

East Goshen Township

Open Space Deer Herd Reduction Initiative



Last revised July 19, 2008

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Introduction

The East Goshen Township Board of Supervisors approved the framework of a deer herd reduction initiative submitted by the township's Deer Management Committee at the end of 2007.

This document is arranged in 8 parts, each devoted to critical control procedures of the initiative. Each part is briefly described below.

1. **Goal** – The background and goal of the initiative.
2. **Land** – List the parcels, boundaries, and setbacks of the land to be bow hunted.
3. **Deer Management Groups** – Describe how groups will be selected to perform bow hunting.
4. **Assignment & Scheduling of Bow Hunting Areas** – Describe the methods deer management groups and the township will use to assign archers to locations.
5. **Bow Hunting Procedures** – Specify the controls and requirements imposed on bow hunting activities.
6. **Reporting** – Specify requirements for deer management groups and their archers to inform the township of hunting activities and results, and for the township to inform residents of the initiative's performance.
7. **Complaints** – Describe how issues raised by residents, archers, groups, or the township will be handled.
8. **Initiative & Change Management** – Specify which township organization(s) shall manage the initiative and the general process for how changes will be made.

Anyone with questions or comments regarding this initiative should submit them in writing to the township office at the address below or through the Deer Management Committee's email address deer@eastgoshen.org.

East Goshen Township
Attn: Deer Management Committee
1580 Paoli Pike
West Chester, PA 19380

Part 1 - Goal

East Goshen Township launched a study of the deer within the township in January 2007. The study found the township had a deer problem based on observations of the following symptoms:

- Traffic accidents deer at unacceptably high levels (50 – 70+ per year).
- Lyme disease density within Chester County among the highest in the country.
- Severe depletion of the understory in East Goshen's public and private woodlands.
- Damage to private landscaping.

The township counted approximately 300 deer (30 per square mile) in March 2007 using an overhead thermographic scan. The best information the township could obtain regarding sustainable deer densities was that a target of 4 – 13 deer per square mile is recommended for a suburban landscape, up to a high of 20 for large open spaces, such as Valley Forge Park. Long-time township residents reported a sentiment in 1995 that there was no deer problem when there were 157 deer counted using similar technology.

The goal of this initiative is to return to the deer population size in the township to its 1995 level within 10 years. To accomplish this, the township set an annual harvest goal of 36 deer from the public open space initiative based on the following considerations:

- The deer population growth must be arrested. It grew from 157 to 300 in 12 years, approximately 7% or 21 deer per year to maintain the population size.
- The deer population must be reduced by 15 deer per year, in addition to maintaining the population size, to achieve a target 150 within 10 years.
- The deer population was reduced through traffic accidents and private hunting during this timeframe. Approximately 50-70 deer were killed per year on East Goshen roads since 2001. An unknown number of deer were harvested through hunting on private land.

The initiative's annual activities will continue through the season even if the season's goal has been met. The reason for this is to accomplish the goal sooner and to mitigate risk that future seasons' annual harvests may be lower.

The initiative will need to continue beyond the achievement of this goal to maintain the deer herd size at appropriate levels. The intensity of the initiative may be reduced at that time.

Part 2 – Land

The parcels listed within this section are township-owned open spaces that will be bow hunted during the 2008-2009 deer hunting season. The following land-related regulations apply to each parcel:

1. The boundaries of the parcel and bow hunting areas within the parcel that may be hunted will be clearly marked by the township. The township shall post outwardly facing signs informing residents the area is a part of the township's deer herd reduction initiative, that bow hunting is occurring from the start date of the initiative to the end date, and that residents in the open spaces during that time should wear brightly colored clothing to ensure they are visible.
2. The parcels to be managed by this initiative are Bow Tree/Clock Tower (115 acres / 100 hunt-able), Supplee Valley East and West (18 and 28 acres / 17 and 24 hunt-able), Grand Oak and Mill Creek (28 acres / 24 hunt-able), and Wentworth (21 acres / 16 hunt-able).
3. Bow hunting areas are defined as the parcels above, less a setback of 150 feet (50 yards) from any occupied dwelling, except for any attached or detached playground of any school, nursery school or day-care center which has a 450 foot (150 yard) setback requirement. Occupied dwellings consist of structures that often contain humans. Examples include any house, residence, or other building or camp occupied by human beings, or any barn, stable, garage, shed, or other building used in connection therewith or any attached or detached playground of any school, nursery school or day-care center. This regulation is from the Pennsylvania Game Commission.
4. All property lines shall be protected by a minimum safety zone of 50 feet, regardless of the presence of occupied dwellings, except those property lines in which the township owns both sides of the line. Adjoining landowners to the township open spaces may request the township waive this safety zone for their property. The township may choose to waive or retain the minimum guaranteed 50 foot safety zone on a per adjoining property basis, with or without such a request.
5. Parcels may be subdivided into multiple bow hunting areas based on size, geography, and land features to improve management of the parcel. The decision to subdivide will be based primarily on the desire to allocate more than 1 group to a given parcel, without having the groups geographically overlap, and to accommodate additional groups.

