



Welcome!

Virtual Public Scoping Meeting for the White- Tailed Deer Management Plan/EA

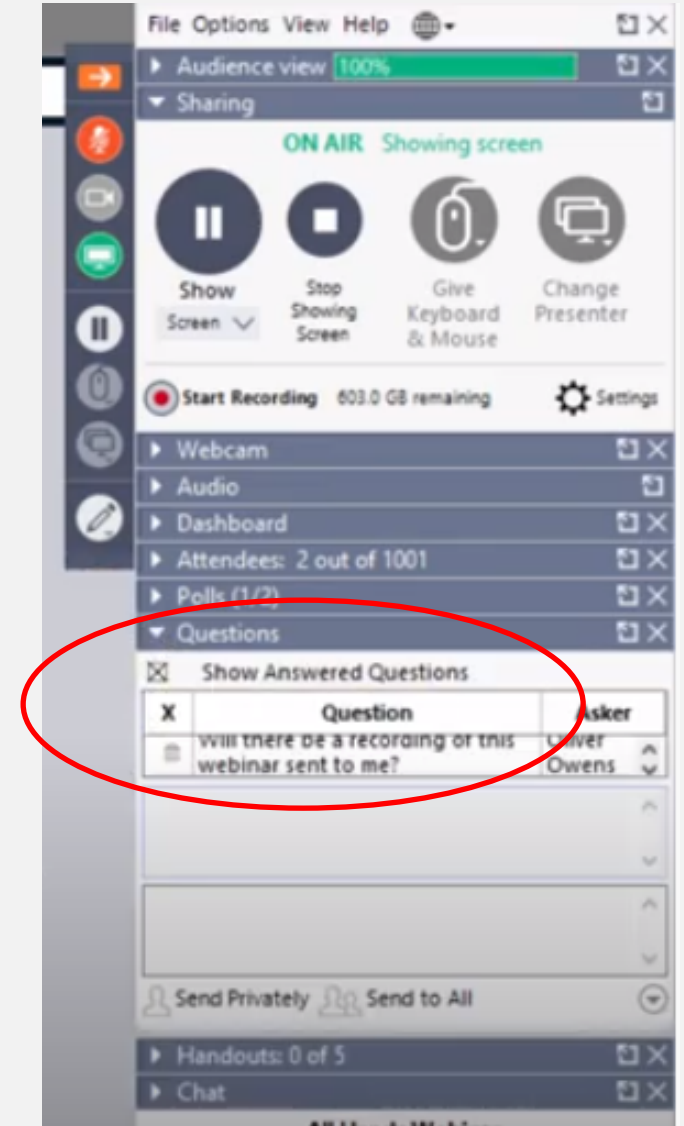
June 15, 2021





Meeting Protocols

- This meeting is being recorded
- As an attendee, you will be in listen-only mode
- Type your questions at any time during the webinar into the **Questions Box** in the Control Panel
- Questions will be answered at the end of the presentation, as time allows





QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Questions or comments submitted as part of this meeting will **not** be considered formal comments on the project.

Your participation will help shape this plan! To provide comments on the project:

Online:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=102432>

U.S. Mail:

Attn: Deer Management Comments
National Capital Parks – East
1900 Anacostia Drive, SE
Washington, DC 20020

Project Phone Line:

410-777-9538

Comments must be submitted online, by phone, or postmarked by July 15, 2021, to receive consideration.



Meeting Agenda

National Environmental Policy Act

Project Background

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Schedule

How to Comment

Questions and Answers



WHAT IS NEPA?

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is part of a planning and decision-making process
- NEPA requires federal agencies to:
 - Analyze the environmental impacts of federal actions
 - Engage the public in the decision-making process



NEPA PLANNING PROCESS

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the range of issues to be addressed and for identifying issues related to the proposed action

Internal Scoping

- NPS staff identified the purpose of and need for action, the range of the plan, and preliminary issues and alternatives

Public Scoping

- The engagement of interested and affected public related to the proposed action, alternatives, issues, and sources of data



Environmental Assessment

Preliminary Issues and Impact Topics:

- Vegetation
- White-Tailed Deer
- Terrestrial Wildlife and Habitats
- Cultural Landscapes
- Historic Districts
- Visitor Use and Experience

