



**BACKCOUNTRY  
HUNTERS & ANGLERS  
NORTH DAKOTA**

**TESTIMONY OF BROCK WAHL  
NORTH DAKOTA BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS  
SENATE BILL 2368  
SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 2, 2023**

The North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers opposes SB 2368.

In 2022, our California chapter of BHA was able to successfully fight off attempts to ban black bear hunting in California. An effort proposed by anti-hunting organizations and brought forward with intent to pass by the California Fish and Game Commission. But our chapter's in Washington and Oregon were not so successful; they now see restrictions on black bear hunting and mountain lion hunting due to their Commissions' efforts.

We can also cite examples like Montana, Wyoming, and New Mexico, where commissions have been directly responsible for or used as a political tool to exert unwise influence over biological decisions, special interest tag allocations and political favors, or like in the case of New Mexico, residents left with only half of the available elk tags in their own state.

All of these issues and more can be attributed to politicized fish and game commissions. North Dakotans and North Dakota wildlife deserve better than that. We deserve trained professionals, often with decades of institutional knowledge and direct experience with North Dakota wildlife. Currently the department is accountable directly to the beneficiaries of the trust they manage. No political middle man, no extra layer of bureaucracy.

The public can go to the game and fish office any time, and have 16 opportunities to give feedback with other stakeholders in public meetings around the state. Just because someone doesn't always get their way, doesn't mean we need to put someone else in charge.

We do not believe a commission will be of any measurable benefit to the average resident hunter in North Dakota. We do believe a commission would send North Dakota down the road of politicization and commercialization of our wildlife. With that in mind, we do not believe a legislative management study for a game and fish commission is worth any consideration by this legislature. It is a solution looking for a problem.

We strongly oppose Senate Bill 2368.



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