

**DRAFT PROPOSAL  
FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING SEQ  
VILLAGE OF CAYUGA HEIGHTS BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 9/21/09**

Charged by the Mayor and the Board of Trustees of the Village of Cayuga Heights (“VCH” or the “Village”) the Deer Remediation Advisory Committee (the “DRAC”) researched options for deer management in the VCH. This proposal is based on the information gathered by the DRAC from experts in the field of deer management, plus feedback from open committee meetings and two public forums. The DRAC shared this data with the community via the website [www.vchdeercommittee.com](http://www.vchdeercommittee.com) and an 8-page information sheet delivered to residents in early March 2009, a copy of which is attached to this report for reference.

**The Proposal:**

**Acknowledging the need to reduce the number of deer in the Village, the Village of Cayuga Heights Board of Trustees intends to adopt the recommendations of the DRAC to implement a phased options approach (“POA”) to deer management. The DRAC recommends that the Village begin the POA with the surgical sterilization of approximately 20-60 does within a two-year period; followed by culling of the remainder of the herd within the year subsequent to completion of the sterilization program, followed by a program of ongoing maintenance of the herd size, as necessary through further sterilization and culling. It is expected that this program will, once implemented, result in a reduced and stable deer herd in approximately 3 years.**

**Specific Recommendations:**

The following specific recommendations are further detailed under the next heading of this report.

1. The VCH should hire a part-time Deer Management Director (DMD).
2. The VCH should adopt the goal of the cultural carrying capacity of 15 deer/square mile, which would result in a total deer population in the Village of Cayuga Heights of approximately 30 deer for the Village’s approximate 1.85 square miles.
3. The VCH should establish guidelines for confirming that the POA is reaching its goal of managing the VCH’s deer herd to reduce ecological damage, traffic accidents, incidents of Lyme Disease, and other unwanted deer-human interactions.
4. The VCH should implement the POA as soon as VCH has made its final determination that the community is supportive of the POA.
5. The VCH should recognize that any approach to deer management must be implemented without fail for each of the initial five years of the program, and the VCH Board of Trustees and its constituents must recognize that otherwise the program will fail.

## **Further Details:**

The following additional details expand upon the specific recommendations listed above.

**1.** The VCH begin working toward implementation of the POA by hiring a part time DMD who will report administratively to the Village of Cayuga Heights, while accomplishing the following:

- apply for grant monies on the basis that the VCH's deer population problem is part of a larger concern;
- identify the number of properties needed for culling;
- work with the VCH treasurer and attorney to bid out and write contracts for all contractors hired;
- work with Cornell University personnel, especially Paul Curtis, regarding capture and sterilization procedures; staff and facilities; and identifying the recommended number of VCH sites for trapping for sterilization.
- work with contractors to coordinate and implement timing, safety concerns, impact guidelines, etc.
- work with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and Cornell University personnel to file permits and other paperwork as required.

**2–5.** The VCH Board must make a long-term commitment to the POA. It will take a minimum of 3 years to see the results of sterilization of the VCH deer population, but the maintenance phase (periodic culling and/or sterilization) will be ongoing. The Board also may wish to consider the use of additional methods to reduce deer-human conflict, such as roadway reflectors, and a re-examination of the VCH Fencing Ordinance (*see below regarding Lyme Disease and fencing*).

**4.** A survey, for which private funding has been offered, could be conducted to gauge public sentiment about deer, deer impacts and support for the POA. It could also be used as a tool to begin the process of identifying property owners who would allow their properties to be used for trapping for sterilization and/or for culling.

**5.** Under the POA, the sterilized population will be established first does will be completed first, allowing for the capture of the “easy” or less wary does which is more efficient in time and cost. These are the does and families who would continue to live in our community and whose observation and maintenance would be ongoing. Paul Curtis' experience both in the VCH and at Cornell indicates that this first phase would take approximately two years at an average cost of approximately \$1200/does.

Once the core population of does is sterilized, the DMD would oversee the hiring of professional sharpshooters to shoot unsterilized deer at bait sites. It is estimated that approximately 6 to 10

sites will be required to complete the culling. The DMD will work with VCH Police Chief Boyce and the Department of Environmental Conservation (the “DEC”) officer David Riehlman to develop and oversee the culling protocol and hiring of professional sharpshooters. It is anticipated that the initial culling of the remainder of the herd, which is intended to be completed within the year after sterilization has been completed. The cost estimate for a bait and shoot method is approximately \$400/deer.

It is estimated that an area of 18 acres will be necessary for each culling site. Permission will be needed from landowners to allow hunting within 500’ of their businesses and homes to assemble the required area. For safety reasons, the DEC and the DRAC recommend against publicizing culling sites and times. Some Village residents have expressed their view that safety would be enhanced by publicizing the sites and times. The VCH Board may wish to consider enacting a local law making it illegal, and punishable by fine, to interfere in any portion of a culling operation.

### **Interim Action:**

Given the length of time that will be required for the POA to significantly reduce the number of deer in the VCH, the DRAC recommends that the VCH Board of Trustees immediately focus attention on two specific matters.

### **Education Concerning the Transmission of Lyme Disease**

Two species of ticks are responsible for transmitting Lyme Disease and conditions such as ehrlichiosis. Their larvae and nymphs pick up the bacteria when they feed on any small rodents whose blood has already been infected, and whose preferred cover is long grasses and shrubs. Adult ticks move on to feed on a variety of larger mammals including humans, and deer which are their preferred hosts. Studies show that all local deer would have to be removed to affect the number of locally transmitted cases of Lyme Disease, none of which would affect the ticks frequently picked up by travelers. Nevertheless, studies also show that the number of ticks in a local area are generally linearly correlated with the number of deer present. Recommended mitigation of deer-borne diseases includes fencing, reducing tick habitats (especially where properties are bounded by heavy vegetation), and the possible treatment of white-footed mice. Educating the public includes practicing “due diligence” in clothing for outdoor wear and learning to check for ticks after being outdoors.

### **Review of VCH Fence Ordinance**

Because the results of the POA will take several years to achieve, an interim means to reduce human-deer interaction could result from reviewing and amending the VCH ordinance concerning fence heights. Currently, property owners are allowed to erect a fence of up to 4’ high at the boundary line of their properties, or erect a higher fence the same distance from the

property boundary as required for a building, that is, 25' from the front boundary line of the property and 15' from the side or rear of a property.

## **Alternatives:**

### **Do nothing**

If no management of the deer population is implemented, research indicates that the deer population will continue to increase in number and density. Given the current degree of complaints about the deer population, it is expected that doing nothing will lead to increasing deer population numbers and increasing concerns with deer-human interaction in the VCH.

### **Culling only**

While this is the most cost-effective method of reducing the size of the herd, it is also the most controversial. Maintenance of the herd would be required at a higher level, because the deer that have not been killed will continue to breed. Culling would be ongoing, would disrupt Village harmony, and would keep the controversy alive.

### **Sterilization only**

This option is slower and more expensive than culling alone or even the combined approach of sterilization and culling recommended by the DRAC. It would take approximately 3-5 years to stabilize herd growth if target numbers of deer are sterilized annually, and herd reductions would not begin to be evident for approximately 5-6 years.