

TOWN OF ISLESBORO
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Meeting of Thursday, January 3, 2013, 4:30 PM, Town Office

MINUTES

Present: Pete Anderson, Jacob Bethune, Linda Gillies, Laura Houle, Philo Hutcheson, Don Johnson, Carol Macaulay (by phone), Gilbert Rivera, Rachel Rolerson-Smith, Fred Thomas (chair), William Tilden

Absent: Andrew Coombs, Paul Hatch, Jr., Scott Sienkiewicz

By invitation: from MDIF&W - Michelle Merifield, Mark Merifield, Game Wardens, Keel Kemper, Regional Wildlife Biologist.

Fred Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm. He introduced guests: from MDIF&W - Michelle and Mark Merifield, Game Wardens, and Keel Kemper, Regional Wildlife Biologist; from the Penobscot Bay Pilot – Ethan Andrews.

Approval of Minutes, meeting of December 6, 2012. Upon MOTION made and seconded, the minutes were approved as written.

Review of Special Deer Hunt, December 10-31, 2012. Fred called on committee members and visitors from MDIF&W to comment on the hunt.

- *The numbers.* Laura Houle reported that 50 deer in all were killed during the hunt, 48 on Islesboro, 2 on 700 Acre Island. Of the 42 hunters who qualified for the hunt on Islesboro, 15 took deer. Laura circulated a list of statistics about the hunt. Carol Macaulay reported that of the 8 hunters who qualified for the hunt on Acre, 4 did not show up (inclement weather made it difficult to get to the island).

Keel Kemper said the Special Hunt numbers were similar to fishing: “10% of the fisherman catch 90% of the fish.” He said that 50 deer killed was respectable, and that he hoped the number would increase in the next two years. He believes “the deer are here;” once the regular hunt numbers are in, MDIF&W will have a more solid feeling about the population.

- *Hunting conditions.* Fred and other committee members said that hunters who put in many hours and went deep into the woods had difficulty finding deer, especially in the snow and cold of the last two weeks. He said the deer did not follow their usual habits and were more likely to be seen in the morning rather than in the “golden hours” at the beginning and end of the day.

- *Information from the hunters.* Fred suggested that the DRC should find out why only 15 of the 42 hunters who qualified for the hunt ended up tagging deer during the three weeks. Committee members agreed that the DRC should try to collect this and other information about the hunt by getting everyone who qualified together. They scheduled a meeting on Saturday, January 12 at 1 pm at the Sporting Club. Linda will send out notices. Keel will draft a questionnaire to be filled in by hunters who attend the meeting.
- *MDIF&W regulations.* Fred recalled that at the early stages of the DRC's work, Gerry Lavigne and others had advised that in the Special Hunt techniques such as baiting would be necessary. Fred felt that MDIF&W's stipulation that regular hunting rules must apply to Islesboro's Special Hunt indicates a perception that the hunt is recreational, when instead it is meant to harvest as many deer as possible in order to address problems relating to Lyme disease and damage to the forest. He said that the Special Hunt needed more and better tools and asked Keel if there could be any flexibility in the regulations so that techniques such as baiting would be permitted.

Keel said Fred's was an excellent point and that a mechanism to allow for more flexibility during the Special Hunt should be created. He said he would work on this. He also cautioned that any obtaining any modification in the regulations would be difficult, as MDIF&W staff is constrained by other factors. He suggested that the DRC would have to address the issue with the leadership at MDIF&W; perhaps Islesboro's legislators should be involved. Mark Merifield said that the DRC would have to explain clearly what changes it wants. He and Michelle Merifield agreed that baiting should be allowed, for in general the hunt would be safer; they felt that the island community would be receptive to the idea. Mike Boucher, who attended the meeting, stated that using baiting was the safest way to hunt.

- *Safety.* There was general agreement that from a safety point of view, the hunt had gone very well. Fred Porter said he had no complaints.
- *Weapons.* Carol Macaulay said that more deer would be killed if rifles were used rather than shotguns and asked if another year rifles could be permitted. Keel responded that a weapon change would not involve a rule change. Pete Anderson said such a change would have to go to Town Meeting.

Laura Houle questioned whether buckshot should be used in the Special Hunt, for it causes much damage to the deer. Crossbow use was also questioned. It was agreed to defer the weapons issue until a later meeting.

- *Butchering.* Linda said she had spoken to Ron Moon at Moon's Wild Game Processing and that having expected approximately 100 deer, he was disappointed in the low numbers of deer that the hunt provided for him to butcher – 25 paid for by the Town and 8 by Hunters for the Hungry. His total charge to the Town was \$1,280. He doubted that he would stay open for Islesboro's Special Hunt another year, for after the regular season closes, it is more advantageous for him to go back to his construction job (\$1,000 per week). Linda suggested that because there are few game processors close to Islesboro,

the DRC should guarantee Moon's a minimum of \$1,000 per week. She thought that the DRC should make up the \$1,720 difference to Moon's this year. It was decided to wait and see if Moon's did a good job butchering the meat, which hunters had not yet picked up, before making such a determination.

