

Mary Mills

From: Thomas D tom Hall [REDACTED].com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 07, 2010 9:36 AM
To: Mary Mills
Subject: Comment on DEIS draft report

☐ **From:** Thomas D. Hall
Sent: Tuesday, December 07, 2010, 9 AM
To: 'mmills@cayuga-heights.ny.us'
Subject: DEIS comment

Dear Ms Mills,

Prior commitments prevented me from attending the Dec. 66 meeting on the Deer Management Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Please share my comments with the Village Trustees and Mayor. I have been a resident of Cayuga Heights for 11 years. I have read the DEIS and find that it is a helpful assessment of our situation in the Village. I found it well executed and clear. I hope the final EIS will build on this excellent and appropriate report.

I encourage the CH to proceed with the Deer Management Plan and to move as quickly as possible toward reducing the herd by 90% to bring the herd down to local carrying capacity level.

Below I explain why I hold this view, VERY STRONGLY, and offer some rebuttals to the misguided resistance from "Ithacans for Safe, Ethical and Rational Approaches...."

I have deer in my yard regularly. Over the years I have had to continually "upgrade" so-called "deer resistant" plants. Still, each year I find deer both eating more of existing plants, and increasingly eating plants that "deer do not like." The "do not like" category comes from both nursery people and authoritative gardening books. The continual intensification of deer eating nearly all my plants is very frustrating AND expensive. I have had to build more and more "cages" to protect plants, use more deer sprays, and replace plants, and most frustrating, give up on growing some plants altogether. In recent years, I have had to reinforce cages because hungry deer have knocked cages down to get at plants.

But the DEIS highlights much more serious problems than my personal inconvenience. Every year the deer are smaller, more ragged in appearance, and slower toward the end of winter. Their food supply is dwindling. This is why they are eating plants that "deer do not eat." While frustrating and expensive, this is not the only problem. As the report notes deer have exceed the carrying capacity of natural (and planted) environment of CH. They are increasingly destroying the local ecology, endangering local, rare species, and generally reducing botanical diversity, and destroying habitats of other animals, including birds.

I also have observed that deer are becoming less afraid of humans and more aggressive. Ten years ago simply knocking on a window or making a noise or opening the garage door would scare them away. Now I need to go outside run at them or throw something at them, or when it is not cold "shoot" them with a squirt gun with a 30 foot range. Even then it requires more effort to drive them away.

The habituation to humans and increasing scarcity are behind the attacks on dogs recently reported in many sources.

"Ithacans for Safe, Ethical and Rational Approaches...." recently flooded mailboxes with an 8 page diatribe against deer herd reduction. This mailing angers me for several reasons. Most notably they do not identify who they are, nor do they do so on their web site. What are they hiding? Do they own stake in deer repellent and fencing industries?

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At best their arguments are misguided, at worst downright harmful.

Start with a key point from the DEIS: doing nothing will only insure more conflict, more damage, and more dead animals, both deer and other animals whose forage the deer are destroying.

Their argument about costs is nonsense. Those arguments do not include the cost to home owners in protecting their plants. If I take about 10% of what I spend annually on protection from deer damage and multiply by about 25% of the households in CH the total costs exceeds what the pamphlet claims the cost of reduction will be. I have noticed on walks around the village, more and more people are putting up cages and many fences. Thus my assessment, if anything, severely understates the costs of deer damage for local property owners. The latter has given rise to further controversy. Add to this the deterioration of quality of life in CH as more and more people are forced to give up gardening or end up in legal wars with CHV over fencing regulations. All together how do we measure the cost of a severely degraded ecology and loss of plant and animal populations that many residents appreciate? The costs incurred by citizens to protect their property are, in fact, a hidden tax. This tax is far higher than the paltry sum the deer reduction will cost. The rise in taxes would be cheaper!

The "Ithacans for Safe, Ethical and Rational Approaches" folks, unwittingly, are undermining their own goal of protecting deer. As the ecology degrades more and more deer will starve over the winter. If deer are going to die, then a quick method is far more humane than slow starvation.

Starvation leads to "desperation" or aggressive food seeking. There will be more deer – auto encounters. How long before there is a fatal – to human(s) -- accident? How humane is it to kill deer with an auto – not to mention the danger and costs of such encounters? How long before deer move from attacking dogs to attacking small children who are typically attracted to "cute" animals?

What about the degradation of the local ecology and loss of plants and animals. I, like many people in CH, have bird feeders. I do this both for personal satisfaction, but more because many bird populations are in severe decline. As Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (and many other scientific organizations) have documented, a major cause of bird population decline is loss of habitat. Deer are NOT an endangered species, they ARE and ENDANGERING species.

Given all the harm and anger, how long before some resident, out of frustration, takes matters into her or his own hands and starts killing deer with poison, traps, bow & arrow, or guns? All this is against the law, but if the CHV does not do something, someone will be pushed beyond endurance. Such action will have severe costs in danger, in lowered quality of life, and vast increases in costs to law enforcement.

To sum up: The issue is not whether to reduce the deer herd, but how to do so in the most humane way possible. I strongly prefer the "net & bolt" method, with a follow up to dress the meat and donate it to local food banks. I recognize that the food bank option faces some very complex legal and health issues. But if possible it would put the culled deer to good use.

Net & bolt is far more humane than starvation, death by auto, or murder by irate citizens. Also, and not trivially, the quality lives of the remaining deer would be vastly improved, and CH's biodiversity maintained.

Discussion has gone on long enough, over 10 years! The time for action is now! Please move forward on deer herd reduction with all due deliberate speed.

Sincerely
Thomas D. Hall

Thomas D. [tom] Hall Ithaca, NY Cayuga Heights resident & taxpayer

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