



SUBURBAN WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS, LLC

2021 SHARPSHOOTING FINAL REPORT

MT. LEBANON, PA

April 14, 2021



INTRODUCTION

Mt. Lebanon, like many cities and towns throughout the country, recognizes the negative impact on the community created by an overabundant deer population. In response, Mt. Lebanon established deer population management goals with a primary objective of reducing deer-vehicle incidents by 50%. Additionally, Mt. Lebanon aimed to address residents' concerns of damage caused by deer in and around public and private properties.

Suburban Wildlife Management Solution (SWMS) staff members have participated in and/or managed the archery hunting portion of the program since 2015. Beginning in 2021, SWMS was chosen to conduct the sharpshooting phase of the deer management program. Sharpshooting remains an effective way to manage the deer population in Mt. Lebanon.

METHODS

Private property owner involvement is essential to the overall success of the management program. Over the past 6 years, Suburban Wildlife Management Solutions (SWMS) staff has spent hundreds of hours in Mt. Lebanon meeting with residents and assessing the feasibility of deer management locations. In doing so, we have developed strong working relationships with property owners as well as a vast knowledge of local deer behavior and patterns. This knowledge has helped us to consistently deliver a safe and effective management program.

Mt. Lebanon, via social media, the municipal website, and the Mt. Lebanon Magazine, provided the community with instructions on donating private properties for use during the deer management program. All private properties are first assessed via overhead mapping. Following the initial assessment, representatives of SWMS meet on site with a representative(s) of the Mt. Lebanon Police Department to identify all potential safety hazards at a particular location.

Public properties used for sharpshooting include Mt. Lebanon Golf Course, McNeilly Park, Robb Hollow Park, and the Conservation District. All sharpshooting locations on public properties are also assessed by the Mt. Lebanon Police Department.

Upon determining a property is feasible for sharpshooting, SWMS technicians begin baiting the location. Baiting assists in attracting deer to a specific area and ensures a safe, humane, and discrete removal. Baiting for the 2021 program began on January 24, 2021.

Mt. Lebanon established permitted times to conduct sharpshooting activity. In order to ensure a safe and discrete operation the majority of sharpshooting occurs at times with the lowest human activity. Sharpshooting for the 2021 program was permitted daily between 4 pm and 11 pm on private properties and 6 pm and 1 am on public properties.



SWMS technicians utilize ATF registered; suppressed .223 caliber rifles equipped with night vision technology for sharpshooting operations. In order to avoid the use of spotlights, and ensure discrete operation, night vision and thermal imaging technology is also utilized to locate target animals. Ammunition consists of frangible or controlled penetration projectiles to minimize the bullet travel past the intended target.

In order to ensure the greatest reduction in overall deer population, adult doe are targeted as the top priority. Juvenile and antlered deer are also harvested; however, they are of a lower priority. Once a shot is determined safe, all shots are taken from an elevated position with a solid earthen backdrop. All deer are shot in the head or cervical spine to ensure they are dispatched in a humane manner as defined in Pennsylvania Code §147.722 (Definitions). All harvested deer are removed from the location and transported to a local processor. The venison acquired during the sharpshooting phase is then donated through Hunters Sharing the Harvest to local food pantries, missions, homeless shelters, Salvation Army facilities, and churches.¹

RESULTS

SWMS safely removed 50 deer from Mt. Lebanon during the sharpshooting portion of the 2021 deer management program. SWMS Staff expended approximately 207 hours to accomplish this harvest number. This does not include time spent conducting site assessment, baiting, and resident outreach.

Harvests were spread nearly evenly between public and private properties with public properties accounting for 28 (56%) and private properties accounting for the remaining 22 (44%) deer harvested (Table 1).

Table 1

Property Analysis	
Public Property Total	28
Conservation District	5
McNeilly Park	9
Mt. Lebanon Golf Course	5
Robb Hollow Park	9
Private Property Total	22
Total Harvests	50

Table 2

Demographics			
Sex	Adult / Yearling	Juvenile	Total
Female	21 (42%)	5 (10%)	26 (52%)
Male	16 (32%)	8 (16%)	24 (48%)

Demographics of the 50 deer harvested include 21 (42%) adult or yearling female; 5 (10%) juvenile female; 16 (32%) yearling or adult male; and 8 (16%) juvenile male. (Table 2)

¹ The PA Hunters Sharing the Harvest Program: Successfully Feeding the Hungry for 29 Years. sharedeer.org/about/.

