



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Reynolds Game Farm Stays Open !

CATHARINE YOUNG March 3, 2009

Keeping open the Reynolds Game Farm, a preserve where pheasants are bred to be released for hunting across the state, is a big win for outdoor sportsmen and rural New York, said Senator Catharine Young (R,I,C-Olean).

Governor David Paterson had ordered the closure of the Department of Environmental Conservation-run facility near Ithaca last December, but reversed his position on Friday.

"Gov. Paterson deserves kudos for changing his mind. This situation is a prime example of what you can accomplish when you raise your voice in protest and take on Albany," Sen. Young said.

Upset sportsmen had been pressuring Gov. Paterson to drop his plan.

"Hunters felt betrayed because funding for the facility, which costs \$750,000 per year to operate, was coming from dedicated money from the Conservation Fund. Fees collected from hunting and fishing licenses, and excise taxes from firearm and ammunition purchases, are supposed to be dedicated to the Conservation Fund to support pheasant propagation, fish hatcheries, sporting license databases, wildlife health monitoring, and stream and lake surveys," she said.

"The sportsmen felt that they were the ones paying for the program, and the State was going back on its promises," Sen. Young added.

"When Gov. Paterson announced closing the pheasant preserve, he said the birds would be slaughtered and donated to food pantries. That action triggered a lawsuit filed by sportsmen groups who recently won a restraining order that halted the destruction of the pheasants," she said.

Sen. Young said she expressed her strong opposition to the game farm closure to DEC Commissioner Alexander "Pete" Grannis last Tuesday during a environmental conservation budget hearing in Albany.

"Hunting is a very important contributor to our local economy and Upstate in general. DEC estimates that approximately 60,000 sports people hunt pheasants in New York State annually. According to a 2006 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey, small game hunters spend about \$600 per person on hunting outings and equipment per year. We must protect initiatives that help our small businesses thrive," she said.

"Gov. Paterson now has asked DEC to formulate a long-term solution that sustains hunting and fishing programs. It is a positive turn of events," Sen. Young said.

Keeping pheasants present continues the state's wildlife heritage, she said.

"When I was growing up, I used to tramp around the fields constantly. Nothing would get your heart racing quicker than to have a pheasant take off unexpectedly in front of you from tall grass. It would go from complete silence to loud squawking and wings beating, and would really make you jump. They really are beautiful birds," she said.

The Reynolds Game Farm has operated since 1927, and is the last pheasant breeding operation in the state. Pheasants are released by DEC and their designees onto land open to the public for hunting. Annually, the program produces 25,000 adult pheasants; 60,000 day-old pheasant chicks that are released by 160 4-H clubs, numerous sportsmen's clubs, and five state prisons; 15,000 young pheasants distributed to individual landowners; and 1,500 adults pheasants for special hunts for people with disabilities and youth ages 12 to 15.