

Natural Resources

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Procedure Name: Controlled Bowhunting

Procedure Number: {200-24-033}

Summary

MetroParks recognizes that the population of white-tailed deer must be controlled to ensure the maintenance of a healthy ecological system throughout the various lands owned by or under the management of MetroParks of Butler County. A humane and effective method for controlling white-tailed deer populations is through the implementation of a controlled bowhunting program.

The program is used to manage deer populations in identified areas of selected MetroParks. The use of this program is based upon reported or observed damage to the ecology of MetroParks property or tenant farmers crops due to an overpopulation of white-tailed deer. The program may also be used to protect human health where evidence exists that an overly dense population of white-tailed deer has been demonstrated to play a role in the spread of infectious disease or serious risk of accident or injury to park visitors and surrounding community. Bowhunting is an effective wildlife management tool used to promote the growth of healthy animal populations and improve habitats, especially in areas overpopulated with deer and in places where modern firearms are restricted.

Effective Date

7/29/2024

Scope

This standard operating procedure applies to the management of white-tailed deer and the controlled bowhunting program.

Guidelines/Authority/Governing Agency

Federal, State, and Local laws, and MetroParks Rules and Regulations apply to all hunting activities within and upon lands owned or controlled by MetroParks of Butler County. This SOP establishes the program by which the Board authorizes individuals to hunt on MetroParks property and does not nullify, modify, or otherwise change established laws, rules, and regulations. This policy does not modify or supersede Ohio hunting laws and regulations. All program participants must comply with this policy and all applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Ohio Rev. 1531.02 State ownership of and title to wild animals – prohibited activities

Ohio Rev. 1531.04 Division of wildlife – powers and duties

To Be Used By/Responsibility by Role

- Manager of Natural Resources will oversee the controlled bow hunting program.
- Natural Resources Department staff will assist with the implementation of the program.
- MetroPark Police will investigate violations of MetroPark Rules and Regulations and state Law.

Checklist/Procedures

General: The Natural Resources Department, under the direction of the Manager of Natural Resources, may establish separate hunting zones within the MetroParks identified for inclusion in the program for that year. Determination of hunting zones will be based upon the size and location of the identified MetroPark and consider the deer population in that area.

Requirements for Participation:

- All participants must be at least 18 years of age and submit a complete application.
- Participants may be under the age of 18 if participating in the MetroPark Youth Hunt. See Youth Hunt section for details.
- All participants must submit proof of a hunter education course at qualifications.
- All participants must complete a proficiency test (qualifications) administered by MetroParks or designated party.
- All participants must possess a current hunting license at time of qualifications.
- All participants must possess a current either-sex deer permit before their hunting period begins.
- All participants must agree to abide by applicable federal, state, and local laws as well as all MetroParks program policies and Rules and Regulations while participating in the controlled bowhunt program.

Application Required:

- To participate in the program an application must be completed online via MetroParks' website before the deadline listed on the website.
- Incomplete applications will be rejected.
- An application fee will be required to offset the cost to administer the program and is non-refundable regardless of whether the applicant is selected for participation in the program.
- Any applicant who falsifies their application or provides false or misleading information on his/her application will be disqualified from participating in any MetroParks controlled hunt for a period of 5 years. Applicants may also be subject to investigation and criminal prosecution as determined by MetroParks or Butler County Police.

Marksmanship Qualification:

- Applicants are required to complete a qualification test to ensure safety and accuracy while hunting within the MetroParks. Applicants who submit an accepted application and the associated application fee will be notified of the date, time, and location of the qualification. Any applicant who fails to arrive at the qualification at the specified time, or fails to satisfactorily complete the qualification course, will be disqualified from the program, and will be denied participation in the program for that year. Applicants must qualify each year regardless of whether they qualified during prior years.
- Upon arrival to the marksmanship qualification, each applicant will be required to present valid Ohio Hunting license and evidence of completion of a hunter education course. Those who do not present proof of hunting license and hunter education course will not be allowed to participate in qualifications, lottery, and controlled bowhunt.
- An applicant may qualify with up to three types of weapons (compound bow, crossbow, long/recurve bow) but may only hunt with weapons with which he/she has passed qualification. For example, if a hunter fails with a compound bow, but passes with a crossbow, he/she may only hunt with a crossbow.
- The marksmanship live fire qualification will be administered by MetroParks or designated party and all safety rules set by qualifier must be followed. An applicant will be afforded one opportunity to qualify. An attempt to qualify shall consist of the release of five arrows/bolts. The applicant must place four out of five arrows into an 8½ inch x

11 inch target from a distance of 20 yards to qualify. All participants must use Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife approved bow and arrows to qualify. Those who fail to qualify on the first round will be disqualified for participation in that year's-controlled hunt.

