

Deer Hunt Cancelled One Day Before Killing Was To Begin

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As Friends of Animals Staffers Expose Committee Activity



Since 1997, when Darien's First Selectman appointed the Darien Deer Management Committee with Kent Haydock as chair, the town has pursued deer "as Public Enemy Number 1," said Priscilla Feral, president of the Darien-based Friends of Animals.

The first organized kill took place in 2005 in town-owned property of Selleck's Woods after gaining approval from Darien's Parks & Recreation Commission, which oversees the land. Ironically, Darien Land Trust's Dunlap Woods has also allowed deer to be shot by archers, although Norwalk's Land Trust prohibits deer-hunting.

The Parks & Recreation Commission has neither questioned the moral or scientific need for killing the deer, nor pressed for pertinent data from the so-called Deer Management Committee.

"Friends of Animals is relieved that the lovely deer who reside in Selleck's Woods are spared the torment and agony imposed by hunters this year," Priscilla Feral said.

Friends of Animals staff members, including president Priscilla Feral, have met with Darien officials, requesting opportunities to speak about this issue. The advocacy organization has also organized public demonstrations, letter writing and phone campaigns. Letters to local newspapers have been published each year along with educational advertisements.

In 2011, Friends of Animals' Outreach Coordinator Nancy Rice filed a complaint with the Freedom of Information Commission, on the ground that the committee and the first selectman failed to release requested information which should be public. The requested information shows that the Darien Deer Management Committee has not had a meeting in ten years. It has also failed to adhere to Darien's town charter rules, and a ruling from the hearing officer is pending.

Darien resident Peter Hawkins, who was invited by Kent Haydock to be part of the deer committee, aware of this new information, challenged Haydock and other committee members on deer-targeting decisions.

"At least 50 deer have been shot in Selleck's Woods since 2005 and others have been killed on Land Trust property and private property because of the town's deer-hunt advocacy," Feral said. "It's high time to hold comprehensive educational programs in Darien about how to peacefully address conflicts — and to best live with deer and other wildlife, as opposed to launching violent, Draconian schemes that treat deer like snow removal."