

Thurs., Jan. 19, 2006
Roosevelt Swim Center Meeting Room
5:00 p.m. — 6:30 p.m.

Deer Task Force Meeting Notes

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Karen Olson, at 5:00 p.m. In attendance: Karen Olson, Jerry Cole, Mike Forrette, Pat Mexican, Chris Heacock, Bill Rasmussen, and guests, Veda Wojciechowski (Concerned Citizen), and Lowell Schmitz (Big Game, Wildlife Biologist, SD GF&P).

A warm welcome and appreciation is extended to the meeting's guests who are encouraged and invited to participate in future discussions.

Relying upon the expertise of Lowell Schmitz, the thrust of the meeting was devoted to the advantages and methodology of acquiring more specific data re. deer living in and around Rapid City. While recognizing the contribution of information gleaned from trend surveys provided the City by SD GF&P, and the inherent limitations of an annual deer cull, as well, the Committee explores the possibility of conducting a deer study designed to establish a "baseline" from which future management alternatives can be derived, e.g., what are the migration patterns of deer (or lack of) in the Chapel Valley area? Is this an area of Rapid City that would lend itself to a pilot PZP (porcine zona pellucida) study? Or, would such a study more logically be conducted in an area of town east of the "Gap"?

With an eye toward its potential for practical application vis-à-vis wildlife study — already in use by toll plazas, libraries, retailers tracking inventory, etc.— Pat Mexican provided the Committee with a handout describing radio frequency identification tags (RFID) which can be read from a distance, and require no internal energy source.

Chris Heacock asks the salient and thought-provoking question: Is the knowledge of a migratory route lost upon the death of a mature doe? Does an orphaned fawn know how to migrate? What are the unintended consequences of an annual deer cull?

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In terms of both funding and scientific inquiry, the Committee would like to maximize research dollars. Is it possible to institute a mutually beneficial study in partnership with the SD GF&P, the City, et al.

Jerry Cole sketches an outline of the City's budgetary process, its constraints and realities. Careful planning is advised, particularly, as the GF&P and City fiscal cycle are out of sync with one another. Also, Jerry addresses issues of safety in regards to the City's ongoing deer cull. Each deer killed is tested for chronic wasting disease.

Should the City commit to a research program, a number of issues, including private funding sources, need to be resolved. Mike Forrette asks that any study be conducted with an eye towards the institution of an integrated PZP pilot program, whether it is incorporated as an aspect of a preliminary "baseline" study or as a follow-up program in its own right.

For instance, considering the associated costs of ear-tagging a deer, perhaps a cost-effective strategy might include the immunocontraception of a doe previously tagged as part of a preliminary census/migration study.

Lowell Schmitz proves to be an invaluable resource and liaison with the GF&P. Apparently, mule deer are in decline throughout the West. In the Black Hills as a whole, the population is approximately 75% white tail and 25% mule deer. How will a proposed study account for variations in behavior and numbers between the species vis-à-vis an urban landscape?

Bill Rasmussen outlines an intriguing idea, introduced at the Dec. 8th meeting, that would invite the public to participate in a deer census (something akin to Audubon's Christmas bird count). In particular, the survey would be designed to ascertain the movements of deer within and without the Chapel Valley area (Jerry Cole suggests that it would be possible to tabulate the count via the City's website); in general, perhaps the "public" would gain a greater understanding of the deer and its behavior.

The meeting was adjourned at approx. 6:30 p.m. The next meeting date was established for Feb. 23, 2006 at the same location and time.

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Respectfully submitted for approval,

Adrian M. Forrette