

## Livingston Deer Management Program

(Livingston, NJ) – Deer management is an emotive issue, but it is a necessary program for protecting the environment and ensuring that other wildlife has an opportunity to thrive. Deer are majestic animals. But they are also prolific breeders, very destructive, and carry parasites such as ticks which can cause Lyme disease. Deer will eat anything and everything. From those expensive flowers, vegetables, and shrubs in the garden, to the undergrowth in wooded areas which are home to a myriad of song birds and insects.

Each deer eats between 10-20 pounds of vegetation a day. Stripping the garden and anything it can reach including the vegetation in wooded areas up to 6ft in height. The understory, which is the lower level vegetation in woods and forests, consists of small trees, flowers, shrubs and grasses which is the habitat of numerous birds, small animals, and insects. Flowers in particular are essential to the survival of many creatures including hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. Flower pollen feeds moles and mice, which are the mainstay of foxes, hawks and owls. In a healthy wooded area or forest, there are no gaps between the trees, which are shrouded with vegetation. In woods over-burdened by deer there are large bare areas between the trees, and it is this destruction of vegetation and habitat that can severely affect the populations of other animals and birds.

The Livingston Deer Management program helps to strike the balance in keeping the numbers of deer under control. The program which is in its third year under the management of the Township is strictly regulated by the Police Department. Those participating in the program are licensed by the state and are experienced bow hunters who have submitted to a full background investigation by the Police Department, and who have successfully passed a proficiency assessment. Hunting permits are required and hunters are only allowed to shoot with bows from tree stands downward towards the ground. Individual hunters are assigned designated areas and crossbows are not permitted in the Township program. Hunters are required to login and logout with the Police Department and to comply with all state hunting season laws enforced by the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife.

The Deer Management program began on October 1, 2011 and will run through to February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, between a half hour before sunrise and a half hour after sunset. Designated areas include the East Orange Water Reserve, and Township properties at Laurel Hills Park, Northland Park and Pool, East Hills Park, Eisenhower Pkwy, and the parcel of Township land adjacent to St. Barnabas, 204 Hillside Ave, and Dougal Ave. Additional restrictions also apply to some of these areas regarding access and number of hunters allowed. No hunting is permitted on municipal land on Sundays.

It is important to note that the Deer Management program not only keeps their numbers in check, but also provide venison which is donated to The Food Bank of New Jersey in Hillside which supports various soup kitchens and shelters in the area. Last year's program netted 65 deer of which 27 were donated to the Food Bank resulting in 1200 lbs of venison (or 4800 meals) to the those in need. In addition, three hunters obtained permission to donate 16 deer to families who they knew were in need due to unexpected layoffs and job loss. This resulted in

an additional 711 lbs of venison donated, and the cost of processing the deer by the Township was generously absorbed by the individual hunter. Their contribution to the processing saved the Township \$1,280 at a cost of \$80 per deer.

For more information about the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife state hunting season laws visit [www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw). Information about the Township of Livingston's Deer Management Program may be reviewed on the Township's website at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org) or be obtained by contacting the Livingston Police Department at (973) 992-3000, ext. #3199.