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Arnold L. Randall

January 11, 2020

Eric Palm
Village Administrator, Village of River Forest
400 Park Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305

Mr. Palm,

I am writing this letter to provide supplemental information to the letter sent by General Superintendent Arnold Randall (https://vrf.us/uploads/cms/documents/news/1-7-20_arnold_riverforestwildlifemanagement_additionalinfo.pdf) regarding the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's (the "District's") management of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). Please see responses below to questions that you provided to the District.

- How do you measure your success with the deer management program?** Through the process of our standard vegetation monitoring, the District is able to determine if the return of native vegetation is of a quantity and quality that would indicate that the local deer population has been reduced to a more sustainable level. This means that deer impacts such as the consumption of plant flowers, seeds, branches, and stalks across the site are reduced to a level where plants can grow and spread. Visual indicators are the re-appearance of native shrubs, wildflowers, grasses and tree branches growing below 6ft. This can be measured through meander surveys or vegetational plots.
- Deer are prolific breeders. How by thinning the herd does the population stay in check? In other words, if you remove 40 deer and 40 new deer are born how do you ever reduce the herd to make meaningful impact?** Deer populations face restrictions such as disease, infant mortality, accidents, etc. However, without predators, the population does grow beyond what the land can sustain, even with these factors. Management is done at a level to work in concert with these factors so as to maintain a sustainable and healthy population and protect the natural lands they live on.
- While deer management programs appear to be ongoing, how long does it take to achieve meaningful results, and transition to more of a maintenance program?** Based on our past experiences in other locations throughout the Forest Preserves, the reduction stage is generally 3-5 years, after which we transition into maintenance mode. Maintenance mode would continue into the future and may result in seasons where management is not warranted.

4. **How often do deer herds move outside of their local areas?** Deer herds typically do not move out of what could be called a local area, although what a “local area” is will differ by location and circumstances. Telemetry work done by staff in the Forest Preserves’ Resource Management Department indicates that for this location, that area is generally 80 acres. Males will move out of a local area during the breeding season but will return afterwards. The females will generally stay within this 80-acre area throughout their lifespan.

5. **What does Zoonotic Disease Monitoring mean?** Blood and tissue samples are taken from a subset of animals handled and we work with a group of public health agencies and organizations to monitor for disease. As it relates to deer management, the District is monitoring for Chronic Wasting Disease, Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease and other diseases specific to this animal. This monitoring helps us understand changes in populations and disease vectors. Please review (or direct others) to our web site for peer reviewed publications on this subject.

6. **In your letter dated 1/7/20, you state that Thatcher Woods is the 9th ranked landscape based on their “quality”? Can you expand upon that? How are the rankings determined and how do you define “quality”?** In 2015, the District conducted an assessment of all our lands with the assistance of the Prairie Research Institute, Illinois’ premier science consortium. After a careful assessment of the biology, ecology, and other natural resources of the property held by the District, fifteen preserves were selected as priorities based on these factors. The Thatcher Woods Complex (comprised of Thatcher Woods, Grand Army of the Republic, and Thomas Jefferson preserves) was ranked ninth, due to the presence of important natural communities (ex. mesic woodlands, floodplain forest, prairie), the diversity of native plants, presence of rare plants, healthy soils, and low impacts from prior land uses. This high level of quality is very unusual in Cook County, and northeastern Illinois in general.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John McCabe", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John McCabe

Director

Department of Resource Management