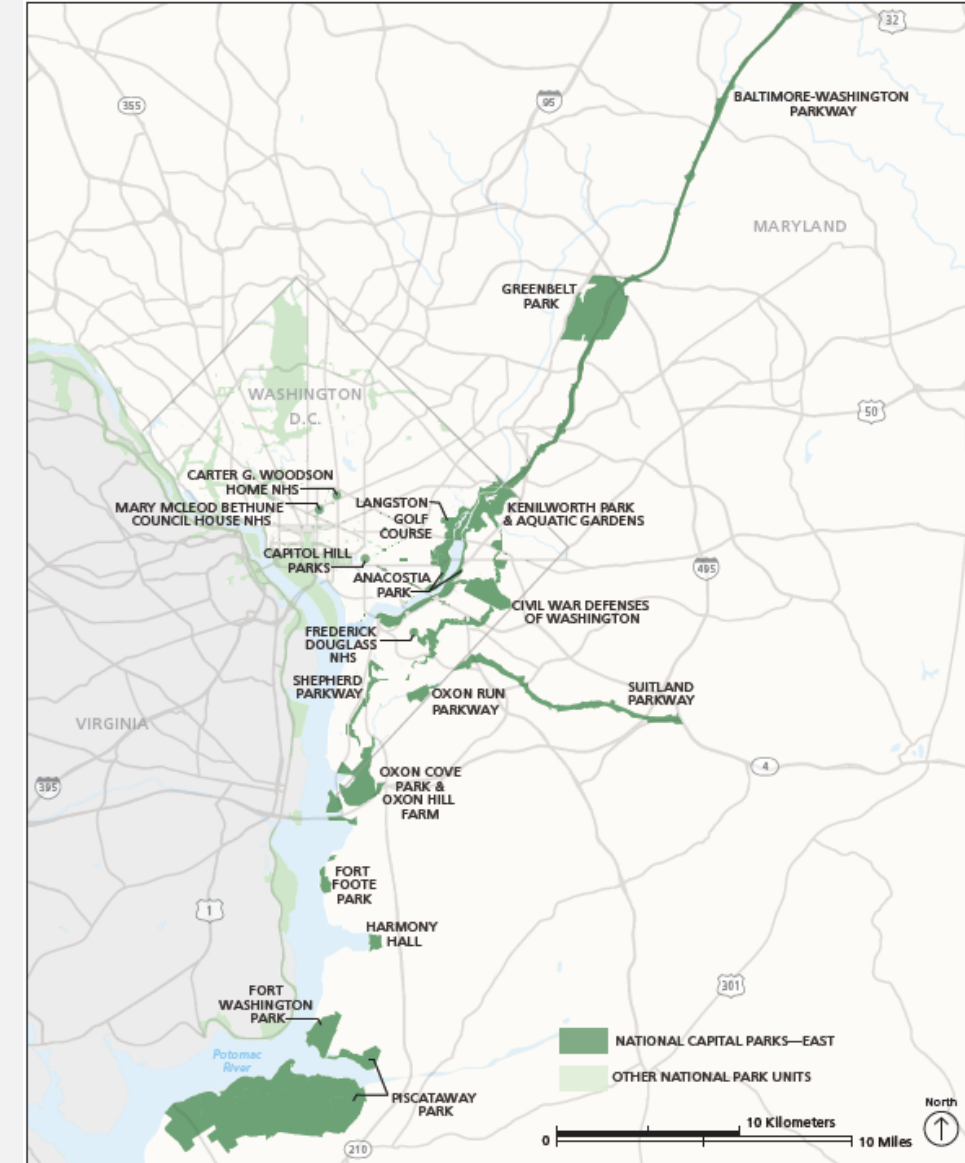


NPS Greenbelt Park



INTRODUCTION

National Capital Parks – East, an administrative unit of the National Park Service (NPS), proposes to develop a Deer Management Plan and Environmental Assessment.





IMPACTS OF OVERABUNDANT DEER POPULATIONS

White-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus) cause significant stress on forests of the National Capital Region.

