

Environment Committee Testimony H.B 6034
Public Hearing 03/20/2015

Co-Chair: Senator Kennedy
Co-Chair: Representative Albis
Members of the Committee

My name is Bruce Tolhurst. I live at 16 Virginia Rail Dr in Marlborough, CT

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony today.

I support H.B. 6034; AN ACT AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON CERTAIN PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAYS

I sit on the **Conservation Advisory Council**, <CAC>, for DEEP's Bureau of Natural Resources. I know that DEEP needs every option available to them in order for them to manage wildlife in our beautiful state. I believe hunting is the single best management tool there is for controlling Connecticut's deer population. You've heard that today many times. Believe it!

Connecticut through the DEEP Deer Management Program has a very specific and detailed plan and set of goals. They are: 1) to maintain the population at levels compatible with available habitat and land uses, and 2) to allow for a sustained yield of deer for use by Connecticut hunters. The program focuses on stabilizing or reducing deer population growth for the best long-term interest of the deer resource, native plant and animal communities, and the public. Regulated deer hunting has proven to be an ecologically sound, socially beneficial, and fiscally responsible method of managing deer populations. Deer management programs have focused on increasing harvest of antlerless deer, coordinating controlled hunts for overabundant deer herds, assisting communities and large landowners with deer management issues, and completing research and management of urban populations of deer.

Recent specific management strategies include: issuance of free replacement antlerless tags, (1995), changes in state law to allow hunting over bait (2003), extending the archery season to include the month of January (2003), implementation of 'sharp-shooting' programs (2003), development of 'earn-a-buck' program (2005), increased bags limits in specific deer management zones (2009), allowing more flexibility in implements, (cross-bows, pistols, 'lesser implement' regulations (2009 thru 2013), and the coordination with municipal programs such as; the Fairfield County Municipal Deer Management Alliance, (www.deeralliance.com), (2004) and the Be Safe Redding program, (BeSafeRedding.org), in the town of Redding.

Understanding the need for an expansive deer management program in Connecticut, the question comes to mind; "*How effective is the bow hunting in Connecticut?*" (relative to the DEEP goals). A few statistics will demonstrate just how effective bow hunting has become. For the last ten years bow hunters have harvested 40% to 45% of the total deer harvested in Connecticut and this was closer to 50% in 2013. It has been estimated, < that the final report will show >, 2014 will also be near 50%. In 2010 4,670 deer were harvested by bow hunting out of 12,183 total harvest or 38%. In 2011 5,211 deer were harvested by bow hunting out of 12,897 total harvest or 40%. In 2012 5,413 deer were harvested by bow hunting out of 13,421 total harvest or 40%. In 2013 6,046 deer were harvested by bow hunting out of 12,549 total harvest or 48%.

For each of the last ten years, over 80% of the total deer harvest is on private land. In 2010, 4,017 deer were harvested on private land by bow hunting out of 4,670 total harvested by bow hunting or 86%. In 2011, 4,636 deer were harvested on private land by bow hunting out of 5,211 total harvested by bow hunting or 89%. In 2012, 4,771 deer were harvested on private land by bow hunting out of 5,413 total harvested by bow hunting or

88%. In 2013, 5,051 deer were harvested on private land by bow hunting out of 6,046 total harvested by bow hunting or 84%.

It is clear that bow hunting for deer on private land is the most effective management program DEEP currently employs. Allowing bow hunting on private land on Sundays will 'extend the season', <and expand its management control>, by allowing DEEP to add 18 or more days of hunting in areas where the deer herd is deemed too large.

Where is hunting by bow hunting going? Archery permits issued: In 2010, 13,276 permits were issued. In 2011, 13,725 permits were issued. In 2012, 14,341 permits were issued. In 2013, 15,800 permits were issued. In 2014, 16,586 permits were issued. Another indication of the popularity of bow hunting is the Conservation Education and Firearm Safety classes given. In 2014, 73 bow hunting classes were conducted. There were 2,956 graduates. This suggests that there will be even more bow hunters in 2015. We can expect bow hunting to continue to grow.

I hope you understand and appreciate the effect bow hunting has on the DEEP's overall deer management plan. Not only is it effective, but it is accomplished as a 'direct revenue generator', <as opposed to a cost for services>, with annual deer license/permits contributing over \$1,500,000 to the DEEP in each of the last 4 years. In 2010 deer permit sales contributed \$1,635,839. In 2011 deer permit sales contributed \$1,522,180. In 2012 deer permit sales contributed \$1,626,606. In 2013 deer permit sales contributed \$1,601,187. Furthermore, data collected from the annual deer hunters survey indicated that Connecticut deer hunters, <alone>, spent an estimated \$13,452,477, which directly contributed \$850,869 in sales tax and over \$1,475,000 in federal excise taxes, which are returned to the states under the Pittman-Robertson Act.

Make no mistake, in addition to the importance of the DEEP's deer management plan, bow hunting is a recreational sport enjoyed by sportsmen. Sportsmen desire to "go hunting"; whether it is bow hunting, deer hunting with a firearm or hunting in general, for all types of game. There is no denying, the recreational aspects of hunting is important to Sportsmen. That is why Sportsmen remain perplexed as to why hunting is not allowed on Sunday. Think about it . . . what other activity, legal six days of the week, cannot be done on Sunday? Hunting seems like it may be the last thing we "can't do" on Sunday. And it is not so big a leap in regulation. Under current law:

I may shoot at my club's range on Sunday. I may hunt on a private preserve on Sunday. I may train my dog with live birds on Sunday. I may compete at field trials with my dog on Sunday.
. . . . So why can't I bow hunt on Sunday?

I support this bill wholeheartedly. Not only will it give DEEP another wildlife management tool, but it will give me and thousands of other sportsmen more recreational options.

I urge you, keep up the good work and please, let's make Sunday an option for all recreational activity, and not let hunting be the only activity prohibited on Sunday.

Thank you

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Sources for the information and statistics in this testimony come from DEEP
2011 Connecticut Deer Program Summary
2013 Connecticut Deep Program Summary
DEEP OnLine Sportsmen's Licensing System; License/Privileges Report printed; 01/09/2015
Conservation Advisory Committee; March 10, 2015 *Wildlife Division Updates*