

Submitted Editorial

If you haven't heard, there has been a lot of discussion over the past 12 months about deer management in the Dorsey's Search community. A lot of information has been shared through meetings, social media posts, petitions, and websites. While there are a lot of different opinions, as with much of our world views these days, it is clear that people in Dorsey's Search care about our community. I continue to be thankful that I live in an area where people are passionate about what is happening in our neighborhoods and are generally able to share their thoughts in a respectful and professional manner.

Within this month's scroll you will find a survey asking our residents to provide feedback on potential options for deer management. The main topic which has been the focus of concern is that of archery hunting within the open space adjacent to Dorsey Hall. This is the area between homes in Grey Rock and Dorsey Hall, where we have beautiful paths to enjoy the natural environment.

I'm not going to try and convince you to lean one direction or the other. I am keeping an open mind and think it is extremely important that each person complete the survey and share their opinion based on what they feel should be executed. I would however strongly urge you to share your opinion! This decision should be based on how the majority of our residents feel we should proceed. Given there has been a lot of discussion and confusion around this topic, it's important that our voice as a community is heard in terms of providing clear direction for Howard County Rec & Parks as they determine actions for 2025 and moving forward.

While I greatly appreciate the efforts from the deer management taskforce and the survey provides a lot of information, I personally still have some questions. A few that I would love to have answered include:

With past sharp shooting events the park was cleared with signage posted and county representatives both conducting and monitoring the hunts. In this case, while hunters would be permitted and screened, would a county representative be on site when hunting is occurring? If no county representatives will be at site when hunting is occurring in our community, how would the open archery hunting be managed? Would hunters be on the honor code method to sign in/sign out on paper or digital forms?

Has the county executed other similar archery programs? If so, how has this gone and was it effective in curbing the deer population while still providing the community with access? I think this is really important to understand given the area will be open to both hunters and community members while hunting is taking place.

Where will the hunters be positioned within the open space? How close to the paths will they be? Will community members walking the paths be able to see the hunters? How will the hunters know which directions they can or can't shoot?

I would encourage you to use the comments/recommendations section of the survey to ask your questions as well. The more information we provide as a community, the better chance we have of finding a solution. Please participate in the survey and have your voice heard to help support our community and the topic of deer management for 2025 and beyond.

- Jason Budden
resident of Dorsey's Search

This editorial is not representative of the Dorsey's Search Board of Directors stance on archery hunting. We need to hear from all of the residents. Whether it is for or against archery hunting, please complete the survey.

Deer Management Information & Resident Survey

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Howard County Recreation & Parks (HCRP), and the Columbia Association recognize that the growing number of deer is a serious problem. As a community, Dorsey's Search must address this issue logically and legally. HCRP provided the Dorsey Hall Deer Management Task Force with data and recommendations to manage the deer population safely and effectively. The decision on whether or not to conduct managed archery hunting as a control measure in the County's open space adjacent to Dorsey Hall in 2025 depends on us.

Dorsey's Search residents must demonstrate sufficient support for the managed archery hunting program to proceed in 2025. HCRP must then apply to DNR for approval. The archery program must be widespread, prolonged, and continued every year to be effective.

The Problem

- Over the last 3 years, surveys show the deer population on County land along the Little Patuxent stream adjacent to the Dorsey Hall neighborhood ranges from 62-109 deer/square mile. This is 3-5 times the number of deer the natural environment can support. This number does not include the deer in the neighborhood's residential area.
- Healthy forests can support, at most, 15-20 deer/square mile.
- Uncounted numbers of deer freely roam the Dorsey Hall neighborhood. Only deer on County property along the Gwynn Acres stream can be managed by HCRP programs.
- Each female deer typically produces 1-3 fawns annually, dramatically increasing the population.
- The Sharpshooting Program alone has had virtually no impact on the deer population.

Since the late 1990s, the population of white-tailed deer has exploded in Howard County resulting in catastrophic environmental damage to our forests with a parallel explosion in the incidence of Lyme Disease and automobile-deer collisions. Our woods which once supported a healthy understory of shrubs, young trees, and wildflowers have been decimated and replaced with foreign invasive weeds. Loss of the understory has resulted in serious soil erosion, habitat loss for countless birds and animals, and an absence of young trees to replace those that decline or die. The risk of Lyme Disease which had been relatively unknown 50 years ago is now rampant in Howard County and throughout Maryland. Annual collisions of deer with vehicles are now in the thousands. Left unchecked the deer population will continue to increase making them more susceptible to starvation and disease. Managed bow hunting is one tool that can reduce the deer population and the associated risks to health and the environment.

