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**Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations  
Before the Environment Committee – March 17, 2014**

**In Support of Bill 5080**

**AAC DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY  
AND AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING  
ON PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAYS.**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to express our support for Bill 5080 - AAC DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY AND AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAYS.

Large populations of White-tailed deer have been identified as a significant threat to the health and diversity of our forested landscapes, especially in southern Connecticut. Historically, deer populations were controlled by wolves, humans, and limitations of food supply. The eradication of wolves, the decreasing numbers of hunters and difficulties of hunting in many residential areas, the availability in winter of landscape shrubbery, and other changes to the landscape have allowed deer populations to dramatically increase in many areas. In southwest Connecticut, the density of deer generally exceeds 40 deer per square mile.

Densities in excess of 20 per mile can result in suppression of forest regeneration and reduction of biological and structural diversity. Numerous studies have confirmed the detrimental effects of deer overbrowsing on Eastern U.S. forest habitats.

Over the past 15 years, the DEEP has made a number of changes to the regulations regarding deer harvest that affect two of the mostly densely-populated of its twelve deer management zones, southwest (Zone 11) and southern Connecticut (Zone 12). As a result of these changes, the deer harvest in these two zones has increased significantly but the population is still higher than needed to support proper forest regeneration and biological and structural diversity. In eight out of the state's 15 hunting zones, densities are above targeted levels.

While we do not feel that recreational hunting alone will sufficiently address the deer problem, even archery hunting alone can be a significant factor in control. In 2013, approximately 48 percent of deer taken were taken by archery statewide, and 71% of the deer harvest in Zone 11 was by archery. Sunday hunting would very likely increase the total harvest. Twenty eight percent of deer taken by archery statewide are taken on Saturdays, when most hunters are currently available. Even if applied to just archery in Zones 11 and 12, Sunday hunting likely would significantly increase the total harvest.