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comprehensive look at the issue. A portion of the report also recommends sustainable harvest for population control; however as noted in the report this method is the only apparent option given the requirement for permitting through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources."

Royal continued, "To be clear, the HP/C committee's action DOES NOT begin the implementation of this method. I am encouraging each of you to share your thoughts and concerns about deer population management with Jones (Jones Hooks, JIA executive director) and Ben Carswell (JIA Director of Conservation). Ben will continue to work with his colleagues and keep Bob (Krueger, chair of the HP/C) and the conservation committee apprised of new information coming to them from you, his colleagues and the general public."

Concluding the letter, Royal said, "Should sustainable harvest indeed be the ultimate and best solution, this will come back through the HP/C committee and before the full board for final approval at a public meeting. I want all board members to be prepared and comfortable with this issue prior to any possible future action."

The JIA Deer Management Committee members included Ben Carswell, JIA Director of Conservation; Terry Norton, DVM, JIA Director of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC); John Marr, Ph.D., JIA/GSTC General Manager; Kimberly Andrews, Ph.D., JIA/GSTC Research Coordinator; Cliff Gawron, JIA Director of Landscape and Planning; Jim Broadwell, JIA Projects Manager; Will Ricks, GADNR WRD, Game Management Section, Wildlife Biologist; Jacob Thompson, GADNR WRD, Nongame Conservation Section, Wildlife Biologist; Robert Warren, Ph.D., UGA, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Management; Judy Winieki, Retired, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Jekyll Island seasonal resident. The group met three times: December 2013, January 2014, and June 2014.

According to Carswell, based on the guidance from the Jekyll Island Conservation Plan, the JIA Conservation

staff have been working with partners since 2011 to evaluate the need for deer-population management and to identify feasible management techniques.

JIA staff, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture conducted four "spotlight surveys" from 2011 through 2014. The numbers of deer per square mile varied widely in each assessment: 80 (Fall 2011); 146 (Fall 2012); 123 (Fall 2013); and 76 (Spring 2014).

The Conservation Staff also did two motion sensor camera surveys: one in December 2012 and one in January 2013.

The report stated: "This survey was conducted because the scientific literature suggests that camera surveys can be more accurate than spotlight surveys for estimating deer population size, particularly in areas with thick vegetation."

"Mindful of public concern that had been expressed regarding the spotlight methodology, we decided to assess the camera methodology to see if it would prove accurate and feasible on Jekyll Island."

"Unfortunately the camera survey was unsuccessful. This methodology relies on the attraction of deer to bait stations stocked with corn."

Apparently a low percentage of deer visited the bait stations "resulting in an unrealistically low estimate of 160 deer on the island, a number below the lower bounds of the 95% confidence range from the spotlight survey for the Urban/Developed land-use areas alone and below the number of individual deer counted on 2 out of 3 nights during the spotlight survey."

A herd health assessment was conducted by the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Survey (SCWDS), College of Veterinary Medicine (UGA) in 2012.

John Fisher, Director SCWDS, said in his report that four of the six deer were in poor overall condition and that this is an indication of the overall health of the herd is declining. He recommended the herd density not be allowed to increase; that the current population be reduced; that regular population control is appropriate.

Vegetation has been monitored since 2013. The study found that deer browsed 72 percent of oak seedlings

and saplings in the live oak maritime forest and camphor tree seedlings were 13 percent browsed.

The conservation staff said they were concerned about the loss of locally rare plants.

Deer eat an average of 8-10 lbs of vegetation per day, the report said.

Population management methods considered by the committee included relocation; contraception and sterilization; reintroduction of native predators; controlled public hunting; professional sharpshooting.

The committee recommended professional sharpshooting by the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services program as the only method meeting all six criteria set by the committee, which include:

- Can be accomplished legally with all necessary permits;
- Measurably reduces the density of deer on Jekyll Island by an amount to be determined;
- Is safe for residents, guests, and staff of Jekyll Island;
- Is economically sustainable without compromising other conservation goals;
- Is adaptable to changing conditions and information;
- Maximizes the beneficial use of any animals to be sustainably harvested as part of a prospective program.

The committee recommended that 80 deer be "harvested" at a first year expense of \$10,000 to Wildlife Services.

The harvest would need to continue or the first year would be wasted, Carswell said. The cost for subsequent years would probably be lower.

No one from the public who spoke was in favor of the deer management program.

Lisa Norton, president of CHAT (Citizens for Humane Animal Treatment, a local group) and HSUS (Humane Society of the United States) district leader, urged caution before entering into a contract with the federal government.

"They are not required to comply with local and state laws," she said. "And this could possibly lead to recreational killing and pressure to maintain the same type of techniques to control species."

Norton asked the JIA to consider a deer education center concept much like the Sea Turtle Center.

Norton also suggested the JIA consider humane deer management or it could be a point of embarrassment for Gov. Nathan Deal. "This could be the deal breaker for Gov. Deal and affect his reelection chances if he doesn't stop the contract," Norton said.

Jekyll resident Marcia Newcomb said, "The USDA Wildlife Services has a terrible reputation. They are under investigation for animal cruelty including occasional accidental killings of pets and endangered species."

"They act as exterminators for golf clubs and resorts," she continued urging the JIA to consider a contraceptive method to manage the deer population.

Ji resident Mindy Egan told Authority members to use creativity to solve any deer population problem. "Jekyll Island is a protective habitat. Jekyll's image would benefit tremendously from deer contraception."

"Contraception techniques have improved," she said. "Long term resources are available to make this possible for Jekyll Island. Please do not go forward with this plan."

Trish Clements, one of the first trained turtle walk guides, said, "If an overabundance of fawns are born, then reproduction is curbed. Also I question the accuracy of the spot light survey. Hold your fire; do more homework; listen to more informative sources from both sides."

David Kyler, Executive Director Center for a Sustainable Coast, said, "There are no scientific facts that there are too many deer on Jekyll Island or a decrease in the native plants."

"Deer foraging keeps the forest floor clear and helps prevent fires," he said. "Plus planting ornamentals (shrubs) attract deer and there simply appear to be too many. You should be using native plant species that deer don't particularly like to eat."

Tony Cerrato, Jekyll resident, said, "The spotlight survey focused on road shoulders and the golf course where deer feed. There are 2,500 acres not surveyed. You have based the numbers on the whole island on this spotlight count."

Jekyll resident David Egan said, "The research is insufficient to justify the conclusions in the report. Do more

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