6. Each deer management group shall provide the township with the approximate locations of each of their proposed tree stands by the first business day of September. The township reserves the right to deny any proposed location. Groups may assume their approximate locations are approved if they do not hear otherwise from the township.
7. These parcels are public open spaces and accessible to the public while bow hunting is occurring. Archers shall not make any attempt to harvest a deer while any non-archer is within 150 feet (50 yards) of the targeted deer.
8. Entry and exit points for the bow hunting areas shall be identified for each area.
9. Parking locations for archers shall be identified for each area. Archers' vehicles shall display a tag indicating they are part of the township's deer herd reduction initiative or a member of the deer management group.
10. The township shall disclose to archers any hazards in the open spaces that are not typically found in a natural environment.

Part 3 – Deer Management Groups

The township open space bow hunting initiative shall be open only to selected organizations recognized by the township as deer management groups. Such organizations typically possess most of the following attributes:

- Agreement to adhere to the Pennsylvania Game Commission's rules and regulations regarding bow hunting in Pennsylvania.
- Commitment to ethical bow hunting standards and practices.
- Focus on deer management best practices, versus bow hunting for recreation.
- Certification of members' bow hunting marksmanship and safety at a higher level than required of recreational archers.
- Minimum requirement for member bow hunting experience and track record.
- Charter or similar document describes the goals of the organization. These goals are consistent with the above points.
- Track record of deer management experience for the organization.
- Minimum insurance on members and the group of approximately \$1M per incident and \$2M aggregate per year is required
- Record of volunteerism among the organization's members to help landowners.

Deer management groups shall apply to the township no later than May 14, 2008 to be included in the initiative. The township may elect to continue to accept applications beyond this date if one or more hunting areas are unassigned after reviewing applications submitted by this date. The application may be submitted as a free-form letter and shall include the following information:

- The name of the organization, their contact information, and current member list. The member list should include members' addresses and indicate if the member is a resident of East Goshen Township.
- Describe deer management experience in East Goshen Township in 2007, if any, and nearby areas.
- Indicate if the deer herd reduction initiative will be staffed by new recruiting. If so, how many archers will be recruited? If not, indicate which members are likely to participate in the initiative and the number of deer they individually harvested in 2007.
- Indicate the parcels the group is interested in managing, in order of preference.

- Indicate the average number of archer-hours your members invest in harvesting a deer in existing initiatives similar to what East Goshen Township is considering (tree stand only, archery only).
- Agree to abide by all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including those limitations and requirements imposed by the township through this initiative.
- Indicate if any members of the group are responsible for any violations of the PA Game Commission rules and regulations. These members will not be permitted to participate in the township's initiative.
- Indicate if complaints, grievances, or any other issues have been lodged against members of the group within the past 3 years by landowners, neighbors to hunting areas, or other individuals through the activity of hunting. Briefly describe how those complaints were handled and their outcome.
- Provide a schedule or schedule strategy to appropriately set the township's expectations on when and how frequent hunting will occur. For example, "The group expects to provide 1-2 archers 1-2 days per week, occurring Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday. The archer(s) will be available for the entire day, pending weather conditions and indications of deer."
- A description of the volunteer services the group is willing to offer the township or its residents and how to engage such services. Volunteer services should be described in relatively specific terms, though exactness is not required. For example, "The group commits to provide 40 hours of unskilled, low-intensity labor to the landowner to maintain the areas hunted by the group." is sufficient. Groups are welcome to offer specific skills as well.