Deer Control

According to HCRP, lethal removal is the only feasible and legally permissible means of reducing the deer population on Howard County property and the only method approved by DNR.

Sharpshooting Program	Managed Hunt Program
Conducted by Howard County staff	Conducted by DNR-licensed archers and overseen by HCRP staff
January 15 through the end of March	On select days from October through December
Only 9 deer harvested in 2024	No Managed Hunt Program in the Dorsey Hall area in 2023 or 2024

Safety Measures for Managed Archery Hunting

The safety of residents and program participants is a priority.

- Hunters are screened and selected by DNR and Howard County staff for participation.
- Participants undergo extensive training, including safety courses, shooter proficiency qualifications, and yearly background checks.
- Archers are stationed in dedicated zones and do not roam beyond the approved managed hunt areas.
- Archers can be in the assigned area of the County's open space adjacent to Dorsey Hall from 5 am to 11 am.
- No hunting will take place on weekends or days when the schools are closed.
- Hunters are required to discreetly remove the killed deer.
- No safety incidents have occurred in Howard County since this program began early 2000s.

Notifications

- Notices would be placed by County staff at all entrances to open space at least 2 weeks before the scheduled hunts. Notification would also be published in The Scroll.
- With ample notification by the County and the Village, residents should be able to exercise restraint from accessing open space from 5 am to 11 am on the days of the posted hunts.

- Upon the community's request, Howard County can restrict the number of days archers are allowed to hunt. However, the fewer days they hunt, the fewer deer are harvested. If the number of days offered for archery is severely restricted, archers may choose to hunt elsewhere.

Summary

- The growing deer population is unhealthy for people, property, and the environment.
- The Sharpshooting Program alone is not sufficient to reduce the deer population.
- The proposed Managed Hunting Program with certified archers is safe, more effective, and less expensive than the Sharpshooting Program.
- Since 1998, Howard County has utilized these programs effectively and safely.
- Notices would be placed at all entrances to open space at least 2 weeks in advance.
- This pilot program would be evaluated and adjusted after the first year.

Resources

Maryland DNR

Howard County

Hunting in Maryland https://tinyurl.com/huntingMD	Natural Resources https://tinyurl.com/hocoresources
eHunting Regulations PDF https://tinyurl.com/ehuntingregs	NRC Deer Management https://tinyurl.com/nrcdeer
Safety Zones https://tinyurl.com/safTzones	2022-2023- White-tailed deer population density survey https://tinyurl.com/2023deer
MD Hunting resources https://tinyurl.com/huntresources	The Importance of Deer Management https://tinyurl.com/impctrl

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BELOW
ONE PER HOUSEHOLD
RETURN TO LINDEN HALL BY NOVEMBER 22, 2024

Hunting will only occur on County property, not near Columbia Association Open Space & pathways, and not within Dorsey Hall's residential area.

1. Given the previous information, emphasizing the safety built into this program, are you in favor of archery through the Managed Hunt Program?
 - o Yes
 - o No
2. If you answered yes to Question 1, are you in favor of daily archery hunting for the first three weeks of November, Monday - Friday excluding the days schools are closed? The County property would remain open for public use.
 - o Yes
 - o No
3. If you answered yes to Question 1, are you in favor of daily archery hunting for the first two weeks of October, November, and December excluding the days schools are closed? The County property would remain open for public use.
 - o Yes
 - o No

Please share your ideas, recommendations, or concerns. They will be shared with the HCRP staff. If you need more space, you may submit additional comments on a separate piece of paper.

Return only one survey per household.

Please provide your street address: _____

You may scan this survey and email it to the Village Association at nmeredith@dorseyssearch.org, or mail it to:
 DSCA

Attn: Deer Task Force
 4765 Dorsey Hall Dr
 Ellicott City, MD 21042,
 or hand deliver it to the Village office located at Linden Hall by **November 22, 2024**.

An exterior mailbox is located at our parking lot entrance on the left hand side of the door on the brick wall. Surveys may be dropped off in the mailbox.