



**NORTHWEST CT SPORTSMAN'S COUNCIL**

3 BARE HILL ROAD,  
GOSHEN, CT 06756  
(860) 491-4867 nwcsc.org

March 3, 2010

**Position Paper:**

**Env. Committee Bill No. 116 Sec.2. Section 26-86a of the 2010 supplement to  
the general statutes.**

**Regarding The Use Of Traditional Handguns During The Private land  
Firearms Deer Hunting Season.**



The Northwest Connecticut Sportsman's Council represents the interest of 34 member sportsmen's clubs and associations, with a combined membership of over 6,000 men and women from throughout the Northwest Region of Connecticut.

Our Council strongly supports establishment of a framework to allow the legal use of traditional handguns for the hunting of Deer on private land, during the regular Connecticut Firearms Deer Season. We, along with other interested sportsmen and sportsmen's groups have advocated for the establishment of handgun hunting for deer.

We commend the members of the Environment Committee for their responsiveness to the desires of their constituents for considering the proposed legislative changes contained in Sec. 2. Section 26-86a of Committee Bill No. 116.

The intention in of my testimony today and that of my written submission is to share with the members of the Environment Committee some factual information regarding handgun hunting for big game, the Connecticut sportsman's viewpoint and the reasons why we feel this legislation should be adopted by our State.

For many, if not most of our Connecticut Legislators, the topic of handgun hunting for deer will be something new, about which little is known or understood simply because the issue has not been formally considered in our State in recent years. I will begin my discussion by stating several facts that CT sportsmen are intimately aware of because of their unique interest and participation in all forms of hunting.

1; Some forms of handgun hunting are currently legal in CT. It is legal to hunt small game on private land with a handgun of any caliber. It is also currently legal to hunt small game on state land with a handgun using ammunition no larger than 22 Long Rifle. To the best of our knowledge, there has never been a hunting incident of any kind in Connecticut involving the legal use of a handgun.

2; The hunting of big game with a handgun is currently legal in <sup>47</sup>48 states. Connecticut<sup>CT</sup> and Rhode Island are the only states that do not provide for some form of big game hunting with a handgun. The research conducted by our Council of other states allowing this type of hunting found no significant data suggesting any problems with the use of large bore handguns for hunting.

3; Connecticut subscribes to the standards of the International Hunter Education Association. All Connecticut hunters must pass a course in Hunter Education/Firearms Safety before they can purchase their first hunting license. The CE/FS course as taught in Connecticut has always contained a section on handgun hunting.

4; In addition to CE/FS certification, anyone wishing to hunt with a handgun in CT must by law possess a CT Pistol Permit. Criteria for obtaining a CT pistol permit include: passage of an approved, "handgun safety" course of instruction and fingerprinting, followed by local, State, and federal background checks.

Connecticut is home to about 200,000 licensed handgun owners. While there are many legitimate reasons why people choose to own a handgun, one motivation that is important to CT sportsmen is that of hunting big game with a handgun. Currently, Connecticut sportsmen who wish to pursue this type of hunting must travel out of state and incur high non-resident expenses that are hard to justify in these economic times. Sportsmen have already paid several hundred dollars to take safety classes and obtain a pistol permit and hunting license in their home state, yet they are denied the logical use of handguns to hunt deer in CT during the regular firearms season.

The logic that I am asking our legislators to understand regarding the use of handguns is simply that traditional handguns and their cartridges offer a safe venue for deer hunting in our State.

The handgun is a short range hunting tool, limited by its size and the type of ammunition available for it to about 50 yards of effective range. Thus, hunting with a handgun is not much different than hunting with a bow. To be successful, a hunter will usually hunt from a stand or ground blind and let the game come to him. This ensures proper identification of the game and the background beyond the intended target, which results in close range shots that are safe.

The handgun typically used for hunting is a large frame revolver or single-shot pistol with a barrel length of 6" to 14" in length. These handguns typically weigh 40 to 50 ounces. They are large handguns meant to be carried in a pack, belt or chest holster.

There is a wide variety of ammunition available for handguns, most of which are considered unsuitable to reliably take big game such as deer. We would recommend to the Committee that a minimum cartridge caliber, and possibly a minimum power factor, (expressed in foot pounds of energy) for the purpose of hunting deer be included in this bill. The 357 Magnum cartridge and/or a minimum power factor of 500 foot pounds of muzzle energy is pretty much accepted by all states allowing handgun use for the hunting of big game. We suggest the Committee adopt this standard by inserting this language in the last sentence of the proposed amendment to Sec. 2. Section 26-86a (a). This language would ensure the use of adequately powerful cartridges for use in handgun deer hunting.

