

Dutchess lawmakers extend youth deer-hunting program

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POUGHKEEPSIE – The Dutchess County Legislature on Monday approved extending a pilot program that allows 12- and 13-year-old hunters to harvest deer with certain restrictions. The law extends the Youth Deer Hunting Pilot Program which follows the guidelines set by the New York State DEC.

The local law extends the program from December 31, 2023, to December 31, 2025. Dutchess County previously voted to participate in the program that started in 2022.

“I am pleased to once again join my colleagues in supporting a local law that allows our youth to participate in deer hunting after seeing how successful the original Pilot Program was,” said Legislature Chairman Gregg Pulver. “Through this program, we are able to teach the next generation safe and responsible hunting practices and share traditions of food sustainability, especially for those living in rural communities. New York State recorded zero safety incidents during the first initial two years of this program making our youth the safest group of hunters.”

The extension permits a hunting license holder, who is 12 or 13 years old, to hunt deer with a crossbow, shotgun, or muzzle-loading firearm through December 31, 2025, during the scheduled deer season established by the DEC.

In a recent report to the New York State Senate and Assembly regarding the results of the initial Pilot Program, the Department of Environmental Conservation recorded that no hunting-related shooting incidents, violations, or license revocations involving 12- and 13-year-old hunters were reported or occurred during the first two years.

Despite the Department of Environmental Conservation’s recommendation that the authorization for 12 -and 13-year-old hunters to hunt deer with a firearm and crossbow remain permanent, counties are once again required to opt-in for the newly extended pilot program.

“I am proud to support the extension of the youth deer hunting pilot program to help give the opportunity to learn safe and responsible hunting practices, and carry on the tradition between generations for our local families,” said Assistant Majority Leader Deirdre Houston.