



In photo, from left: Delaware Sportsmen's Caucus co-chairs, State Reps. William Carson & Jeff Spiegelman, and State Sen. Brian Pettyjohn. (State Sen. Bruce Ennis not shown.)

Defining a Firearm, Delaware's Deer Harvest, & More

MARCH 8, 2019 -- Delaware has a broad legal interpretation of what constitutes a firearm.

Deer in The First State continue to be fruitful.

Those were two of the topics covered at the monthly meeting of the Delaware Sportsmen's Caucus -- an unofficial, bipartisan group of state legislators sharing a common interest in issues impacting fishing and hunting activities in The First State. Here are some of the notes from Thursday's event:

- State Rep. Jeff Spiegelman told the caucus about his ongoing discussions with the state attorney general's office to redefine the term "firearm" under Delaware law. "Essentially, state law says that anything that fires anything is a firearm," he told those in the House Hearing Room. "So a slingshot is a firearm. A crossbow is a firearm. A potato gun is a firearm." He said state prosecutors like the overly broad definition because it gives them greater flexibility. However, the nebulous term is blocking initiatives supported by Delaware sportsmen such as legalizing airbows for hunting. Rep. Spiegelman added it is also exposing Delawareans to potential trouble.

"Someone who gives a slingshot to their son could be charged with providing a firearm to a minor," he said. No progress has been made to resolve the issue.

- State Rep. Ruth Briggs King briefed the meeting on a proposal to allow out-of-state students studying at a Delaware college or university the opportunity to purchase hunting and fishing licenses at the rate charged to residents. "As sportsman advocates, we want more people engaged in outdoor activities," she told the group. "This would be one way to encourage that." More than 20 states reportedly already allow the practice.
- Division of Fish & Wildlife Director Dave Saveikis told the caucus 14,968 deer were harvested in Delaware during 2018/19. That was down 2.7% from 2017/18, which Mr. Saveikis attributes to bad weather during the November shotgun season. Still, the 2018/19 harvest was the second-highest on record and marks the sixth consecutive instance the total has topped 14,000.