



City of Grand Haven

Deer Management Program Report

Date: March 31, 2026

Program Summary

The City has completed its annual deer management program, concluding in the early morning hours Sunday March 29th. The program was conducted over two evenings, during which a total of 50 deer were harvested in accordance with approved City guidelines and as permitted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The operation was carried out in coordination with the City's contractor and the Department of Public Safety, with no incidents, issues, or public complaints reported.

Background and Need

In the absence of natural predators and with no safe means of allowing hunting within City forested areas during the annual hunting season, the local deer population has experienced unchecked growth. Recent surveys have identified more than 112 deer within select City parks and adjacent neighborhoods.

This overpopulation has placed significant pressure on the forests' ability to regenerate. Without sufficient new growth establishing and maturing to withstand grazing, the long-term health of these ecosystems is at risk. These green spaces play a vital role in supporting wildlife habitat, stabilizing dune systems, and providing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The deer management program is intended to mitigate these impacts and support ecological balance.

Safety and Operations

Public safety was the primary consideration throughout planning and implementation. The program took place during overnight hours to minimize interaction with pedestrian and vehicular traffic. A controlled perimeter was established and continuously monitored by trained personnel to ensure that only authorized individuals were present within the operational area.

Nearby residents were directly notified in advance by the contractor to ensure awareness of activity. Specific dates and times were not broadly shared with the general public in order to preserve the integrity of the secured perimeter, minimize disruptions, and allow public safety personnel to manage operations effectively in real time.

Additional safety measures included coordination with the Department of Public Safety to verify proper equipment use and ensure full compliance with all applicable safety standards and regulations. These precautions contributed to a controlled and incident-free operation.

Program Outcomes

Of the 50 deer harvested, one was deemed unsuitable for human consumption due to illness. The remaining venison was provided to food pantry.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The deer management program was executed as planned and in alignment with the City's approved resolution. The effort represents an important step in managing the local deer population and protecting the long-term sustainability of the City's natural areas.