



NYC Parks

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Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Hon. James S. Oddo
Staten Island Borough President
10 Richmond Terrace
Borough Hall, Room 120
Staten Island, NY 10301

Re: Deer Task Force Inquiry

Dear Borough President Oddo,

Thank you for your letter of September 10 regarding the inter-agency Deer Task Force. I'm responding on behalf of Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver to your request for an update on the progress of the Task Force.

Parks has participated in the multi-agency task force that met monthly from December 2014 through May 2015 with the intention of producing a report to guide management actions in Staten Island. This summer, NYC Parks took the initiative to join the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on the preparation of an environmental assessment of deer impacts and deer management options in New York State with a specific focus on the issues in New York City and Staten Island. The full Task Force will reconvene once the environmental assessment has been released for public comment this fall and recommendations from the USDA have been received. Joining the USDA as a cooperating agency on the assessment puts the City many steps ahead of where it would be had it continued to produce its own report.

The City has been and continues to be proactive about this issue. In addition to the environmental assessment, the following actions have been taken:

- At the City's request, this past spring the NYS DEC and Cornell University conducted a public perceptions survey of 3,000 residences in Staten Island regarding deer, which is the report referenced in our previous correspondence and was originally estimated to be complete in June of 2015. The purpose of the study was to understand how the public experiences deer, parks and greenspaces on Staten Island and to gauge perceptions of deer-related impacts on Staten Island. Survey results are being analyzed and the full report is now expected this fall.
- NYC Parks continues to monitor deer damage to forest restoration plantings. According to 2015 inspection data, roughly 10% of \$5 million in restoration plantings in Staten Island have been impacted by deer.
- NYC Parks and NYC DEP are experimenting with the installation of fencing to keep deer out of some plantings, including a \$100,000 fence installation at Buck's Hollow in Staten Island.
- Other City agencies track vehicle collisions and deer carcasses and have installed moveable deer warning signs on Staten Island roads.
- NYC Parks will host a workshop for land management agencies and other stakeholders, focusing on deer biology and management examples from other municipalities in late fall.
- NYC Parks has drafted a plan to inform the public about the impact of deer populations in their neighborhoods and what they can do to protect themselves. The plan will launch this fall and include the production and distribution of educational flyers and tip sheets, public educational programs, and the use of social media to raise awareness about the issue.



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Ultimately, any local deer management plan must be approved by the DEC as the State agency with jurisdiction over wildlife. Though NYC Parks is but one of the entities involved in developing a plan, we believe joining the environmental assessment as a cooperating agency will provide comprehensive recommendations informed by federal stakeholders, and will be vital to moving this process forward. In the meantime, NYC Parks has been involved in meetings with senior officials at City Hall to discuss the issue and City Hall is interested in moving the process forward as quickly as possible.

We appreciate the importance of this issue to you and your constituents, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and your office regarding this topic. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Best,

Matt Drury
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