**Community-Based Deer Management Plan Template**

**for**

*[City, State]*

*This is a template to help you recognize the important components of a deer management plan. As you browse the example deer management plans included on this website, you will find that they do not follow a standard format. Some plans are hundreds of pages long with many appendices, whereas others are simple 10-page documents. Some states may require that communities undergo an environmental impact assessment process prior to implementing a program, which may affect the length of a plan and the components of that plan. However, what we have included in this template are the core elements that a deer management plan should include no matter the length.*

*Be sure to include a date of plan publication, identify the author of the plan, and if you received any outside assistance it may be helpful to note that as well. Other communities, especially those in your state, my look to your plan to help guide the development of their own plan. For instance, if you received outside assistance from a wildlife biologist, that person may be a good resource for other nearby communities.*

**PLAN SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND**

*Here is where you might provide a brief summary of the content of your deer management plan, e.g., actions selected and a general timeline for implementation. You may also provide some background regarding your community or a description of the area targeted for management, e.g., location, size, land ownership type, etc. If a deer committee was convened to help create the deer management plan, include some information about a) how committee were selected (process, by whom, criteria for selection, etc.); b) committee members names and affiliations; c) important dates or milestones; d) the decision-making process used to create the deer management plan. Some plans may also include a purpose: what is your community’s overall purpose in creating this deer management plan? Some communities may describe their purpose as to mitigate some general deer impacts, or to provide planning guidance.*

**PROBLEM DEFINITION**

*Here is the place to describe the deer management problem that your community is facing. Include a discussion of the primary impacts that are driving the problem; these might include impacts to habitat, impacts to ornamental plantings around residences, or perhaps public health and safety impacts such as deer-vehicle collisions or increased Lyme disease cases. Describing the impacts that are driving the problem in your community will help readers of your plan understand the links between the management actions your committee selected, the objectives those actions help meet, and the impacts those objectives help address. You may find it helpful to organize your impacts by type, e.g., human health impacts, ecological impacts, etc. In addition, it can be helpful to identify where or to whom the impacts are occurring, how severe they are, and if they have changed over time. It may also be helpful to include the sources you relied upon to identify the impacts, if possible. For instance, did you acquire numbers about rising deer vehicle collisions from your local police department? Did you implement a resident survey? Was there a deer population survey or forest monitoring project that helped to elucidate your community’s impacts, or impact change over time?*

**GOALS**

*Include here some broad goals that you hope to achieve with your deer management program. These goals might be expressed as a list of general outcomes or reflect a desired future condition. Example goals might be maintaining a socially-acceptable level for the deer population; preserving healthy, local forestland; supporting a community that is well-educated on how to live with deer while reducing human-deer conflicts, etc. These goals should be realistic and achievable. Some communities may find it helpful to connect their community-level goals to any statewide goals for deer management, if applicable (i.e., does your state wildlife agency have a deer management plan you may look to in order to help refine your own community’s goals?)*

**MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVES**

*Here is where you include your measurable objectives, the achievement of which collectively allow accomplishment of your goals for deer management in your community. It may be helpful to think about your objectives in terms of categories, such as: objectives directed towards the number/behavior of deer, objectives directed towards increasing community knowledge about deer/deer management (e.g., driving behavior, deer-resistant plantings, etc.). Example objectives might be to reduce the number of deer-vehicle collisions to a certain amount per year, to eliminate deer damage to ornamental plantings around homes, to increase or maintain stems of certain forest plant species to some density, etc. Whatever objectives you have identified, it is important that they be measureable and have a time component (target date for achievement), meaning that there is a way for you to track progress towards meeting these objectives. In the following sections, you will identify your selected management actions as well as selected indicators for monitoring progress on your plan, both of which need to reflect these objectives. As you identify your objectives, be aware of the kinds of actions you might need to take to make progress towards these objectives as well as the kinds of data that you might need to collect in order to evaluate that progress. Including measurable objectives that are tied to indicators and actions is arguable the most important component of your plan. It is critical to know what you are making progress towards in order to have some way to judge success of your program. It is also important that you start with identify objectives, not with actions. Actions selected should be matched to goals and objectives, not the reverse.*

**MANAGEMENT ACTIONS RECOMMENDED**

*Here is where you outline the various management actions recommended or selected for your community-based deer management program. These actions may include strategies for population control, strategies directed at deer behavior, strategies directed at human behavior, public outreach, education or communication strategies, local ordinance changes or others. Likely your plan will include a suite of management actions, so you may choose to organize them according to type (e.g., deer population control, ordinances, etc.) For each action selected, it is important that you explain how this action will contribute towards meeting your objectives, identify who will carry out the action and on what timeline, and describe the site targeted for management, if applicable. For instance, if you will be installing deer-proof fencing around various natural areas in your community, which natural areas will be protected and if not all at once, then in what order? And who will be doing the installation? It is important that this section is complete and clear, as controversy around deer management in communities is often focused on management actions. It is also critical that you identify why particular actions were selected or recommended; this forms the rationale for your plan.*

