

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mill Creek MetroParks entered into a Cooperative Service Agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services to implement portions of the park's Deer Management Program during the 2023-2024 management season. Under this agreement, WS performed all targeted removal activities, site preparation, field dressing, data collection, and transportation of harvested deer to a butchering facility to be processed for donation and human consumption.

The targeted removals were conducted in accordance with the Ohio Division of Wildlife Deer Damage Control Permit #18048. Deer management occurred on two separate nights. The targeted removal program focused on the southern portion of Mill Creek Park (Boardman Township), with all activity taking place between Shields Road and U.S. Route 224. Thirty-eight deer were removed by Wildlife Services. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the total harvest was comprised of female deer.

Deer were processed for human consumption by a Litchfield, Ohio based processor. A total of 1,071.5 pounds of processed meat from deer harvested on this project was donated by the park to the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley. Due to staff limitations, the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley declined the venison donation that resulted from the 11/30/24 targeted removal. Instead, that 284.3 pounds of venison was donated to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

**United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Wildlife Services**

**2023-2024 Summary Report of Activities
Mill Creek MetroParks Targeted Removal Program**



[Mill Creek MetroParks Logo](#)

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OVERVIEW

Need for Action

In support of white-tailed deer management to reduce damage to natural resources, the Ohio Division of Wildlife (DOW) issued Deer Damage Control Permit # 18048, authorizing Mill Creek MetroParks (MCMP) to remove up to 30 deer using targeted removal. That permit was amended on 11/29/2023 to include the authorized take of an additional 14 deer. The permit stipulated that only seven of those deer could be antlerless. The remaining seven were to be antlered deer. The DOW is the regulatory authority of wildlife in Ohio. The DOW urban/suburban deer management goal is to provide a deer population that will allow maximum recreational, aesthetic, and economic benefits while minimizing conflicts with property damage, loss of ecological biodiversity, and ensuring the overall health of the deer herd. It was under this permit that MCMP requested the assistance of Wildlife Services (WS) in meeting some of the objectives outlined in their Deer Management Plan. Specifically, MCMP would rely on professionally trained marksman from WS to perform targeted removals in areas where controlled hunting is not feasible or where controlled hunting alone fails to meet MCMP management objectives (MCMP 2023).

METHODS

Targeted Removal

For 2023/2024 the targeted removal program was focused on the southern portion of Mill Creek Park (Boardman Township), with all activity taking place between Shields Road and U.S. Route 224. The area was inspected by representatives from WS and MCMP to establish safe shooting zones before the targeted removals took place. MCMP rangers were on location, providing site security during each targeted removal effort.

Wildlife Services used rifles equipped with noise suppression devices, also known as suppressors. Suppressors quiet the muzzle blast of a rifle shot by slowing and redirecting the gases produced when the ammunition is discharged. A suppressor does not silence the sonic signature (sonic crack) of the projectile (bullet) in flight. In accordance with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) guidelines for euthanasia, shots were placed with the goal of penetration and destruction of brain tissue, causing an instant loss of consciousness.

Wildlife Services used forward looking infrared (FLIR) technology aided by night vision devices and/or firearm mounted spotlights when conducting sharpshooting activities. Wildlife Services utilized a handheld FLIR unit to locate and observe deer in complete darkness. These capabilities also further enhanced WS ability to ensure the safety of humans and pets during operations.

Data Collection and Processing

All harvested deer were tagged using temporary tags created by WS per DOW permit instructions. Each tag contained a unique identification number. Harvested deer were transported to a central processing station within the park. Biological data (gender, age, live weight) was collected for every deer. Deer were aged by assessing the tooth replacement and wear of the lower jaw (Severinghaus 1949). Deer were classified into the following age (years old) categories; 0.5, 1.5, 2.5, 3.5, 4.5 and 4.5+. The DOW places all deer older than 4.5 years of age into the 4.5+ category.