Deer management groups will be selected to participate in the township's initiative according to the following criteria:

1. The group's ability to meet the criteria set forth previously regarding common attributes of deer management groups and strength of the overall application.
2. Greater commitment and 2007 success in harvesting larger numbers of deer, especially does, among members is a preference factor.
3. Membership and participation of East Goshen residents is a preference factor, as is the locality of likely member archers. Reliance upon recruiting to staff the initiative is a negative factor.
4. Volunteerism is a preference factor.
5. The township may limit a group's participation to reduce the risk of over-dependence upon that group.

6. Participation and effectiveness will drive ongoing evaluation of groups established in the initiative. Groups with higher commitment and greater production will be chosen over groups with less.
7. Grievances filed against a group that are found to have merit by the township shall negatively impact the group's continued bow hunting privileges.
8. Violations of Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations, other applicable laws, the township's initiative rules, and any safety issues may subject the group to disciplinary action that could include disqualification of the group from the township initiative.

The township will notify groups of their selection in the initiative by the first business day in June prior to the start of the archery deer hunting season.

Part 4 – Assignment & Scheduling of Bow Hunting Areas

Calendar

The annual calendar for the initiative will follow the [PA Game Commission's calendar](#) for archery whitetail deer bow hunting. The 2008-2009 PA Game Commission bow hunting schedule is described below.

Timeframe	Bow Hunting Permitted
September 20 – October 3	Bow hunting for antlerless deer only
October 4 – November 15	Bow hunting for all deer
November 17 – November 29	Bow hunting for antlerless deer only
December 1 – December 13	Bow hunting for all deer
December 15 – December 23	Bow hunting for antlerless deer only
December 24 – December 25	No hunting
December 26 – January 10	Bow hunting for all deer
January 12 – January 24	Bow hunting for antlerless deer only

The daily schedule is dawn to dusk Monday through Saturday. Hunting is not permitted on Sunday, per PA Game Commission rules.

Area Assignment

The township will identify hunting areas by marking their boundaries on the land and by providing a map.

One group will be assigned to each area from among the selected groups for the initiative. Criteria to be considered for area assignment include:

- Group preferences
- Size of group and archer commitment. Larger groups and/or more committed groups will qualify for larger areas.
- Groups with more productive members are more likely to receive the area assignment of their preference.

The township shall notify groups of their assigned area(s) by the first business day in June prior to the start of the archery deer hunting season.

Archer Scheduling

Each group will be required to perform its own archer scheduling for the areas it is managing. Groups may use any tools they prefer to schedule archers in stands.

Each group shall provide the township with a weekly plan for what the group intends to do in its area(s) for the coming week. The plan should be delivered to the township by:

- Email to deer@eastgoshen.org, and possibly other addresses to be specified, by 12PM Friday for the week ahead Monday through Sunday.
- On-demand access by the township through a web site
- Postal mail, phone, fax, or in-person drop-off Monday for the week beginning the prior Sunday.

The purpose of this notification is to set appropriate township expectations for the coming week. The schedule should contain the following:

- Hunting area
- Date, timeframe, and location of the planned hunting (ie. Tree stand #2).
- Name(s) of archers

The group is free to change plans, but must notify the township of any changes as soon as they are known. The township will expect the weekly schedules to be met if no other notification is received. Notifications should be provided by email to deer@eastgoshen.org, other addresses as specified, or a phone call to the township.

Part 5 – Hunting Procedures

The township's deer herd reduction initiative consists of archery-only hunting. Archers must supply their own temporary tree stands, hunt only from those tree stands, and remove them by the end of the season. Hunting is not permitted when travelling to or from the tree stand.

Archers must follow all applicable rules and regulations from the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Archers must be at least 18 years old and possess at least 2 years of archery deer hunting experience. A year of archery hunting experience is defined as any year in which the archer harvested at least 1 deer via archery.

Archers must have completed the Pennsylvania Hunter Safety course and the Bow Hunter Safety course within the past 10 years to participate in this initiative.

Temporary tree stands may be setup at the start of the season. Tree stand installation and removal must not harm the tree. Tree stands may be left in place through the season at the archers' and groups' risk. Tree stands must be secured when not in use. Ladders, steps, or other convenient access devices must be removed from the tree and tree stands when the stands are not in use.

