

01-2017 MANDATORY HUNTER ORANGE

Greene County

WHEREAS: Hunters wearing hunter orange are seven times less likely to be shot than those that do not.

WHEREAS: Forty of the fifty states already have some form of hunter orange law or regulation and, where records were kept, all experienced a decline in firearms-related hunting accidents after the requirement was instituted.

WHEREAS: All recent incidents of accidental line-of-sight hunting-related shootings in New York State have involved victims failing to wear hunter orange voluntarily.

WHEREAS: Deer cannot distinguish between hunter orange and colors in the green-gray-brown range because they are red/green colorblind.

WHEREAS: It is in the interest of all hunters in New York state to minimize the number of hunting-related firearms incidents.

WHEREAS: A significant and increasing portion of New York big game hunters do not wear hunter orange on a voluntary basis,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The New York State Conservation Council requests that the New York State Department of Environment Conservation issue and enforce mandatory hunter orange for all big game hunters any time the hunter is moving in the field during an open big game firearms season.

Specifically, all big game hunters would be required to wear enough hunter orange above the waist to be visible in all directions. For example, this could be in the form of a hat, bandanna, vest, jacket, shirt, sweater, raingear or combination of these, but is not limited to these items of clothing as long as the high visibility color can be seen from every direction. Hunter orange camouflage, fluorescent pink, or fluorescent pink camouflage is also acceptable. Those accompanying or assisting any hunter afield, such as (but not limited to) guides and those helping to haul a carcass, would also be required to wear hunter orange. The regulation would cover all land within the state, both public and private. An exception should be made for seasons limited to bowhunting and/or primitive firearms with limited range.

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Fur Resources Committee

After some discussion about the hunting safety record in NYS, as well as the possibility of improving on that record, countered by the fear of "if it isn't orange it may be a deer."

Fur Resources Committee: **Oppose.**

Small Game/ Habitat Committee

There was much discussion with many good comments for and against the resolution. Positive, it is really needed and could save lives. Some felt that if you wear blaze orange, it is safe to shoot if you do not see any other orange, and not looking at your target.

Small Game/ Habitat Committee: **Oppose.**

Waterfowl Committee

Members felt that at this time with low accident rates in the state, it is not needed now.

Waterfowl Committee: **Oppose.**

Hunter Education Committee

Felt that the resolution was not well written as it does not specify how many square inches are required. Committee was opposed to it being mandatory as farmers, hikers etc. would not be required to wear orange.

Hunter Education Committee: **Oppose.**

Legislation Committee

The DEC probably has the authority to do this now. If Legislation is proposed, it should be limited to confirming the DEC's authority. Hunters will wear orange, but object to a mandate requiring it.

Big Game Committee

We have had similar resolutions under considerations in years' past, all of which were opposed by the BGC.

NYS is already the safest state when it comes to hunting – all hunting, not just big game, despite not having mandatory hunter orange. The State of PA, which does have mandatory orange laws, is not even close to the safety record of NYS. Although last year was reported the safest on record, four (4) HRSI resulting in fatalities did occur last year, however, a deeper analysis of these incidents indicate that a mandatory orange law would not have prevented these incidents, as all of the fatalities last year involved after legal hunting hours shootings. Voluntary use of mandatory orange continues to show effectiveness. Further, concerns arise with mandatory orange, as we believe more hunters would equate not seeing hunter orange with a safe shot selection. Hunter orange does not help when trying to see through thick brush, especially when worn on the torso (vs. legs) only. Hunter orange does not prevent accidents from happening when a hunter chooses to take dangerous "horizon" shots. Reliance on seeing hunter orange as the indicator of a safe shot also brings concerns over other user groups in public land areas, such as State Parks, where no mandatory orange rules govern trail riders, hikers, etc., when going afield during any open hunting season.

Big Game Committee: **Oppose.**