

August 29, 2016

Dear Assemblymember Pamela Hunter,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet on Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at 2PM to discuss deer population management and how the deer density affects the public and environment. There are also the related issues of ticks and Lyme disease. Also, thank you very much for all your outreach to obtain a NYS grant of \$200,000 for use to address these issues in the City of Syracuse and Town of Dewitt!! Sandra Porter, Linda DeStefano and Jan Markarian are constituents in your district. Regarding the issue of deer population management, we are advocating for a humane, non lethal program whenever possible...leaving lethal methods as a last resort. In all our conversations and research, the overwhelming majority of the public want to solve problems that arise between humans and wildlife through science and the principles of humane education. This is a win/win to allow for solving problems through coexistence while also protecting our wildlife companions, living sentient beings, from pain and suffering whenever possible. The public would like to be inspired...and this approach provides a path to problem solving and inspiration!!

Each of us has been working on the deer issue for a number of years including the related issues of ticks, Lyme disease, automobile accidents and deforestation. Sandra was a member of the Deer Committee in CNY and the City/County Urban Deer Task Force. Linda has also contributed to the current work on these issues as well as going back to the public hearings that addressed these issues pertaining to Green Lakes State Park. Linda is also president of People for Animal Rights of CNY. Jan has also been a contributor to the City/County Urban Deer Task Force.

We have done extensive research, attended probably all the related meetings (and that is including with the Village of Fayetteville, NY), and discussed the seriousness of the above issues with the public. Our contacts range from the DEC, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Dr. Paul Curtis, Dr. Brian Underwood, the Humane Society of the United States, the Animal Welfare Institute, White Buffalo and now, the Cary Institute. We have also discussed and learned from the animal welfare advocates of the successful doe sterilization programs in Fairfax City, Virginia and Clifton Deer Park in Cincinnati, Ohio. We have also met with government officials and also reached out to the scientific community to gather as much knowledge as possible. We have talked to the acting directors as well as the wildlife biologists associated with many organizations. We also have learned a great deal and received support from wildlife rehabilitation specialists. And these are just some of our ongoing and many contacts from over the years. All in all, we have received the support by many in the public in addition to animal welfare advocates in CNY, across NYS, and even other locations in the United States. The advocacy for a humane path for human/animal coexistence is extensive and needs the support from government officials.

There is so much background as well as evolving information on these issues. We thought best to include but highlight information so that this letter and meeting are not overwhelming. We hope we can continue to share information over time.

I. Green Lakes State Park:

The background in CNY regarding all these issues includes Green Lakes State Park. There have been a number of meetings over the years to discuss whether Green Lakes should adopt a policy of culling the

deer. In each case, the decision was to oppose the culling of deer based on the potential risks to the public in addition to a desire for a non lethal problem solving approach whenever possible.

The issue at Green Lakes State Park continues to come up to this day given how the Village of Fayetteville implemented a deer culling program during the Winter, 2016. However, in talking with Laura Tully, manager of Green Lakes State Park, she was adamant there is no current plan for culling the deer at Green Lakes State Park. Laura Tully referred me to the Green Lakes State Park Master Plan for all the background information regarding this decision. Again, this is a humane, non lethal approach whenever possible. The article is quite long so did not make a copy but below is the link.

Green Lakes State Park Master Plan: <http://nysparks.com/inside-our-agency/documents/MasterPlans/GreenLakesStatePark/GreenLakesStateParkDEIS.pdf>

II. The City of Syracuse and the Town of Dewitt took up discussion of these issues in September, 2012. There were initial meetings in a Deer Committee that led to the establishment of the City/County Urban Deer Task Force in August, 2013. Please see below for the information accumulated in the City/County Urban Deer Task Force Report dated September, 2014. The recommendation of this report favors the humane, non lethal approach (and mentions the doe sterilization) whenever possible. Please see page 7 of the report for the recommendation of a pilot program for this area and the need to secure NYS funding in addition to local funds in order to help implement the needs of the public health issues addressed by this report.

City/County Urban Deer Task Force Report, September, 2014: Please see the attachment.

It is also important to note that at the same time, Brian Shapiro, NYS Director of the Humane Society of the United States, provided a letter of support for humane, non lethal methods to address these issues. Please see the attachment. Also, NYS HSUS and the Animal Welfare Institute had offered to meet with our local government officials and observe our area firsthand with the potential for our CNY community to receive financial aid and guidance on humane, non lethal methods from these organizations.

III. The Cary Institute and Felicia Keesing, Ph.D scientist of Bard College:

Please see the articles in the links that are related to the research being done at the Cary Institute in NYS. We first learned of the Cary Institute in November, 2015 while talking to Scott Butler in the Office of NYS Senator Valesky. Our discussion began given the information that the NYS Senate formed a Lyme Disease Task Force in 2013 given the growing need to address this serious public health problem.