Participant Selection:

- A lottery will be held to select those individuals who will participate in the controlled bowhunting program. The lottery will occur at the completion of the qualifications and applicants are encouraged to stay but attendance is not required.
- Applicants who qualified will select the park area they would prefer to hunt at and be entered into that park's lottery. The number of available hunting locations will be established by multiplying the number of hunting periods (4) by the number of hunting zones in that park. One entry will be drawn at a time until the number of entries drawn equals the established number of hunting opportunities. This process will be completed for each MetroPark included in that year's controlled hunt.
- Those applicants who qualified but are not selected in the location lottery will be entered into the lottery for alternates. The alternate list will be used when a participant reaches their bag limit or is unable to hunt for more than 6 days.
- Those selected by lottery to hunt will be notified by email of the date and location of their hunting opportunity.

Participation in the Controlled Hunt:

- Bowhunters are expected to participate in the controlled hunt during their assigned hunting period in their assigned hunting zone. Bowhunters who are unable to do so are required to contact the Manager of Natural Resources in advance of their intended absence if they will not be able to participate for a period of 6 days or more. Participants may contact the manager via phone or email and provide the exact dates that they are unable to participate. Bowhunters who do not contact the Manager of Natural Resources of their absence or who fail to hunt for greater than 6 days will be disqualified from the program for the remainder of the year and will be prohibited from participation in the program during the next archery season.
- MetroParks Natural Resources and Conservation Department will then contact an alternate bowhunter from the alternate lottery list in order of lottery selection to inform the alternate of the vacated time and offer them an opportunity to participate in the controlled hunt. Should an alternate bowhunter accept, they will only be permitted to hunt during the vacated time as specified by the Natural Resources Manager and they must cease all activities and remove all equipment upon the conclusion of their authorized time period. Alternate hunters may not disturb any equipment, stands, or other property placed by the primary hunter. The Natural Resources Department will contact alternate hunters in order of lottery selection until an alternate agrees to participate. Alternate hunters will have 24 hours from the initial attempt by the Natural Resources Department to contact them to accept the offer to participate.
- Bowhunters are permitted to hunt their assigned zone during their assigned hunting period until they reach their bag limit as established by the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Once a bowhunter reaches their bag limit, they must vacate their zone and remove all stands, equipment, and property. No stand, property, or equipment may be left in place from one hunting period to the next. Failure to remove all stands, equipment, and property will result in loss of equipment. The Natural Resources Department will remove and any stand, equipment, or property left behind by a hunter after they vacate their zone and turn equipment in to the MetroPark Police for proper disposal.
- Bowhunters will notify the Manager of Natural Resources each time a deer is taken. The bowhunter will provide the Manager with the deer's gender and the location taken within 24 hours and a white-tailed deer harvest report within 3 days. A white-tailed deer harvest report form will

be provided to the hunter at the conclusion of the lottery and a completed form may be emailed to the manager of Natural Resources or delivered to the administration office at 2051 Timberman Rd. Hamilton, OH 45013. MetroParks' Visitor Services will forward delivered harvest reports to the manager of Natural Resources.

