



TO: Happy Haynes, Executive Director
FROM: Vicki Vargas-Madrid, Wildlife Program Administrator/Office of the City Naturalist
SUBJECT: Progress Report Summary and Proposed Goose Management Efforts for 2020 in Denver Parks
DATE: May 29, 2020

Canada Goose Management in Denver Parks

For over 15 years, Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) has managed geese in parks due to the increasing populations in Denver and the metro area. Analysis of historical data from DPR, state and federal wildlife agencies indicates that the overall population of resident Canada geese in the Denver Metropolitan area continues to increase approximately 41% each year. Damage to property and conflicts associated with Canada geese are common throughout numerous jurisdictions along the I-25 corridor of the Front Range and especially in the Denver Metropolitan area. With populations of nesting geese continuing to escalate in urban areas, research and data suggests that multiple management strategies be utilized to address the on-going issues in urban parks.

Since 2002, DPR's Canada Goose Management Program has consistently used a year-round, multi-faceted approach to manage resident Canada goose populations. DPR actively manages goose populations within 11 parks using the multi-strategy approach of egg oiling, harassment/hazing, landscape alterations, repellents, and scare tactics. After years of limited impact on the growing goose population from the use of these strategies, it was determined that culling, a more effective and longer lasting approach to managing resident goose populations, would need to be implemented in order to meet the goals and objectives of the program.

One goal of DPR's 2019 Goose Management Program was to reduce the resident Canada goose population by 40%, or 2000 geese within 5 years. To reach this goal, the effectiveness of goose management approaches (i.e., lethal control and non-lethal) are determined by quantifiable benefits to the Denver Park system and include:

- Reduction in number of complaints received from citizens
- Reduction in the amount of Canada goose fecal droppings in parks
- Reduction in park maintenance due to goose damage
- Increase in waterfowl species richness and diversity
- Increase in vegetative growth and recovery in park locations
- Reduction in the abundance of Canada geese harassed or removed from Denver parks
- Reduction in annual occurrences of wildlife diseases in water sources (botulism and fish diseases)

In June and July of 2019, USDA-Wildlife Services (WS) Colorado was contracted to cull resident Canada geese in Denver parks. A total of 1,662 resident geese were rounded up and euthanized in Washington Park, City Park, Sloan's Lake and Garfield Park. The 2019 goose management efforts did not meet the



objectives of the program as the plan was to cull in at least 9 parks, however culling only occurred in 4 parks citywide.

The Canada Goose Management Program is working towards maintaining healthy goose populations that park habitats can support. Analysis of 2019 and 2020 data indicates that culling should take place in at least 6 Denver Parks to reduce the populations to 40% of its current numbers. Approximately 325-400 geese will be culled in the following parks:

- Garfield Park – 50 geese
- Harvey Park - 50 geese
- Sloan’s Lake – 100 geese
- Barnum Park –30 geese
- Garland Park –25 geese
- City Park Golf Course – 100 geese

Four of the parks listed above are parks where culling was not performed in 2019 and unsustainable populations remain. DPR has again contracted with USDA-Wildlife Services to perform the work during the molting season which can occur anytime between mid-June and the end of July.

From both a scientific and biological perspective, there should not be a resident goose population of any size in the Flyway, as geese are migratory birds and are supposed to fly to their breeding grounds during the migration season. However, DPR understands the role that wildlife has in the overall ecosystem and how valuable and important wildlife is to the public. DPR remains committed to the idea that “total elimination of geese from any Denver park is not a goal of this program”, and we will continue to manage sustainable resident goose populations.

Cc:
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