



**New York State Conservation Council Inc.**  
8 East Main Street, Ilion, New York 13357-1899

## **MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT**

**Bill #**                 **A 479A** Gunther                                 Same as **S 1386A** Gallivan

**Title: Amend the environmental conservation law in relation to crossbow hunting.**

The proposed legislation would make changes in the law to facilitate and clarify the use of the crossbow for hunting and fishing, specifically:

- Includes crossbow hunting in the bow hunter education course.
- Removes the 200 pound draw weight and 17 inch minimum width restrictions.
- Aligns the minimum age for crossbow use with other archery equipment.
- Authorizes use of the crossbow during the all seasons that use archery implements.
- Includes crossbows in the archery privilege.
- Permits fishing with a crossbow whenever a long bow is authorized.
- Establishes standard 150 foot building setback for all archery equipment.

### **Justification:**

The NYSCC supports this legislation. The Council believes that the crossbow should be included as a legal implement for hunting and fishing during all seasons in which the long bow is permitted. Based on the experience in New York and several other states, we believe that it is time to accept the crossbow as regular archery equipment, as does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The passage of this legislation will make that step. The confusion caused by the current work-around regulations that try and accommodate the use of the crossbow without fully accepting it as legitimate archery equipment would be eliminated.

The first legislation permitting the use of crossbows, enacted in 2010, provided New York hunters some exposure to the equipment, limited to the firearms season, but did little to address the DEC's deer management needs or hunter preferences. Subsequent legislation has provided piecemeal increases in hunting opportunities but still fell short of meeting the DEC's deer management goals or hunter preferences.

We now have some experience with crossbow big game hunting in New York. During the 2016 season, 9439 deer were harvested by crossbow hunters. There were no safety or damage incidents involving crossbow hunters. While not a complete resolution, this legislation will address many of the issues that have arisen over the last five years, providing a more uniform system and an enhanced sportsman experience.

The often-heated discussion that has arisen over use of the crossbow during the big game archery season is not the first debate over bow technology. It is reminiscent of the controversy that arose in both hunting and target archery circles in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the introduction of the compound bow. Acceptance ensued and everyone moved on.

The NYSCC's objective is to support hunting in New York both as a sporting tradition and as part of the management program for a healthy wildlife population. The use of crossbows provides an opportunity to bring more hunters into the fields and to keep them coming back in the future.

Crossbows are nearly identical to compound bows in terms of ballistic performance. The principal difference is that they provide this performance in a form that is much more accommodating to hunters without the upper body strength or mobility to effectively use compound or recurve bows.

With 20% of hunters over the age of sixty-five, the crossbow provides a chance for older hunters to return to bow hunting. It also provides an opportunity for others who have physical limitations and for those who just find the crossbow a challenge in its own right. This is beneficial for both the management of the deer population and for the contribution hunting provides to the economy, particularly in underserved rural areas.

While the legislature is the representative of the people and is responsible for establishing the broad policies reflecting the objectives for wildlife management, the DEC should have the freedom to develop and administer the methodologies needed for implementation.

We believe that the professional staff at the DEC should be empowered to manage the methods to be used and within what parts of the season. Management of habitat and wildlife is complex, requiring both professional training and the experienced gained through actual boots on the ground. This is particularly important in those areas where there is a burgeoning deer population and the use of firearms is precluded.

**Contact:**

A. Charles Parker, President  
NYS Conservation Council, Inc.  
Phone: 315/963-8413  
Email: nyscc@nyscc.com