



RESOLUTION # 35-8/06

TO: HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ITEM #: 1918

BOARD ACTION

Adopted: _____
For: 32 _____
Against: _____
Abs/Excd: 2 _____
Vote Req: _____
Other Action: _____

RE: APPROVAL OF INTERIM GOOSE ISLAND DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2006 & MANAGED DEER HUNT

WHEREAS, over the past several years there has been growing concern over the health of the deer in Goose Island Park because of overpopulation; and,

WHEREAS, Goose Island Park consists of approximately 1 square mile of wildlife habitat and it is estimated that there are in excess of 100 deer in the park which is well above the management goals that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has set for this area; and,

WHEREAS, in January 2006, the Public Works & Infrastructure Committee referred the matter to the County Wildlife Abatement/Damage Committee who then referred it to a Task Force consisting of the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, La Crosse County and the Town of Shelby; and,

WHEREAS, the Task Force began meeting in April and has developed the attached Interim Goose Island Deer Management Plan for 2006 (the Plan); and,

WHEREAS, the goal of the Task Force is to effectively manage the deer herd on Goose Island by reducing the deer population to protect the integrity of the habitat, minimize the loss of biodiversity on the island and provide the public with safe viewing opportunities of healthy deer by using a limited managed hunt; and,

WHEREAS, the information gathered during the year 2006 managed hunt will be significant in developing a long term comprehensive deer management plan for Goose Island Park.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the La Crosse County Board does hereby adopt the Interim Goose Island Deer Management Plan for 2006.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the La Crosse County Board does hereby authorize the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to conduct a managed deer hunt on December 9 and 10, 2006, at Goose Island Park, utilizing physically challenged hunters as described in the Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that La Crosse County Board does hereby grant exception to the prohibitions set forth in s. 19.03(1)-(3) of the County Code to permit the possession, use and discharge of firearms by the participants of the managed deer hunt at Goose Island Park on December 9 & 10, 2006.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Board Chair and County Clerk are authorized to sign, after review by Corporation Counsel, any permits required by the state and federal agencies in order to hold this hunt.

**RE: APPROVAL OF INTERIM GOOSE ISLAND DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2006
& MANAGED DEER HUNT**

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FISCAL NOTE: No cost to La Crosse County.

Date: 08-07-06

Date: 8/7/06

Cliff Jones
**PUBLIC WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Cheryl A. Stephen
RECORDING CLERK

Approved Not Approved
C/A: SO 8-3-06 _____
F/D: GI 8-306 _____

Requested By: Jim Speropulos
Date Requested: August 2, 2006
Drafted By: Corporation Counsel

Adopted by the La Crosse County Board This 17 Day of August, 2006.

STATE OF WISCONSIN
COUNTY OF LA CROSSE

I, Marion I. Naegle, County Clerk of La Crosse County do hereby certify that this document is a true and correct copy of the original resolution required by law to be in my custody and which the County Board of Supervisors of La Crosse County adopted at a meeting held on the 17th day of August 2006.

Marion I. Naegle
Marion I. Naegle, La Crosse County Clerk

INTERIM GOOSE ISLAND DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN for 2006

Purpose:

Implement an interim Goose Island deer management plan in 2006, including plans for herd reduction to alleviate negative impacts of overabundant deer herd.

Background Information:

Goose Island County Park is located 3 miles south of La Crosse, WI off of Highway 35. The Island is owned in fee by the U.S Army of Corps of Engineers (COE). Part of the island is leased by La Crosse County and that was developed as a campground in the early 1960's. The remainder of the Island is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as part of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. Forest management activities on the island are carried out by COE staff. The COE, FWS, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), La Crosse County, and Town of Shelby all have enforcement authority on the island. A task team was formed with all of the above agencies represented.

Property and habitat destruction, herd health concerns, and safety issues within and around Goose Island have increased in recent years due to the high deer population. Residents in the Town of Shelby have reported damage to gardens and shrubs, and other people have expressed concerns about personal safety as deer lose their fear of humans. Habitat destruction within the park is evident by the decline in tree regeneration and the appearance of a browse line. Costly abatement measures are now being used for tree plantings which may or may not be successful.

This decrease in habitat quality affects the health of deer and other wildlife species. It also impacts the biodiversity of the island. The reduction in quality/quantity food is likely responsible for the stunted growth that has been observed in the Goose Island deer herd. The most common concern reported to the Wisconsin DNR is that many deer in the park do not look healthy. The deer within the park are also relatively tame which raises concerns regarding their lack of fear of humans and vehicles. This may cause serious conflicts or unnatural interactions between deer and people.

Car-deer collisions within and around the park have increased in recent years. Sheriff's Departments in La Crosse and Vernon County reported 20+ deer collisions along the 2 mile stretch outside the park in 2005. Approximately 5-10 collisions are reported within the park each year. Not all collisions are reported

Reducing the number of deer on Goose Island is needed to protect the integrity of the habitat and minimize the loss of biodiversity on the island. The goal in 2006 is to begin reducing the number of deer using a limited management hunt. The Task force will also begin developing a long term deer management plan for Goose Island.

