



**STATE OF NEW YORK CONSERVATION FUND ADVISORY BOARD**

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**<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/566.html>**

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**January 27<sup>th</sup> , 2021 Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2021-2022 Executive Budget  
“Environmental Conservation”**

**Testimony Given by Jason Kemper, Chairman, NYS Conservation Fund Advisory Board**

Good morning. On behalf of the Conservation Fund Advisory Board and the sporting community in NYS, thank you for allowing me to testify in relation to the 2021-2022 State Budget. The Conservation Fund Advisory Board (CFAB), as spelled out in the State Finance Law (Section 83 Conservation Fund) and ECL (Section 11-0327) is charged with ensuring that the money in the Conservation Fund is spent specifically for the care, management, protection, and enlargement of the fish and game resources of the State and the promotion of public fishing, hunting, and trapping. The main source of revenue for the Conservation Fund is the sale of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses.

The sale of these licenses in New York generates approximately \$46 million dollars per year and leverages another \$25 million in federal aid. The Conservation Fund directly funds 240 individuals in the NYSDEC and another 65 positions in the Department are funded from the federal aid associated with sporting license sales.

According to a 2011 study performed by the United States Fish Wildlife Service, the New York sporting community spends approximately \$4.95 billion per year pursuing their activities. This ranked #2 in the nation. Those sporting activities supported approximately 56,000 jobs in New York State (#5 in the nation) and generated over \$623 million in state and local taxes.

Through the American System of Conservation Funding, sportsmen and women contribute immensely to conservation efforts. This “user pays, public benefit”- model essentially provides a vast majority of the funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. This system allows for the proper management and conservation of the state’s resources while providing benefits for the public at large, not just the sporting community.

I think we can all agree that 2020 was certainly an unprecedented year and there was, therefore, a significant boom in all forms of outdoor recreation. This boost was also evident in the sporting community. All categories of license sales showed increases during the 2020 calendar year. However, more importantly is the dramatic increase in requests for Hunter Education Courses, because these courses are mandatory for all individuals prior to their first purchase of a hunting license.

In 2020, there were 69,264 individuals who completed the hunter education certificate program. And additionally, 50,736 individuals have signed up for the course and are in the process of completing the requirements. To put this into perspective prior to 2020, approximately 25,000 individuals completed the hunter education program on a yearly basis. This is an astonishing 176 % increase in individuals completing the course in 2020. A large percentage of those completing the 2020 program include youth between 11-13 years of age, as well as a large percentage of female participation. In addition, there is increased participation from urban and suburban areas.

## **Universal Hunting Age of 12**

The need to keep the Conservation Fund solvent and also to recruit younger people into the sporting community is crucial. Currently, 12 and 13-year olds with adult supervision can only pursue small game in New York State, while 14 and 15-year olds are allowed to pursue big game under adult supervision. CFAB strongly supports the Executive Budget proposal of instituting a minimum Universal Hunting Age of 12 which will allow 12 and 13-year olds under adult supervision to pursue big game. As previously stated, 12 and 13-year olds can already pursue small game, but the new provision will simply allow them to legally pursue big game in New York State.

At this time the average age of a sporting license buyer in New York is over 50 years of age. The Executive Budget proposal to allow the same hunting rules for all hunters aged 12 through 15 years with adult supervision would recruit a younger group of sporting license buyers. Every other state in the nation allows a person 12 years of age, or younger, this full range of hunting opportunities. Because of this, New York loses out on the economic benefits from this activity as older hunters looking to take their young people on a hunting vacation are unable to consider New York if their child's age is younger than 14. In addition, surrounding states are getting the local tourism revenue and license sales revenue associated with New York's youth and family leaving the state to pursue big game opportunities where they are legally allowed to do so. Attached to this testimony is a chart prepared by the New York Sportsman's Advisory Council illustrating the big game age restrictions by state.

The universal hunting age of 12 was supported in the 2012-2016 NYS Deer Management Plan and is a recommendation in the Draft 2021-2025 NYS Deer Management Plan that was released in December and is currently in the public review phase.