Sec. 2. Section 26-86a already provides for a general firearms deer hunting season during the month of November in which shotguns firing a single projectile slug may be used on State and private land. This section also provides the option for private land owners of ten or more acres to allow the use of a centerfire rifle for hunting deer. The proposed amendment to this section simply adds the option to allow the private landowner of 10 or more acres to authorize the use of a traditional handgun for the hunting of deer.

Strictly from a safety viewpoint, it should be observed that even the highest velocity handgun cartridges typically used for deer hunting actually travels at less than one half the velocity of many popular centerfire rifle cartridges now in use, thus reducing the maximum distance a handgun bullet can travel by a considerable amount. The rapid deceleration of blunt, relatively heavy bullets fired from a hunting handgun further constrains the hunter to shorter range shots at game, enhancing both game identification and awareness of what is beyond the target.

The members of our NWCSC fully support the concept of handgun hunting for deer as proposed in this legislation. We see this bill as responsive to a need expressed by our fellow Connecticut sportsmen who want to pursue their sport in their resident State. The State of Connecticut will also benefit from this bill with increased revenue derived from sportsmen who will purchase the private land handgun hunting permit. Due to the fact that anyone transporting a handgun in Connecticut must have a CT State Pistol Permit; and anyone hunting with a handgun must have hunter education certification, we can be assured that 1; the new handgun option will be limited to primarily CT residents, and 2; that those sportsmen who participate are very well qualified to do so.

The members of Northwest CT Sportsman's Council ask that the Environment Committee approve the handgun deer hunting amendment; with a change to designate a minimum cartridge caliber and power factor, and raise this bill for full consideration by the Connecticut Legislature.

Thank You

Chris M. Marino  
Secretary: NWCSC



**Northwest Ct Sportsman's Council**  
**3 Bare Hill Rd., Goshen, CT 06756**  
**Nwsc.org**

**Statement of Purpose**

The Northwest Connecticut Sportsman's Council is a non-profit organization created to represent the mutual interests of all sportsmen's groups throughout Northwest Connecticut. The Council membership is made up of several delegates from each of the member clubs. Council membership is open to any and all sportsman's clubs and associations located or active within the Northwest Connecticut area.

The basic objectives of the Northwest Ct. Sportsman's Council are:

- To unite all sportsmen and women from the various clubs and associations in our area in order to support common goals and interests.
- To become a proactive advocate of the Connecticut sportsman.
- To engage all of our members to get involved in the matters which affect them.
- To promote the concepts of conservation, multiple use of renewable resources, sportsmanship and ethics.

The Northwest Ct. Sportsman's Council currently has representation from the following member clubs:

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| • Bell City Rifle Club                  | Bristol             |
| • Bethlehem Wildlife & Conservation     | Bethlehem           |
| • Bristol Fish & Game Club              | Bristol             |
| • Chase Rifle & Pistol association      | Waterbury           |
| • Ct. Classic Bucks                     | New Milford         |
| • CT Trapper's Association              | Statewide           |
| • CT Falconer's Assoc.                  | Statewide           |
| • Dutchess County Muzzleloaders         | Amenia, NY          |
| • Foothills Sportsmen                   | Goshen              |
| • Goshen Sportsmen                      | Goshen              |
| • Harwinton Rod & Gun Club              | Harwinton           |
| • High Rock Sportsman's Assoc.          | Beacon Falls        |
| • Kingdom Game Club                     | New Hartford        |
| • Litchfield Hills Foxhound Assoc.      | Litchfield          |
| • Minortown Firearms Enthusiasts        | Woodbury            |
| • Naugatuck Valley Beagle Club          | Beacon Falls        |
| • New Preston Rod & Gun Club            | New Preston         |
| • Northwest Ct. Sportsman's Association | Colebrook           |
| • Northwest Chapter Trout Unlimited     | Litchfield          |
| • Northwest Rod & Gun Club              | Canaan              |
| • Northwest Tree Hounds Assoc.          | Watertown           |
| • Olde Newgate Coon Club                | Norfolk/Colebrook   |
| • Ousatonic F&G Protective Assoc.       | Redding/New Milford |
| • Ratlum Mtn. F&G                       | Burlington          |
| • Rocky River Coon Club                 | Torrington          |
| • Thomaston Fish & Game                 | Thomaston           |
| • Torrington Fish & Game Club           | Torrington          |

- Torrington Gun Club Torrington
- Second Amendment Sisters Statewide
- Sharon Rod & Gun Club Sharon
- Simsbury Coon Club Simsbury
- United Bowhunters of Ct. Statewide
- Waterbury F & G Protective Assoc. Waterbury
- Woodbury/Southbury Rod & Gun Morris/Woodbury/Southbury

We also maintain close ties and associations with statewide organizations such as the Coalition of CT Sportsmen, the Ruffed Grouse Society and the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance. We currently have three Council delegates holding seats on the CT Department of Environmental Protection's "Conservation Advisory Council", representing sporting, conservation and agricultural interests.

