



## NEW YORK BOWHUNTERS, INC.

P.O. Box 619  
LaFayette, N.Y. 13084

February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Dear Commissioner Grannis,

Although New York Bowhunters (NYB) has not received a reply from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Patricia Riexinger, the Division Director of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources has produced a generic letter (see attached) in response to the loss of early season bowhunting opportunity in the southern zone. I would like to comment on this letter as it unfortunately continues to represent the Bureau of Wildlife's stalled position regarding this matter.

In the opening paragraph it is stated that *"This is an outcome that was anticipated and openly discussed when the DEC restructured deer hunting seasons in 2005"*. NYB did indeed have a discussion with the DEC on the restructuring proposal. It was agreed that in exchange for NYB's support to open the regular firearms season on a Saturday, early season bow hunters would be compensated for the loss of this very valuable weekend of hunting opportunity during the prime "rut" hunting time with added weekend opportunity on the front end of the season in early October. NYB upheld their end of the agreement but the DEC not only reneged, they took hunting time away from the early season bow hunter. There was no further discussion with the DEC on this matter despite a Herculean effort on our part to do so. An annual opening date of October 1<sup>st</sup>, as originally proposed by the DEC, made sense as it conformed to the beginning of the license sale year, it standardized the opening date to one that could be easily remembered and it conforms to the opening date of October 1<sup>st</sup> for Suffolk County archers.

A second DEC version proposed to open the season on the Saturday **after** Columbus Day. Countering this 2<sup>nd</sup> proposal, NYB suggested opening the season on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in October, with no success. Finally in a spirit of compromise we stated via numerous avenues of communication, that we could live with opening the season on the Saturday **before** Columbus Day, which would at least restore the one weekend of hunting opportunity that was lost as a result of opening the regular season on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in November. The DEC never engaged NYB in openly discussing any of our alternate suggestions, resulting in the implementation of the current season structure despite the huge volume of letters and correspondence in opposition.

The table after the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph is accurate. We took the liberty of expanding the table by one year, while comparing season length for past, present and the rejected Saturday before Columbus Day opening date that was earlier proposed.

### Early Bowhunting Season in the Southern Zone

| Old Season Structure<br>October 15 <sup>th</sup> Opener |                     | Current Season Structure<br>Sat. <b>After</b> Columbus Day | Rejected NYB Proposal<br>Sat. <b>Before</b> Columbus Day |
|---|---------------------|--|--|
| <u>Year</u>   | <u>Total # Days</u> | <u>Total # Days</u>  | <u>Total # Days</u>                                      |
| 2008  | 33                  | 28   | 35   |
| 2009  | 32                  | 35   | 42   |
| 2010  | 38                  | 35   | 42   |
| 2011  | 37                  | 35   | 42   |
| 2012  | 35                  | 35   | 42   |
| 2013  | 34                  | 28   | 35   |
| 2014  | 33                  | 28   | 35   |
| <b>Average:</b>   | <b>35</b>           | <b>32 (lost 3 days)</b>                                    | <b>39 (gain 4 days)</b>                                  |
| <b>Range:</b>   | 32-38 days          | 28-35 days   | 35- 42 days  |

When compared to the season structure prior to the 2005 change, bowhunters on average lost three days of hunting opportunity, including the loss of one very valuable weekend of hunting during the rut. Early season bowhunters would have been far better off with the old season structure vs. the current structure. However, with the scenario of opening the early southern zone archery season on the Saturday before Columbus Day, bowhunters would gain on average four days and more importantly it would restore the lost weekend of hunting opportunity. One of the original goals of the DEC's restructuring proposal was to enhance hunting opportunity and hunter satisfaction. Opening the season on the Saturday before Columbus Day would have accomplished both.

Paragraph three describes how the expansion of the late combined archery and muzzleloading season adds to the total number of days of bowhunting opportunity. Bowhunters would never relinquish early season hunting time in November and have it replaced with late-season hunting after the regular firearms season. This is like comparing apples to oranges. The early and late seasons are two completely different animals. The early season is an archery-only season during more favorable weather conditions for bow hunting. The late season is a shared season with muzzleloader hunters with weather conditions more favorable for firearm hunting and less favorable for bowhunting. Bowhunting is a close range sport and when the guns go bang during the preceding regular season and via muzzleloaders during the shared late season, the deer go running, making effective and enjoyable bowhunting nearly impossible. As such, the extension of the late season has no tangible value to bowhunters. The addition of two days during the late season is by no means compensation for the major loss of prime archery-only hunting time during the early archery-only season.

The fourth paragraph describes the advantages of opening the season on a Saturday for the purpose of providing added opportunity for youth hunters. This is exactly what we are trying in vain to point out. Weekends are the key to hunting satisfaction for all hunters, as many are working or at school and only have weekends available to participate. That is why it is so important **not** to cut weekend hunting opportunity, as was done with the current southern zone archery-only season. In fact, opening the season on the Saturday before Columbus Day would only increase opening day weekend opportunity for junior hunters as this is a three day weekend for school age archers.

The fifth paragraph appears to be a weak effort by the DEC to justify their entrenched position for not opening the early archery season on an earlier date. For decades bow and small game seasons have overlapped without any conflicts. Quote, "...specifically small game and game bird hunters, noted that there was little time for them to be afield in the autumn and use their sporting dogs without causing conflicts from other hunters". Conflict with what other hunters? The vast majority of hunters using sporting dogs are pursuing game in habitats typically uninhabited by bowhunters. The fact is, most bowhunters are multi-season hunters and are also participating in these overlapping seasons. Field encounters between bow and small game hunters are rare and inconsequential.

The last line of the sixth paragraph states that " .... increasing the season length for bowhunters in 2008 is not currently warranted for biological or population management purposes". For years wildlife biologist have been stating that, except for archery-only areas, bowhunting seasons have little effect on the management of deer populations and that big game hunters in general are not concentrating on harvesting additional female deer. The extension of the early archery season will not negatively effect the deer population, but rather can only aid the DEC in their quest to harvest additional female deer. The more time allowed in the season will result in a greater probability that bowhunters can be successful in filling the antlerless tags at their disposal.

**In summary the following points are clear;**

1. As a result of the implementation of the 2005 season changes, the early season bowhunter in the southern zone lost on average three (3) days of hunting opportunity, including one very valuable weekend,
2. There are four alternate actions, in order of preference, which would correct this injustice;
  - (1) open the early archery-only season on October 1<sup>st</sup>,
  - (2) open the early archery-only season on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in October,
  - (3) open the early archery-only season on the Saturday **before** Columbus Day,
  - (4) open the regular firearms season on the Monday after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in November,
3. The addition of any days during the late combined archery & muzzleloading season is by no means compensation for the time lost during the early archery-only season,
4. The DEC has been delinquent in their duty to honestly deliberate with their constituents, the sporting community of NYS. Such behavior only erodes the credibility of the department. Such erosion is completely unnecessary and easily restored by correcting the mistakes of the past.

Thank you for listening to our concerns with the hope that you can help us resolve this issue in a constructive manner. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely yours,



Gary Socola  
President  
New York Bowhunters, Inc.