Hunting provides quality time for parents to bond with their children and other family members in an outdoor setting. These are excellent opportunities to introduce youth to nature, conservation, and responsible wildlife management. Hunting, especially at an early age, imprints in youth the mindset that game management and environmental stewardship go hand and hand. Statistics have proven that youth hunters, under the supervision of an adult, are the safest hunters afield. Starting youth at a young age with a mentor results in an increased long-term retention rate and has proven to make them safer and more responsible hunters when they are old enough to hunt on their own.

CFAB believes that the future of hunting in New York State, as well as the conservation and sustainability of our natural resources, is directly tied to the recruitment and retention of our youth. Allowing 12 year olds the legal opportunity to partake in all New York hunting opportunities will have a positive impact on hunter safety, family recreation, local and statewide economies, and the Conservation Fund.

## **Full Inclusion of Crossbow**

CFAB supports the Executive Budget Proposal for full inclusion of crossbow use during all big game seasons. Currently, crossbow use is limited to a portion of the regular and bowhunting big game seasons in New York State.

Limited crossbow use was implemented as part of the 2014-15 State Budget. The current law requires that individuals possess a muzzleloader privilege in order to use the crossbow during allowable seasons. The Executive Budget proposal seeks to classify the crossbow as archery equipment and require a license holder to purchase a bowhunter privilege in order to utilize a crossbow.

Each year since the crossbow use was legalized there has been a steady increase in the number of deer harvested using the crossbows. The continued expansion of crossbow use is an important deer management tool, especially in urban settings. In addition, the full inclusion of crossbows will increase license sales as well as provide additional opportunities to all ability levels of sportsmen and sportswomen.

The use of crossbows for all hunting seasons is supported in the 2012-2016 NYS Deer Management Plan and is a recommendation in the Draft 2021-2025 NYS Deer Management Plan that was released in December and is currently in the public review phase.

In addition, as is the case with youth hunting opportunities, many neighboring states have provide crossbow opportunities that are more inclusive than New York State.

Aside from the items explained in detail above the Conservation Fund Advisory Board fully supports the additional items outlined in the Executive Budget Proposal. This support includes increased investment opportunities for the Lifetime License Trust Account, improving the provisions for youth utilizing treestands with an adult, and the proposed investments in infrastructure being proposed in the New York Works Program.

In conclusion, I would like to state the Executive Budget proposal to increase opportunities for 12 and 13-year old youth and increasing the opportunities for the sporting community will have an immediate positive impact on the Conservation Fund. However, these proposals go further than that. The sale of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses fund a significant amount of staff and management for all species of plants and animals. In essence, the sporting community pays for management of species that they will never pursue. Furthermore, the more solvent the Conservation Fund is the less dependent this species management is on the NYS General Fund. As we approach unprecedented financial uncertainty ahead, this is more important than ever.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to working with legislature on items relating to the sporting community.

## Minimum Hunting Ages for Big and Small Game Hunting with a Firearm, by State

State	Minimum Age, Big Game, Rifle	Minimum Age, Small Game, Rifle
<b>New York</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>
Connecticut	12	12
Rhode Island	12	12
Massachusetts	12	12
Idaho	12	10
California	12	No Minimum Age
Colorado	12	No Minimum Age
Minnesota	12	No Minimum Age
Nevada	12	No Minimum Age
North Dakota	12	No Minimum Age
Utah	12	No Minimum Age
Wyoming	12	No Minimum Age
Iowa	11	11
Nebraska	10-12, depending on species	No Minimum Age
Delaware	10	10
Montana	10	10
New Jersey	10	10
South Dakota	10	10
Arizona	10	No Minimum Age
Oregon	9	No Minimum Age
Pennsylvania	7	7
Alabama	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Alaska	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Arkansas	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Florida	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Georgia	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Hawaii	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Illinois	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Indiana	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Kansas	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Kentucky	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Louisiana	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Maine	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Maryland	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Michigan	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Mississippi	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Missouri	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
New Hampshire	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
New Mexico	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
North Carolina	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Ohio	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Oklahoma	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
South Carolina	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Texas	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Tennessee	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Vermont	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Virginia	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Washington	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
West Virginia	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age
Wisconsin	No Minimum Age	No Minimum Age



## Minimum Ages for Hunting Big Game with a Firearm

