

TOWN OF ISLESBORO
DEER REDUCTION COMMITTEE

MEETING OF THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2011, 4:30 PM, TOWN OFFICE

MINUTES

Present: Jacob Bethune, Andrew Coombs, Linda Gillies, Paul Hatch, Jr., Philo Hutcheson, Don Johnson, Carol Macaulay (via speaker phone), Gilbert Rivera, Scott Sienkiewicz, Fred Thomas (chair), William Tilden

Absent: Pete Anderson, Rachel Rolerson-Smith

By Invitation: Gerry Lavigne

Fred Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:32 pm. He introduced the meeting's guest, Gerry Lavigne, Deer and Moose Biologist at IF&W from 1975-2005. During that time Gerry managed many deer reduction programs in coastal communities. He now runs a smokehouse, processing facility and custom wild game business on his farm in Boyd Lake, near Bangor; he is also associated with the Maine Sportsmen's Alliance.

Approval of Minutes, Meeting of November 3, 2011. Gil Rivera suggested that reference to IF&W's "deer permits" be changed to "depredation permits." Upon MOTION made and seconded, the minutes were approved as amended .

Options for Deer Reduction Method. Fred Thomas asked each committee member to give his/her thoughts on what a deer reduction program might look like.

- Pete Anderson. In his absence, Fred Thomas gave Pete's view. Important for committee and community to understand that a deer reduction program will not be a "hunt" but a "cull." There could be designated areas for different weapons – archery, cross-bow, shotgun (non-rifle), rifle. Culls could be after dark with baiting and lights, possibly in the first week of December.
- Fred Thomas. Agreed that hunters need to look at a deer reduction program as a cull, not a hunt in the traditional sense. This implies other hunting options. In favor of limited, two-week deer cull, maybe in first two weeks of December with firearms. Only hunters from on island. Highly regulated and controlled. Hunting regulations rulebook specifying no firearms on Islesboro should not be changed. More does should be shot – at least 50/50. Town should mount Lyme disease protection campaign in 2012.
- Philo Hutcheson. Concerned that the very large number of deer to be taken will be difficult. Not enough island hunters. In order to maximize the kill, changes could be made to regular hunting season, such as depredation permits, crossbow use, using bait. During two-week special hunt only smooth-bore firearms and buckshot, Sunday hunting, designated areas. There should be a tagging station at the ferry. A deer butchering business should be established on the island during the season.
- Not being a hunter, Linda Gillies declined to comment.

- Andrew Coombs. Agreed with Pete and Fred. Two week season after regular archery and extended archery seasons. As much “in house” as possible. Community will oppose use of rifles. Seeing plenty of deer now.
- Jacob Bethune. For a special culling season but opposed to firearms. Also noted that once deer are culled, questing ticks will cause a rise in Lyme disease for a year or more.
- Don Johnson. Opposed to baiting during regular season. In favor of baiting during special season for cull.
- Scott Sienkiewicz. Doubted if IF&W would relax regulations during regular season. Special cull season should be kept local, should have strong safety guidelines and should include the whole island. In favor of crossbows. Should be a moratorium on bucks.
- Paul Hatch, Jr. Opposed to any gun at any time. Once guns are permitted, it would be impossible to stop them. Deer numbers are less than indicated by deer surveys.
- Gilbert Rivera. Against all firearms. In favor of sanitation station that would wash ticks off deer.
- Bill Tilden. Has been extremely ill with Lyme disease. Allergic to medication, worried about treatment if he contracts it a second time. Important to reduce deer as a means to eliminating ticks, for tick numbers have increased by 300 percent in the past year. There are drawbacks to bow hunting, for some people aren’t good at it; the crossbow is difficult. Suggested controlled hunts in designated areas using rifles.
- Carol Macaulay. Not for guns, thinks deer can be reduced with archery during a special culling season. Hunters could buy two doe permits during season and culling season, culling antlerless deer only. Shouldn’t shoot trophy bucks. Agreed with proposal for an extra tagging station and on-island butchering.

Gerry Lavigne. Gerry thanked the committee for the invitation to speak and said it was a pleasure to be in a place where the community has come to the decision to have a deer reduction program. He made the following points:

- It has been IF&W policy to extend hunting to as many people as possible. However, for communities with an overabundance of deer the Department does permit controlled hunts that are separate in time from hunting season using only local hunters. Great Diamond Island in Casco Bay was one of the first examples; others are Peak’s Island, Wells Reserve, Swan’s Island.
- The increasing numbers of infected ticks and cases of Lyme disease indicate that there are a lot of deer on Islesboro; his estimate is about 50 deer per square mile.
- Before the meeting he walked around Bonnet Farm on Main Road, where he had been in 2002 in connection with an IF&W study of the effect of deer upon vegetation. He observed that the vegetation had not changed since that time, indicating that there had been little or no change in the deer population. The deer herd should be below 30 per square mile for vegetation to improve.
- If there’s an error in the Stantec pellet survey technique, it undercounts rather than overcounts.
- By his estimation, about 700 deer need to be taken off the island over a period of 3-4 years.
- A community does not have to know the exact number of deer in an area before beginning a deer reduction program. No population count is perfect, and Islesboro has

many deer. It would be impossible to overkill. A third deer survey is not needed before the committee puts together a proposed deer reduction plan.

- The present archery season and extended archery season are not sufficient to reduce the deer herd.
- Islesboro should leave the present regular hunting season the same and have a special season that is at a different time for the cull. Later in the winter is best – January or February. Will involve multiple hunters and a change in technique - pre-baiting and baiting in safe, specially designated areas; use of shotgun or possibly rifles; taking the leader doe first. As many as 40 hunters could be assigned to different designated parts of the island. Will take more than one year to reach the goal.
- As the deer become scarce, the hunting becomes more difficult. Hunters have to be willing to stick it out. Some communities have brought in sharpshooters once the herd is below 20 per square mile. Sharpshooters charge about \$300 per deer.
- Once the deer population is reduced, Islesboro could maintain the deer population at 10 per square mile by taking the “gamekeeper approach,” which is used on Peak’s Island. Local hunters are designated to kill a specified number of deer during the winter using methods such as baiting and night hunting with lights.
- Once the herd has been reduced and there is more vegetation for those left to eat, the reproduction rate goes up, and the population goes back up quickly.
- The buck/doe problem goes away if bucks have lost their horns, which happens in December/January.
- It should be mandatory that deer killed in a cull are tagged on Islesboro.
- There also could be a biological station, where deer could be examined for physical condition. They are measured and weighed, and a tooth is pulled to determine their age. Through this process the deer population’s history can be reconstructed. Perhaps the examination could be done by school students; the analysis could be done by the State. Babe Hatch said that this work could incur a cost to the Town.
- In a cull there should be no tagging fee or other cost to the hunters (a point brought up by Scott Sienkiewicz).
- Butchering culled deer on the island is a good idea. Monhegan brought in a butcher who set up in a local store; on Peak’s a butcher worked out of a refrigerated trailer. Butchers still charge \$60-\$70 per deer; some communities set up a fund in order to provide local people with meat. The community can work with the State program, Hunters for the Hungry. A reduction of 700 deer would produce 25,000 pounds of meat.

Fred Thomas thanked Gerry for coming to the meeting and for his informative remarks. It was agreed that the many points made by Gerry and others would be discussed at the committee’s next meeting on December 1st. In the meantime, the draft letter to the Selectmen and the budget for the committee’s work will be put on hold.

Adjournment. Upon MOTION made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Gillies

Amended 12/2/11