

Jenkins Woods Deer Management Program

An overabundance of deer in Jenkins Woods is adversely affecting the health of the forest.

- Deer thrive within the edge habitat that Jenkins Woods provides, with few natural predators and no hunters to keep their numbers in check.
- In overabundant numbers, deer consume the young trees, shrubs, and wildflowers that make a natural area healthy, beneficial to wildlife, and self-sustaining.
- Their impact can be readily observed by comparing the healthy understory within the deer fence (installed 10 years ago) to the sparse understory outside the fence.



When deer are out of balance with their habitat, they can very quickly degrade the forest environment for themselves and other plants and animals. However, with the right balance, both the deer and the forest thrive.

Jenkins Woods Deer Management Program

Lethal removal is the most effective deer management option.

[WeConservePa](#) provides a concise analysis of deer overabundance, management options, and monitoring their impact:

- *"A healthy forest can sustain roughly one deer per 64-128 forested acres without compromising ecological integrity."*
 - Our Jenkins Woods easement (125 acres) likely has 20-40 deer patrolling it, if not more.
- *"Monitoring vegetation indicators is a practical way to assess the effect of deer on forested areas."*
 - The deer impact index in Jenkins Woods is currently between 4 (High) and 5 (Very High).



"Choosing not to manage deer can result in a park-like forest with only canopy trees and an herbaceous layer dominated by exotic invasive species."

Photo credit David Steckel, courtesy of Natural Lands.

"The decision to restore any forest must start with the goal of reducing and maintaining deer density at an appropriate level."



Jenkins Woods Deer Management Program

Lethal removal is the most effective deer management option (cont.)

- *WeConservePa* summarizes possible deer management options, as follows:

	METHOD	COMMENTS	MOST APPROPRIATE APPLICATIONS
✓	Tree Shelters	Maintenance requirements	Converting open areas to forest. Protecting landscape plantings.
✓	Deer Fencing	Significant up-front cost, frequent monitoring	Establishing tree regeneration in overbrowsed forest areas. Creating demonstration areas. Protecting collections (arboretums).
✓	Repellents	Impractical in natural areas	Protecting landscape plantings in small areas.
✗	Contraceptives	Currently illegal, high cost	If allowed in the future, maintaining populations in areas enclosed by fencing or isolated by significant natural boundaries (e.g., water, mountains).
✗	Trap and Transfer	Expensive, difficult, transfer location, permit/license	Permits currently restricted so not currently feasible. Removing deer that are in an area that puts humans or themselves in immediate danger.
➔	Lethal Removal	Currently most effective, safety concerns	Reducing and maintaining populations in areas large enough to provide appropriate safety zones.

- The Foundation already employs tree shelters (tubes), deer fencing, and repellants in the most sensitive areas, such as riparian zones and Hemlock Cathedral.
- The use of contraceptives or trapping is not feasible.

In the absence of public hunting, lethal removal "is probably the safest removal option as removal is usually done at night using infrared sighting scopes, over isolated baiting stations located where sharpshooters direct shots into the ground using rifle silencers." "It is also the most effective option for reducing the deer population in the shortest time."

Jenkins Woods Deer Management Program

The Foundation has been granted a special deer control permit.

- Buck Hill Falls lies within the PA Game Commission Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 3D, which is one of just two in the state where deer impact has been consistently rated as “Too High”.
- The PA Game Commission accepted the Foundation’s application for deer control, which outlined our deer overabundance problem, management goals to reach a sustainable population, and history of deer management actions.



With this special deer control permit, the Foundation received “red tags” to be used to record the deer harvest during the 2024-25 hunting season.



Jenkins Woods Deer Management Program

The Foundation will employ [USDA Wildlife Services](#).

- To help restore a healthy balance, the Foundation will use trained wildlife professionals from USDA Wildlife Services (WS) to reduce the local deer density, using sound suppressed rifles, night vision, and infrared equipment.
- WS will only operate on several weeknights during February and March, when Jenkins Woods will be closed to evening hikers.
- Signs will be posted at all entrances to Jenkins Woods for the duration of the program.



**Animal and Plant Health
Inspection Service**

USDA Wildlife Services personnel have been safely and successfully employed for many years by neighboring communities to assist with their deer damage issues.

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The harvested venison will be donated to local food banks.

- All deer will be brought to a local processor for donation to the PA [Hunters Sharing the Harvest Program](#), which has been feeding the hungry for over 30 Years.
 - One deer yields 200 servings of venison, which is high in protein and low in cholesterol.



All venison from our deer management program will be sent to local food banks in Monroe County, such as C.A.M.E..

Jenkins Woods Deer Management Program

The Foundation will monitor effectiveness of the program.

- USDA Wildlife Services will conduct deer density surveys and will prepare a final summary report on the program.
- The Foundation monitors the health of the forest understory of our Jenkins Woods easement:
 - Special attention will be made on understory differences along fenced areas.
 - We will also use our planting database to track sapling mortality rates.

The Foundation will evaluate the overall effectiveness of this program and will share our findings with the Community.

