COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY: RAISED BILL HB-5080

AN ACT CONCERNING DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY AND AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAY

Submitted by Raymond B. Ryan

I am testifying in support of HB-5080.

By way of introduction, I am a small business person living and working in Darien, Connecticut. My wife and I first moved to Darien in 1986 and later raised our family here. My group affiliations include membership in the Fairfield County Fish & Game Protection Association in Monroe, the National Rifle Association, Ducks Unlimited, and Life memberships in the Coastal Conservation Association and Trout Unlimited. In the late 1990s and 2000, I was the President of the Connecticut Chapter of CCA. During my tenure as CCA's President in Connecticut, it was my good fortune to work with Representative Doc Gunther and the Chief of DEP's Bureau of Natural Resources, Ed Parker. In large part because of these Connecticut conservation giants, we were able to sponsor and see a number important conservation laws passed. Most significant was the banning of purse seines in Connecticut's portion of Long Island Sound. I am proud to be part of that legacy.

Having made my introduction, I simply want to endorse the testimony of Ed Parker, now retired from the DEP, Mike Ose, Conservation Advisory Council, and Moise Torrent, Environmental Analyst CT DEEP. These gentlemen make the case better than I can.

Why would this bill not pass? Clearly, it is in interest of the state's ecology, the watershed, Lyme's disease limitation, landowners property, automobile insurance rates, vendor's used by hunters and of course, added recreational opportunities for bow hunters themselves and sale of archery licenses. Where is the objection?

A guess is that a objection is heard from a few vocal non-hunters who are not affected by deer property damage or Lyme's disease exposure. Non-hunters (and state Representatives) need to know that it is the hunters and fishermen that pay to manage and provide wildlife habitat. Hunting and fishing license revenues are only a part of source of funds that support the CT DEEP wildlife division. (The DEEP gets little to nothing from the Connecticut General Fund.) On the other hand, very important are the Pittman-Robinson Act (1937) and Dingell-Johnson Act (1950) - laws that impose a federal excise tax of 10% to 11% on the sale of long guns, pistols, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing rods, reels and related equipment sold in the USA. These revenues are reallocated back to those states in proportion to hunting and fishing licenses sold. To receive an allocation, the state must keep its license revenues dedicated to wildlife (i.e. out of the state's General Fund). In the federal fiscal year ended in 2013, the P-R Act collected $522 million from hunting equipment sales and the D-J Act collected $380 million from fishing equipment sales. Said simply, it is hunters and fishermen that pay the bills to have abundant and diverse wildlife. Bird watchers, hikers and the like are non-paying beneficiaries of sportsman dollars.

In the 1930's, US wildlife was in serious trouble from market hunting and an anti-wildlife prejudice in the agrarian society. Today, it is hard to imagine that deer, coyote, bobcat, turkey and other native wildlife were extraordinarily rare in Connecticut back then. It has been P-R Act dollars and hunter license fees that have paid for the remarkable wildlife recovery in Connecticut and across the nation. Also purchases with these dollars include public wildlife areas. It seems logical then, when a species is over populated, Connecticut should turn to its hunters and give them the opportunity to cull the excess and so doing, enjoy the sport they have being paying for so many years.

Enclosures: See Below

Enclosure 1

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AN ACT CONCERNING DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY AND AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAY
Submitted by Edward Parker
I am testifying in support of HB-5080.
In 1949, when the Sunday hunting prohibition was enacted, Connecticut did not have a deer problem. In fact seeing a deer anywhere in the state was rare. Today the deer population is estimated to be 126,000. The rapid growth of the deer population is attributed to the development of land across the state which provided ideal habitat for deer and an abundant and nutritious food supply; mild winter weather and until recently limited hunting opportunities. The population density established by DEEP for a healthy and sustainable deer population in balance with the ecosystem is less than or equal to 20 deer per square mile. There are 13 deer management zones in Connecticut. Only five zones are at goal. The other 8 zones, which include 123 towns out of 169 have an overabundant deer population. Three of the 8 zones have deer densities of 20 to 32 deer per square mile. Three zones have a population of 32 to 56 deer per square mile and two zones have more than 56 deer per square mile. As the deer population grew DEEP implemented measures to increase the deer harvest to slow population growth. Those measures, including longer seasons, more tags, outreach to private landowners and incentives for hunters have been effective. However, to achieve population goals statewide, hunters need additional opportunities to hunt on weekend days on private property in the overpopulated management zones. Extension of the current hunting season is not practical. The best option is to allow hunting on Sunday during the current bow hunting season. This will add 16 days of hunting when most hunters have the day off. Harvest data collected for many years by DEEP indicates that the number of deer killed on weekend days is more than twice the number killed on weekdays. Also, hunting on Sunday in 42 other states has proven to be effective in increasing the deer harvest. Connecticut's bow hunters harvest 50% of all deer taken during the hunting season
Deer hunting with a bow and arrows is safe. It does not jeopardize public safety. There has never been an incident involving bow hunting that has resulted in injury to a non- hunter since bow hunting was established in Connecticut over 35 years ago.
Bow and arrow hunting does not limit outdoor opportunities on private property. Hunters must obtain written permission from the landowner to hunt. Therefore, private landowners determine what recreational activities they will allow on their property. If the landowner prefers hunting over other outdoor activities it is their choice. It is very likely that hunting on Sunday will occur on private property that is already open to hunters.
The hunter is the most effective and efficient predator. Given the opportunity to hunt and with access to private property, hunters can kill enough deer to achieve and maintain deer population goals statewide.
I encourage committee members to read the December 9th, 2013 Time magazine cover story and the November 3-4, 2012 Wall Street Journal article, titled "America Gone Wild". Both articles address the problem with overabundant wildlife populations and the role of the hunter. The physical impact of over abundant deer population is well documented in Connecticut and includes deer/vehicle collisions, crop damage, landscape damage on private property , habitat destruction which affects fauna and flora, and a high incidence of Lyme disease.
Every year the economic impact of an overabundant deer population in Connecticut likely exceeds 100 million dollars. In just one town –Redding, deer damage in 2010 was estimated to be approximately 4.5 million dollars. Redding is just 1 of 123 towns that fall within the 8 deer management zones that exceed population goals.
In summary, it is time for Connecticut to address the deer problem. Further delay will only exacerbate the consequences of an overpopulation of deer.
For those who oppose any expansion of hunting ask them what specific measures they would implement to reduce the deer population and to describe the proven effectiveness of those measures