Archers must use a safety harness whenever ascending or descending a tree and while hunting.

Baiting of deer is permitted. Archers may use up to 5 gallons of corn per day, or other bait, as regulated by the Pennsylvania Game Commission while performing archery hunting on the selected township open spaces.

Archers must park and enter hunting areas in the designated locations. Each vehicle participating in the initiative shall display a parking tag associating it either with the township initiative or the deer management group.

Archers must carry authorization to hunt township open space with them while hunting. A copy of the township's authorization, weekly schedule showing the archer's name assigned to the hunting area, and official identification, such as a driver's license, is sufficient.

Group identifying information must be visible on all arrows. This is to facilitate identification of the arrow in the event it is lost individually or found in an injured deer.

Each group must harvest a ratio of at least 3 does to 1 buck per season for the area(s) they are managing as part of this initiative. Archers are encouraged to continue hunting

after harvesting a buck. Archers may not harvest albino, “piebald”, or otherwise “mostly white” deer.

Archers must remove all harvested deer. All arrows must be retrieved.

The number of deer management group members in an open space is limited to the number of tree stands in that open space that have been approved by the township. Deer management group members are not permitted to drive deer in the open spaces or adjoining private properties.

Archers may field dress their harvested deer on township land in a location that is generally out of sight of residents. Remains may be left behind, but must be concealed and placed away from likely human access. Archers are not permitted to field dress any deer on private land without written permission from the landowner that is granted at least 1 day before the deer was harvested. Groups must notify the township of any such permissions they are given within 3 days of the date of the agreement.

Archers must remove all material brought into the hunting area. Nothing may be left behind except the tree stand

Archers are asked to collect minor litter they observe in the open spaces.

Archers must act in a courteous and professional manner whenever they come in contact with members of the public. Archers should anticipate that they may come in contact with neighbors who are blind, deaf, or possess another disability and need to communicate. Archers are asked to consider how they might communicate with these members of the public should they come in contact with them before entering a bow hunting area. For example, an archer may find carrying paper and a pen helpful to communicate with a deaf person.

Groups and archers should feel free to contact the township, police, or PA Game Commission if immediate assistance is needed in any situation. Archers and groups should call 911 to report any instances of poaching as soon as it is observed.

Township staff, DMC members, Supervisors, police, or other township officials will periodically verify that archers are in their proscribed locations according to their stated plans and adhering to the initiative’s rules and regulations. These checks will occur without prior notice. Issues observed during these inspections will be treated as complaints (see Part 7 – Complaints).

Part 6 – Reporting

Group/Archer Reporting Requirements

The township requires that deer management groups report the planned week-ahead schedule to the best the group knows it by Sunday via email (preferably) or by Monday using other means.

The township requires that deer management groups report the following information via email to deer@eastgoshen.org or phone when a deer is harvested within 1 business day of the harvest:

- Date, time, and location of the harvest
- Group name and archer
- Gender
- Age
- Anything noteworthy or unusual about the animal
- Any lost arrows.
- Any deer shot and not recovered.

The township requires that deer management groups report the following information via email to deer@eastgoshen.org or phone whenever a contact with a member of the public occurs. Hostile or tense contacts should be reported the same day; otherwise, within 1 day is sufficient.

- Date, time, and location of the contact
- Name(s) of the group members, members of the public, and any township, law enforcement, or PA Game Commission staff involved in the contact, if the names are known.
- Description of the contact.
- Indicate if the member(s) of the public desires to be contacted by the township to discuss the situation. If so, name and contact information will be needed.

The township further requires that archers immediately report the following:

- Suspected instances of poaching as they are observed. Call the police at 911 if real time poaching with firearms is observed or 610-692-5100 for all other poaching. Notify the police at the earliest convenient time of past poaching evidence if the evidence does not appear to be from the same day.
- Any hazardous or unsafe conditions, regardless of whether or not they are related to hunting. Call 911 or the East Goshen Police Department at 610-692-5100 depending on severity.

- Safety issues and any violation of Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations or the township’s initiative rules.