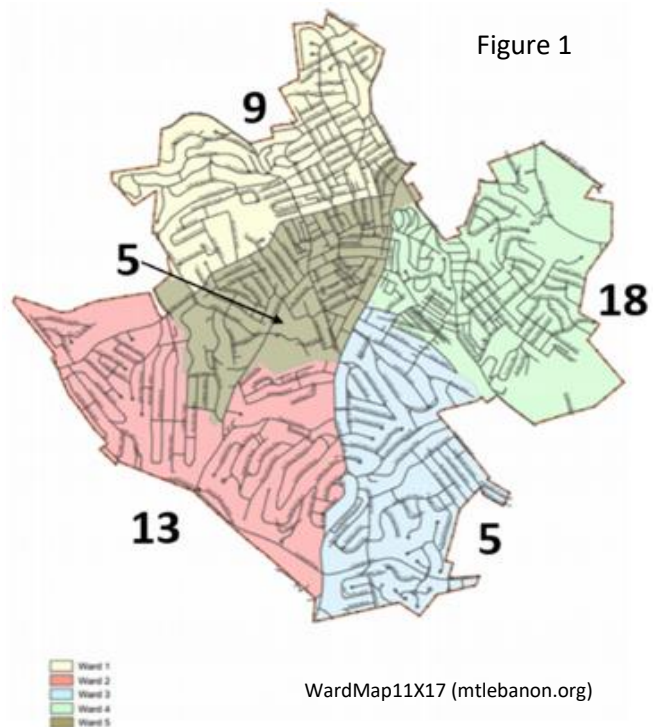


ANALYSIS

SWMS hunters harvested 21 deer during the archery portion of the deer management program. Combined with the 50 deer harvested in the sharpshooting phase, 71 deer were removed from Mt. Lebanon during the 2020-2021 deer management program. The sharpshooting harvest total for 2021 shows a 13.6% and 42.8% increase respectively when compared with the 2019 and 2020 sharpshooting totals.² This increase can be contributed to multiple factors. The weather throughout February 2021 remained cold with snow covering much of the available browse. This increased the frequency in which deer visited baiting sites. Additionally, being based close to the Mt. Lebanon, SWMS technicians were not bound by travel limitations and instead were able to effectively adapt sharpshooting operations to weather, citizen interaction, and/or deer behavior. This allowed us to operate more effectively with limited intrusion on the community.

The success of the program continues to hinge on the involvement of private property owners. SWMS utilized four private property locations during the sharpshooting portion of the program. One location was authorized but could not be safely utilized for sharpshooting due to increased human activity. Eight additional private properties were assessed, but not used due to various reasons including property size, proximity to other homes or businesses, and/or abundant human activity.

Achieving a balanced harvest, spread evenly throughout Mt. Lebanon, is important for the overall success of the program. Prior to the 2020-2021 management program certain areas of Mt. Lebanon had seen little, if any, deer management efforts. This can be attributed primarily to a lack of public property and/or private property participation. One such area lies north of Bower Hill Road between Segar Road/Swallow Hill Road and Cochran Road. SWMS focused heavily on developing safe and discrete locations for deer management in this area. As a result, our efforts in this area yielded roughly 18% of the total 2021 deer harvest. Additionally, it solidified the importance of community involvement in the deer management process.



² White Buffalo. *FINAL REPORT 2020 Deer Management Program Mt Lebanon, Pennsylvania*. 25 Feb. 2020, www.mtlebanon.org/DocumentCenter/View/17511/Final-Report-Sharpshooting-25-February-2020-Mt-Lebo?bidId=.



DISCUSSION

All evidence suggests the deer management program is having a positive impact on the community. Deer versus vehicle collisions in Mt. Lebanon are trending downward.³ Additionally, residents consistently report fewer deer sightings and less damage in and around areas where management efforts are taking place.

Mt. Lebanon remains a very complex and challenging area to conduct deer management. The high population density combined with the limited number of public properties greatly limit viable locations. However, we believe the residents of Mt. Lebanon recognize these challenges and are becoming increasingly willing to assist in accomplishing the deer management goals. The importance of their cooperation cannot be understated. Areas once deemed too small or densely populated are beginning to see increased management efforts. Neighbors are working together to make management efforts possible by combining individual smaller parcels of land into larger more suitable properties for management activities. Without this cooperation deer management goals cannot be fully achieved.

In assessing the deer harvest within each ward, we have been able to judge the effectiveness of the program community wide. (Figure 1) Prior to the 2020-2021 season, Ward 1 had little deer management taking place. However, we have now identified and obtained permission from multiple private property owners in this area to conduct management activities. If available properties remain consistent or increase, deer management efforts in Ward 1 should also expand. Historically larger tracts of land have provided higher yields in Ward 2 and Ward 4. Management efforts in Ward 3 continue to prove challenging. The southern end of Ward 3 accounted for the harvest total in that ward. We continue to work with multiple residents in the northern portion of Ward 3 to develop a strategy to address the deer population. Ward 5 also remains challenging due lack of viable private properties. The density of homes and business in this ward have presented a challenge for deer management. However, we are continually working to establish additional areas in this ward as well.

