

Accokeek Community Deer Management Program
Holly Wagner (301-292-5767; hbwagner@verizon.net)
& Byron Williams (301-938-2876; jbyronwilliams@comcast.com)

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Description:

We have operated a managed deer hunt on 120 properties in the community for the last four years. It has been very successful and, most importantly, there have been no safety issues. The entire operation is run by volunteers and costs about \$150 annually. Every year we say “never again” because of the enormous amount of work it takes to organize. Every year we find many reasons to continue and put more energy into subcontracting tasks to other volunteers.

Start up:

This is not a one person operation. We began with a 4 person team with three separate responsibilities. (1) Community relations, (2) Hunt management), and (3) General operations. After we had the team in place, we held a general community meeting with George Timko, MD DNR Wildlife & Heritage Service, first giving a presentation on deer population management. At the meeting we assessed the support for a managed deer hunt in the community and felt that it was strong enough to begin organizing.

Organization:

Community relations:

The two tasks of the community relations team are to inform landowners about the facts of the managed hunt and to distribute and collect hunting permission forms. Both tasks are difficult and time consuming partly because a small anti-hunt contingent circulates misinformation. We find that most of the permission forms have to be collected in person. Volunteers usually do not know ahead of time whether hunting is a sensitive issue for a landowner who has not previously been approached and there have been a very few memorable verbal attacks.

Hunt management:

We were fortunate in that the person managing the hunt is very well regarded in the community, experienced with managed hunts, and willing to take responsibility for ensuring that the hunt is safely operated. This person’s task is to establish and run a productive and safe hunt. This includes providing information and advice to landowners, volunteers and hunters; recruiting and working with approximately 65 safe, expert hunters experienced in managed hunts; working with volunteers to find and re-establish previous hunting sites; establishing new sites. Annually, 150 hunting sites are renewed or established.

General operations:

This team supports the community relations and hunt management teams, organizing and coordinating pre-hunt, hunt, and post-hunt operations, including recruitment of volunteers. Pre-hunt tasks include keeping everyone on schedule, tracking landowner participation, collecting and maintaining directions to each hunting site, and creating a packet of information and forms for each hunting site. On hunting days, site assignments are made, packets with directions to the sites are distributed to hunters, food & coffee are prepared, viscera removal stations and composting arrangements are organized, and everything is cleaned and polished afterwards. After the hunt, all materials & equipment are stored and modifications to operations for the next year are discussed and incorporated into the next year’s plans.

Conclusion:

Running a safe, successful managed hunt with volunteers is an enormous amount of work. A community probably could contract for a company to manage the hunt component at significant cost. However, we have managed to maintain the support of the landowners because of trust in the hunters. We hold annual meetings for both participating landowners and hunters at the beginning of the hunting season and each have developed their favorites over the years.