- The only person permitted to hunt in the controlled hunt is the bowhunter selected in the lottery. Others may accompany the hunter as guests; however, only the hunter selected for the program and authorized to participate by MetroParks may handle any weapons or engage in any hunting. A bowhunter may not allow any other person to participate or hunt on his/her behalf. All guests must remain with the selected hunter at all times while in the MetroPark. A hunter who allows another person to participate in his/her place, or to participate along with him/her, will be disqualified from the program for the remainder of the year and will be prohibited from participation in the program for the following five years.
- Tree stands are authorized, but all persons in the stand must use a safety harnesses and other safety equipment. Under no circumstances are bowhunters permitted to damage or destroy any tree, plant, vegetation, or other natural resource while in the MetroPark. All other equipment, devices, and weapons must comply with Ohio Division of Wildlife regulations. Use of a firearm of any type in any MetroPark is prohibited. All hunters are required to utilize bows while participating in the program.
- Any deer stand or hunter placed on edge of hunting zone must face inward toward the interior of zone, never toward a structure, parking area, or trail.
- Vehicles of any type are not permitted in the MetroPark for use during the controlled hunt. All vehicles must conform to park rules and regulations and may not be operated off any paved roadway.
- Baiting IS NOT allowed in this program. Hunters may NOT place bait in any form in any MetroPark.
- Participants may hunt white-tailed deer ONLY. Hunting of any other wildlife or species is prohibited and violations will result in criminal prosecution.
- A hunter must exercise care in dressing the deer so as not to disturb park guests. Under no circumstances will participants dress a deer in the view of any non-program participant. Hunters are responsible for removal of deer entrails and/or carcasses recovered which have spoiled. Entrails are not to be placed near trails, parking areas, or in any other place easily visible by other park users. The MetroParks rule prohibiting hunting knives is waived for participants who are hunting pursuant to the program.
- A participant must maintain awareness of his/her location and under no circumstances is he/she authorized to enter onto any private property adjoining or adjacent to MetroPark property unless WRITTEN permission is obtained from the property owner.
- All deer harvested in the program must be taken and claimed by the hunter. Hunters shall not leave any deer behind and shall not fail to claim any deer. A hunter will make every reasonable effort to follow-up and locate deer for which he/she is responsible.
- All Ohio Division of Wildlife tagging procedures must be followed. Once a deer is harvested, the deer must be checked through the proper check-in procedure. The deer is the property of the participant.
- If a participant determines a deer was hit (blood or missing arrow) and does not locate the deer within 2 hours of searching, then the participant should notify the Manager of Natural Resources. Participants will not incur any penalties for reporting a wounded deer; however, failure to report a wounded deer will result in disqualification for the remainder of the season for the first offense. A second offense will result in permanent disqualification the controlled bowhunting program.
- All bowhunters shall abide by all federal, state, and local laws as well as MetroParks Rules and Regulations and program requirements while participating in the controlled hunt. Failure to do so will result in immediate disqualification for the remainder of the season and for the following five years. Hunters who violate this section may be subject to criminal prosecution.

Rules and Provisions:

- All rules and provisions of the program shall be followed by all controlled bowhunting participants. Failure to adhere to the participation requirements will result in disqualification for remaining season and 1 additional year.
- Videotaping or photographing a deer harvest is prohibited. Participants may video tape live deer and may take still photos after the hunt, but video or photographs of the harvest are prohibited. Anyone who videotapes or photographs a harvest will receive a lifetime permanent disqualification from the program.
- Non-hunting minors may accompany a permitted hunter, but the minor(s) may not carry a weapon or participate in the hunt. Minors must remain with the permitted hunter at all times.
- All equipment must conform to the State of Ohio requirements. Compound, long, recurve, and crossbows are allowed. Longbows must have a minimum draw weight of 40 pounds and crossbows must have a draw weight of not less than 75 pounds or more than 200 pounds.
- A tree stand and safety harness are required. Participants are limited to two stands (or combination of stands and blinds if permitted) per participant in each area. All shots must be downward into an earth backstop. A harness must be worn while hunting. Failure to comply will result in disqualification from the program for a period of five years. All stands must be at least 60 yards from other stands unless an agreement is reached between the respective hunters. All stands (or blinds if permitted) must be at least 60 yards away from any MetroPark boundary. Climbing, ladder, and tripod stands are authorized. Hunters should lock stands or remove them at the end of each day.
- No person may place a permanent stand, or place spikes, nails, wires, or other metal or non-metal objects into a tree for uses as steps, to secure a stand, or for any other reason or purpose while on MetroParks property.
- Participants are required to place a durable name tag with contact information on stands or blinds left in the field and shall lock or remove the equipment daily after departure from the designated area. Stands or blinds left behind without name tags will be confiscated.
- Hunting from the ground is specifically prohibited unless medical exemption is provided to the Manager of Natural Resources prior to hunting.
- Limited clearing of shooting lanes is permitted as long as the sticks, branches, or bushes are smaller than ½ inch in diameter. Cutting of any foliage larger than ½ inch is prohibited and is a violation of MetroParks Rules and Regulations. Removal of Amur Honeysuckle, Callery Pear, and Autumn Olive is authorized and encouraged regardless of the size.
- Archery season hours are from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset as set by the Ohio Division of Wildlife regulations. Bowhunters should use the times for Western Ohio.

