

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE, by Robert T. Crook, Director. 02/09/11

IN SUPPORT of H.B. No. 5158 (COMM) AN ACT AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON SUNDAY UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES

This Sunday Hunting bill will help accomplish DEP Wildlife Management Objectives and is a revenue raiser.

This bill promotes Bowhunting, Written Permission of the Landowner, Deer only.

Indisputable Facts:

1. Deer numbers are increasing, while the numbers of hunters is decreasing.
2. Deer/Car collisions, Lyme disease occurrence, and property damage are all increasing.
3. Hunting is the ONLY proven population management technique available for Deer.
4. DEP Wildlife Management has resulted in population balance on most State lands; overpopulation problems are on privately owned lands.
5. **Increases Harvest:** About 20-22% of Deer are taken by bow; 6-8% by muzzleloader; the remainder by rifle/shotgun 70-75%. "The deer harvest on Saturdays during the firearms season is 76% greater than the average harvest on weekdays." (DEP, Dep. Comm. Leff, 2006). The Saturday deer harvest data applies equally to bowhunting.
6. Inclement weather on Saturdays significantly reduces take and management.
7. **SAFETY:** In over a century of record keeping, there has been NO instance of bowhunting injury/death of non-hunting participants!
8. Some promote the separation of hunters and other recreationalists non-state lands with Blue Trails although there have been NO instances of accidents on the other six days. We'd ask you to defend Landowner Rights allowing landowners to determine who, where, when, and what activities should occur on his property; and Multiple Use Recreation, promoted by this committee, DEP and most conservation organizations.
9. Public lands (State Forests/Parks) are not included.
10. We would expect a Bowhunting Season Change due to the additional days and significantly increased take expected. Currently Bowhunting season is Sept. 15 - Dec.31. DEP might reduce the beginning date to Mid-October, to coincide with upland game seasons providing those apprehensive of hunting a compromise.
11. **Sunday Bowhunting is a Revenue Raiser** by allowing those persons who work 6 days per week to participate. Even for those who work Monday through Friday, a Sunday hunting ban cuts their available hunting time in half. The most common reason that hunters stop hunting is lack of hunting opportunity which is largely decided by two factors: accessible land and available time. **Promotes non-resident involvement:** Few hunters will take extended hunting trips to a state that won't let them hunt on Sunday. Out-of-state hunters pay higher license fees benefitting DEP and spend even more money than in-state hunters on gas, food, lodging and other incidentals that go along with a day's hunt. **Recruiting new hunters.** Many young people have school or athletic obligations on Saturday. Sunday hunting allows parents time to hunt with their son or daughter. With the myriad of activities that compete for the attention of young people today, a Sunday hunting restriction means many of them never take up the sport.
12. **Eliminates the last remaining CT Blue Law.** In the early days of America, so-called blue laws restricted many activities on Sunday. In recent years, however, state governments have recognized that the people's right to choose for themselves what they do, or don't do, on Sunday is more consistent with America's founding principals. This state ban on Sunday hunting is the last holdout of these blue laws, and hunters are questioning why they are being treated differently from their fellow citizens. (44 States have Sunday Hunting, those that do not are of the original 13 colonies).

The Sunday Hunting prohibition has been an impediment to DEP wildlife management for too long. This bill will allow DEP wildlife experts to set seasons and take to improve Deer overpopulation management. We'd ask you to refuse to maintain the status quo which ignores obvious ecological problems (Forestry regeneration, non-game species declines), public safety (Deer/Car Collisions), public health (Lyme disease), and property damage problems —clearly not in the public interest.

We urge you to Support Sunday Hunting and act to promote this effort as essential to wildlife management and the public interest of the state. **If Not Sunday Hunting – What IS the solution to an ever-expanding Deer management problem?**