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## **'Hunt for Balance' paper by Ulster resident touts hunting as the most effective way to deal with an overabundant deer population**

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KINGSTON >> The state should take steps to expand the current crossbow hunting season and lower the crossbow discharge distance as part of its strategy to manage overabundant white-tailed deer populations, a policy paper concluded.

In his paper, "The Hunt For Balance," author Brent Miller examines management techniques and policy recommendations for dealing with overabundant deer in the Hudson Valley. That includes a look at management techniques such as contraception and sterilization, as well as hunting and the introduction of large predators.

The paper comes to the conclusion that hunting remains the most effective way to manage overabundant populations of white-tailed deer, Miller said recently. He said his paper also looks at policy recommendations that might help the state improve the efficacy of hunting to manage those populations, including expanding the crossbow hunting season and providing more access to land where deer populations are overabundant.

### **[DOCUMENT: "The Hunt for Balance"](#)**

Miller, an Ulster County native who works as the northeastern states director for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, notes in his paper that the 2014 state budget authorized the use of crossbows in the last two weeks of archery season, though set a 250-foot discharge distance for their use. He said both the crossbow allowance, as well as the reduced discharge distance for crossbows and vertical bows, were measures the state Department of Environmental Conservation had recommended in its 2012-16 deer management plan.

Currently, the state requires hunters using firearms to be a minimum of 500 feet from the nearest occupied dwelling, unless they have prior consent from the owner. For hunters using vertical bows, the setback distance is 150 feet. For hunters with crossbows, the discharge distance is 250 feet.

"Although the policy change in the 2014 budget is a positive step forward in the furtherance of both the New York hunting tradition and the DEC's ability to utilize hunters for deer management near more populated places, additional work will be required for the resulting policy to reach its full potential," Miller writes. He said potential areas of focus include expanding the crossbow season itself, as well as reducing the discharge distance to the same level as vertical bow archery. Additionally, the state should implement landowner

education programs to increase the acceptance of archery hunters in non-traditional hunting environments, such as near suburban areas, Miller said.

Miller said public education is one of the key recommendations in his paper, which was published by The Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives at SUNY New Paltz. He said the public needs to be educated, but his paper does not look at hunting as the “end all, be all.”

In his paper, Miller writes that the education campaign should focus on the positive role hunting plays in providing both conservation funding revenue, as well as its social benefits, and the effectiveness of hunting as a wildlife management tool to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and damage to forest composition and the biodiversity of an ecosystem.

Earlier in the paper, Miller wrote that a 2013 estimate based upon federal data showed that 823,400 New Yorkers identified themselves as hunters. He added that a Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation study showed those hunters contributed an estimated \$2.25 billion to the state’s economy in 2011.

Susan Booth-Binczik, a wildlife biologist with the DEC, said her agency would like to expand the crossbow hunting season, but lacks the authority to do so. That authority lies with the state Legislature, she said.

“They’ve basically held on to control of crossbows the way they haven’t with the rest of the hunting structure,” Booth-Binczik said.

Booth-Binczik said, though, the DEC is considering expanding the archery season in areas where the deer are overabundant. She noted that the hunting seasons vary across the state, but archery takes place before and after firearm season.

Still, the state needs to employ several different approaches to get the deer population to a level where it is ecologically and culturally balanced, Booth-Binczik said.

“There’s not one thing that’s going to solve it or work,” Booth-Binczik said. She said deer population control in developed areas is a very complicated issue that is compounded by several factors, including fragmented habitat, different landowners and cultural feelings regarding hunting.

Booth-Binczik noted that a deer sterilization program DEC authorized on Staten Island, which Miller mentions in his paper, was being done for research. She said the agency had not studied sterilization of male deer before and felt it was a good idea to do so.

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