

Some individuals have expressed concerns during the scoping and comment periods regarding the alternatives for managing the deer population in the parks. Some of the expressed concerns relating to the selected alternative included: Killing deer on a historic battlefield; that animals will lose their life; and that NPS personnel, not hunters, will kill deer in the parks. The NPS acknowledges the feelings and concerns of these individuals. Keeping in mind the purpose for which each park was established, however, this action was chosen to maintain the historic landscapes of the two parks and aid visitor understanding of the historic events, while ensuring public safety.

Other Alternatives Considered

Nine alternatives for controlling the deer browsing in the parks were dismissed from further analysis for reasons explained in the EIS. The rejected alternatives included: releasing predators; using deterrents, repellents, or poison; hunting in the parks; fencing; converting cropfields to hay and grass; selling the deer; and allowing private landowners to kill as many deer as they wished on their property and sell the carcasses for profit. Six alternatives, including the proposed action, were considered in the EIS. Alternative 1, No Action, considered taking no management action to control the effects of deer browsing in the parks. The NPS statutory mission is to preserve parks for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The historic woodlots could not be perpetuated for future generations under the No Action Alternative because deer browsing would continue to prevent seedlings from becoming established. In addition, the parks could not meet their landscape management objectives for cropfields with the No Action Alternative.

Alternative 2A, Capture and Transfer, discussed deer population management through capturing and relocating the deer. Live trapping for relocation, according to NPS policy, is the preferred method for controlling wildlife populations within parks. Suitable relocation sites outside the parks, however, have not been identified (see p. 61 of the EIS). Deer-related problems are amplified at the release site if deer are transferred to an unsuitable location. The Pennsylvania Game Commission will not support requests for permits to transfer any trapped deer (see Pennsylvania Game Commission comment letter p. 105-1 in final EIS). Transferring deer also requires the long-

term commitment of a large amount of resources.

Alternative 3, Reproductive Intervention, explored surgical sterilization and contraception of deer. This alternative was a component of the preferred alternative in the draft EIS. The use of contraceptives on deer, which are considered food-producing animals, must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Contraceptive vaccines and steroids to control deer reproduction for population management have not been approved for use at this time. In addition, surgical sterilization was considered impractical because of the large number of deer in the parks. This alternative was, therefore, rejected and removed from the preferred alternative in the final EIS.

Alternative 2B, Direct Reduction, is management of the deer population in the parks through shooting by NPS personnel and authorized agents. Alternative 4, Cooperative Management, is the combined effort of the NPS, Pennsylvania Game Commission, and nearby private landowners to increase public hunting opportunities outside the parks. These two alternatives comprise the selected alternative, Alternative 5, Combined Management.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The environmentally preferred alternative is the one that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment. It is the alternative or alternatives which best protect, preserve, and enhance the historic, cultural, and natural resources in the area where the proposed action is to take place.

Alternative 5, Combined Management, is the selected action and the environmentally preferred alternative. The combination of shooting deer inside and outside the parks will be the most successful at reducing the number of deer in the parks. This action will reduce the park deer population so park management objectives may be achieved. The historic and cultural resources are particularly important at these parks. The reduced deer density in the parks will make it possible for the historic woodlots to regenerate and the agricultural programs at the battlefield and the Eisenhower Farm to maintain the cropfield component of the cultural landscapes. The reduced level of deer browsing will result in an increase in abundance and diversity of herbaceous and woody vegetation. This reduction, not elimination, of the deer population in the parks will enhance the protection and preservation of the historic, cultural, and other natural resources of each park.

Capture and transfer was initially considered as another environmentally preferred alternative. Suitable relocation sites and transfer permits, however, are not available. Even if relocation sites could be found, the ability of capture and transfer to control deer populations on a long-term basis has not been proven for large populations (see p. 61 of the EIS). This alternative, therefore, was not selected as an environmentally preferred alternative.

Conclusion

The above factors and considerations justify selection of the preferred alternative as identified and detailed in the final EIS.

In July, park personnel will begin dialogue with local private landowners in an effort to increase hunting opportunities on private lands near the parks. An action plan will be written for the deer reduction efforts in the parks. Killing deer to reduce and maintain the population at a level where park landscape management objectives are met is proposed to begin in October, 1995.

Dated: July 5, 1995.

Warren D. Beach,

Northeast Field Area, Acting Associate Field Director.

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Subsistence Resource Commission Meeting

SUMMARY: The Superintendent of Gates of the Arctic National Park and the Chairperson of the Subsistence Resource Commission for Gates of the Arctic National Park announce a forthcoming meeting of the Gates of the Arctic National Park Subsistence Resource Commission.

The following agenda items will be discussed:

- (1) Call to order.
- (2) Roll call.
- (3) Approval of summary of minutes.
- (4) Review agenda.
- (5) Superintendent's introductions and review of the SRC's function and purpose.
- (6) Superintendent's management/research reports.
- (7) Public and agency comments.
- (8) Old business:
 - a. Correspondence.
 - b. Federal Subsistence Program update.
 - c. Regions 6 and 10 boundary adjustments.
 - d. NPS firearms/trapping regulations.
 - e. Hunting Plan Recommendation #11.
- (9) New business: