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The Economics Yearling Buck Protection

Good afternoon Chairpersons Senator Young, Senator O'Mara, Assemblyman Farrell, Assemblyman Englebright and members of the Committees. I thank you and the Legislature for the opportunity to speak today. My name is David Hartman and I am the President of the New York State Whitetail Management Coalition. Our membership represents people in 56 different NY Counties who range in age from teens to octogenarians.

Since the dawn of time, adult bucks have fascinated humans. Cave drawings from thousands of years ago depict these magnificent creatures. The fascination continues today. Our road signs depict adult bucks with large racks. As do our nature shows. The New York state hunting guide has only 2 pictures of immature yearling bucks and 44 images of adult 3.5-year-old bucks. However, wildlife viewers, hunters and the citizens of New York are not getting to experience a natural deer herd with adult bucks in the population. This is because of a law from 1911 designed to protect female deer and restore a depleted population, which are no longer New York's objectives but still the law of the land. This 1911 law defined a legal buck as one with one 3-inch antler. The law makes every immature yearling buck legal to harvest. As a result, today NY has the highest yearling buck harvest rate in the NATION. It is unnatural and inappropriate to have such a disproportionate impact on wildlife.

Hunting-related expenditures in NY totaled $1.6 billion and wildlife watching expenditures totaled $4.1 billion in 2011.

New York is losing hunters at an alarming rate. We have lost half our hunters since 1990 and half of the hunters now are over the age of 50. Everyone remembers the days when hunters filled restaurants and hotels in rural towns. Losing hunters is extremely costly. First, we lose the important revenue in upstate communities and hunting licenses funds for environmental programs. Then we have no way to control the deer populations on a landscape scale resulting in environmental, agricultural and automobile collision damage.

What to Do? When a business is losing customers, the first thing to ask is, are customers satisfied with the product or service?

DEC/Cornell studies have found that most hunters are dissatisfied with their hunting experience. Further, that hunters of all ages throughout the state widely support a regulation to protect most yearling

bucks from harvest. In addition, a recent survey shows that 69% of hunters find it important to protect yearling bucks. There is no question hunters want to see and harvest adult bucks.

The solution is adopting an appropriate size limit to protect yearling bucks with regulation or legislation so they can reach adulthood. Since 2005 Antler Restrictions to protect yearling bucks have been adopted successfully four times in New York. The current New York antler restriction program is among the most successful in the country at protecting yearling bucks and increasing the adult bucks in the population. 77 to 90.5% of hunters in the area support continuing the antler restriction program. Hunters highly value this program. However, this program is only in place in a small portion of the state, which has lower quality habitat.

In March of 2015, DEC's Analysis found that the expansion of mandatory antler restrictions to most of the state would best satisfy hunter values and interests in the long term. However, the program's expansion has not been adopted.

There is no cost to implement this program. It only requires changing a few words in the hunting guide. We have a winning lottery ticket for a vastly improved buck herd- The best soils and the right species of whitetail deer. The only missing part is a modern size limit that allows bucks to get a year or two older and reach adulthood. There is only economic upside to recruiting new hunters and increasing hunting and wildlife viewing activity.

Hunters are recruited by one on one communication. When hunters see adult bucks it excites them and they transfer their enthusiasm to other hunters, lapsed hunters and future hunters, youth. Every extra day that hunters go afield generates additional revenue.

It is time to give New York hunters, the hunting experience they deserve. It is time to update this hundred-year-old relic of a law of one 3 inch antler and move forward with protecting yearling bucks throughout the state. We cannot afford to wait any longer, the economics are just too critical.

It takes more than stating NY is a premiere hunting destination. It takes changing a 100-year-old law created before the science of deer management was invented which no long makes any sense.

We look forward to the expansion of antler restrictions. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

About: The New York State Whitetail Management Coalition is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving deer management and the hunting experience in New York State. The coalition is the only statewide organization dedicated exclusively to improving New York's deer management and hunting. The organization brings together thousands of New York deer hunters and experts to advocate for sound biological deer management solutions that produce the best deer hunting experience possible in New York State. www.nyswmc.com