

TOWN OF ISLESBORO

LYME DISEASE PREVENTION COMMITTEE

MEETING – MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2010 – 4:30 PM – TOWN OFFICE

MINUTES

Present: Andrew Coombs, Philo Hutcheson, Linda Gillies, Laura Houle, Alison Wood, PA

Absent: Nakomis Nelson, Seth Wilbur

Invited but unable to attend: Jeffrey Grossman

The minutes of the committee's meeting of October 25, 2010 were approved.

Reports on Information Gathering

- *Lyme Disease Cases.* Allie Wood reported that the number of Lyme disease cases diagnosed by the Health Center in 2010 continues to be 10. All cases were contracted on Islesboro.
- *Information from Other Communities.* Linda Gillies reported that the information project is about 80% done. Since the October meeting she has researched several other islands, and she and Laura Houle have met by telephone conference call with Jim Connolly, IF&W Wildlife Biologist for Region 3; they are scheduled to meet by phone on December 8 with Tom Schaeffer, Wildlife Biologist for Region C (see report about that conversation at the end of these minutes).
- *Tick Count.* Linda Gillies reported that on November 12th three members of the staff of the Vector-borne Disease Laboratory came to conduct a tick count. In their report, previously circulated to the committee, they said that 93 ticks were collected during a total of 11.25 hours of flagging, equaling 8.3 ticks per hour (in the fall of 2009, 5.0 ticks/hr were flagged). The Lab will report on the percentage of infected ticks in several weeks.
- *Deer Count.* Linda Gillies has contacted Steven Pelletier, Principal of Stantec Consulting, Inc., who said that the company would agree to conduct a second deer count in March 2011. The same wildlife biologists who did the field work in March 2010, Michael Johnson and Tom Tetreau, will come to stay on Islesboro for several days. As they now know the island well, they will be able to do most of the pellet counting themselves; volunteers will not be necessary unless there is someone who particularly wants to join them. The cost will be \$12,500, which will include preparatory work and a report. Steve is in the process of preparing a proposal for the Town.

As only \$7,500 was allocated in the 2010/11 Town budget for survey work, the committee plans to request an additional \$5,000 from the Town. Jeff Grossman has said that we may do so at the special Town meeting of February 26. He said that the request should be submitted by January 19, 2011 and that the allocation would come from the Undesignated Fund.

Philo Hutcheson said that while the gathering of information was important, it was clear to him and to others that with an estimated herd of 800-900, Islesboro had an overpopulation of deer. The only remaining question is what to do about it, if anything. The sense of the meeting was

that the committee was not ready to come to any conclusions at this point and that the information-gathering process should continue.

- *2010 Deer Take.* Laura Houle reported that the number of deer tagged on Islesboro to date is approximately 70, well below the take in previous years. She said that 2010's season has been unusual – hunters are seeing few deer, there are fewer off-island hunters, and there is some confusion about the regulations governing archery.
- *Hunting Regulations on Islesboro.* Philo Hutcheson, who at a previous meeting was asked to provide a history of the laws governing hunting on Islesboro, distributed a memo he had prepared, "State of Maine Laws Concerning Deer Hunting on Islesboro" (attached). In it he summarized the law based on information provided by the Maine State Law Library. The law to establish a continual closed season on deer was approved on April 13, 1939. A law passed on September 12, 1959 continued the closed season on deer except for bow and arrow during the months of October and November. In 2003 a law allowed a special archery season to the end of regular firearms season in Waldo County.
- *Process for Changing a State Hunting Law.* Philo Hutcheson distributed a second memo that he had prepared, "Memo for the Record" (attached). In it he reported on a recent conversation with Andrew Erskine, Legislative Liaison in the Office of the Commissioner at IF&W, who described the legislative process for changing a law prohibiting the taking of deer by firearm. A town can go through that process or, if requested by the town's legislative body, the Commissioner can open closed areas on a controlled basis in order to balance the deer herd and the habitat (this was confirmed by Tom Schaeffer in the December 8 conversation – please see report at the end of these minutes). The present Commissioner, Danny Martin, has supported special hunts that are controlled by local government and the warden service. However, Commissioner Martin will soon be replaced by the new Republican state administration, and it is not known who his successor will be.