Deer were processed for human consumption by a Litchfield, Ohio based processor. A total of 1,071.5 pounds of processed meat from deer harvested on this project was donated by the park to the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley. Due to staff limitations, the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley declined the venison donation that resulted from the 11/30/24 targeted removal. Instead, that 284.3 pounds of venison was donated to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

RESULTS

Effort

Wildlife Services conducted targeted removals on two different nights (Table 1). A total of 18-person hours were utilized to remove 38 deer from the established management area within Mill Creek Park. This yielded a ratio of 0.47-person hours per deer harvested (total number of person hours spent shooting/total number of deer removed) (Table 2).

Table 1. WS targeted removals in Mill Creek Park, Ohio, 11 October and 30 November 2023.

Date	Deer Removed
10/12/2023	30
11/30/2023	8

Table 2. Effort required by WS to harvest 38 deer in Mill Creek Park, 11 October and 30 November 2023.

Number of Days	Number of Person Hours	Number of Deer Removed	Average Number of Deer Removed per Day	Number of Man Hours per Deer Removed
2	18	38	19	0.47

Age and Sex Distribution

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the total harvest was comprised of female deer.

Table 3. Age and sex distribution of deer harvested by WS in Mill Creek Park, 11 October and 30 November 2023.

Age Class	Male	Percent of Total Harvest	Female	Percent of Total Harvest	Total for Age Class	Percent of Total Harvest
0.5	7	18%	10	26%	17	45%
1.5	1	3%	4	11%	5	13%
2.5	0	0%	8	21%	8	21%
3.5	0	0%	5	13%	5	13%
4.5	0	0%	2	5%	2	5%
4.5+	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%
Total	8	21%	30	79%	38	100%