Ron Moon also said that many of the 8 deer contributed to Hunters for the Hungry were small and some were full of buckshot, so that butchering produced only 200 pounds.

Keel mentioned that Scott Brown of Morrill might be interested in the butchering but that he would have to be guaranteed a minimum amount.

Laura said that several hunters contributed deer meat to people in need on Islesboro, and that meat should be considered in the same category as meat given to Hunters for the Hungry.

- *Hunters for the Hungry Truck.* There was agreement that the loan of the refrigerated truck had been very important for the hunt, enabling Laura Houle to maintain harvested deer at the correct temperature before they were transported to Moon's. Laura said that in the future the truck should be stationed off the road, so that passersby did not see deer that had been killed. Fred expressed gratitude to Hunters for the Hungry and to Laura for all her work in managing harvested deer.
- *Deer transport.* Laura reported that the deer transport had gone smoothly. Babe Hatch took two loads and Pete Anderson one load.
- *Permits during the hunt.* Linda distributed the Town office's accounting of permits acquired by hunters during the Special Hunt and paid for from the DRC budget; the total cost was \$2,470. Keel Kemper said it was unfortunate that permits were necessary but because they are mandated by law during special hunts, this is an issue that will not go away. Pete asked if during future hunts permits could be acquired retroactively, after deer had been harvested. Rachel Rolerson-Smith asked if the tagging stations could issue the permits, rather than the Town office. Mark Merifield suggested that perhaps MDIF&W could reduce the cost of the permits. Keel said that he planned to go to the Licensing Division, explaining the problem and asking how we solve it.

The committee expressed gratitude to Town Manager Janet Anderson and the Town office staff who handled issuing and recording the permits. During times when the office was closed, Janet issued the permits from home.

- *Neighboring islands.* Keel questioned why hunters from the mainland were allowed to hunt on Acre Island during the Special Hunt. Philo Hutcheson reviewed the DRC's decision to allow Carol to ask a group of mainland hunters with whom she has hunted on Acre for years to hunt there during the Special Hunt. This determination, made at the December 15, 2011 meeting, was based on the belief that Islesboro hunters are not familiar with Acre. Laura added that the issue of hunter eligibility for Acre Island had come up at the December 6, 2012 DRC meeting, and it was decided that hunters from

Islesboro may hunt there if they secure landowner permission.

Keel then asked about hunting on the other islands adjacent to Islesboro, such as Hutchins and Minot's. Linda said that the DRC had not thoroughly thought through the "outer island" issue, and that the committee should discuss it and come up with a policy for next year's hunt.

- *Type of deer harvested.* Mike Boucher suggested that the DRC should designate the Special Hunt as a "doe only" season, saying that does are the ones who produce the lambs and that saving bucks would enhance the recreational hunt. Fred responded that the committee had discussed this option and had decided that there would be more hunter participation if hunters were not restricted in that way.

Review of DRC budget. Linda distributed a copy of a spreadsheet showing projected and actual costs for 2011/12, 2012/13. Because the Town office paid some of the 2012/13 costs out of the 2011/12 budget, and because fewer deer were harvested than anticipated, it is expected that \$9,136.39 will be charged against the DRC's current budget of \$13,032.

Linda suggested the DRC should give modest stipends to people who had provided valuable services to the hunt – Babe Hatch and Pete Anderson for transporting deer and Laura and Rachel for their very considerable work in tagging deer and managing the deer storage and transportation (in addition to the amount approved for them at the DRC meeting of December 6, 2012). It was agreed that the DRC will consider these payments, as well as additional funds for Ron Moon and a contribution to the Sporting Club, at the next meeting. Gil Rivera said that the DRC would be handing out a lot of money; Linda replied that the hunt was a very big job and that payments to people who put in many hours would be justified.

Reporting on the Special Hunt.

- To MDIF&W. Keel Kemper said that he would report to the department.
- To the Islesboro community. Committee members discussed several ways in which the community will be informed: 1) a verbal report to the Selectmen at their January 16th meeting 2) a box holder mailing giving the basic facts (Linda to prepare) 3) an article by Sandy Oliver (present at the meeting) for Islesboro Island News 4) a talk by Fred Thomas scheduled for Sunday, February 10th at 3 pm, Alice Pendleton Library.

Issues to be discussed. It was decided to defer discussion of unresolved issues until the next DRC meeting. Issues include:

- Clarification of DRC guidelines for eligibility to participate.
- Permit requirement.
- Safety briefings for hunters hunting on 700 Acre Island.
- Use of buckshot, crossbows.
- Policy for neighboring islands

DRC meeting schedule. The next scheduled DRC meeting will be held on Thursday, January 24, 2013 at 4:30 pm in the Town Office.

Fred thanked the visitors for making a special effort to attend the meeting.

Upon MOTION made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Gillies, Secretary

Follow-up:

- Send out notices for meeting on January 12th of all hunters who qualified. (LG)
- Draft questionnaire for hunters who qualified. (KK)
- Prepare boxholder report on hunt. (LG)