



Peters Township Police Department
Washington County, Pennsylvania
200 Municipal Drive
McMurray, PA 15317-3496
724-942-5030 Fax 724-942-5004



Peters Township Deer Management Program 2022-2023 Final Report

Introduction

In 2007 the Peters Township Environmental Quality Board authorized the development of a deer management program. The primary goal was to utilize managed archery hunting as a means to reduce deer-related vehicle accidents while also addressing resident complaints of property damage due to over-browsing. Following the inception of the program, deer-related vehicle accidents declined to an eventual low of 40 in 2012. However, the downward trend was short lived, and we have seen a steady increase since that low in 2012.

Several factors are believed to have contributed to the continued increase of deer-related incidents. Most notably, Peters Township has continued to experience steady development of both residential and commercial properties, thereby reducing the natural deer habitat, creating fewer viable hunting locations, and causing an increase in vehicular traffic. The impact of decreased habitat combined with breeding norms of the whitetail deer has resulted in an increase in the deer population with smaller spaces in which to live. This combination inevitably results in a steady increase of deer-related incidents. This impact of these changing variables is made clear when you consider the historic high of 94 deer-related vehicle accidents in 2021.

In our efforts to mitigate the increase in deer-related incidents, the Peters Township Police Department (PTPD) proposed an expansion of the deer management program to include a controlled sharpshooting program for 2022. Following the completion of all Pennsylvania Game Commission requirements and certifications for the institution of such a program, the formal proposal was presented to the Peters Township Council for consideration. On December 20, 2021, Peters Township Council granted authorization for the PTPD to initiate the sharpshooting program beginning on February 1, 2022. It is significant to note that the program was established in accordance with all Pennsylvania Game Commission Guidelines. During the initial year of the sharpshooting program 125 deer were safely removed from the community.

Prior to the implementation of the program, specific goals and objectives were developed. The goals and objectives were based upon critical analysis of Peters Township historical data collection and a review of similar programs. The initial targeted goal of the program is to stop the upward trend of deer-related vehicle accidents. The long-term targeted goal of the program is to reduce the deer-related vehicle accidents below 65 per year. This would equate to an almost 30% reduction in deer-related vehicle crashes over five (5) years.

Managed Archery Hunting

The PTPD managed an archery hunt which took place during the established 2022-2023 hunting season (September 17 – November 12; Sunday November 13; November 14-19; Sunday November 20; November 21-25; and December 26 – January 28, 2023). The PTPD screens volunteer hunters to participate in the program. Authorized hunters are assigned designated hunting areas throughout the municipality. The managed archery hunt is conducted on both township owned and privately owned properties. Township owned properties include Peters Lake



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Park, Peterswood Park, Elm Grove Park, Rolling Hills Park, and Rees Park. Residents interested in donating their property for use during the program do so by contacting the PTPD. Each hunting location is assessed for feasibility by members of the PTPD prior to being used for the program.

During the 2022 – 2023 archery season 33 program hunters safely removed 53 deer from the community. Deer harvested by program archers consisted of 45 female and 8 male. Six deer were donated through Hunter Sharing the Harvest resulting in approximately 270 pounds of venison being distributed to local families in need.

Sharpshooting

Methods

Properties utilized for the sharpshooting program include both privately-owned and Township-owned properties. Township-owned properties included Peterswood Park, Peters Lake Park, Rolling Hills Park, Elm Grove Park, Old Trails Park, Rees Park, and Venetia Park. In addition sharpshooting also took place at Peters Township Fire Department Station #3 and on township-owned property adjacent to Old Washington Road, Hidden Valley Road, and Brush Run Road. Twenty private properties were also approved for use in the program.

Our efforts to acquire properties for this program included utilizing various communication outlets such as the Township website and social media to provide the community with instruction for donating private properties for inclusion in the program. All private properties were assessed for safety by members of the PTPD prior to being approved. It is significant to note that several additional properties were offered by residents; however, they did not meet the safe standard necessary for this program.

Upon confirming a property was viable for inclusion in this program, members of the PTPD began strategically placing bait at strategic locations on the approved properties. In accordance with the Pennsylvania Game Commission special use permit, the process of baiting began on January 29, 2023. This process is designed to attract deer to a specific location for the safe, humane, discrete, harvesting of the animal.