Harvest Procedure:

- The goal of the program is to humanely reduce the population of white-tailed deer and only white-tailed deer may be taken under the program.
- Participants must harvest an **antlerless deer first** and send a MetroPark harvest report to the Manager of Natural Resources. After the Manager of Natural Resources confirms the receipt of the harvest report then hunters may harvest an antlered deer provided harvest does not exceed Ohio Division of Wildlife bag limits for Butler County.
- At the discretion of the Manager of Natural Resources certain hunting areas and periods may be deemed as antlerless harvest only.
- Bowhunters must complete Ohio Division of Wildlife check-in procedures for all deer harvested.

Other Conditions:

- All participants shall comply with all applicable federal, state, local, and MetroPark laws, rules, and regulations. Participants may be checked periodically by Ohio Division of Wildlife Officers or MetroParks Police to ensure compliance. Participants must have a copy of the MetroParks issued permit on their person while hunting.
- All applicable Ohio Division of Wildlife rules and regulations apply to the program. MetroParks controlled bowhunting program is not an Ohio Division of Wildlife controlled hunt.

- All participants are required to report violations of law or the program immediately to the Manager of Natural Resources when they are observed or discovered.
- Participants must complete sign-in sheet located at the parking areas of controlled bowhunting sites.
- Scouting or visiting the assigned location while not hunting, for the purpose of determining the location of deer or the likely future location of deer is permitted, but only during the hunting period and in the zone for which the hunter was selected. Scouting outside of the assigned hunting period, or outside of the designated zone, is prohibited and will result in disqualification for the remainder of the season. Only the selected hunter may participate in scouting. Any other person who engages in scouting within a MetroPark is in violation of the program and MetroParks Rules and Regulations. Unauthorized scouting may result in prosecution.
- The use of trail cameras is prohibited. A hunter who places a trail camera will have his/her camera confiscated and will be disqualified for the remainder of the year in which he/she was selected to participate.
- Participants are required to report feral pig sightings immediately to the Manager of Natural Resources.
- Salt blocks, scattered bait and automatic feeders are prohibited. Stands must be at least 60 yards from any MetroPark boundary or any other participant's stands. All stands and blinds must be marked with name and contact information of the participant. Any unmarked stand or blind will be removed and confiscated.

Youth Bowhunt:

- The Natural Resources Manager may designate youth hunting locations prior to the controlled bowhunt.
- Youth bowhunting is open only to persons that are 10- 17 years of age on the date of participation.
- Youth must complete the same qualification test as adult bowhunters to ensure safety and accuracy while hunting within the MetroParks.
- Youth must also provide proof of youth hunting license and hunter education course or apprenticeship license at time of qualification. Youth bowhunter must have youth either sex deer tag at time of hunt.
- A separate youth hunting lottery will be held for youth applicants. Lottery will determine location and month of hunting opportunity. Any remaining hunting opportunities from youth hunting area will be filled from the adult alternate list in order of lottery selection.
- The youth hunting location will be exempt from tree stand requirement. Youth hunters may use ground blind or tripod.
- A youth hunter must be accompanied by one non-hunting adult that is at least 21 years of age.
- Adult accompanying youth must have at least 3 years of experience hunting deer with a bow and have proof of hunter education course. The accompanying adult hunter is responsible for the safety of the youth hunter and their actions in the field. The youth hunter must be within 4 feet of accompanying adult when handling a hunting device and when in the act of hunting. Adult accompanying youth during bowhunt may not possess a hunting weapon.
- All other rules of adult controlled bowhunt apply to youth bowhunt with the exception of exemptions listed in the Youth Bowhunt section.

Tools/Equipment/Supplies Needed

Attachments

Approving Authority/Revision Information

SOP Sponsor Name/Position: Tony Carpenter/Director of Operations

SOP Owner Name/Position: Joe Dumyahn/Senior Natural Resources Manager

Creation Date: 2013

Revision Date: 7/22/2025

Next Review Date: 4/01/2026