General:

La Crosse County amended their ordinance to allow hunting within Goose Island County Park. The Corps and Service will be able to use this interim deer management plan to amend their lease and hunt plans. A permit from the Wisconsin DNR will be issued to conduct a managed hunt (see Form WDNR 2300-109).

The flat terrain and accessible roads/trails on Goose Island provides an ideal opportunity for disabled hunters. The North American Squirrel Association (NASA) has been recommended as an organization to develop such a limited hunt. NASA is a non-profit organization formed to assist individuals with physical disabilities and elderly enjoy outdoor activities. NASA can obtain a list of willing participants in a managed hunt and, along with the task team has developed a safety plan and will administer the hunt.

Proposed 2006 Managed hunt:

General:

- The managed hunt will utilize Class A, Long term B, and C permit holders (25-30 persons) who apply through NASA. NASA will then conduct a random drawing to select participants and alternates to harvest up to 60 white-tailed deer at Goose Island.
- The managed hunt will be held on December 9th and 10th which correlates with the current statewide December herd control hunt. The hunt will occur on lands held in fee title by the COE and managed by the FWS and the land leased by the county.
- A safety plan has been developed that includes stand locations with safe shooting lanes, closure of the island for public use during the managed hunt, and other safety hazards.
- All deer harvested during this hunt may if needed be registered on the island and transferred to Badger State Sportsman's Club at N3530 Mohawk Valley Rd. for a mandatory health screening, and disease testing (CWD and TB).
- All government agencies listed and organizations will have representation present to administer and coordinate the managed hunt and assist in decision making if issues arise.
- Following the managed hunt, the task team will evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the managed hunt and will be utilizing the information along with winter population surveys to develop the final deer management plan.

Details of the Managed Hunt:

- NASA will be responsible for finding and choosing participants for this managed hunt. NASA will advertise this opportunity (approximately September 1) and select hunters through a random drawing. Eligible applicants will apply directly to NASA, submitting a letter of interest and filling out an application form. Approximately one month later (September 30) NASA will stop accepting applications. For a participant to be eligible for this hunt they must possess a Class A, Long term B, and C disabled permit, a Wisconsin hunting license, and abide by Wisconsin hunting regulations. NASA will select 25-30 participants and 10 alternates through a random drawing. Selected participants will be notified shortly after the drawing, and NASA will confirm the interest and availability of the participant. An able bodied mentor who is provided by NASA or chosen by the participant will accompany every successful applicant to assist in the hunt. Each mentor must be at least 18 years of age and have passed a hunters education course.
- The managed hunt will be conducted on December 9th and 10th, 2006. A landowner/lessee authorization to remove or destroy animals causing damage or nuisance will be issued by the DNR and signed by the county, FWS, and COE for the hunting permits at Goose Island (see form WDNR 2300-109).
 - Friday before the scheduled management hunt, there will be a mandatory safety meeting for the hunting participants and their partners. This meeting will cover safe shooting zones, arrival and departure from the island, specifics on how the hunt will start and end and encourage an antler less harvest for herd control. The registration process and our blaze orange requirements (must follow state regulations and must have a blaze orange article (vest, flagging tape, etc.) above all blind sites that are visible from 360 degrees) will be explained. Hunting locations will also be assigned, and the participants will have an opportunity to visit stand sites to familiarize themselves with their shooting lanes and clear any obstructions.
 - On the Saturday of the hunt, volunteers and agency representatives will set up blinds and patrol for unauthorized persons on the island. As the participants come to the island they will be granted access to the island via a window sticker, and their name checked off a checklist. Participants will then head to their respective stand sites. The hunt will begin when each participant is in their stand site and agency representatives give permission to start hunting via a radio transmission. Each hunter will have the opportunity to harvest two deer. No other wildlife is allowed to be

shot. Once a hunter decides to leave their stand site, they need to notify shelter 1 (head quarters), so that other hunters can be made aware of the potential unsafe conditions. They are not allowed to return to their stand sites once they have decided to leave. Hunters are restricted to one stand site per day. At 11 a.m. the hunt is over and participants must begin cleaning their sites, gathering any harvested deer, and return to the headquarters (shelter 1, see attached map) regardless of success. After checking in with the headquarters, participants are to proceed to Badger State Sportsman's Club (Badger) located at N3530 Mohawk Valley Rd. At Badger, any harvested deer will go through a health screening, and disease sampling. There will be a luncheon provided by volunteers for the hunt participants at Badger following the hunt. Goose Island will officially open to public use at 12 p.m. if all agencies involved in the hunt agree that the island is safe for entry by the public.