In furtherance of our efforts to perform this task discretely, safely, and effectively all sharpshooting was conducted during times when the chances of encountering human activity was minimized. Therefore, sharpshooting generally took place between 6pm and 5 am.

In our efforts to ensure the greatest reduction in the overall deer population, adult doe were targeted as the top priority. All shots were taken from a position with a solid earthen backdrop created by land topography and/or elevation of the shooter. All deer are shot in the most humane way possible to ensure they were dispatched in a manner in accordance with Pennsylvania Code §147.722. Harvested deer were immediately removed and transported to a local processor. Venison acquired in this program was donated directly to Hunters Sharing the Harvest, which is a statewide donation program that supplies venison to local food banks and families in need.



Results

From February 1st through February 19th, the PTPD safely removed 250 deer from the Township during the 2023 sharpshooting program. Sharpshooting was conducted by Peters Township Police Officer James Stevick, Corporal Austin Kline and Captain Jason Brunetti over the course of 10 shifts. This equates to a combined effort of 25 deer per shift.

As a result, private properties accounted for 180 deer and represented 72% of the total harvest. The remaining 70 deer (28%) were taken on Township owned property. Table 1 reveals a closer look at harvest locations and harvest totals.

Property Analysis	
Peters Township Property	
Peterswood Park	16
Peters Lake Park	0
Rolling Hills Park	11
Elm Grove Park	0
Rees Park	9
Venetia Park	9
Old Trails Park	2
Old Washington Road	9
Station 3	9
Brush Run Rd	5
Twp. Property	70
Private Property	180
Total	250

Table 1

Demographics			
	Adult / Yearling	Juvenile	Total
Female	107 (43%)	55 (22%)	162 (65%)
Male	39 (16%)	49 (19%)	88 (35%)

Demographics of deer harvested consisted of 162 female (107 adult or yearling / 55 juvenile) and 88 male (39 adult or yearling / 49 juvenile). (Table 2).

Table 2

The PTPD collects and evaluates data regarding deer-related vehicle accidents. Multiple sharpshooting locations were chosen based on their proximity to roadways with the highest levels of deer-related vehicle accidents. Historically, these roadways include Washington Road, East McMurray Road, Valley Brook Road, Bebout Road, Venetia Road, and Waterdam Road. Therefore, the majority of sharpshooting efforts were focused within 1/4 mile of these roadways. Distance was extended to 1/3 mile if necessary to obtain a safe location to conduct sharpshooting. As a result, 188 deer (75%) were taken from within these areas (Table 3).

Primary Sharpshooting Locations	
Corridor	Deer Total
Washington Road	71
East McMurray Road	35
Bebout Road	36
Venetia Road	31
Valley Brook Road	8
Waterdam Road	7
Total	188

Table 3



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Acknowledgments

We are greatly appreciative of our residents for their ongoing support of the PTPD and our efforts to maintain a safe community. This program would not have been possible were it not for the extraordinary community support. The success of the program necessitates the ability to access private property. In our case, numerous residents contacted the PTPD and generously donated their property for use in this program. As a result, the program continues to be an overwhelming success and allows us the opportunity to conduct a thorough analysis of this program and provide an even more comprehensive, Township-wide approach to our deer management goals moving forward.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission provided significant support and guidance in the development and execution of this program. Absent their support, assistance, and oversight of our deer management program this would not have been as successful.

We would also like to thank Lenik's Deer Processing in Finleyville, PA and Bobeck's Deer Processing in Monongahela, PA for their efforts to effectively process all the deer harvested in this program. Both companies worked diligently to ensure venison acquired through the deer management program was quickly processed and packaged for safe and efficient donation to local food banks.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the collaborative effort of Hunter Sharing the Harvest (HSH) and Executive Director, Randy Ferguson's support and assistance. The 2023 sharpshooting program yielded approximately **10,000 lbs. of venison** which was distributed to Greater Washington County Food Bank (AKA Food helpers), Washington City Mission, Washington Food Pantry, the Allenport Food Pantry, and the Donora Food Pantry. Additionally, HSH generously agreed to reimburse the Township 50% of the venison processing fees further mitigating the cost of this program to the Township.