Harvest Locations

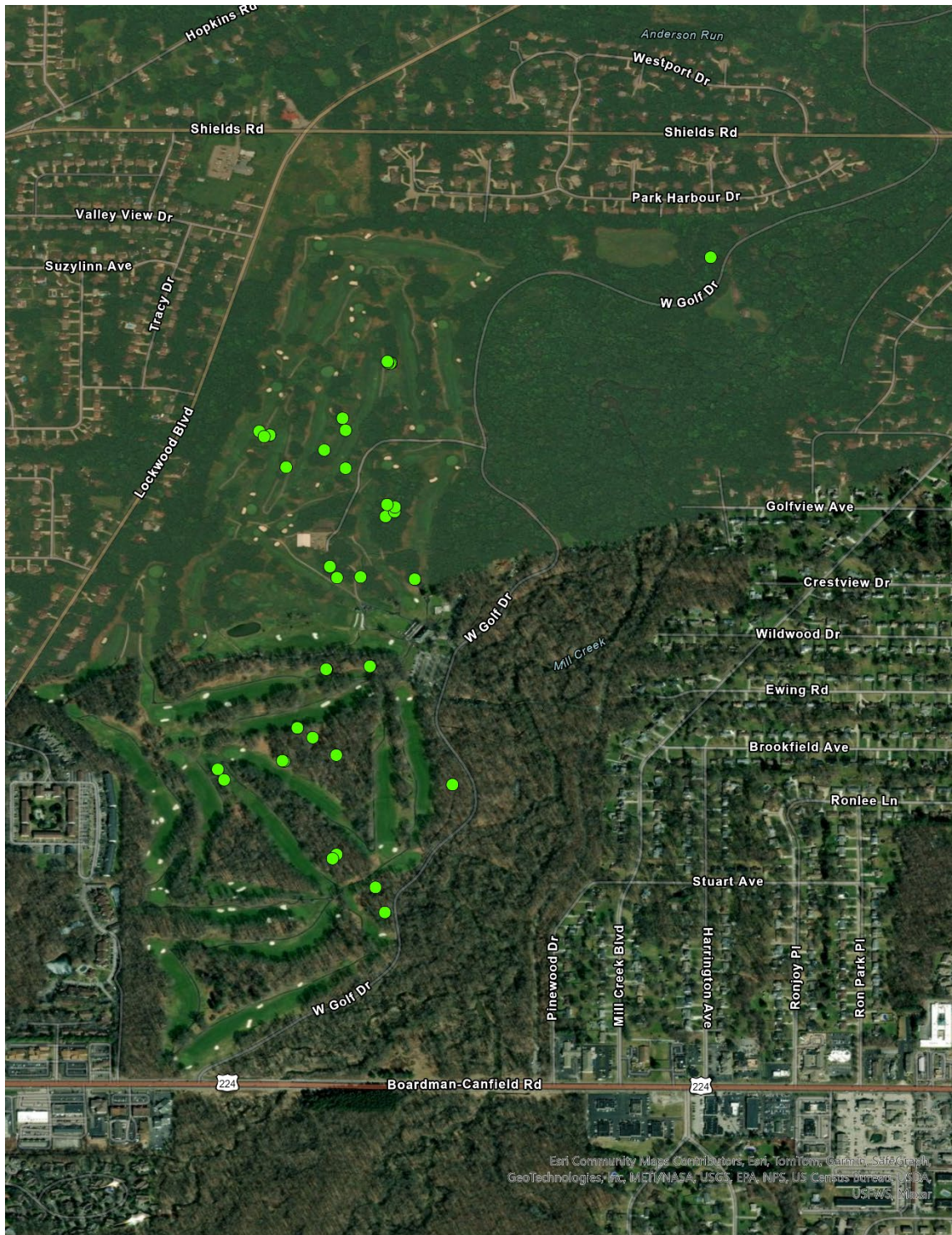


Figure 1. A map depicting the harvest locations of deer removed by WS during the targeted removals in Mill Creek Park, 11 October and 30 November 2023.

Live Weight

Figure 2 depicts the mean live weights (lbs.) for deer harvested during management activities in Mill Creek Park. Mean weights (lbs.) have been calculated by age class for both males and females.

