

Native Habitat Collaborative – 25-07-24 Meeting Summary

Video Links: [Morning Meeting](#) Evening Meeting – small group discussion not recorded but included in notes

Overview:

- **Group Business:**
 - Future Meetings tentatively scheduled for **4th Thursday of the Month** 10:30am and 6:30pm – please provide feedback if there is a conflict of a similarly themed group
 - **Next Meeting: August 28th 10:30am 6:30pm**
 - **zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83855096940>**
 - Topic: Sharing and discussion of projects/issues
- **Please get in touch if you have a success/learning experience/problem for input you'd like to share with the group for the August meeting. We'd love to hear it.**
- If anyone has successfully created a shared google calendar that a large group of folks could update let me know – I may need a hand with this.
- We had a great presentation and discussion with Joe Basralian about NJCF's ongoing work on deer management in NJ both providing information and seeking input. To Contact Joe with further questions:
- **Joe Basralian** joe.basralian@njconservation.org

Key takeaways

- Joe presented on behalf of NJCF about a new initiative to address deer overpopulation in New Jersey
- The initiative aims to create a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to deer management
- Key challenges include cultural perceptions, regulatory barriers, and funding for venison processing
- Potential solutions discussed include expanding venison donation programs, supporting town-level deer management, and exploring commercial hunting options
- The group emphasized the need for public education and cultural shift to support effective deer management
- Sharing of successful deer management examples from Princeton and Bernards Township
- Exploration of various stakeholder perspectives and barriers to effective deer management
- Plans for future Native Habitat Collaborative meetings and organizational updates

Discussed topics

NJCF Deer Management Initiative

Joe presented an overview of a new initiative by the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) to address deer overpopulation issues in the state.

- **Details**

- Joe: Explained the background of the initiative, including extensive stakeholder interviews and development of a strategic plan
- Joe: Highlighted the need for a collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders
- Joe: Emphasized the importance of public education and cultural shift in addressing deer management issues

- **Conclusion**

- The initiative aims to create a comprehensive, statewide approach to deer management
- Focus on building coalitions and supporting existing efforts rather than imposing top-down solutions

Venison Donation and Processing

Discussion on the challenges and opportunities related to donating and processing venison from hunted deer.

- **Details**

- Kelly: Asked about legal barriers to using harvested deer for human consumption
- Joe: Explained that selling venison is prohibited, but donation is allowed
- Mike: Highlighted the need for funding to cover butchering costs for donated deer
- Cliff: Mentioned past attempts at venison exchange programs that were blocked by state regulations

- **Conclusion**

- Current regulations allow for venison donation but not sale
- Funding for processing remains a significant barrier to expanding venison donation programs

Commercial Hunting Considerations

The group discussed the potential for commercial hunting as a solution to deer overpopulation.

- **Details**

- Cliff: Suggested commercial hunting as a logical solution to deer overpopulation
- Mike: Emphasized the need to compensate hunters for their time and effort
- Joe: Cautioned about the need for cultural acceptance and regulatory changes before implementing commercial hunting

- **Conclusion**

- Commercial hunting could be an effective solution but faces significant regulatory and cultural barriers
- More public education and stakeholder engagement needed before pursuing commercial hunting options

Successful Deer Management Examples

Discussion on existing successful deer management programs and potential lessons for New Jersey.

- **Details**
 - Stephen: Asked about successful examples from other areas
 - Joe: Mentioned localized successes in New Jersey and other states, but noted challenges in scaling up these efforts
- **Conclusion**
 - Some localized successes exist, but scaling up remains challenging
 - Need for broader cultural and policy changes to support effective statewide deer management

Chronic Wasting Disease Concerns

Brief discussion on the potential impact of chronic wasting disease (CWD) on deer management efforts.

- **Details**
 - Stephen: Raised concerns about CWD in bordering states
 - Joe: Explained that rigorous testing in Pennsylvania has not significantly impacted hunting participation
- **Conclusion**
 - CWD is a concern but has not significantly impacted deer management efforts in neighboring states
 - Proper testing and safety protocols are essential for any deer management program

Regulatory Incentives for Hunters

Discussion on potential regulatory changes to incentivize increased deer harvesting.

- **Details**
 - Steve: Asked about relaxing bag limits or offering additional tags to incentivize hunters
 - Joe: Explained that New Jersey already has relatively liberal hunting regulations, but hunter participation remains a challenge
- **Conclusion**
 - Regulatory changes alone may not be sufficient to increase deer harvesting
 - Need to address cultural and practical barriers to hunter participation

Additional Discussion Points at Evening Meeting:

- **Details**
 - Joe: Presented data on deer-vehicle collisions reduction in Princeton and Bernards Township
 - Joe: Discussed the correlation between deer density and Lyme disease cases
 - Andrew: Shared personal experience with changing perspectives on hunting
 - Wendy: Mentioned the positive impact of deer management on bird populations in Princeton
- **Conclusion**
 - Effective deer management can significantly reduce deer-vehicle collisions and Lyme disease cases
 - Public education and communication of success stories are crucial for gaining support

Stakeholder perspectives and barriers

- **Details**
 - Joe: Explained the need to address different stakeholder groups' concerns and goals
 - Mike: Raised the question of quality deer management and its potential benefits
 - Laurie: Highlighted the importance of addressing emotional responses to deer management
- **Conclusion**
 - Different stakeholder groups have varying concerns and goals regarding deer management
 - Addressing emotional responses and providing clear, factual information is essential for gaining support

Native plant initiatives and deer impact

- **Details**
 - Andrew: Shared experiences with the Hopewell native plant swap group and school habitat projects
 - Terry: Compared California's native habitats to New Jersey's deer-impacted ecosystems
 - Wendy: Mentioned the stark difference between deer-protected and unprotected forest areas
- **Conclusion**
 - Deer overpopulation significantly impacts native plant ecosystems and restoration efforts
 - Demonstrating the difference between protected and unprotected areas can be an effective educational tool

Future plans for deer management advocacy

- **Details**

- Joe: Outlined a three-phase strategic plan for improving deer management in New Jersey
- Joe: Discussed the need for policy changes and community support
- Mike: Emphasized the importance of a unified message across conservation groups

- **Conclusion**

- A multi-phase approach is needed to address deer management challenges
- Collaboration between various conservation groups and stakeholders is crucial for success

Action items

- **Terry**

- Share Joe's email address with the group for follow-up questions
- Send follow-up email with meeting notes and links to Google Group and Drive
- Create documents for shared resources and organization descriptions in Google Drive
- Follow up with group members about topics for future meetings
- Continue working on setting up the shared Google Calendar

- **All participants**

- Provide feedback on the group's name and mission statement if needed
- Consider sharing project successes or learning experiences at future meetings and letting Terry know – brief 10-15 minute presentations to the group
- Review the proposed 4th Thursday of the month meeting schedule and provide feedback on any conflicts
- Utilize the email group for announcements and communications

- **Joe**

- Be available for follow-up questions and discussions with group members
- Send the deer-vehicle collision chart to Wendy