

Fairfield County Deer Management Alliance
Meeting dated March 11, 2013
Wilton Town Hall
Minutes

In attendance:

David Streit, Redding
Patricia Sesto, Wilton
Colin Kelly, Westport
Dave Shugarts, Newtown
Teresa Gallagher, Shelton
William Duff, Bethel

Observers:

Peter Knight, Westport
Peter Hood, Fairfield

Welcome. David Streit presided and opened the meeting at 10.30 a.m. He asked Peter Knight to take the Minutes.

Approval of Minutes. The Minutes of the December 10, 2012 meeting, having been circulated previously, were approved.

Treasurer's report Pat Sesto said that the balance of the Alliance's funds was \$6,022.20. There had been no expenditure in 2012 apart from the cost of the PO Box because no projects were currently ongoing. Consequently the call for Towns annual dues would be deferred.

Town reports

Redding. Dave Streit said that the Ag Station project, for which \$900,000 over 3 years had been authorized, was getting under way and various sites had been identified. The study would test for tick results on land that was untouched (control), hunted, bait boxes placed, sprayed and where deer had been sharpshot with a target of reduction to 10-15 per square mile.

The Be Safe Redding program that matched private property owners with hunters had been quite successful and, at least visually, had had a marked effect on reducing deer numbers at those locations. The biggest opposition to deer reduction in Redding has been and continues to be the town appointed hunters that have been given permission to hunt on town properties as well as the Redding Land Trust.

Wilton. Pat Sesto reported that their project to match hunters with property owners had also been quite successful. Year after year property owners did not respond to the Town requests for data but they did use their own hunters. So far 150 deer had been taken and they were looking for 300.

Newtown. Dave Shugarts noted that the Town had instituted a Be Safe program over the past year that had done a very good job, spear headed by John Moran. It was estimated that two thirds of the residents were in favor, about 3-5% against and the remainder uncertain. However, it was clear that actual numbers of deer taken (35 in 2 square miles) was not effective in reducing the overall number. More public education was needed.

Bethel. William Duff said that Bethel would try to adopt a Be Safe program.

Westport – Colin Kelly said that the FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared Imaging System) deer count that had been authorized by the Town at a cost of \$6,000 had not yet taken place. As the weather was now warming up, it would probably be deferred to next year (if ever). Others felt that Howard Kilpatrick's daylight flyover with actual spotting of the deer was more effective and reliable – the FLIR (infra red) technique had produced some questionable results in Shelter Island.

Colin mentioned a symposium that had taken place in Stamford on the connection between ticks and Japanese barberry that are deer resistant. Peter Knight added that there had been no meeting with Allen Rotberg to pursue the PZP contraception option.

Shelton. Teresa Gallagher felt that Shelton was several years behind other towns in confronting the problem. She distributed an excellent pamphlet that she had designed and printed for the Alliance and that emphasized the out-of-balance-with-Nature status of the deer herd. Towns were invited to review the pamphlet for comment and eventual distribution. Her effort was warmly commended by those present.

Future plans/other towns – Pat Sesto said that, as Director of Environmental Affairs for Wilton, she spent only 2-3% of her time on the deer issue. Redding had a "Deer Warden" but it was not a paid position. Not all towns had Conservation Directors that took ownership of the deer issue. She felt that if the approach to deer management was to try to marry a citizens' approach with a Town approach, the process could be very prolonged. Citizens' initiative and

involvement could be highly effective with “Be Safe” programs on private land and had the benefit of minimal cost to Towns. These could be supplemented with controlled hunts that were relatively inexpensive.

Dave Shugarts made the point that towns were re-inventing the wheel with repetitive deer committees and deer reports. He felt strongly that the State DEEP should come up with a plan and model that could be used by all towns. For example, the USDA had developed a program for Pennsylvania. Colin Kelly agreed but noted that in many cases Connecticut required towns to establish their own environmental plans, for example, over management of wetlands. After further discussion, a **MOTION** was made: that the Alliance supported efforts, similar to Be Safe, to connect hunters with landowners to contribute to deer management in urban and suburban areas. The motion was **PASSED** unanimously.

A discussion regarding current and former participants in the Alliance to determine where we need to focus our recruiting drive. The following towns and members were discussed.

Norwalk – Shockley, Callaghan

Greenwich – Joe Casone

Bethel – Ron Maxwell, T. Kloster

Weston – David Patton – (D. Streit to contact)

Fairfield – no one identified (Colin Kelly would call the Town to enquire)

Ridgefield – not active in the Alliance but working on the problem

Danbury – Nick ? – D. Streit will follow up

Trumbull – no one identified – Teresa Gallagher would make a call.

Other items. The desirability of ongoing **tick drags** was discussed. The last one sponsored by the Alliance and undertaken by Eva Sappi several years ago had not fully defined tick density. Dave Shugarts noted the importance of conducting drags year after year as the incidence of ticks fluctuated naturally and only a count over a number of consecutive years was useful. **Western Connecticut State University's** Dr. Neeta

Connally,

Professor of Biology and Environmental Sciences, had hired students to conduct a tick prevention study in several area towns. The leading area authority was entomologist **Dr. Thomas N. Mather**, director of **University of Rhode Island's Center for Vector-Borne Disease and Tick-Encounter Resource**. The need was for density counts, not necessarily infection rates because the latter led to discussion about detection methods and was expensive. Dave Shugarts will make some calls and determine the cost of doing annual tick drags in member towns.

Hunting regs. Dave Streit said that there was some progress in simplifying these for example in the areas of definition: what is a “loaded cross bow?”, the number of shells a shotgun can hold (vs. a rifle), replacement tags in State parks and sharpshooting on private land. Dave Shugarts advised that crossbows are considered to be 5 times more effective than traditional bows at harvesting deer.

The next meeting will be on June 10th at 10.30 am, same venue.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12.00 midday.

Peter Knight