

2023 HB 1151

As I look around this room, I can't help but think there are individuals here that, like many of us, will watch our favorite football team on the tv set. How many times do we complain about the plays our favorite team tries. "They should have run the ball, why didn't they try a deep pass, they should have kicked the ball." At times we feel we know more than the professional coaches and quarterbacks. If in fact we did, why aren't we the coaches or quarterbacks. We are what is referred to as an "armchair quarterback".

In 1930 the North Dakota Legislature passed legislation that established the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to be the authority on wildlife management for the State of North Dakota. They are the ones that have contacts all over the United States that can share experiences in the field of wildlife management. They have the wildlife biologists on staff. They are the people who work full time managing the wildlife that belongs to the people of North Dakota. They are the experts.

Who are we, the "armchair quarterbacks" to tell them how to do their job by passing legislation we think will "win the game".

We are not saying ban or don't ban baiting. This is not a baiting issue. We are saying let the North Dakota Game and Fish Department do their job for which they were created.

Vote a "do not pass" on this legislation.

The North Dakota Bowhunters Association (NDBA) has the following comments on House Bill 1151 that seeks to prevent any agency from banning baiting for the lawful hunting of deer. That would include preventing the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) from implementing science-based restrictions designed to help reduce the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in North Dakota ungulates including deer and elk in and near units where CWD has been found.

CWD is an infectious and always fatal disease spread by deer which have the disease. CWD has continued to expand across the country and North Dakota. There are still many unknowns with CWD, but like all infectious diseases, putting distance between animals with the disease and those without it, helps reduce the spread of the disease. That is why we don't sit next to people who are sniffing and coughing, because we know it helps reduce the chance of us catching a common cold. If it would kill us, we would move as far away as possible. When CWD is identified in a Deer hunting Unit, banning baiting is one of the steps in the NDGF strategic plan to reduce the spread of CWD by putting distance between animals.

NDBA does not have a stance on the ethics of baiting as our members are diverse and some engage in lawful baiting, and some do not. We all want to see the deer herd managed in the way most beneficial to the resource. If the deer herd is significantly reduced by disease or mismanagement, it would have a significant impact on our members to hunt deer in this state.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department holds Spring/Fall Advisory board meetings at multiple locations across the state to allow open public input. In addition, the NDGF professionals are always open to listening to comments and input on decisions affecting management of our game populations. After considering such input, the NDGF department attempts to apply the science and best management practices to their stated mission to *"protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitat for sustained public consumptive and non-consumptive use."*

NDBA has seen loss of hunting opportunity, including outright hunting bans, in many other states when game management is left up to their popularly elected officials influenced by well-funded outside sources. NDBA believes that game management decisions are best left to professional, science-based game and fish departments like the NDGF Department after considering public input. Passage of this bill would prevent the North Dakota Game and Fish Department from implementing science-based restrictions designed to help reduce the spread of wildlife diseases in North Dakota. For the above reasons the North Dakota Bowhunters Association (NDBA) opposes House Bill 1151.

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