SWMS continues to encourage residents to contact us with any deer related issues. This is the first step in developing areas to conduct deer management and the only way to ensure a comprehensive program.

³ McMeans, Ian. *Mt. Lebanon Deer Management Program Summary Report*, 19 June. 2019
www.mtlebanon.org/DocumentCenter/View/17040/Deer-Management-Program-Review-For-Commission-6-11-19?bidId=.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, management activities are conducted during times of the most inclement weather. This is purposefully done to reduce the impact on residents. Inclement weather also increases deer sightings as there is stronger need for deer to seek additional food sources. The use of currently restricted public properties specifically Bird Park, Williamsburg Park, and Sunset Hills Park for sharpshooting would undoubtedly increase the number of deer harvested with minimal effect on residents. Additionally, expanding permitted times for sharpshooting would be beneficial. During the 2021 season, Mt. Lebanon agreed to expand permitted times on public property to 6pm-1am. This change resulted in a higher yield on public property with no noticeable effect on residents. Many baited sites continue to experience deer activity prior to or shortly after the permitted times. Therefore, we would suggest expanding the permitted times to at least 4pm-2am for both public and private properties.

Deer management harvest numbers continue to remain steady. However, with the decrease in deer numbers in hunted areas, archery hunting alone cannot maintain the current deer population. Additionally, archery hunting is not possible in certain areas where sharpshooting occurs. Therefore, SWMS recommends continued sharpshooting efforts to regulate the deer population. Without sharpshooting the deer population will certainly increase back to levels observed prior to the implementation of the program. We believe that the target goal of combined archery and sharpshooting efforts should be set at or around 60-80 deer per season. This is based on multiple factors including historical harvest totals, available properties, reduced deer population numbers, community goals, resident sentiment, and vehicle accident statistics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWMS would like to thank the residents of Mt. Lebanon for their continued insight and support of the management program. Without the assistance of the community, this program would not be possible. Additionally, SWMS would like to thank the Mt Lebanon Municipal Staff and members of the Mt. Lebanon Police Department for continually working with us to ensure a safe and effective management program. Finally, we would like to thank Lenik Deer Processing for processing the harvested deer and preparing them for donation through Hunters Sharing the Harvest. The 2021 sharpshooting program yielded approximately 1,950 pounds of venison for local families living with hunger.



Deer Harvest Total				
	DATE	TAG #	SEX	AGE
1	2/1/2021	26321	M	1.5
2	2/1/2021	26322	F	2.5
3	2/1/2021	26323	F	2.5
4	2/1/2021	26311	M	1.5
5	2/1/2021	26292	F	1.5
6	2/1/2021	26291	F	< 1.0
7	2/1/2021	26414	F	3.5
8	2/2/2021	26416	F	3.5
9	2/2/2021	26415	M	1.5
10	2/3/2021	26440	M	< 1.0
11	2/3/2021	26420	F	1.5
12	2/3/2021	26419	F	1.5
13	2/3/2021	26418	M	1.5
14	2/3/2021	26417	F	1.5
15	2/3/2021	26435	F	3.5
16	2/5/2021	26310	M	1.5
17	2/5/2021	26320	M	1.5
18	2/8/2021	26294	M	1.5
19	2/8/2021	26293	M	< 1.0
20	2/8/2021	26434	M	< 1.0
21	2/8/2021	26433	M	2.5
22	2/9/2021	26295	F	1.5
23	2/9/2021	26437	M	< 1.0
24	2/9/2021	26436	M	< 1.0
25	2/12/2021	26300	F	2.5



Deer Harvest Total				
	DATE	TAG #	SEX	AGE
26	2/12/2021	26306	M	2.5
27	2/12/2021	26331	M	1.5
28	2/12/2021	26309	M	< 1.0
29	2/12/2021	26308	M	< 1.0
30	2/12/2021	26299	F	< 1.0
31	2/12/2021	26298	F	< 1.0
32	2/12/2021	26333	M	1.5
33	2/12/2021	26307	F	1.5
34	2/14/2021	26303	F	2.5
35	2/16/2021	26438	F	3.5
36	2/16/2021	26439	M	2.5
37	2/17/2021	26328	F	1.5
38	2/17/2021	26329	F	2.5
39	2/17/2021	26402	F	2.5
40	2/17/2021	26403	F	< 1.0
41	2/17/2021	26430	F	2.5
42	2/19/2021	26296	M	1.5
43	2/19/2021	26297	M	1.5
44	2/22/2021	26404	M	1.5
45	2/22/2021	26401	F	4.5
46	2/22/2021	26405	M	< 1.0
47	2/22/2021	26302	F	3.5
48	2/22/2021	26305	F	4.5
49	2/22/2021	26304	F	< 1.0
50	2/23/2021	26431	M	3.5