- National Capital Parks – East *Natural Resource Condition Assessment, 2016*





VEGETATION IMPACTS

Although ideal density will change with the setting, research by the U.S. Forest Service has shown that deer densities above 20 deer per square mile inhibit tree regeneration.

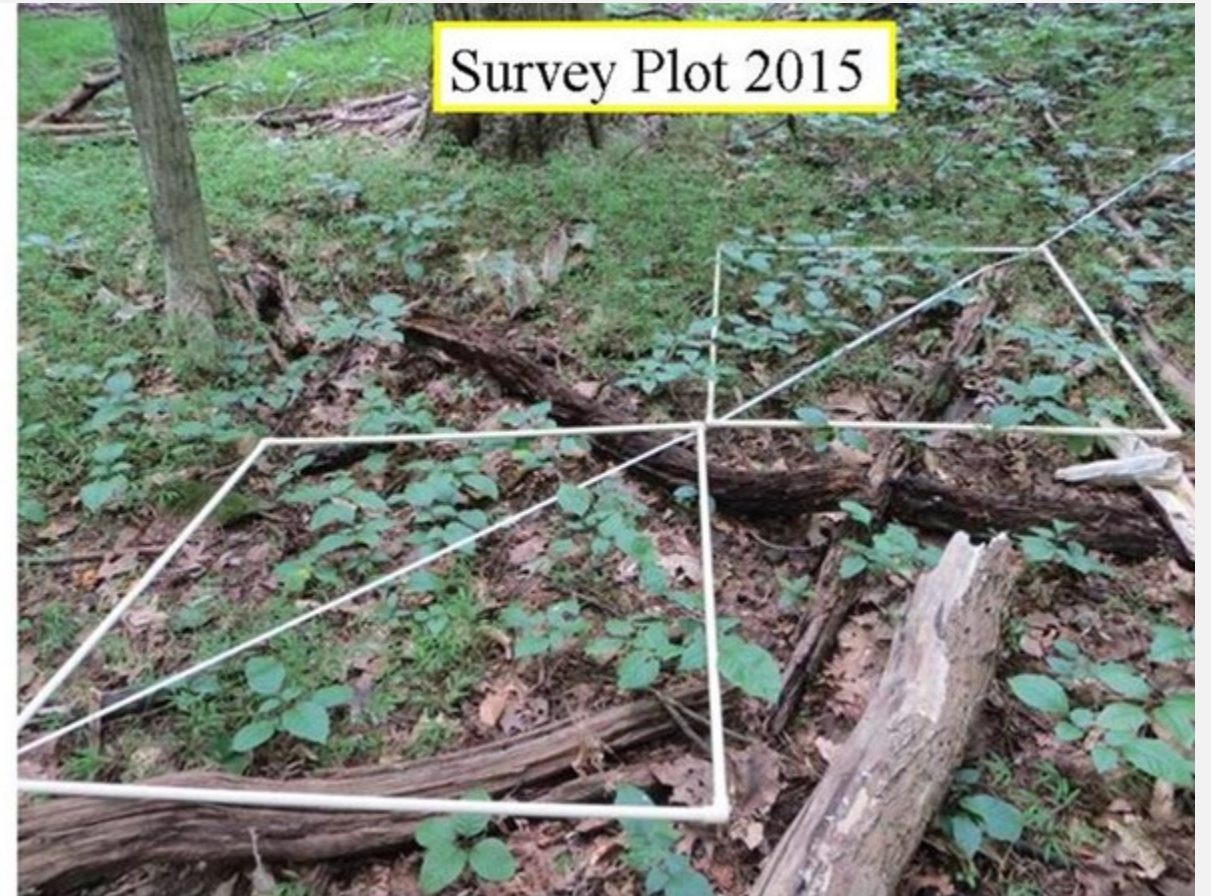
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NPS Fort Washington Park



VEGETATION IMPACTS



NPS Catoctin Mountain Park



VEGETATION IMPACTS

After 7 years of deer management, there was an **11-fold** increase in tree seedling density in Catoctin Mountain Park.

According to 2020 monitoring data, the tree seedling density increase is now **13-fold**.

The state-threatened **purple fringed orchid** was more plentiful in a 2016 Census than it was in 2008.



