\\_damage/ddmtintro.asp](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Hunt_Trap/deer/deer_damage/ddmtintro.asp) (MCE, M-NCPPC, DNR)

**5. Continue to encourage effective deer population management on private properties.**

The vast majority of land in the County is private and any effort to manage deer populations on these lands can only be undertaken by the landowners. Managing deer impacts countywide requires the cooperation of county agencies and private landowners. Parcels of land that are forested, in agriculture or slated for development all need to be managed.

Many landowners that do allow hunting on their property are not doing it effectively and would benefit greatly from reviewing the DNR publication, “Deer Hunting - a Valuable Deer Management Tool for Private Landowners”.

- a. The Department of Economic Development (DED) should continue and improve as needed their cooperative cooler box program to assist farmers in storing, transporting, processing and donating to charity, deer harvested from agricultural lands. (DED)
- b. Promote Quality Deer Management (QDM) as a philosophy and information source to encourage landowners and hunters to better manage deer herds on private property. More information is available at [www.qdma.com](http://www.qdma.com) and [www.marylandqdma.com](http://www.marylandqdma.com).
- c. MCPD and the Firearms Safety Committee (FSC) should continue to publicize the changes to the County Weapons Law that were completed in 2007. Informational brochures should continue to be distributed to all County businesses that sell hunting license. DED should inform county farmers of new opportunities that the changes allow. (MCPD, FSC, DED)
- d. M-NCPPC should continue to work with farmers growing crops on private land adjacent to parkland deer management sites, to coordinate their management efforts. Landowners should contact M-NCPPC at 301-962-1342 for this program. (M-NCPPC)
- e. Investigate changes made in Frederick County to reduce hunting distance requirements for bow hunting. Monitor outcomes.
- f. Publicize new regulations on use of crossbow which offer potentially more safe and effective deer management in areas not open to firearm hunting.
- g. Investigate additional opportunities for Sunday hunting in the County.

**6. Continue and expand population reduction programs on select State and County lands.**

Table 1 lists public land on which deer population management is currently being conducted and land on which the DMWG recommends deer management in the future. Decisions as to the type of population management implemented, the duration of the operation, and annual harvest goals should be decided by the appropriate agencies and DNR. The timing of implementation is subject to the resources and budget of the agency managing the property. Tight budgets for FY11 will most likely limit which of the following recommendations can be implemented in the upcoming year. Budgets are expected to remain limited for the next 2 to 3 years.

- a. The National Park Service should consider addressing deer management needs in the Goldmine Tract of the C&O Canal Historic Park in Potomac. (NPS)
- b. The Montgomery County Division of Solid Waste Services (DSWS) should move forward with efforts begun last year to implement deer population management on the approximately 800 acres of County owned property that they manage in the Dickerson area to help reduce impacts to agriculture in the area. Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Deer Management Work Group will continue to provide assistance in developing a program. (DSWS)
- c. MNCPPC should complete work required to permit the Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) to re-implement deer population management on the former M-NCPPC Golf Courses that they now operate in the County. In several locations programs were begun by M-NCPPC prior to transfer of the courses to MCRA. Management could be conducted either by the MCRA or in cooperation with M-NCPPC's ongoing deer management program. (Map 2 and Table 1, #32 & 33) (MCRA, M-NCPPC)
- d. M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks should continue ongoing deer population management programs adjusting methods and harvest goals as needed and continue to expand these efforts, as budgets and staffing allow, into new areas in order to reduce deer impacts to park resources and adjacent property. (M-NCPPC)

- e. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) should continue current deer population management programs on their lands and continue to expand these efforts, as required to protect WSSC resources and adjacent property. (WSSC)
- f. Continue to investigate methods that are appropriate for managing deer populations in smaller more urban parks that provide the level of control and safety required. (DMWG, M-NCPPC)

## **7. Other recommendations**

Each year thousands of deer and other large animal carcasses are picked up and disposed of from along County roads. The current method of disposal (rendering) is expensive and depends on a contractor that has given notice to the county that it may stop providing this service in the near future. This would leave the county in the unacceptable position of having no way to dispose of carcasses at all. Much work has been done in recent years on developing methods of composting large animal carcasses that are sanitary, effective and environmentally sound. Developing such a program in the county would provide the additional benefits of being a more dependable and less expensive alternative of disposal.

- a. Develop a large animal composting program. This could possibly be done in conjunction with SHA and/or with other counties. Cost savings to the county could be substantial over the current disposal methods. (MCPD – Animal Services Division)