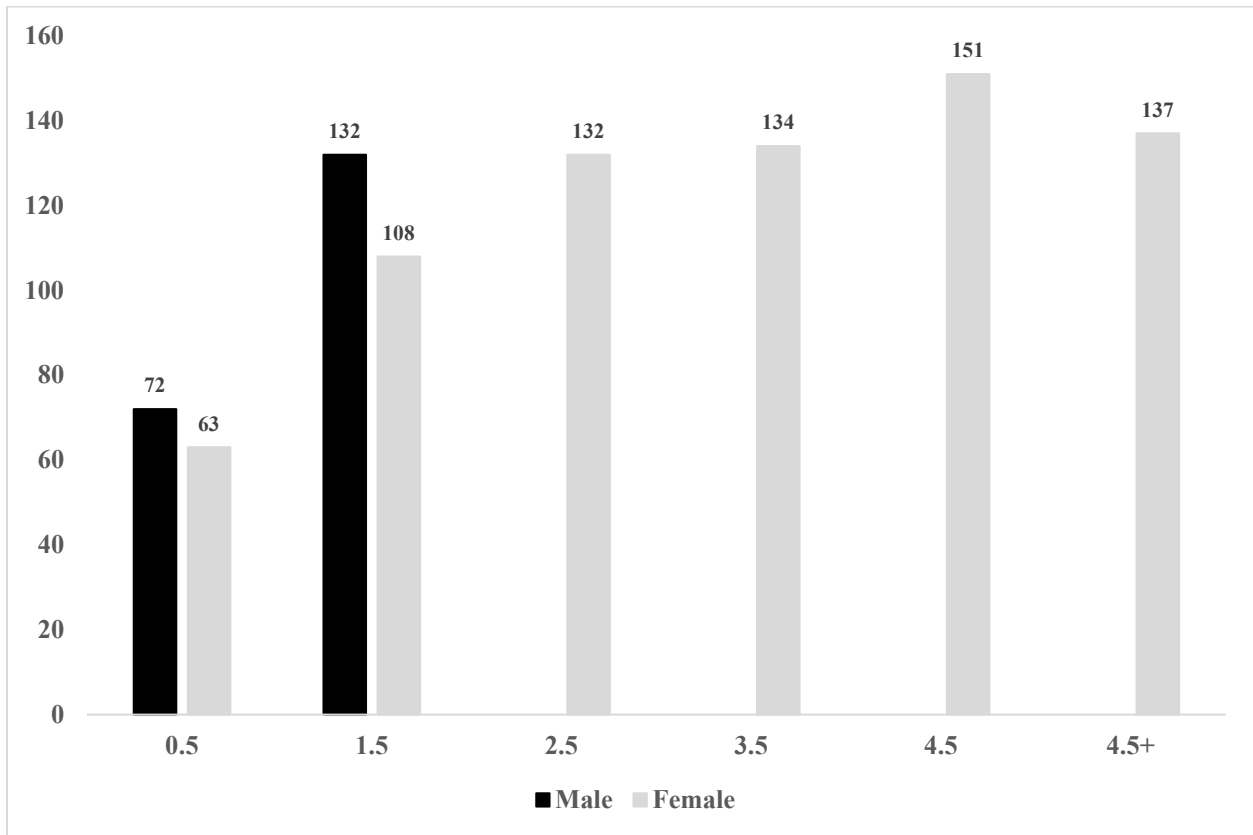


Figure 2. Mean live weights calculated by age class for male and female deer harvested by WS in Mill Creek Park, 11 October and 30 November 2023.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

In 2023, MCMP finalized the development of a goal-oriented Deer Management Plan (MCMP 2023). The Deer Management Plan should be reviewed on an annual basis and updated periodically to reflect changing trends in science and culture. Wildlife Services will continue to support MCMP in evaluating and refining their Deer Management Plan and monitoring techniques to ensure that the most appropriate, effective, and current management practices are being utilized.

Management techniques considered in the Deer Management Plan included the use of hunting through controlled public hunts and targeted removals (MCMP 2023). Some combination of the two techniques will likely be the most efficient and cost-effective means for MCMP to reduce deer conflicts on properties where they have management authority. When possible, lethal management should be supported with non-lethal measures for an Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDM) approach. The most effective approach to resolving wildlife damage is to integrate the use of several methods simultaneously. Management alternatives should be reviewed and updated annually. Goals should be evaluated and updated to reflect changes in deer populations, damage to natural resources, and overall public perception to deer within the MCMP. As the deer management program continues there may be a need to refine or change techniques to have continued success (MCMP 2023).

LITERATURE CITED

Mill Creek MetroParks (MCMP). 2023. White-tailed Deer Management Plan. 7 September 2023. 208 pp.

APPENDIX 1. 2023-2024 Biological Data for Deer Removed by WS

Date	ID Number	Sex	Age	Live Weight
10/12/2023	FY24MC001	Female	1.5	113.6
10/12/2023	FY24MC002	Male	0.5	76
10/12/2023	FY24MC003	Female	0.5	60.2
10/12/2023	FY24MC004	Female	0.5	77.3
10/12/2023	FY24MC005	Female	2.5	148.8
10/12/2023	FY24MC006	Female	2.5	129.2
10/12/2023	FY24MC007	Female	3.5	142.6
10/12/2023	FY24MC008	Male	0.5	78.4
10/12/2023	FY24MC009	Female	0.5	68.9
10/12/2023	FY24MC010	Female	0.5	47.8
10/12/2023	FY24MC011	Female	2.5	116.4
10/12/2023	FY24MC012	Female	1.5	97.4
10/12/2023	FY24MC013	Female	4.5+	136.8
10/12/2023	FY24MC014	Male	0.5	61.2
10/12/2023	FY24MC015	Female	2.5	166
10/12/2023	FY24MC016	Female	0.5	59.4
10/12/2023	FY24MC017	Female	1.5	110
10/12/2023	FY24MC018	Female	0.5	64.3
10/12/2023	FY24MC019	Male	0.5	68.2
10/12/2023	FY24MC020	Female	3.5	144.1
10/12/2023	FY24MC021	Female	0.5	62
10/12/2023	FY24MC022	Female	4.5	132.8
10/12/2023	FY24MC023	Female	3.5	123.3
10/12/2023	FY24MC024	Female	3.5	135
10/12/2023	FY24MC025	Female	0.5	52
10/12/2023	FY24MC026	Female	2.5	115
10/12/2023	FY24MC027	Male	0.5	59
10/12/2023	FY24MC028	Female	4.5	170
10/12/2023	FY24MC029	Female	2.5	131
10/12/2023	FY24MC030	Female	1.5	110.4
11/30/2023	FY24MC031	Female	3.5	127
11/30/2023	FY24MC032	Male	0.5	88
11/30/2023	FY24MC033	Male	0.5	74
11/30/2023	FY24MC034	Female	2.5	112
11/30/2023	FY24MC035	Female	0.5	67
11/30/2023	FY24MC036	Female	2.5	136
11/30/2023	FY24MC037	Female	0.5	72
11/30/2023	FY24MC038	Male	1.5	132

