



State of Delaware
Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
Division of Parks and Recreation
89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware 19901

Thursday, July 17, 2025

Ardentown Forest Committee,

I manage Delaware's Natural Areas Preservation Program, and I am writing to recommend implementation of a Whitetail Deer management program in the South Branch Naaman's Creek Nature Preserve. This management will include archery hunting.

The South Branch Naaman's Creek Nature Preserve, otherwise known as the Sunnyside Preserve, is one of 34 sites in Delaware that has been dedicated for permanent protection for its outstanding natural character. Ardentown citizens have been excellent stewards of the Preserve, especially in their efforts in removing invasive plants and restoring native species. The next step in enhancing habitat in the Preserve is to implement deer population management.

While native to Delaware, Whitetail Deer have unfortunately become an injurious species due to their inflated population. In the Wildlife Action Plan, the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife identified a target deer population density of 40 deer per square mile. However, survey data from nearby Bellevue State Park suggest that the deer population in Ardentown is well over 100 deer per square mile.

Whitetail Deer are voracious herbivores that aggressively feed on young growth of native plants. Because of the excessive deer pressure in the Sunnyside Preserve, Ardentown's forest volunteers are unable to make as much progress as they could with a smaller deer population. This problem can be mitigated by implementation of archery hunting of Whitetail Deer in the Preserve. Archery hunting was recommended in the 2008 management plan prepared for Ardentown by the Natural Areas Presentation Program.

I hope that you consider implementing archery hunting in the South Branch Naaman's Creek Nature Preserve, and I look forward to working Ardentown in the future on the management of the Preserve.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Schlusser

Benjamin Schlusser
Natural Areas Preservation Program Manager