



RIVER HERITAGE CONSERVANCY

2/23/2026 3PM

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA ABOUT DEER CULLING IN ORIGIN PARK.

River Heritage Conservancy (RHC), the organization responsible for managing Origin Park, is also tasked with monitoring and protecting the health and well-being of both park visitors and the wildlife that call the area home.

Following a site survey conducted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR), unusual grazing patterns among deer were observed. Subsequent assessments revealed a deer population exceeding recommended levels for the park's habitat capacity. As a result, a reduction in the number of deer was advised to restore ecological balance.

In response, River Heritage Conservancy entered into a partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) last fall to explore strategies for addressing deer overpopulation. This collaboration included detailed monitoring of deer movements throughout the park.

"The report found that a number of deer within the park were malnourished. While population reduction is never a popular decision, even within our own office, it is a necessary course of action to protect the long-term health of the park," said River Heritage Conservancy.

"This is not an eradication or hunting effort, but rather a rightsizing of the herd to ensure a healthy deer population and maintain the ecological balance for other native wildlife," added RHC.

Population management activities will be conducted in coordination with wildlife biologists and firearms experts from the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). For public and staff safety, all work on Origin Park grounds would happen after park hours when it's already closed to the public. All activities will follow strict safety protocols and nationally recognized best practices.

Any venison resulting from the population management effort will be processed on-site in accordance with all applicable health and safety regulations. The meat will then be distributed through established charitable networks to serve community members experiencing food insecurity, including organizations that support individuals who are unhoused. This approach ensures that the process is conducted responsibly and that the harvested deer provides a meaningful community benefit.

Decades of unchecked deer overpopulation have hindered forest regeneration, accelerated the spread of invasive species, increased deer-human conflicts, and elevated the risk of tick-borne diseases.

Following discussions with the Town Manager, the reduction effort has been temporarily paused. Representatives from River Heritage Conservancy will meet with the Council to review the process and address any outstanding questions before proceeding.