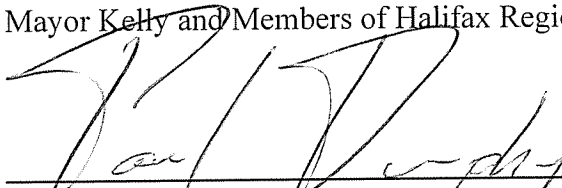

Halifax Regional Council
December 10, 2002

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Paul Dunphy, Director, Planning and Development Services



Maureen Ryan, Planner II

DATE: December 2, 2002

SUBJECT: Wildlife and Development Projects

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Motion of Regional Council (status sheet item #10.3.1(i) - September 17, 2002)

BACKGROUND

At the Regional Council Session of September 17, 2002, Councillor Diana Whalen requested a staff report to examine the impact on deer of development occurring on forested lands. The report is to respond to the following:

- Who, if anyone, is responsible for the displaced deer?
- Does HRM have the resources or authority to act to relocate the affected animals?
- Is it possible to include a provision in development agreements to put the onus on developers to study the deer that will be impacted and have a plan to relocate deer that are affected?
- Does staff have any other suggestions on how we can respond to this situation?

DISCUSSION

It is not unreasonable to assume that suburban development of forested land negatively affects deer populations by reducing habitat. In fact, the opposite appears to be the case. Suburban development attracts deer and increases the concentration of deer in the area. Relocating deer would have to be on an on-going basis since more deer would keep moving into the area. According to the Department of Natural Resources:

White-tailed deer survive very well in close proximity to human development...The highest densities of deer are often found in and near suburban developments and acreage subdivisions. They feed on lawns, ornamental shrubs, gardens, in parks and graveyards and in small green or un-managed sites within populated areas. These deer find adequate security/cover in surprisingly small treed or brush areas.

In areas of new development, deer may find improved habitat as a result or will move into surrounding undeveloped areas. If there are more deer than there is suitable habitat in these surrounding areas, mortality rates will increase due to malnutrition (usually during severe winters) and reproductive rates will decline. It is neither practical nor possible to trap and remove deer from an area slated for development... more would simply move in from adjacent areas. Further, trapping or darting deer is a difficult task, seldom entirely successful and may result in death of the deer as these wild animals fight to escape.

As noted above, the White-tail deer will find improved habitat at the forest edges of newly developed areas and more will simply move into an area if other deer are relocated. Relocation can also be very harmful to the deer during the trapping and transport process. Studies have also shown that the chances of survival of the deer within one year of relocation are very low.¹ Over time the deer will move out of an urbanizing area if access to gardens and natural parks is limited. The deer will remain at the forest edges given the access to improved habitat and the absence of hunting pressure and natural predators such as coyotes.

Although it is difficult to control deer populations in near urban areas, an overabundance of deer can cause problems in urban and suburban settings. While some residents enjoy the natural experience of the presence of deer, commonly reported problems associated with an abundant deer population include:

- damage to expensive ornamental plants;
- damage to natural areas due to overgrazing;
- increased vehicular accidents associated with deer movements between fragmented habitats;
- and

¹ Leonard Lee Rue III, *The Deer of North America*, (England: Airline Publishing Limited, 1989) 426-427.

- public health concerns should the deer population become host to ticks that are responsible for the spread of Lyme's disease.²

One of the most effective means that a municipality has toward the management of the deer population is to plan for the development of new neighbourhoods in a manner that minimizes impact on forested areas.³ Under the Regional Planning process, staff will be working with personnel from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to identify significant wildlife habitat and the wildlife corridors and buffers that will be required to protect them. This information will be integrated with other information under the Regional Plan to determine areas for potential future growth where environmental impact can be minimized.

The Nova Scotia Department of Health, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources, is undertaking a survey of the deer population to determine the risk and significance of Lyme disease throughout the province. Early findings suggest that the risk of developing Lyme disease is minimal.

Conclusion

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources has jurisdiction over the management and handling of terrestrial wildlife in accordance with the *Wildlife Act*. According to the Department of Natural Resources, programs aimed at the relocation of the White-tail deer from suburban and near urban areas would be impractical and ineffective. The White-tail deer is a highly adaptive species which can thrive in the forest edges near urban populations. If the White-tail deer were removed from these forest edges, more White-tail deer would move in to inhabit the area. Over time deer will move out of an urbanizing area if access to gardens and natural parks is limited. There are a number of management techniques which the homeowner can deploy to keep deer away from ornamental plants and shrubs. HRM will also be taking into account significant wildlife habitat and need for connecting corridors when planning for future anticipated growth under the Regional Planning process.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications arising from this report.

² Anonymous, *Deer and Humans*, found at <www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/deerandhumans.html> accessed 15 November 2002.

³ Thomas G. Barnes, and Lowell Adams, *A Guide to Urban Habitat Conservation Planning*, found at <www.ca.uky.edu/age/pubs/for/for74/for74.htm> accessed 15 November 2002.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

The report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating Reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.
Report Prepared by: Maureen Ryan, Planner II