

DEER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
Telephone (203) 563-0180  
Fax (203) 563-0284



TOWN HALL  
238 Danbury Road  
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

**Deer Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
March 12, 2013**

In attendance: Mike Russnok, Donna Merrill, Loretta Foley, Scott MacQuarrie, Steve White, Frank Mabley, and Patricia Sesto

- I. Chairman Russnok called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- II. Minutes: Mike Russnok made a Motion to approve the February 12, 2013 minutes as drafted, Seconded by Loretta Foley and carried 6-0-0.
- III. Ongoing Business

- a. Survey Review

Russnok reported on the hunter surveys, noting of the 33 hunters participating, 25 returned their survey. Fifty three deer were taken by survey respondents. The summary of the surveys reflects only answers that produced a trend. Committee members interested in more detail can refer to the individual surveys. The summary includes a harvest table. Of note from previous years is the productivity of the Belknap/Gregg Preserves and the poor harvest at Sackett. Hunters also noted those properties with the most evergreen trees suffered the worst damage from Hurricane Sandy and subsequently had low yields. Discussion ensued regarding conditions and activities that could impact a harvest. Russnok reiterated his desire to know if harvests were down statewide or is Wilton an anomaly. With so many variables potentially affecting the various properties, it is impossible to draw any sort of reasonable conclusion regarding the success or lack thereof.

- b. 2013 Management Plan

Russnok acknowledged the work of Tim Fridinger, Gary Bartush, and Fran Soltes in organizing the hunt. It was the consensus of the committee to direct staff to write letters of thanks to the three hunt masters.

Some hunters expressed discontent that the landowner properties were not inspected for suitability prior to being assigned. At least three properties were identified as unsuitable. Russnok will verify that the homeowners were made aware of the hunters' assessment.

c. Conservation Newsletter Article Discussion

Donna Merrill indicated the Wilton Conservation Commission wants to include a topic on the deer hunt in their Spring newsletter and asked if there was a particular subject that the Deer Committee would like covered.

Pat Sesto suggested an article on the effect of deer browsing on the forest understory. The Conservation Committee will submit this article

Press releases would be valuable to report on the outcome of this year's hunting effort and broach the issue of how the town can move forward to meet its goal of 10-20 deer per square mile given that recreational hunting remains ineffective in meaningfully reducing the herd. A late summer press release on the issue of homeowner liability was also proposed. Members also debated the value of proactively seeking new homeowners to allow hunters. Going forward, the committee will likely take a reactive stance on providing hunter-landowner matches rather than proactively calling for homeowner participation.

Members requested a future meeting be held at Quarry Head State Park in order to view the deer enclosure. Also, staff was directed to contact DEEP to see if a member of their staff can meet with the Committee to discuss next moves. The group feels they have pushed recreational hunting as far as possible and any further tinkering will not produce a meaningful change to the current harvest levels. This being the case, what are the other culling tools available?

- IV. Mike Russnok made a Motion to adjourn at 7:59 p.m., Seconded by Frank Mabley, and carried 6-0-0.