

Date

Mr. Jack Buckley
Director, Mass. Division of Fish and Wildlife
1 Rabbit Hill Road
Westborough, MA 01581

Dear Mr. Buckley:

Martha's Vineyard has one of the highest per capita rates of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses in Massachusetts and all of the United States. The relationship between deer density, number of ticks and cases of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses is well documented in the scientific literature. Female adult deer ticks feed and mate on the deer prior to laying eggs. In addition, all stages of the Lone Star tick feed on deer. Therefore we believe the large number of deer on the Island is the major factor contributing to the extremely high incidence of tick-borne illnesses on the Vineyard.

Deer-car collisions are also a significant and increasing public safety issue on Martha's Vineyard. In 2016 the Dukes County Sheriff's office reported 207 deer-car collisions, a 43% increase over the 145 reported in 2015.

In the last 11 years, the deer harvest on Martha's Vineyard has varied from 460 to 792 annually, with an average of 624 taken per year. This has not been enough to noticeably reduce the deer herd and in fact the number of deer on the Island may even be slowly increasing. Therefore we are respectfully requesting that the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife conduct a public hearing on Martha's Vineyard to consider *extending the deer hunting season* or other changes to the regulations designed to increase the number of deer harvested annually on Martha's Vineyard.

We are committed to working with the Martha's Vineyard Tick-borne Illness Reduction Initiative to ensure that any regulatory changes will still promote a safe and organized hunt that will be a positive experience for both the hunters and other members of the Martha's Vineyard community. We are also aware that the Tick-borne Illness Reduction Initiative is also working on plans for storage and processing deer as well as disposing of the deer carcasses.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, which is of great importance to the health and safety of the Martha's Vineyard Community.

Sincerely,

Chair, BOS

Cc: Joseph S. Larson, PhD,
Chairman, Fisheries and Wildlife Board
c/o Director of DFW
Mass. Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
1 Rabbit Hill Road
Westborough, MA 01581

Mr. George Peterson, Jr. Commissioner, Dept. of Fish and Game
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