Our Council is also striving to reach beyond the traditional fellowship of our inter-related sporting interests to engage and interact with other recreational, community, agricultural and conservation oriented groups. The members of our Council believe that the task before us: that of preserving our Cultural Sporting Heritage; is compatible with and beneficial to, the goals and desires of other diverse organizations. We have, and continue to initiate cooperative efforts between our organization and that of the DEP, Community, and Private Organizations.

Private lands owned by Council member clubs provide a significant contribution to Connecticut's Open Space Program, with approximately 5,000 acres under their stewardship. Many of these Club Properties are close to urban and suburban areas of development, and serve their communities as an effective buffer to sprawl while providing natural habitat areas benefiting the local environment and all citizens of the state. Our members are active on many Northwest CT Land Trusts, and we are supporting members of the CT Working Lands Alliance; a statewide organization dedicated to preserving more of our state's working agricultural lands.

We have initiated and entered into a cooperative habitat and conservation effort with the CT DEP. to help maintain and manage; through volunteer efforts, newly acquired state lands. Our volunteer efforts have been cited by the DEP in the several editions of "Connecticut Wildlife Magazine".

Members of our organization are working with the University of Connecticut's Cooperative Extension System's, "Coverts Project". Council members have attended seminars at the Yale Forestry Camp located in Norfolk, CT. The purpose of this project is to train volunteers to provide local community leadership in promoting long-term stewardship of forest and wildlife resources.

We have an active, ambitious, and committed organization here in Northwest Connecticut. Our interests are many and varied. The NWCSC is providing organization and leadership to address all interests of sportsmen and women. With our Council in the forefront, our membership has addressed all pertinent social and politically relevant issues affecting sportsmen and the environment that have come before the state since the founding of the Council in 1998.

Through the commitment of our clubs, our Council grows stronger each year and our influence with decision makers increases. United and organized, our ability to create change and determine our future is greatly enhanced. Together we can preserve and expand our Sporting Heritage. Join us in preserving the best sporting and conservation traditions of our state and country.

**NWCSC**

**Through your support of the NWCSC Banquet-Fundraiser, we are able to fund great projects like these.**

**Wildlife Viewing Building at Goshen WMA**

Volunteers from the Northwestern CT Sportsmen's Council built a wildlife viewing building near one of the ponds in the large field at the Goshen Wildlife Management area. The structure affords bird watchers and wildlife enthusiast and hunters a great place to relax and enjoy the multitude of animals that make the area their home.

When the initial purchase of the Goshen WMA by the state was made, volunteers from "The Council" marked & posted the property boundaries of the new WMA. This needed to be done before the area could be used by the public. This was the first volunteer project done by the NWCSC.

**Netting Project at Burlington Fish Hatchery**

Volunteers from the Northwestern CT Sportsmen's Council purchased and installed protective netting at the Burlington Fish Hatchery. This netting was put in place to protect the fish in the rearing ponds from predators like raccoons, foxes and birds of prey. Until the nets were installed the hatchery lost about a 30-40% of fish every year which obviously affected the amount of fish stocked in local lakes and streams. Since the installation of the nets, fish production has increased greatly, which means more fish stocked in CT waters every year.

**Habitat Project -Housatonic WMA**

Funding provided by the Northwestern CT Sportsmen's Council supported old field restoration and new field development at the Housatonic WMA. This is an ongoing project.

**Supplemental Pheasant Stocking- John Minetto State Park**

Funding provided by the Northwestern CT Sportsmen's Council funded supplemental stocking of birds due to BNR budget short falls. As a result, birds were stocked every week of the season at this area located near the outskirts of Torrington.

**Maintenance Equipment Funding Support**

Funding provided by the Northwestern CT Sportsmen's Council supported maintenance of the states newly purchased Bobcat-Fecon tracked brush mower. Due to BNR budget short falls, funding for maintaining this machine was cut. This will keep the mower in good order so it will continue to be utilized for habitat projects throughout the year. This is an ongoing project.

**Junior Pheasant Hunting Day**

The Northwestern CT Sportsman's Council has purchased birds for the event for the past 8 years. Volunteers from "The Council" have been organizing and putting on this great program on the western side of the state for new graduates of the CT Hunter Safety Program. Approximately 45 junior hunters enjoy the day hunting birds over trained dogs with experienced instructors. Food and beverage are provided to all volunteers and participants. This is an ongoing project.

Future projects planned: **Habitat Project -Greenwoods Dam WMA**  
**Senior's Fishing Derby- Southbury**  
**Farmington River Kids Fishing Derby**