The township requests that archers report the following within 1 business day by email to deer@eastgoshen.org or by phone:

- Significant or “large” item litter that cannot be easily carried out off township land, such as tires, appliances, and vehicles. The township requests that small amounts of litter be removed by archers if they observe it. Reporting small amounts of litter to the township for removal, versus removal by the archers, is also appreciated.
- Items that require township attention. Examples include damaged or dysfunctional 4-Post Feeder/Bait Stations, unauthorized permanent installations of material on township land, tampering with the sewer system, and vandalism.
- Unauthorized tree stands.

The township recognizes the significant additional value deer management groups provide to landowners through their volunteer efforts. The township requests that groups inform the township by email or postal mail of volunteer efforts by their members in the township each month for the prior month. The purpose of this reporting is to ensure the township and its residents are aware in a timely manner of the substantial additional value the groups provide. Information to include in the report for each volunteer activity includes:

- Date(s) of activity
- Group name and members involved
- Activity performed and impact.
- Amount of effort invested.

Example:

Group A adopted Paoli Pike from Line Road to Boot Root as part of the Adopt-a-Highway program. Members Peter Smith, Paul Jones, and Mary Johnson picked-up trash along this stretch of road for 2 hours each last month on February 25th. The members filled 4 trash bags and took them home with them for disposal.

Township Reporting Requirements

The township believes that it has a responsibility to inform residents of the progress of the deer herd reduction initiative. The township commits to provide the following information in an annual report to be delivered to the Board of Supervisors by the end of February following each hunting season in which township-owned land was hunted.

Initiative Efficiency & Yield

- Number of deer management groups and archers participating in the initiative.

- Deer hunting breadth across areas, intensity, schedule utilization, and other information pertinent to how often hunting is active in the open spaces.
- Total number of deer harvested and by hunting area, their gender, age, and anything noteworthy or unusual about them.
- Effort-to-Yield performance metric overall, by group, and by hunting area/parcel: number of archer hours that were invested per harvested deer.

Other Benefits to the Township – Volunteer Efforts

- Summary of volunteer activity by each group.
- Information to be provided includes a high level description of the volunteer activity, each group's level of involvement in the activity, and the benefit to the township.

Issues

- All safety, PA Game Commission, and initiative rule violation reports and their adjudication.
- Poaching reports by hunting area and any information pertaining to the reports or the outcome of the investigation.
- Group performance issues.
- Report of complaints from the public.

Lessons Learned

- What worked well?
- What did not work well?
- What does the Deer Management Committee recommend be changed for next year?

In addition, the township's Deer Management Committee will provide the Board of Supervisors a brief monthly report covering the months of September through January summarizing the activity in the month. This report will be delivered during the 2nd Board of Supervisors meeting in the months of October through January.

Part 7 – Complaints

The township shall advise a group's point of contact of any complaints brought against the group or activity in the group's area and will request a response. The township will attempt to investigate all complaints to the best of its ability and requires the support of the groups to accomplish this goal. The township will provide a timely response to the complainant by postal letter or email, depending upon the medium in which the complaint was filed.

The township will be the ultimate arbiter of disputes and complaints. Complaints against groups found by the township to have merit may result in loss of hunting privileges for the group or its members.

Feedback regarding the conduct of the initiative is welcome. Residents should send email to egtadmin@eastgoshen.org to contact the Board of Supervisors or deer@eastgoshen.org to contact the Deer Management Committee. Postal letters and phone calls to the township office are also welcome.

Part 8 – Initiative & Change Management

The Deer Management Committee shall be the administrator of the deer herd reduction initiative, with assistance from the township Board of Supervisors, Public Works Department staff, police, Pennsylvania Game Commission, and related bodies.

Ordinary changes to the initiative shall be made through recommendations from the Deer Management Committee to the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors may need to incorporate these recommendations into their next formal meeting's agenda during periods when hunting is underway. The Board of Supervisors will decide to implement the recommended changes only in their formal meetings. All meetings are open to the public.

Changes to address concerns regarding health, safety, and welfare, or otherwise to restrict the initiative that cannot wait until the next formal meeting of the Board of Supervisors shall be referred to the chairman or vice chairman of the Board of Supervisors for an immediate decision, or decided upon by the Township Manager or Manager of Public Works as the need arises. The Deer Management Committee and Board of Supervisors will be advised of the situation, actions taken, and have the opportunity to act at their next scheduled meeting. This information will be shared with the public at their meetings.