



November 19, 2021

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Arlington County Board
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Deer Management

Dear Chair de Ferranti:

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission and many Arlington citizens have been concerned for years about the problem of deer overpopulation in the County. Many forested areas in Arlington are unhealthy and impoverished, because deer are killing both the new saplings needed to regenerate the forest and the lush understory of bushes that provides crucial habitat for a wide range of insects, birds, and other creatures. The deer are literally eating up Arlington's future natural environment.

That's why the FNRC was so appreciative that the County began to address this problem earlier this year by moving forward with an innovative drone survey of the deer population by contractor Stewart Green. That survey showed, as expected, that the numbers of deer are excessively and unacceptably high in at least 40% of the County's total area. These areas include all seven of our Natural Resource Conservation Areas and virtually all our significant natural areas—including the forests that are now being seriously harmed by browsing deer. As the Stewart Green report says: "Moving forward, we recommend more aggressive deer management."

The FNRC therefore also applauds the County's plan to quickly take the next step, hiring another contractor to conduct an independent assessment of deer management options available for the County by next summer.

The Commission does urge, however, that this study be done as expeditiously as possible, drawing on both well-established deer management science and the considerable expertise in neighboring jurisdictions, such as Fairfax and Montgomery Counties, where officials have been successfully conducting deer management programs for more than 20 years.

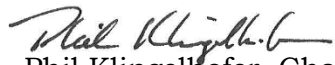
After the study is done, the Commission urges the County to move as rapidly as possible to implement the best management option. There is no time to waste, given the current size of the deer problem.

The FNRC fully understands that reducing the deer population can be a sensitive issue, and that there may be opposition in the County. But many other jurisdictions, both in the larger Washington DC area and across the entire country, have successfully won widespread public acceptance and support for their deer management programs, and the FNRC hopes that Arlington can take advantage of the lessons they have learned.

Finally, the FNRC would like to remind the County that successful deer management requires constant monitoring and regular intervention. One-time interventions will fail to keep the deer herd in check or provide any durable improvements in our valuable County forests and the ecosystem services that those forests provide. We recommend therefore that Arlington ensures that one County department will be permanently given primary authority and sufficient staffing and financial resources for deer management. The County can look to Fairfax County or Montgomery County for examples of such positions.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.

Sincerely,



Phil Klingelhofer, Chair
Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

Cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation