



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF
FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

1 Rabbit Hill Road | Westborough, MA 01581
MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE

Director: Jack Buckley

June 26, 2017

Dear Town Administrator,

I am writing in response to the letter I received from your town, requesting options to reduce deer numbers on Martha's Vineyard to help address public health and safety issues, specifically, Lyme disease and deer-vehicle collisions. Both are serious issues and significantly reducing deer densities can help mitigate the risks.

The deer population density on Martha's Vineyard is estimated to be over 40 deer per square mile, which is one of the highest densities in the state. There are options to reduce deer numbers; however, it will require the cooperation of all the towns on the Vineyard. Reducing deer numbers will also require a sustained multi-year effort because harvest success will vary from one year to the next due to several factors, such as weather conditions, deer behavior, hunting pressure, etc. Further, increasing access on properties otherwise closed to hunting will be a key component to a successful outcome. Increased hunting access coupled with other potential options, such as an increase in season length, liberalizing the types of hunting gear that can be used, or a combination thereof, can reduce deer densities on the Vineyard.

Just to reemphasize, cooperation from all the towns and a sustained, long-term commitment are key to making this a successful effort. We want to work with the towns in order to develop a fuller understanding of local concerns. We would like to suggest an island-wide listening session with residents in the fall to facilitate a dialogue. We would hope that such a session would be cosponsored by the political leaders of each community. If you agree with this approach, Michael Huguenin, our Assistant Director of Operations, will work with appropriate town officials to set up a listening session. Michael can be contacted at 508-389-6317.

Sincerely,

Jack Buckley
Director

Cc: Joseph Larson, Chair, Fisheries and Wildlife Board
Michael Roche, Vice Chair, Fisheries and Wildlife Board
Bonnie Booth, Secretary, Fisheries and Wildlife Board
Ernest W. Foster IV, Southeast Wildlife District representative, Fisheries and Wildlife Board
Stephen A. Sears, Fisheries and Wildlife Board
Brandi Van Roo, Fisheries and Wildlife Board
Frederic Winthrop, Fisheries and Wildlife Board