

RE: Opposition to HB 1151

North Dakota House Bill 1151 would severely undermine the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's (NDGF) authority and ability to manage deer and deer hunting with the best-available science. Specifically, the bill removes the authority from NDGF to issue rules or adopt a policy or practice prohibiting the baiting of deer for lawful hunting. The bill, and the removal of management authority from NDGF, is a direct attempt to undermine chronic wasting disease (CWD) management efforts in the state.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department recently reported 24 deer from the 2022 hunting season tested positive. Single positive deer were also found in four new units – 3A3, 3E1, 3F1 and 4F – where the disease had not been previously detected. The department is encouraged the number of cases was on par with results from the 2021 hunting season when 26 cases were found. This stable trend is a good thing and supports the current management approach being used by the Game & Fish department.

Any time there are 2 sides to an issue, it is very hard for a governing board to come up with something which satisfies everybody. We need to advocate for the long-term health of the resource the NDGF is trying to protect for future generations of hunters in this state.

The practice of baiting and its role in deer management have grown in terms of controversy and complexity in recent years. Baiting increases density around a single food source and therefore increases the potential for direct and indirect contact among wildlife specifically deer. The NDGF has used baiting bans as a management tool to reduce the risk and spread of CWD. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) sites that the prohibition of baiting or feeding wild deer as a best management practice for the prevention of CWD introduction and establishment.

Wildlife management decisions, and especially disease management decisions, should remain in the hands of professional wildlife managers – not lawmakers. HB 1151 would result in a massive setback for disease and deer management in North Dakota. HB 1151 intentionally and irrationally removes this management practice from the authority of NDGF. I ask you to vote NO on HB 1151 and keep management of North Dakota's wildlife in the hands of the professionals and biologists.

Thank you,

*Michael Goroski*

ND Sportsman