APPENDIX 2. 2023-2024 Mill Creek MetroParks Ohio Division of Wildlife Deer Damage Control Permit

Control Permit Number: 18048 Key: 2479905670	Division of Wildlife Ohio Department of Natural Resources DEER DAMAGE CONTROL PERMIT	DNR 8004
The following permit is issued to:		
Nick Derico <small>(Name of Landowner, Lessee, or Agent)</small>	_____	(330) 702-3000 <small>(Phone No. w/Area Code)</small>
7574 Columbiana Canfield Rd. <small>(Mailing Address)</small>	Canfield <small>(City)</small>	44406 <small>(Zip Code)</small>
This permit may be utilized on the following properties in Mahoning County:		
Address (closest road intersection if no address)		
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Mailing Address (if checked)		
2. Mill Creek MetroParks Properties		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
Only the below listed shooters may be present while pursuing deer utilizing this Deer Damage Control Permit:		
• All shooters (except for Ohio resident landowners, their spouses, and children) must have a current Ohio hunting license to take deer under this permit.		
• All shooters are subject to a background check and may be denied as a shooter if they have been convicted of a prior wildlife or weapons offense.		
Shooter's Legal Name Date of Birth		
1. USDA Wildlife Services	_____	1/1/2000
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
This permit shall be in effect from <u>September 20, 2023</u> to <u>March 31, 2024</u>		
This permit authorizes the killing of a total of <u>44</u> deer on properties listed on this permit.		
The following types of deer may be killed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Antlerless deer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Antlered deer		
The following must be notified: (not required to notify if "N/A" is written).		
before shooting each day: N/A _____ at () _____		
after shooting each day with the number of deer shot: N/A _____ at () _____		
Special conditions of this permit: <u>Special conditions are outlined in the letter emailed to you and shall be attached to this permit. This permit notes an increase from 30 to 44 deer and shall replace the previously issued permit.</u>		

ND <small>(Initials)</small>	I acknowledge that if I am not the landowner, I must have written permission from the landowner prior to utilizing this permit to conduct control activities on the listed property(ies).	
ND <small>(Initials)</small>	I certify that I have read and understood all of the rules and conditions for the use of this permit listed on the front and back of this permit. Further, I understand that any failure to comply with all of the provisions of this permit will result in its immediate revocation and that any misuse of this permit will result in prosecution. I also understand that this permit does not supersede, and I must adhere to, any local laws, rules, or ordinances that pertain to the properties where this permit will be utilized.	
ND <small>(Initials)</small>	I certify that all statements made by me in this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief and that I understand that knowingly and willfully providing false information and applying for this permit/license is a violation of Section 2921.13 of the Ohio Revised Code for which I am subject to arrest.	
_____ <small>(Signature of Landowner, Lessee, or Agent)</small>		<u>11/29/23</u> <small>(Date)</small>