I urge the environment committee to pass this bill. Further, I respectfully request that the committee co-chairs give this bill a high priority and strongly recommend to the House and Senate majority leaders that a vote on HB-5080 be taken by the full House and Senate.
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Enclosure 2

HB 5080 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY AND AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY SUNDAYS.

The Conservation Advisory Council is in **support** of this bill.
I am speaking on behalf of the Conservation Advisory Council. The Council consists of 25 members, who represent approximately 135,000 sportsmen throughout the state. These members belong to groups such as: United Bowhunters of CT, CT Audubon Society, CT Farm Bureau, Bristol Fish and Game, Rockville Fish and Game, CT Sportsman Alliance, Northwest CT Sportsmen, New London /Windham County League of Sportsmen Club, Fairfield County League of Sportsmen, CT Fish Advisory Council, CT Falconers Association, American Hunting Dog Club, CT Trappers Association, CT Woodcock Council, to name a few. As you can see, these groups have different interests at heart, but believe that conservation is important to the state's ecology.
This bill is supported by the DEEP as another deer management technique. The DEEP and its' biologists believe bow hunting on Sundays on private land, where 80% of the deer control happens, will help control the deer populations. They have studied deer populations in our state and how deer can change the ecology of an area.
The CT Audubon Society has seen their land trust areas demolished by deer eating the understory and bird nesting areas of their mature woodlands. Some of these areas are very important to our own survival.
Water supply regions, like Lake Gillard in Branford, attract large numbers of deer and need hunting to keep the ecological damage in check. The Regional Water Authority started bow hunting this region 5 years ago and have lowered the deer population 70%. The understory is now starting to rebound and sediment and debris no longer wash into this New Haven water supply.
The CT Farm Bureau has seen crops damaged by deer in the eastern region of the State. They have testified that they believe in wildlife control by hunting and trapping. Deer and beavers, (and developers), are the number one enemy of CT farms.
This bill will also benefit small businesses around the State. Sales by sporting goods stores, restaurants, motels, and others, will increase, as we expect not only CT bow hunters to be afield but also an increase in non-resident hunters.
It is important to understand what the passage of this bill will do. This bill will only impact those who wish to be impacted. This bill does not affect State Land or its use. This bill will only allow bow hunting on private land with written permission given to the hunter by the Landowner. The Landowner can still refuse to give permission to hunt on Sunday. This bill does not administer more tags for deer harvest. This bill only provides more opportunity, 16 Sundays to be exact, for archery hunters to be successful. This exact bill has been passed by this committee 3 years in a row. I ask that you pass this bill again, move it from this committee to the legislative floor. Let the people of the State, who you all represent, decide if this bill is right for the State.
Mike Ose CAC Chairman, Rockville Fish and Game member, Bow hunter

Enclosure 3

Committee Members,
Opening Sundays to bowhunting is essential to restoring and maintaining healthy deer populations in Connecticut. As you must have noticed, this year bowhunting harvests surpassed firearms harvest. We have a terrible problem with over-population in some areas of the state. For situations like those in Redding, CT to be avoided (where $80,000 in funds were used to have professional sharpshooters annihilate 200 deer), Sunday hunting must be opened up. Most sportspeople, like myself, must work weekdays leaving only Saturdays and a handful of vacation days to be out in the woods. The one part of the bill I am against is the no shooting within 40-yards of a blazed trail. If you didn't know, The United Underwriters have rated Archery as a safer sport than ALL ball sports - even golf! The perception that bowhunters are any danger to human beings is simply that - false perception. Also, I believe that private land is private land, and landowners ought to be able to grant permission for their entire property as they see fit. Respectfully submitted,
Moises Torrent
Environmental Analyst, CT DEEP
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