

The Advent of Deer Hunting on Long Island  
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2nd Place Winner - 2002 ESSAY WINNER

Betsey Patten is a state representative for Moultonborough, New Hampshire. Representative Patten has lived in Moultonborough for 18 years and has been in the state legislature for 8 years. She became a representative because she loves this town, she wanted to give something positive back to the community and provide a voice for Moultonborough in the legislature. One of the ways she has helped the town is to help make Long Island the first island in NH to allow hunting.

Long Island had a bad deer over-population problem. The deer were so thick that you couldn't grow anything outside of a fence. The problem was getting worse because there were people who were feeding deer, which can cause them to use up their fat layers and succumb to starvation or predation. According to the State Fish and Game Department there should only be a maximum of six to ten deer per square mile to maintain a healthy balance. Long Island had over sixty deer per square mile or six to ten times the number of deer that would result in a healthy deer population. The deer got on the island by swimming, walking across the ice or walking over the bridge when it was built. As a result, even though one benefit of so many deer was that they were beautiful to watch, Long Island had a serious deer overpopulation problem.

When Rep. Patten first became involved with this issue, there was no deer hunting allowed on any island within the state. After talking to many people, including residents of Long Island and wildlife professionals and holding several meetings in her own home, it was decided that hunting was the only way to control the herd. But there were a lot of opinions on how it should be done and even several people who objected to any hunting.

So new legislation was introduced that allowed bow hunters and muzzleloaders to hunt on the island. About twenty people opposed the legislation and the people who liked the legislation think it is a complete success. Although it took over five years to get the legislation passed, over 100 people helped and supported the effort.

The legislation was developed in consultation with the Department of Fish and Game to make sure the deer herd was safely thinned out, that property owners could make their own decision about hunting on their land, and that the residents

of Long Island were not disturbed by the hunting. In order to achieve all this, muzzleloaders were not allowed to hunt on the island because they are too loud, if your bow couldn't pull a certain amount of force the deer might not die in one hit, you have to be in a tree stand ten feet off the ground in order to minimize the chance of someone getting hurt and that you cannot hunt from a car because there is too great a chance you will hurt someone. In exchange for the opportunity to hunt the hunters must plant some trees to try and reforest the island with plants the deer don't like. The first season or two there weren't many hunters so a sharpshooter was hired to thin out the deer. The sharpshooter first planted bait in several areas on the island to attract the deer. He was allowed to hunt at night and was supervised by Fish and Game officers the entire time. All of the deer he shot were weighed, had the gender and age recorded, skinned and donated to the food bank. It took two legislative sessions to get the law passed and Rep. Patten believes the hunting has worked to reduce the deer population. Despite her success, Rep. Patten said she never wants to do it again! That is the end of my story about Long Island. I hope you enjoy it. Read on for my Works Cited area!