

White Township supervisors approve deer management plan

- [By PATRICK CLOONAN \[pcloonan@indianagazette.net\]\(mailto:pcloonan@indianagazette.net\)](#)
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Tom Peel / Indiana Gazette

A deer management program used in Murrysville’s parks is being adapted to the recreational properties in White Township.

The township board of supervisors voted Wednesday to develop a bow hunting plan that could begin after Christmas.

“The purpose of this is to thin the herd,” township Manager Milt Lady said, before supervisor Sandi Gillette moved to create the program and Rich Gallo seconded that motion.

Board Chairman George Lenz pointed out that supervisor Gene Gemmell put together an identical program 10 years ago — but because of “some outcry” from the community, the township did not follow through with that plan.

Gemmell said his program was based on that conducted at the Treasure Lake development near DuBois. That deer management program dates to nearly 20 years ago.

Lady said Murrysville first had muzzleloader and archery hunting, when its program began some 40 years ago, but now only has archery from a tree stand, in seven municipal parks and reserves.

Lady said a volunteer coordinator is involved with each park.

According to the Murrysville municipal website, hunters must provide their own tree stand, pay a \$35 annual fee, follow all Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations and qualify annually with the municipality's recreation department.

In addition to the hunting, Murrysville has a third party that collects road kill — and Lady said the numbers of road kill have been decreasing in recent years.

Township resident John Somonick said he was concerned about someone deciding to try to lure away the deer from those set up for a hunt.

Invasive plant removal is also conducted in Murrysville's parks. White Township is considering a similar program for its properties.

Lady said a woman living near one of those parks has volunteered for over 20 years and works actively with others involved in what the township manager called "very intensive, very hard work" removing invasive plants.

"It has made a difference," Lady said.

The township manager was part of a delegation that toured those parks recently, a tour from which he produced reports for the board of supervisors.

Invasive plant removal has been part of the discussion about what to do with the White's Woods Nature Center.

Members of Friends of White's Woods distributed copies of a letter to Lady, dated March 25, from Thomas P. Ford, director of the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation in the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

It was a reminder that White's Woods was created with funding through the state's Project 70 Act and, "while forest management is permitted on Project 70 funded sites, a forest stewardship plan must be completed by the grant recipient and reviewed by (DCNR)."

Ford told Lady, "we respectfully request to be informed of what decision the township makes (about forest stewardship) within 30 days of any decision made."

It was among points brought home by FWW members Dave Dahlheimer and Tom Miller.

However, Lenz reminded the FWW members that they filed suit against the township on May 22, 2020, and no decision yet has been made by Indiana County Common Pleas Senior Judge William J. Martin.

It is not known how soon Martin may decide on arguments given to him at trial earlier this month.

Township Solicitor Ryan Fritz said there has been no unusual delay in that process.

Dahlheimer also zeroed in on a “Forest Management & Timber Harvesting” presentation, made at a recent Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors conference and shown earlier this month after a White Township board meeting.

The township has posted it on www.whitetownship.org.

“The timbering webinar ... focuses on the hardwood industry and has nothing to do with the Project 70 forest (White’s Woods Nature Center),” Dahlheimer said in prepared remarks. “It was produced by the forestry industry, and is not appropriate for management of Project 70 land designated for recreation” and supposed to remain in a natural state.

Supervisor Gail McCauley said it was produced by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and did not involve White’s Woods.

Township resident Sierra Davis suggested that the township should listen to DCNR, not the “industry driven” Department of Agriculture, in deciding on White’s Woods.

McCauley said the point of the webinar was “what to do to maintain healthy trees,” as well as “dead and diseased trees.”

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