

Probation Granted In Windsor Bear Shooting

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VERNON —

An 82-year-old Windsor man who shot a black bear that had been roaming through his property in January was granted a special form of probation Tuesday in Superior Court in Rockville.

John Rocha is on accelerated rehabilitation for six months and must complete 10 hours of community service with Meals on Wheels. If he completes the program, Rocha's charges — fourth-degree negligent hunting and violating wild game hunting regulations — will be dismissed in September.

His attorney, Salvatore Bonanno, said both he and his client are glad the judge granted accelerated rehabilitation.

"He's relieved to have this part of the case behind him, and he looks forward to the dismissal in six months, which I have no doubt will occur," Bonanno said.

Rocha is accused of shooting a 5- to 6-year-old bear with a .30-caliber rifle on Jan. 4. The bear's cub was found nearby and was relocated.

Bonanno said his client had reported seeing the bears on his property on Jan. 1 and was told the environmental officials had been tracking them for a week. Rocha saw the bears multiple times after making the call.

On Jan. 4, he saw them cross his property on Poquonock Avenue onto his neighbor's property where one of them tore apart garbage bags, Bonanno said.

Rocha told Judge Howard Scheinblum on Tuesday that he was concerned because the bear was very close to a basketball court on the neighbor's property where he has seen children play, Bonanno said.

"He was watching the bear. He started thinking about the children that he's seen there," he said.

Rocha got a rifle from his house, brought it outside and shot the bear. Bonanno said his client has received several vulgar letters since his arrest.