**MANAGEMENT ACTIONS CONSIDERED**

*Were there actions that your community considered prior to selecting the management actions outlined above? If so, an explanation of which actions were considered and why they were ultimately not recommended provides an important part of the rationale for your implementation plan. Be as specific as possible. For example, if deer immunocontraception was a popular choice among residents but the deer committee found it not to be feasible in your community, make sure you clearly explain why. Was it cost? Effectiveness? Time expected for results? If a management action was considered and rejected, the reasons why should be communicated here. Including these kinds of considerations is an important part of communicating the rationale for your plan; as mentioned earlier, controversy around deer management is often focused on the actions selected. Presenting a clear rationale as to why particular actions were not suitable for you community is an important part of developing a sound, acceptable deer plan.*

**PLAN FOR MONITORING**

*Here is where you should include a list of the indicators you will be monitoring to assess progress towards achieving your objectives. It is important to identify for each indicator what specific data you are going to collect, who is going to collect those data, and how they will do so. For instance, will your community be conducting aerial counts of deer each year to monitor changes in population? Will you be monitoring regeneration of certain forest plants? Tracking deer-vehicle collisions? Whatever your community will be doing to evaluate your deer management program’s progress towards addressing important impacts, it is critical that the indicators you have selected are clearly identified and are tied to measureable objectives.*

**PLAN FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

*Here is the place to include plans for public outreach regarding your deer management program. You may have included outreach strategies as part of your selected management actions to meet education-related objectives (e.g., holding neighborhood workshops on landscaping with deer-resistant plantings), but if there are additional steps that will be taken towards engaging community members, here is the place to describe those steps. For instance, do you plan on holding annual or semi-annual public meetings to update the community on progress towards your plan? Will you be maintaining a page on your community’s municipal website regarding the deer management program? Keeping the public apprised of changes to your deer management program or progress towards goals and objectives is an important aspect of effective CBDM efforts, and having a place in your plan where you can explicitly identify how you will do so is one way to stay accountable.*

**BUDGET**

*Include here the estimated costs of each element of your community’s plan for each year that the effort is funded. Identity both one-time costs as well as ongoing costs. Be sure to be as comprehensive as possible; costs such as hiring a firm to conduct sharpshooting for deer population control, for instance, may be easy to identify. However, do not forget about other potential costs such as those associated with outreach and education. Sometimes you will see plans that have budget elements nested within actions selected (e.g., if a plan notes that they will be hiring sharpshooters, it may place an estimate of cost in the text). While this is a fine approach, it can be helpful as a reference for readers to include a separate, traditional budget as a component of your plan.*

**TIMETABLE**

*Include here an anticipated timetable for the various components of your deer management plan. When are different management actions scheduled to be completed? When do you intend to collect data for monitoring and evaluation, and over what time horizon? Do you have any annual public meetings scheduled where progress on your deer management program might be shared with the community? Remember, it is important that if changes are made to your program, you revise your timeline accordingly. As with the budget, timing may be noted in the text of your plan with respect to particular objectives or actions. However, it can be helpful as a reference for readers to include a separate timeline as a component of your plan.*

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

*For each activity included in your deer management plan, someone or some entity should be identified as the responsible party for carrying out that activity. Of course, they should be aware of and have agreed to that responsibility (e.g., who is responsible for collecting monitoring data?). You may identify that person or entity in the corresponding section of the plan, or you may use this space to outline those responsibilities. You may also list responsibilities as part of a timeline. Be sure to include the affiliations of the responsible party. This does not necessarily involve listing a specific individual, as municipal leaders may change, for instance, but rather their role: e.g., is this particular action the responsibility of a deer committee, a mayor, a “Friends of” group, etc.*

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

*Here is where you might attach any additional supporting documents for your plan. For instance, if some data were collected early on in your process (e.g., aerial deer population counts, a survey of community member attitudes, etc.), you might include that information and results as an attachment.*

**REFERENCES**

*Here is where you may list documents you referenced in the development of your plan. Some plans may include in-text citations of journal articles, Cooperative Extension resources, state agency resources and reports, other deer management plans, etc. Other plans may just include the reference list or suggested readings. Whatever sources you may have consulted to inform your development of the plan may be included.*