



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Valley Forge National
Historical Park

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Valley Forge National Historical Park - News Release

For Immediate Release
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Valley Forge National Historical Park Announces Approval of the Record of Decision for the Final White-tailed Deer Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

VALLEY FORGE, PA – The National Park Service has approved the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Final White-tailed Deer Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Final plan/EIS) at Valley Forge National Historical Park. The deer management plan addresses browsing by an increasing number of deer over the past two decades. Excessive browsing has led to the inability of forests to regenerate into the future and the loss of habitat for other animal species. Mike Caldwell, Superintendent, said “We look forward to a future that provides high quality habitat for *all* wildlife species at Valley Forge.”

The decision selects Alternative D, Combined Lethal and Nonlethal Actions, which was identified as the NPS preferred alternative in the Final plan/EIS. This alternative is considered to best meet the objectives of the plan to develop a deer management strategy that supports long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native vegetation and other natural and cultural resources. The secondary purpose of this plan/EIS is to develop a chronic wasting disease (CWD) response strategy that is fully integrated with deer management and that will reduce the probability of occurrence, promote early detection, and reduce the probability of spread of CWD. Caldwell noted, “After many years of study and public involvement, we have an effective, science-based plan that will help us preserve the park’s environment for future generations.”

The alternative continues current park deer management actions including vegetation and deer population monitoring, maintenance of small fenced areas, roadkill removal, public education, coordination with the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), and CWD monitoring and response. The selected alternative incorporates lethal and nonlethal actions to quickly reduce and then maintain the deer population in the park at a level that protects native plant communities and promotes forest regeneration.

Initially, the park will use lethal reduction via sharpshooting and capture/euthanasia to quickly reduce the deer population and achieve the initial deer density goal. Maintenance of population levels will be conducted via reproductive control when an acceptable agent becomes available.

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The plan also responds to an elevated risk of CWD occurrence in the park. Response to CWD was developed cooperatively with the PGC.

All alternatives considered in the plan/EIS were economically feasible, as required by law. Using the best available science, the alternatives were evaluated on their impacts on the human and natural environment and their ability to achieve the stated plan objectives.

The initial target deer density is 31 to 35 deer per square mile (165-185 individuals park-wide). That will maintain a deer population in the park while reducing deer browsing pressure to a level that will allow for the protection and restoration of native plant communities and regeneration of forests.

Work began on the White-tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS in 2006. Extensive public involvement, including a project web-site, brochure, four public meetings, and over 80 briefings to civic organizations, local elected officials, etc. led to the development of four conceptual deer management alternatives.

The Draft plan/EIS was released for a 60-day public review and comment period from December 19, 2008 to February 17, 2009. Public and agency comments received were carefully reviewed and incorporated in the Final plan/EIS, which was made available to the public on August 28, 2009. The Final plan/EIS contains a comment analysis report that summarizes the public comments received on the Draft plan/EIS with NPS responses.

NPS

An electronic version of the Record of Decision and Final plan/EIS may be obtained through the Planning, Environment and Public Comment website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov> or through the park website at <http://www.nps.gov/vafo/parkmgmt/white-tailed-deer.htm>. The Final plan/EIS and ROD are also available at the Chester County Public Library, Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library, Phoenixville Public Library, Tredyffrin Township Public Library, Lower Providence Community Library, and Upper Merion Township Library. A hard copy (limited availability) or CD of the Final plan/EIS or ROD may be obtained from: Superintendent, Valley Forge NHP, 1400 North Outer Line Drive, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406.

For further information please contact Kristina Heister, Natural Resources Manager, Valley Forge NHP, 1400 North Outer Line Drive, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406 or kristina_heister@nps.gov. You may also visit the park website at www.nps.gov/vafo.