NPS Catoctin Mountain Park



PURPOSE AND NEED FOR DEER MANAGEMENT

The **purpose** of the plan is to develop a white-tailed deer management strategy that supports long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native plants and cultural landscapes throughout National Capital Parks – East.

This plan is **needed** for the following reasons:

- Overabundant deer browsing dominates the ecological systems, degrading the vegetation, habitats of other native wildlife, and public health and safety.
- Deer over-browsing causes unsustainable degradation of the parks' forests and natural resources that are important character-defining elements of the cultural landscapes.



PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION AREAS FOR DEER MANAGEMENT

Maryland:

- Fort Washington Park
- Civil War Defenses of Washington Parks: Fort Foote
- Piscataway Park, including Marshall Hall and Colonial Farm
- Oxon Cove Park, including Oxon Hill Farm
- Harmony Hall
- Greenbelt Park
- Baltimore-Washington Parkway
- Suitland Parkway

Washington, DC:

- Anacostia Park and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens
- Oxon Run Parkway
- Civil War Defenses of Washington Parks: Fort Mahan, Fort Dupont, Fort Davis, Fort Chaplin, Fort Stanton, Fort Ricketts, Fort Greble, Battery Carroll, and Shepherd Parkway





DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

The proposed action includes:

- Continuation of deer population density surveys
- Continuation of forest condition survey plots to assess the impacts of over-browsing
- Surveillance and opportunistic sampling for chronic wasting disease
- Using lethal deer management controls, in the form of culling, to reduce the deer population to the sustainable target level



DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Currently, there are no non-lethal deer management controls that are effective in an open, free-ranging deer population.

NPS would consider non-lethal management options should effective methods for an open population be developed in the future.



NPS Greenbelt Park



MONITORING SUCCESS

The deer population will be managed based on the success of forest regeneration. The park uses adaptive management, which must be informed by monitoring data.

- Vegetation monitoring would be conducted on a 4-year rotating panel to document any changes in deer browsing and forest regeneration that might result from reduced deer browsing
- Tree seedling threshold will determine if browsing impacts warrant implementation of the selected management alternative

Deer abundance will vary based on the number of removals, reproduction rate, and immigration/emigration into and out of the parks.



NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No-Action Alternative, no new actions would be taken to reduce the deer population or the impacts of overabundant deer browsing on forest seedlings and other vegetation and in cultural landscapes.

The NPS would continue to conduct deer population density and forest regeneration surveys.

The NPS would also continue to track research related to deer management.



ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the Action Alternative, lethal management of deer populations would occur.

Feasible lethal options include controlled harvest programs through sharpshooting (firearms or archery) and capture and euthanasia.

The Action Alternative would also include continuation of deer population density and forest regeneration surveys and tracking research related to deer management.



SAFETY DURING DEER MANAGEMENT

Extensive safety measures will be in place to protect park visitors, neighbors, and staff during operations.

Safety Measures:

- Working at night when parks are closed (parks are closed after dark every day)
- Advising commuters, including cyclists, to plan alternate routes
- Working away from populated areas and with safety buffers
- Temporarily closing roads
- Stationing NPS personnel at closures
- Enforcing nighttime trails closures
- Posting signs on closed trails/roads and bulletin boards



SAFETY DURING DEER MANAGEMENT

Safety Measures (continued):

- Coordinating with other law enforcement agencies, such as working with U.S. Park Police
- Using highly trained firearms experts experienced in conducting wildlife reduction operations
- Using infrared heat scanners and night vision goggles to identify deer
- Using elevated positions to provide downward, angled shots
- Shooting toward the interior of the park
- Using special non-lead ammunition with a shorter travel distance
- Using noise suppression on weapons



SCHEDULE

The table below highlights the important steps in the NEPA process and tentative schedule for completion of the plan:

Date	Milestone/Activity
June 15 – July 15, 2021	Public Scoping Period (begins NEPA process) *(We are here)
July – September 2021	Prepare Plan/EA
September 2021	Plan/EA Public Review and Comment Period (30 days)
October 2021	NPS Reviews Public Comments on Plan/EA
November 2021	Finding of No Significant Impact or Preparation of Environmental Impact Statement



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