



**White Buffalo Inc.**  
Conserving Native Species and Ecosystems

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

**2015-16 Managed Archery Program**

Mt Lebanon, Pennsylvania

**Submitted by**

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## INTRODUCTION

Increasing deer-vehicle collisions and landowner complaints led the Mt. Lebanon Commissioners to pursue options that would reduce the overall deer density in the community. The Pennsylvania Game Commission requires that a hunting program is part of any deer management program. Therefore, the Commission voted to support an organized archery program in advance of professional management services.

The Mt. Lebanon archery program is a core part of an overall deer management strategy that will help the community reach their stated goal of a 50% reduction in deer-vehicle collisions over the next five years. Since this was the first year of the program, the overarching program goals were to build a foundation for future years and provide a meaningful deer reduction for Mt Lebanon Township residents. These program goals led to five core objectives that included:

- Quickly build and execute a program.
- Build a database of informed and cooperating landowners.
- Develop a skilled, dedicated local leadership team that will continue the program in upcoming years.
- Define a small nucleus of responsible, skilled and community-minded archers.
- Flawlessly carry out a humane, effective, and discrete program.

## METHODS

Prospective landowners and archers were directed to contact WBI by email or phone. We logged and screened nearly 200 private properties for suitability on Google Earth and in person. We carefully selected 12 private properties that were suitable for the program. We focused our work in four public properties: McNeilly Park, Robb Hollow, Public Works, and the Municipal Golf Course. We developed a list of alternate properties and a good understanding of where our work would be most effective.

We screened and selected a core leadership team and assessed 80 local archers through application, interview, and proficiency assessments. We selected nine archers who worked from 19 September – 28 November 2015, then again from 26 December – 23 January 2016.

***\*Note :Five public properties were utilized. The Conservation District was also used as part of the Managed Archery Program***



## RESULTS

White Buffalo archers and local cooperative participants harvested a total of 104 deer during the 2015-16 season. The harvest consisted of 86 females (83%) and 18 males (17%). The antlerless harvest was 96 deer (94%). Only eight antlered deer were harvested. On average shot deer traveled 35 yards. There were two unrecovered deer; resulting in a ~2% wounding rate.

Archers donated >1000 hours to the program. It required 6 hours of hunting/deer harvested, with an additional one hour/deer minimum to handle each carcass and take it to the deer processor. Additional time allocations were for communications with landowners and site set up.

WBI hunters donated 63 deer (75% of their harvest) to the “Hunters Sharing the Harvest,” or approximately 2,520 pounds. The following charities benefited from donations: Bethany Presbyterian Church, Jubilee Soup Kitchen, Greater Washington Food Bank, Link in the Chain Ministries, Monongahela Food Bank, and West Hills Food Pantry.

## DISCUSSION

In most cases, a management program requires a lead-time of 8-12 months. The development of the leadership team, acquisition and screening of participants, and acquisition, screening, and permissions of landowners required to build a program are all significant undertakings. We were able to ensure the building blocks were in place and executed this program over a 2-month time frame.

The success of the program was dependent on the participation of landowners and local volunteers. We were pleased with the level of interest from both groups and had nearly 200 inquiries from landowners and over 100 interested archers. From these inquiries, we found our leadership team, our team of nine archers, and the 12 private properties that would serve as project sites. The communication with property owners and archers established a foundation of both knowledge and contacts that we can leverage to build future programs. Finding 12 suitable private properties was a significant accomplishment considering the density of development in the municipality. Securing all of the permissions necessary to produce a successful suburban program included; direct hunting access authorization, safety zone sign-offs, and deer recovery support. These permissions were especially challenging to secure in a densely populated area like Mt Lebanon. This process was completed in two months and is a credit to both the volunteer



archers and the community residents. Many residents were very helpful speaking to neighbors and playing a key role in obtaining signed permissions. Although many properties were not used, the broad support helped create a strong foundation for the program.

The total harvest was encouraging given the densely developed nature of the community. This program exceeded our expectations and was a strong building block to achieving the long-term community's goals. This outcome is the result of a systematic management approach using screened and highly organized recreational hunters. Our management approach also resulted in negligible issues with injured deer or complaints from residents. The only incident worth mentioning was when a non-resident trespassed on a cooperators' property to engage one of our hunters.

The Hunter Cooperative, as we have termed it, is made up of independent archers with permission to hunt private properties in Mt Lebanon. They were not a direct part of the White Buffalo program. We contacted and encouraged these hunters to support our efforts by increasing their average yearly harvest and reporting those harvest data to us for a more complete picture of deer removal by hunters in the Township. It is very likely that cooperative hunters removed more deer than reported to WBI. However, we can only report the data that was collected (see Appendix A). We value the cooperation of these hunters, but have no control over their harvest efforts, or reporting.

Overall, private landowners were pleased with this phase of the deer management program and noted that they had seen a reduction in local deer numbers. This foundation of landowners enrolled in the program will continue to allow access for the foreseeable future and will help to ensure continued success. Results from this program make it clear that archers can operate close to suburban homes safely, effectively, and with little or no inconvenience to homeowners or other residents, making this program a useful tool in the deer management strategy of the community.

Given the hunter harvest this year, combined with the planned sharpshooting program, we anticipate a reduction in archery hunting harvest next year because of learned behavior by deer and a decrease in the deer population. The municipality should continue efforts to increase access, but ultimately, access will be the limiting factor for further deer reduction. Due to numerous constraints, hunting in densely developed communities like Mt Lebanon will need to be complemented with professional management methods to meet stated management goals.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Total Deer Harvest: 104**

Hunter Cooperative – 20

White Buffalo Hunters - 84

Antlered – 8

Antlerless – 96 (10 male fawns, 86 female)

Total Female Harvest – 86

Total Male Harvest – 18

% Female Harvest – 83%

### **White Buffalo Harvest Information**

Deer Harvested – 84

Male – 14

Female - 70

Antlered - 6

Antlerless – 78 (male fawn – 8, female – 70)

% Female Harvest – 83%

Public Property Harvest – 43

Private Property Harvest - 41

### **Archery Harvest Numbers by Park:**

Golf course - 15

Conservation District - 6

Rob Hollow - 15

McNeilly - 7

### **Hunter Cooperative Harvest Information\***

Deer Harvested – 20\*

Male – 4

Female - 16

Antlered - 2

Antlerless – 18 (male fawn – 2, female – 16) %

Female Harvest – 80%

\*Minimum harvest based only on deer reported