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## Bulletin Sifton Bog Deer

### Summary: Protecting the bog through non-lethal deer management

#### No justification for the cull:

- **Other stressors, not deer, are a threat to the bog. Deer are part of the natural bog ecology:** The proponents of the cull continue to argue that deer negatively impact the Bog. Yet, in comparison to all the serious threats to the Sifton Bog, the impacts of deer are relatively insignificant and more importantly are entirely natural to the evolving bog environment. Impacts of global warming, pollution, containment runoff, human disturbance of vegetation and wildlife and the invasive alien plants such as buckthorn are the real threats to the bog.

If the deer disappeared tomorrow, the bog would remain "in crisis" because of all the "man-made threats" that require immediate management actions. Buckthorn, for example, impacts a significant portion of the bog as described in the Master Plan. The Plan states that "If buckthorn control is not started immediately, the entire swamp could be classified as a buckthorn thicket and the invasion of buckthorn on the open bog mat advanced." From the map provided on page 70 of the Master Plan, it appears that close to half of the Sifton Bog ESA has Buckthorn involvement. Deer, not buckthorn are a natural part of the bog ecology.

- **Deer not overabundant by Conservation Authority's own definition:** The Conservation Authority argue that the deer need to be culled because they are "overabundant". The Authority's web site suggests that "Overpopulation leads to poor overall health of the herd and increases the likelihood of disease. This can lead to a decrease in body weight (starvation) and death. Reductions in the size of the deer herd will improve the health of individual deer."

In fact, the herd is healthy, as confirmed by members of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and other observers. This can only mean that by the Conservation Authority's own measure there is no overpopulation issue. In fact, based on herd health the Conservation Authority has no justification to classify the herd as overabundant or to recommend a cull of these animals.

- **Sifton Bog deer do not have Lyme Disease:** A representative from the Middlesex-London Health Unit answered the following question: "Is Lyme disease a concern in Sifton Bog?" as follows, "Ticks

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221 Broadview Ave.  
Suite 101, Toronto  
Ontario, Canada  
M4M 2G3

Phone  
416.462.9541

Fax  
416.462.9647

E-mail  
Contact@AnimalAlliance.ca  
Website  
www.AnimalAlliance.ca



carrying Lyme disease are rare in Ontario except in Long Point, Point Pelee and Rondeau Parks. There have been only 12 people with Lyme disease reported in Middlesex-London area since 1988 and all but one were demonstrated to have been infected outside this area...In Middlesex-London, Lyme disease is not currently a concern."

### **Killing is cruel, inhumane and not justified:**

- **Bow hunting is cruel, results in 50% wounding rate and will need to be ongoing:** The Conservation Authority raises the following concerns with bow hunting: bow hunting is not as effective as sharpshooting; there are problems with acquiring cost-effective liability insurance for bow hunting activities; mortally wounded deer can travel 100 yards or more before collapsing in public view; other wounded deer may die over a longer period of time, may be permanently disabled or may recover; and there is strong opposition from animal welfare advocates.

According to a study presented at the Annual Conference of Southeast Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, of the twenty-two deer who were shot in this study, 11, or 50%, were wounded and not recovered. As the study indicates "The 50% wounding rate from our data is similar to data reported from other studies. Downing (1971) and Boydston and Gore (1987) reported wounding rates of 50% with archery equipment for white-tailed deer in Georgia and Texas. Similar wounding rates have been reported in Georgia (44%; Croft 1963), Indiana (58%; Stormer et al. 1979), New Jersey (55%; Lohfield 1980), Wisconsin (31-37%; Herron 1984), South Dakota (48% McPhillips et al. 1985), and Michigan (43%; Langenau 1986)."

Deer move in and out of the bog area as evidenced by their changing numbers with the count as high as 52, as low as 26, and with the current count at 35. If Council decides to control the deer by lethal means, the City of London will be required to cull repeatedly as has been demonstrated in places like the Pinery and Presqu'ile Provincial Parks.

### **Non-lethal intervention and prevention are what is required:**

- **Prevention - Enclosures – excluding deer from rehabilitated areas and unusual plants:** Just as enclosures are used to study the absence of deer from a given area, so to can they be used to protect unusual plants from deer and human disturbance such as plant collection. In addition, enclosures should be used to protect the new plants in the rehabilitated areas. Deer Fence Canada provides an inexpensive, mobile fencing solution.
- **Prevention not culling reduces deer/car collisions:** Prevention is the key to reducing conflict between vehicles and deer. The Canada Safety Council pitches prevention on its web site and the City of Ottawa found that its "Speeding costs you dearly" campaign, resulted in a 13% reduction in deer-vehicle collisions and a cost savings of approximately \$420,000.