In any case, Philo Hutcheson advised that our committee should move with caution, being sensitive to the State's regulatory process and working with State officials. If the committee decides to recommend that the Town go through State's legislative process, the request needs to be in by August 2011.

Reporting to/Involving the Islesboro Community

- It was agreed that in the period between now and when the committee's report/recommendation is submitted to the Selectmen, we should disseminate information about our work through both the Islesboro Island News and inserts in the Town monthly calendar. Once up and running, the Town's website will be another venue. Members felt that Laura Houle's article in the November/December issue of IIN and the Health Center's box requesting information from seasonal residents about newly diagnosed cases of Lyme disease came out well.
- Once the committee's report/recommendation is completed, the committee should organize a community-wide forum that includes a panel of experts.

The Committee's 2011 Timetable. There was considerable discussion about the steps to be taken in order to complete the committee's work. The committee tentatively outlined the following:

- December/January – disseminate information, prepare for March deer count, begin background sections of final report to Selectmen.
- February – disseminate information, continue preparation for March deer count, continue work on background sections of final report.
- March – deer count by Stantec, continue work on background sections of final report.
- March/April – work with our Region B Wildlife Biologist and with Commissioner’s office.
- April - complete report/recommendations, submit report to Selectmen and present conclusions at a community-wide Forum.

Next meeting. The committee’s next meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 7th at 4:30 pm in the Town Office.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Gillies, Secretary

Follow-up Task List

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| Linda Gillies | -Continue information-gathering process, begin background sections of final report
-Work with Stantec to finalize March 2011 deer count proposal to Town |
| Laura Houle | -Submit article to January/February Islesboro Island News, January 15 deadline.
-Contact Jeff Grossman about a second report to the Selectmen in January or February. |
| Alison Wood | -See the film “Under Our Skin.” |

*On Wednesday, December 8, Laura Houle and Linda Gillies had an hour-long conversation with Thomas Schaeffer, Wildlife Biologist for IF&W Region C (the Cranberries, Deer Isle, Frenchboro, Isle Au Haut, Mt. Desert, Swan’s Island). The key points made by Tom Schaeffer in the conversation were:

- *Deer Reduction Programs.* IF&W is willing to consider a special hunt or hunts in a specific community on the condition that:
 - The Town is able to document that an overabundance of deer is causing a real problem. Factors would be 1) the incidence of disease caused by deer tick bites 2) depredation of the environment 2) road accidents involving deer.
 - The Town is able to document that the standard and usual means of controlling deer according to the Town ordinance is unable to address the problem.

- *IF&W's Role*
 - Once a town has made the case that its current regulations are insufficient for adequate deer control, IF&W asks the question: Is there a way to expand that effort to make it more effective?
 - IF&W then works with the Town to develop a management plan for a special hunt.
 - The Town is able to specify the type of firearm (while a Town cannot regulate the methods of hunting - length of season, shotgun safety - it can limit the use of firearms).
 - The process is elaborate and very tightly controlled by IF&W working with the Town. Tom will send Laura the written guidelines.
 - Specific hunters are designated. The plans can specify that only local hunters can participate. Each participant is carefully screened. Hunters from outside the community may be invited to participate on a case-by-case basis.
 - There is a requirement that all deer taken during the special hunt must be tagged at the local station.

- *Region C's Experience with Special Hunts*

Since 1999, IF&W's Region C has managed special hunts on three coastal islands. All were successful.

- Cranberry Isles – 1999. Only one year.
- Frenchboro. – 2001 and 2002.
- Swan's Island – 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003.

Because of an increase in the number of cases of Lyme disease, the Town of Mt. Desert explored the possibility of a controlled hunt. The proposal was voted down at a special Town Meeting in November 2006, and the committee was disbanded in 2007.

Acadia National Park is currently an issue, for an increasing number of park employees have contracted Lyme disease. IF&W is considering policies relating to public lands.

IF&W has recently had an inquiry from Isle au Haut, where Lyme disease is a problem. Because a large portion of the island is national park, establishing a plan will be complicated.

- Mice, other small mammal and birds carry the deer tick. However, it is impossible from a practical point of view and unadvisable from an environmental point of view to control these small creatures. Deer control is the only solution to stopping the spread of Lyme disease.

12/10/10