

## **House OKs Proposal to Let Military Hunt on Santa Rosa Island**

**By Willem Marx, Los Angeles Times  
May 13, 2006**

WASHINGTON — Powerful Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-E1 Cajon) has won the first battle in his push to provide special hunting privileges for military personnel and disabled veterans on an island off the Ventura County coast.

But California's two senators — among others — have vowed to defeat the proposal, which they helped derail last year.

Hunter, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, beat back efforts to have the provision removed from a defense spending bill that passed the House on Thursday, 396 to 31. The bill now goes to the Senate.

The dispute involves Santa Rosa Island, part of Channel Islands National Park.

Under an agreement almost a decade old, the island's deer and elk are to be gradually eradicated between 2008 and 2011. They were introduced to the island, which was once privately owned, about 100 years ago.

Under Hunter's measure, the game population would remain stable, and hunting — limited to members of the military, disabled veterans and those assisting them — would continue indefinitely.

About 6,000 people visit the island annually, the National Park Service says. During much of the year, large portions of the island are open only to hunters — limits that would end when the deer and elk are gone.

On Friday, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said in an e-mail that Hunter's proposal "would unfairly limit" public access to the island. She and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) submitted a resolution last week urging the Senate to oppose the provision as it considers the defense spending bill. The resolution argues, "Santa Rosa Island is a natural treasure that belongs to all of us."

Hunter has argued that his plan would create a recreational opportunity for military personnel and disabled veterans. Last year, he said the idea came to him after hearing Iraq war veterans express disappointment that Santa Rosa would soon be bereft of large game.

Intense criticism of the plan by Boxer, Feinstein, other Democrats and National Park Service officials caused Hunter to drop his plan from a defense spending bill in December.

A spokeswoman for Rep. Lois Capps (D-Santa Barbara), whose district includes Channel Islands National Park, complained Friday that it was inappropriate for Hunter, as part of his committee's review of defense spending measures, to insert his proposal for Santa Rosa Island into such measures.

"The Armed Services Committee has no jurisdiction dealing with national park policy," said Emily Kryder, Capps' aide.

On the House floor Thursday, Capps attacked Hunter's latest initiative as a "travesty."

Mule deer from Arizona and Roosevelt elk from Yellowstone were introduced to the island by the land's former owners, the cattle ranching company Vail & Vickers.

The company retained a ranch house, cattle corrals and hunting rights when it sold the island to the federal government for \$29.5 million in 1986.

Under a 1997 settlement to a lawsuit filed by environmentalists, the company shipped its cattle to the mainland. It was allowed to continue offering commercial hunting trips until 2011.