

Crystal Lake Park's Deer Dilemma



Crystal Lake Park is an 850-acre, multiple-use park in Suburbanville, USA. The park has several soccer fields, a baseball complex, and a 6-acre lake used for fishing and canoeing. There is a nice picnic area adjacent to the lake. Nature trails exist around the lake, and the upper end of the lake is composed of a small wetland renowned for its excellent birdwatching. Several nature trails exist in the forested portion of the park, but approximately 600 acres of the parkland is seldom, if ever, entered by park visitors. The park is bordered on the southern and eastern sides by subdivisions. To the west lies the last remaining farm in this portion of the county. The Wolfpack River borders the northern portion of the area.

Residents of the subdivisions, along with Charlie Fields, the neighboring farmer, have petitioned the local Board of Commissioners to do something about the ever-increasing deer population in the park. Mr. Fields currently allows hunting on his property but complains that the deer simply move to the park when the hunting starts and that very few are taken by the hunters on his property during the hunting season. Incidentally, he has resorted to using out-of-season nuisance animal permits to shoot the deer at night while they are eating his

crops. Mr. Fields does not like this option but feels he must shoot the deer in order to keep his farm profitable. The residents of the local communities have tried everything from fencing and repellants to feeding the deer in hopes of keeping the deer away from their flowers and out of the roads. Many residents are ready to use lethal control in this area. However, the issue has divided the community, and arguments about what to do with the deer are common. Some residents don't mind the deer and are willing to tolerate their presence. Many park visitors do not want the deer harmed in any way because they enjoy seeing the herds of deer grazing on the soccer fields in the evenings as they drive through the park.

The Board of Commissioners has called a public meeting to listen to the concerns of their constituents and ultimately to make a decision concerning this issue. State laws do not prohibit hunting in this park, so the decision will need to be made at the local level. The board has made no decision as to what option or options (more than one might be appropriate) to approve and has convened this meeting to hear ideas from constituents.