Task Force:

<http://www.nysenate.gov/press-release/senate-majority-coalition-announces-task-force-lyme-disease>

The Cary Institute:

<http://www.caryinstitute.org/discover-ecology/lyme-disease>

The Tick Project that connects the Cary Institute and the Partnership with Bard College, the CDC, the NYS and Dutchess County Departments of Health:

<http://www.tickproject.org/>

Felicia Keesing, Ph.D., Scientist at Bard College and Her Major Role in The Tick Project:

Dr. Felicia Keesing...Background and Research:

http://www.feliciakeesing.com/uploads/7/5/6/8/75682377/flk_cv_-mar2016_-web.pdf

Cary Institute, Bard receive grant of 5 million dollars for large scale tick control study:

<http://www.caryinstitute.org/newsroom/cary-institute-bard-receive-grant-large-scale-tick-control-study>

IV. The Village of Fayetteville, NY:

The Village of Fayetteville killed 89 deer in a culling program in the Winter, 2016. The announcement for this plan began in the Summer, 2015. There were public hearings as well as information shared. We attended these meetings and shared information to the Village Deer Committee and the Village of Fayetteville. We opposed the culling program...especially the earliest proposal to allow amateurs to use bow hunting for the cull. Although this earliest proposal could save money, this not only entailed additional risk to public safety but also additional pain and suffering to the deer. Although the Village went ahead with the culling program, at least the plan entailed the use of professionals hired by U.S. Wildlife Services using muffled firearms.

Although there was discussion about automobile accidents and deforestation, the driving force to justify the deer culling was based on the argument/claim pushing the proposed linking of deer density, the existence of ticks and a resulting incidence of Lyme disease. The U.S. Wildlife Services did issue a final report on the culling program in the Village of Fayetteville. Unfortunately, there is no mention of a tick count per deer killed. Our advocates have learned a great deal of information from White Buffalo and the Clifton Deer Park doe sterilization project in Cincinnati, Ohio. We learned that the tick count per deer is very important and should be part of the required data. You would think this would be especially true given the argument made by the Village of Fayetteville for culling the deer...and linking the need for this culling to the ticks and Lyme disease. The report did have a discussion about automobile accidents and deforestation but very little detail on the ticks and Lyme disease.

Please see the attachment for the copy of the U.S. Wildlife Services Project Summary Report (4/1/16).

Article on the Fayetteville Deer Culling:

http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/04/fayetteville_says_deer_culling_successful_what_were_the_numbers.html#incart_m-rpt-1

V. Felicia Keesing from Bard College, the Cary Institute and The Tick Project Oppose the Implementation of Deer Culling and the Use of Chickens by the Village of Fayetteville as a Means to Cut Lyme Risk in Fayetteville:

In the Spring, 2016 the Village of Fayetteville came out with two proposed methods to continue efforts in the Village of Fayetteville . One method was to continue with the culling and even trying to expand the area to cull the deer. The second was a proposal to begin to use home ownership of chickens with the idea that the chickens would eat any ticks on a homeowner's property so as to keep the tick count down.

Plan for culling the deer to continue:

http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/05/usda_residents_interfered_with_fayetteville_deer_hunt.html#incart_river_home

Chicken proposal for tick management:

http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/05/chickens_as_a_weapon_against_ticks_cny_village_considers_proposal.html

As a response, Felicia Keesing from Bard College and the Cary Institute came out very strongly in opposition to these two proposals by the Village of Fayetteville .

Article by Felicia Keesing:

Killing the deer and chicken plan not the way to cut lyme disease (by Felicia Keesing):

http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/05/tick_expert_killing_deer_keeping_chickens_wont_cut_lyme_disease_in_fayetteville.html

VI. Going Forward Thru Science and Principles of Humane Education:

Please see the recent article that came out August 17, 2016 from the Cary Institute. Felicia Keesing discusses the “astonishing” local response in Dutchess County, NY. The article states “The response rate means Dutchess County could be the model for other areas affected by tick-borne disease.” The importance in these articles is to focus on the rodents such as mice and chipmunks...not deer. Also, as stated in the earlier article by Felicia Keesing is the need for communities to be supportive of the local wildlife such as opossum and fox as they both provide a means to naturally combat Lyme. As you can see in her articles, the approach is to combat ticks and Lyme through chemical use. The chemical treatment kills the ticks but is not toxic to humans and animals. The analogy given is that similar to the tick treatment that is given to our pets.

The Cary Institute...Tick Study gets “astonishing” local response:
<http://www.caryinstitute.org/newsroom/tick-study-gets-astonishing-local-response>

All of this updated information has been shared with Dave Cassel who is a member of the Fayetteville Deer Committee. We got to meet and have been sharing information since last year. Also, hopefully, we can be on the same page as Dave has stated he is in favor of trying to solve these issues in a humane, non lethal way whenever possible.

We are grateful that Dave reached out to make contact with Felicia Keesing. He learned that she is temporarily away. However, Dave was able to talk to Shannon Duerr at the Cary Institute (845-677-7600 ex.286). Shannon said the best way to contact the tick team is via email at: tickproject@caryinstitute.org. Please see the enclosed copy of the email from Dave to Jan dated August 25, 2016 which gives a description of the work.

