



March 17, 2014

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Environment Committee  
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**Re: Please OPPOSE Raised Bill 5080 , Sunday hunting on private land**

Dear Co-Chair Meyer, Co-Chair Gentile, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, we submit this letter to **OPPOSE HB 5080**, and any other attempts to expand hunting on Sundays.

Lifting the prohibition will jeopardize public safety and diminish outdoor opportunities for non-consumptive users. Further, and contrary to popular myth, Sunday hunting will neither reduce risk of Lyme disease in humans nor reduce the deer population in any lasting or significant way.

**Sunday hunting on private land is a slippery slope to allow Sunday hunting on all land, and does not reflect what the public wants.**

Taking the first step down this slippery slope would further the interests of a tiny fraction of the population (~1%) at the expense of other citizens who have their own claim to enjoying nature. Per the latest survey by the U.S.

Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Commerce, wildlife watchers (defined as observing, feeding, or photographing wildlife) in Connecticut not only *outnumber* hunters by a margin of 29 to 1, but they also *outspend* hunters by 7.4 to 1, contributing about \$510 million to the economy annually.

Sunday is the one day a week that people can freely enjoy the Connecticut outdoors without worrying about encountering stray arrows, bullets, or the sight of an arrow-struck crippled deer.

Hunters already enjoy recreational opportunities disproportionate with their numbers — hunting is already permitted 6 days a week for most of the year. It is only fair that given their overwhelming majority of the state's population, non-hunters should have one day per week to enjoy Connecticut's rich natural

resources in safety and peace.

### **Sunday hunting won't help DEEP "manage" deer numbers or resolve conflicts.**

Wild animals have high *compensatory reproduction* abilities which offset the losses caused by hunting. For deer, this means that after being hunted, their numbers bounce back. This is due to increased food resources available to the remaining deer, resulting in does breeding at an earlier age, more fawns being born and having higher survival rates. This is a natural phenomenon—a biological adaptation to help wild animals recover from cyclic population losses. Hunting merely creates this bounce-back effect which counteracts any long-term population “control” unless a very large proportion of the population is removed and somehow kept at an unnaturally low level—all of which presents a virtual impossibility except in the rarest of cases.

Let's look at the numbers. Connecticut archers removed 6052 deer of which 5330 were taken on private land in the Fall 2013-Winter 2014 season. Of this number, 1500 were taken on private land on a Saturday. If we assume a similar number of deer might be taken on Sunday, that amounts to another 1500 deer possibly removed from the population if HB 5080 bill passes.

This may sound like a lot of deer until you consider that the last statewide deer population estimate in 2006 yielded 124,000 deer. Assuming that the deer population has remained the same for the past 8 years (which it surely hasn't), a liberal estimate of this additional “take” would amount to less than 1.2 % of the deer population. If the deer population is higher now than it was 8 years ago, the additional “take” would drop percentage-wise below 1.2%.

Even if you factor in the additional deer taken by archers, muzzleloaders and shotgun on private land under landowner hunting provisions, the grand total removed still amounts to only 1.6% of the deer population or significantly less, depending on how large the deer population currently is.

### **Removing an additional 1% - 1.6 % of the deer population will not significantly reduce deer numbers in Connecticut.**

There is no “magic bullet” for resolving deer problems. A better approach is for communities to adopt deer *problem* management programs which focus on site-specific solutions and new technologies. For example, Rochester Hills' (Michigan) “Don't Veer for Deer” program reduced deer-car collisions 25% despite a 34% increase in herd size, and a PZP immunocontraception program on Fripp Island in South Carolina showed a 50% decrease in the deer population over 6 years. These new approaches can be utilized in site-specific way to address deer conflicts for a long-term solution.

### **Sunday hunting will not reduce Lyme disease risk.**

The Black-legged tick has well over 100 hosts, including all mammals, many popular songbirds, and even lizards. Studies have shown that the removal of one host isn't enough to suppress the Lyme-disease causing tick (Ostfeld, 2011, Jordan et al, 2007). In addition, the ticks are highly adaptable, and will switch to other hosts when there's a shortage of their preferred host or congregate in higher densities on the remaining deer. In addition, research indicates that hunting

may put the public more at risk by creating disease "hot spots" (S. Perkins et al, 2006, Ginsberg and Zhioua, 1999; Ostfeld, 2011). That is, mature ticks that normally latch onto large hosts (i.e., deer) are more likely to end up on people and dogs after deer numbers have been reduced. There's a good reason why the CDC and health authorities don't recommend hunting to control Lyme disease - because it doesn't work.

### **Bill creates a loophole for poachers**

In addition, we are strongly opposed to the language changes which would add landowners to the list of entities allowed to take deer out of season based on a damage complaint. We fear that this allowance creates a loophole which will be abused by those seeking to hunt out of season.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our views.

Yours truly,



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