



**NIAGARA COUNTY FEDERATION OF CONSERVATION CLUBS INC.**

**6042 Old Beattie Rd • Lockport, NY 14094**

**John Butcher**

*President*

Cell: (716) 628-2211

July 31, 2009

As you are aware, the Niagara County Federation of Conservations Clubs, Inc. (NCFCC) have been denied participation at the Niagara County Fair. The NCFCC has participated at the Fair with our Air Rifle Range for the last 4 consecutive years and our Federation has conducted education and training seminars for shooting sports at the Fair since 1945. I am writing to urge you, as a legislator who has been a strong advocate for sportsmen, to take action to reverse this very consequential, and very misguided, decision.

Mr. Paul Lehman and Mrs. Cathy Lovejoy Maloney from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County (CCE) have informed us that the risk Manger for CCE Mr. David Farris of P.W. Woods Inc, has denied our application.

However, after speaking with Mr. Farris on July 16, 2009 I was told that the decision not to allow the NCFCC Air Rifle Range at the County Fair had nothing to do with risk management; rather it was based on an internal policy of CCE. Mr. Farris stated that “any form of shooting activity on CCE property must be conducted by 4H Shooting Sports and can not be conducted by external organizations.” He also said that “any shooting activities such as Air Rifle Ranges can not be open to the general public, only to those who are directly participating in a 4H Shooting Program.”

Mr. Farris’s policies mark a radical departure from past practice. Moreover, however, they are a slap in the faces of all Niagara County sportsmen and taxpayers—individuals who, as you are aware, heavily subsidize the Cornell Cooperative Extension. I will also note the following:

1. This policy has nothing to do with Risk Management. The premiums for shooting programs are significantly lower than the premiums for other sport related activities. The NCFCC also has an insurance policy to operate our Air Rifle Range and we offered to have our insurance agent fax a copy of our policy to CCE, naming them as an additional insured organization. We also volunteered to purchase additional insurance for the event if needed.
2. Last year alone, more than 350,000 children fired an air rifle at a state fair, county fair, trade show, shopping mall, or similar location as part of the Crosman Challenge program. The vast majority of these children had no previous experience in shooting. Not so much as a marginal compromise of safety occurred in any of these 350,000 instances.

### **AFFILIATED CLUBS**

Fin-Feather-Fur Conservation Society - Hartland Conservation Club - Iroquois Arms Collectors Association - Lake Ontario Trout & Salmon Association - LaSalle Sportsman’s Club - Lockport Conservation Club - Middleport Rod & Gun Club - N.Y.S. Crossbow Hunter’s Association  
Niagara County Chapter of SCOPE - Niagara County Gobblers Chapter NWTF - Niagara County Sportsmen’s Association - Niagara County Trappers Association - Niagara Musky Association - Niagara Frontier Friends of the NRA - Niagara River Anglers Association North American Bear Foundation - North Forest Rod & Gun Club - Pheasants Forever of WNY #29 - Pioneer Conservation Sportsmen’s of Niagara County - Rapids Rod & Gun Club - Somerset Conservation Club - Tonawanda Sportsmen’s Club - Twin City Shooting Club - Wheatfield Firearms Safety & Education Committee Wilson Conservation Club Auxiliary - Wilson Conservation Club - Wolcottsville Rod & Gun Club

3. This discriminatory policy also has broad implications for other groups providing air rifle education, including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, National Rifle Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, YMCA, Royal Rangers, Future Farmers of America, No Child Left Indoors and the Boy Scouts of America.
4. This policy prohibits our non profit organizations from raising funds at the Fair; all of which are used to support youth programs in Niagara County.
5. This policy has never been enforced prior to this year:
  - A. Air rifles, BB guns, crossbows and archery shooting have always been a part of the Niagara County Fair. The Niagara County Federation of Conservation Clubs was incorporated in 1945 and we have been conducting education and training seminars for shooting sports at the Niagara County Fair for 62 years!
  - B. The current Master Hunter Education Instructor for Niagara County has been conducting hunter education courses for the Department of Environmental Conservation on CCE property since 1998 for both gun and bow. These courses require that youth handle and shoot both air rifles and bows. Additionally, other DEC instructors taught hunter education courses on CCE property prior to 1998.
  - C. CCE has also allowed other shooting activities at the fair that have been conducted by for-profit organizations. Air rifles have been used in carnival games conducted on the Midway.
6. Per the Niagara County Legislature's own IL-046-09, the County of Niagara has provided substantial funding for this event. For CCE to then impose blanket policies clearly contravening the expressed intent of the Legislature should invalidate such funding.

As it is the opinion of the Federation that this policy's sole purpose is to discriminate against sportsmen and women that participate in shooting sports and serves no risk management purpose, we requested that CCE provide us a copy of this policy in writing.

The Federation requested CCE furnish us with the following information:

- Any data, incidents or case studies that could prove this policy is needed. The Federation's own research with our system's manufacturer (Crosman Corporation) and our insurance underwriter (United Insurance), there is no evidence that air rifle shooting supervised by certified instructors is a risk activity at a county fair. Nor has Mr. Farris volunteered any information to prove otherwise.
- A written copy of the rule, regulation or insurance policy drafted by CCE specifically stating that "any shooting on CCE property could only be conducted by 4H shooting sports and that the general public was not eligible to participate." They have yet to provide such materials or information on a date of adoption.

The Federation requests your assistance as a county lawmaker who has, through actions such as voting in favor of the Burmaster-Syracuse-Hill-Farnham Resolution protesting this year's passage of extreme anti-gun measures by the New York State Assembly, demonstrated past support for sportsmen and women. We are also appealing to you as taxpayers who helped fund the CCE through measures such as IL-046-09 to overturn a discriminatory, anti-sportsman policy.

Thank you for your anticipated help on behalf of the 27 affiliated clubs and the 5,000-plus sportsmen and women of Niagara County that the Federation represents.

Sincerely,

John Butcher  
President  
Niagara County Federation of Conservation Clubs, Inc