Please also see the copy of the return email from Jan to Dave dated August 26, 2016. Please see how part of this email includes a request that the Village of Fayetteville put a HALT, at this time, to any planned culling of deer. This will allow time for needed research to take place and to share information with The Tick Project...especially given that this research in the Cary Institute does not recommend the culling of deer as a solution. Why would our CNY community not support the efforts of the NYS Lyme Disease Task Force including all the multimillion dollar funding aligned with the Cary Institute??

In the meantime, to continue discussion on deer density and the incidence of automobile accidents, we still need to look at the ongoing humane, non lethal efforts taking place in NYS and around the country. Please see the copies of articles on how Fairfax City, Virginia continues its five year deer spay project. There is also the recent decision that Staten Island, NY is implementing a humane, non lethal buck sterilization program.

Second Phase of Five-Year “Deer Spay Project” Kicks Off in Fairfax, City:
<https://awionline.org/content/second-phase-five-year-deer-spay-project-kicks-fairfax-city>

A Humane Nation (Wayne Pacelle’s Blog)...New York Mayor Supports a Very Different Kind of Birth Control Program:
<http://blog.humanesociety.org/wayne/2016/05/staten-island-non-lethal-deer-management-program.html>

Please also see how the Humane Society of the United States is reaching out to urban areas in order to assist dealing with urban wildlife conflicts in humane and effective ways. It’s called the Wild Neighbor’s Program and the article below (May 13, 2016) describes the program.

Wild Neighbors Program Launched to Assist Cities Handle Urban Wildlife Conflicts Humanely:
http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press_releases/2016/05/wild-neighbors-launched-assist-cities-handle-wildlife-conflicts.html#.VzYz5kP9JDU.twitter

Please also see the precedent set in NYS in 2009 for the financial assistance provided to assist with deer population by the humane use of fencing. The program was allocating up to one million dollars for the program.

NYS Grant Assistance To Assist To Provide Fencing To Help On Deer Population:
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/18/nyregion/18bdeerli.html?_r=0

Regarding the issue of humane education (learning respect, kindness and compassion as a benefit to humans, animals and our environment) there are three articles enclosed:

The definition of humane education found in Wikipedia...**Humane education** is usually defined as the use of education to nurture compassion and respect for living things.^{[1][2]} In addition to a traditional focus on the treatment of non-human animals, humane education also increasingly contains content related to the environment, the compassionate treatment of other people, and the interconnectedness of issues pertaining to people and the planet.^[3] Please see the link below.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humane_education

Also, Pope Francis stressed the importance of animals and the environment in his most recent encyclical. Please see in the article, "A Humane Nation, Wayne Pacelle's Blog" for some of this discussion.
<http://blog.humanesociety.org/wayne/2015/09/welcome-pope-francis-champion-of-animals.html>

"His encyclical is full of references to animals and calls on all of us to embrace a more humane path. He named his encyclical "[Praised Be](#)" (*Laudato Si*) after St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun*, in which the Saint praises God for animals and creation."

"The Pope notes that "our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings."

"human power has limits and that it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly."

"Also, his inclusion of animal issues among other pressing issues like poverty, climate change, immigration, and prison reform, indicates his view that these issues are connected and that they belong among the moral concerns of Christians everywhere."

Also, last but not least please see the information on this humane education program bringing respect, kindness and compassion to and for children and wildlife companions. "Bring the Fur-Bearers Into Your Classroom". <http://thefurbearers.com/blog/bring-fur-bearers-your-classroom> "Critical thinking and compassion can go hand-in-hand in classrooms across Canada this year as The Fur-Bearers unveils new additions to their [Humane Education program](#)."

VII. Conclusion:

Again, thank you so much for the ability to meet and share this information. We tried to keep this as brief as possible while still including the information that has evolved over the years. We are also grateful for your ability to receive the NYS grant of \$200,000 in order to address our important public health issues which exist locally and throughout NYS. We hope that CNY will adopt a program of solving problems thru science and including the implementation of humane education...so this can be a win/win problem solving approach to help and protect our humans, animals and environment.

We are asking that CNY reach out to the Cary Institute and The Tick Program, in order to learn and benefit from the relevant research that is taking place. This research evolved from the statewide concern about ticks and Lyme risk. This is a multimillion dollar research project that entails the partnership of so many important organizations...The Cary Institute, The Tick Project, the CDC, the NYS and Dutchess County Departments of Health and Bard College with scientist, Dr. Felicia Keesing. Why would we not want CNY to benefit from all this important research... especially given our serious concerns about ticks and Lyme risk over the years?

And not to belabor this point, but in all the current research, the overwhelming majority of the public wants to solve our problems through coexistence with our wildlife companions...a win/win to problem solving and protecting these sentient beings from unnecessary pain and suffering. As Oprah Winfrey just discussed in her recent program on OWN (August, 2016) with Wayne Pacelle, CEO of the Humane Society of the United States..."Isn't this one of the biggest spiritual issues of our time?"

Sincerely yours,

Sandra Porter

Linda DeStefano

Jan Markarian

