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## Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission

5045 Stanley Road  
Flint, MI 48506

May 14, 2009

RE: Proposed hunt of deer in For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum

Dear Members of the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission:

I am writing because of our concern about plans to allow a bow hunt to kill deer in Genesee County parks, including the For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest animal protection organization with over 10 million members and supporters nationwide, feels strongly that a bow hunt cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be considered an effective wildlife management tool.

Bow hunting is purely a recreational activity and will have little effect on the size of a deer herd because the deer numbers will bounce right back. Although killing some deer may appease a small number of individuals, the killing does not stop the surviving deer from eating the same plants and crossing the same roads. In fact, when killing is implemented in a new area, the likely result is a surge in the deer population because the surviving deer have more food per animal, which translates into more fawns born the next season.

Furthermore, bow hunts are too inefficient to significantly reduce large deer populations. In suburban bow hunts, the killing of a single deer typically requires 14-28 or more hunter-days in the field. Bow hunters spend thousands of hours in the field, kill only a handful of deer, and prevent the use of open spaces by the public for weeks at a time. To our knowledge, no community of any size has ever achieved its deer population reduction goals relying principally on bow hunting.

In our view, bow hunting is among the cruelest forms of hunting. Arrows rarely kill the animal outright, so a bow hunter (at least a diligent one) must routinely spend hours tracking the blood trail of a deer struck by his arrow before the animal finally bleeds to death. Moreover, three decades of research tell us that for every one or two deer struck and retrieved, another wounded deer is struck and unretrieved. This is an unacceptable level of animal cruelty.

Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty

In addition, the decision to conduct a hunt in the For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum flies in the face of the spirit of Martha Merkley's generous gift of farmland to the county. In her last will and testament, Mrs. Merkley stated that the land she granted shall be used "...in perpetuity for nature study, nature trails, arboretums, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation education for the youth and other interested persons in the community..." The compassion that Martha and her husband Forbes shared for animals was even highlighted in a *Flint Journal* article dated May 1, 1968, which pointed out, "Mr. and Mrs. Merkley always treated the farm as a wildlife preserve and did not allow hunting there." Sanctioning bow hunters to harass, maim, and kill wildlife within the nature preserve hardly fits within that idea of humane stewardship.

The HSUS advocates non-lethal means for resolving conflicts between people and wildlife and cultivates understanding and appreciation for wild animals commonly found in urban and suburban areas and parks. I am including materials on non-lethal deer management to assist you with developing an alternative strategy, and we are eager to answer any questions you might have about the process. For more information on humanely resolving conflicts with wildlife, please visit our website, [www.wildneighbors.org](http://www.wildneighbors.org).

I urge you, in the interests of animal welfare and in the spirit of the land gift by a kind citizen to Genesee County, to reconsider your plans to allow a bow hunt in county parks and the For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Jill Fritz  
Michigan State Director  
Phone: 651-271-4996  
[jfritz@humanesociety.org](mailto:jfritz@humanesociety.org)