- The Sunday hunt will be conducted in a similar fashion. The hunt will again end at 11 a.m. unless the quota of 60 deer has been met, in which case the hunt participants would be notified via radio contact that the hunt is over. Once again, public use of the park may begin at 12 p.m. if agreed by agencies involved that the island is safe for entry.
- Safety issues for those participating in the hunt, agency representatives, volunteers, and the general public are a large concern while the managed hunt is in progress. Park closure signs will be placed at strategic places throughout Goose Island to remind the public of the closure. During the hunt there will be road closed signs approximately one half mile on, Hwy 35, each side of the entrance to Goose Island. Barricades will be placed on the entrance road to Goose Island (see attached map) to remind people of the closure and provide a turnaround site. A town of Shelby police officer and a Conservation Warden will be stationed at the gate to Goose Island to prevent unauthorized access to the island. Participants, volunteers, and representatives will have window stickers to help the officers identify which vehicles will be granted access to Goose Island. At the gate, the officers will also check each person's name off a checklist before they enter the island. Other law enforcement may be present or called as needed. During the hunt, agency representatives will be patrolling the boat docks in case of open water.

Strategic stand sites have been selected and approved by the task team (see attached map). There are a total of 25-30 stand sites selected with safe shooting lanes. An additional ten stand sites were selected in case of inclement weather or as options if certain stand sites were not productive on the first day. There will be radio contact between all hunters and agency representatives. Each hunting pair (hunter and partner) will be

asked to carry a cell phone and given the number of a main cell phone at shelter 1. This number will be in case of emergency only. Med link will be notified by NASA in advance of the hunt in case of any emergencies during the hunt. In case of an extreme emergency the main boat landing (see attached map) will serve as a helicopter pad.

- All deer harvested on the Island may, if needed, be registered at headquarters (shelter 1) or transported and registered at Badger State Sportsman's Club at N3530 Mohawk Valley Rd. Every harvested deer will go through a health screening. The health screening will consist of a live weight measurement, a general field necropsy (suspect animals may be retained by DNR for further necropsy work), and a field dressed weight (after the entails are removed and disposed of). In addition, every adult deer will be sampled for CWD, TB, and possibly bone marrow for any deer showing signs of malnutrition.
 - The DNR will retain and dispose all heads and antlers from CWD sampling of all deer harvested during this hunt.

Approximately 20 volunteers from Badger State Sportsman's Club and other willing volunteers will assist in any needed logistics for the managed hunt

- All government agencies and organizations will have representatives present to administer and coordinate the managed hunt and assist in decision making if issues arise.
 - The DNR will be providing a Warden to regulate the barricade at Goose Island. Wildlife biologists will be present to conduct disease sampling, health screening, deer registration, media contacts, and administrative decisions.
 - The COE will have law enforcement abilities within the island if a situation arises. A representative will also be present to talk to the media and make administrative decisions.
 - The FWS will have a representative to make administrative decisions and meet with the media. They will also help the DNR biologists with health screening, disease sampling, and provide transportation of people and equipment throughout the island.
 - NASA as stated earlier will be responsible for hunter selection. They will also provide hunting blinds, radios, and help with transportation throughout the island. A representative will also be available to talk with the media and help with emergency situations.

- A town of Shelby officer will be stationed at the gate to regulate admittance onto Goose Island and to help out as needed.
- La Crosse County will have an officer patrolling south La Crosse County, and representatives present to help make administrative decisions and talk with the media.
- Following the managed hunt the task team will evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the managed hunt and will be utilizing the information along with winter population surveys to develop the final deer management plan.
 - To evaluate the safety of the hunt, and prepare for any future hunts team members will gather information from participants about their experience or suggestions on improvements. Any incidents will be discussed and evaluated by the task team.
 - The effectiveness of this hunt will be gauged on several aspects: deer harvested, deer response, and participant satisfaction and will be discussed by the Task Team for a final management plan.
 - A helicopter survey of Goose Island and surrounding areas is being planned for the winter of 2006-2007 for a more accurate population estimate. The Town of Shelby, the City of La Crosse, the County of La Crosse, and Onalaska may be helping monetarily conduct this survey. If the helicopter survey can't be scheduled for this year there will be other scientific means to estimate the current deer population.
 - Evaluating the helicopter survey along with the effectiveness and safety of the hunt will be used in creating a future deer management plan for Goose Island. The results of health screening and disease sampling of harvested deer will also go into the development of a deer management plan. The task team will develop a best management strategy for the sustainability of a healthy deer herd at Goose Island: with the above mentioned factors, the amount of habitat destruction, and the social impacts.

Goals:

The Goal of the task force is to effectively manage the deer herd at Goose Island to provide safe viewing opportunities of healthy deer while trying to limit negative impacts associated with the current over population. The information gathered during this years' managed hunt will be significant in developing a comprehensive deer management plan the following year. Survey work, to be conducted in the winter of 2006-07, will help establish population estimate and future harvest plans.