



NATIONAL DEER ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 162305 · Atlanta, Georgia 30321 · phone: 1-800-209-3337 · DEERASSOCIATION.com

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

RE: Youth Deer Hunting Pilot Program - Environmental Conservation Law Section 11-0935 (ECL 11-0935)

Dear

As an avid deer hunter and conservationist in your county, I'm writing to express my interest in the county's opt-in election for the recently passed youth deer hunting pilot program. Recently, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 into law. Included in this legislation, Environmental Conservation Law Section 11-0935 (ECL 11-0935), is a deer hunting pilot program that would allow a hunting license holder who is 12 or 13 years of age to hunt deer with a crossbow, rifle, shotgun or muzzleloader if certain conditions are met.

Currently, New York has the most restrictive hunting age requirements in the country, and this initiative would provide a push in the right direction. Most states allow hunters at least 12 years of age to hunt big game with the supervision of a parent, guardian, or mentor. Engaging youth in big game hunting at a young age and with appropriate supervision goes a long way in developing life-long hunters and conservationists. Further, there is no data to suggest that doing so is unsafe.

To participate in the program, a youth hunter must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian or designated mentor who is at least 21 years of age, has had at least three years' experience in hunting deer and who holds a hunting license. The parent, guardian or mentor must maintain physical control over the youth hunter at all times while hunting, and both the parent, guardian or mentor and the youth hunter must remain at ground level at all times. Second, both individuals must display either a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange or pink worn above the waist and visible from all directions, or a solid fluorescent hat or cap visible from all directions.

Additionally, the deer hunting pilot program will only take effect in eligible areas. Eligible areas will include counties that pass a local law authorizing participation in the pilot program and have notified the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) of such participation. Westchester and Suffolk counties are not eligible to participate in the program.

The New York Department of Environment Conservation (DEC) Division of Wildlife of Fish and Wildlife has already reached out to all eligible counties to provide guidance on opting-in to the program. Additionally, DEC will provide draft language for the county to meet the necessary legal requirements for participation. To notify DEC of the county's local law opting into this program, or if you have any questions or need any assistance regarding this new pilot, please contact the DEC Division of Fish and Wildlife at wildlife@dec.ny.gov or 518-402-8883. There is no deadline for opting-in, and DEC will maintain a rolling list of counties that do so.

Again, as an avid hunter in your county, I urge you to opt-in to the youth deer hunting pilot program. New York's youths are missing out on hunting opportunities and outdoor experiences that youths in every other state get to experience. Youth hunting opportunities, especially with the appropriate provisions listed ECL 11-0935, are safe and enjoyable for all, and engaging youth in big game hunting at a young age and with appropriate supervision goes a long way in developing life-long hunters and conservationists.

Respectfully,

Name: _____

Address: _____
