

01/15/2023

Written testimony in support of HB 1151

Dear Energy and Natural Resource Committee,

I am writing to you today to show my support for HB 1151 which would make it illegal to ban baiting for the purposes of hunting (on private land).

You will hear testimony from experts in favor and support of HB 1151 which will address facts and will utilize scientific data to make a strong argument as to why baiting should be allowed. I will leave those arguments to the professionals and experts.

I however would like to provide insight into my reasoning and support for removing the ban from the perspective of an avid hunter. I myself have been an active hunter all of my life as I started out when I was very young. My father passed on basic hunting skills to me at an early age and I have embraced and practiced hunting my whole life from then on. We have used baiting as a tool in many instances, not all, but have found it to be a very effective means to provide for a pleasant hunting experience, and when it mattered most, also helped to make a clean and ethical harvest on deer. This is a tool that is utilized by many in the field, but not everyone agrees with its practice. I can understand and appreciate their point of view, but that is an argument of ethics and personal beliefs and should be saved for a different debate.

I am writing this letter however to convey my support for baiting today because I believe in it as an effective tool for all sorts of users who would like to enjoy the outdoors and increase their chances of wildlife interaction and success. I actually shouldn't be supporting the ban and here is the reason why;

My family owns some of the best huntable farmland in Mountrail County. My father has spent decades and has poured countless funds from his pocket to develop amazing wildlife habitat including food plots, water points, fruit trees, miles upon miles of tree'd shelter belts and CRP. Needless to say, the wildlife in the area flocks to our land and we have an abundance of it. Simply put, a ban on bait does not hurt our situation one single bit...in fact, it does nothing but help our hunting opportunities thrive, BUT, we are aware and embrace the fact that this is so much bigger than ourselves.

Ultimately, we are proud that we have built a place for wildlife to thrive that has also turned into a hunting haven for us, but for many that is not the case. There are many outdoor enthusiasts who simply do not have the means to develop such a pristine environment for wildlife to flourish, and many are fortunate by the grace of a friendly farmer or rancher to be able to hunt on potentially less wildlife friendly land. For many, the only tool they have for being able to create a successful hunting environment is to have the ability to place a bait pile to attract deer, something that has been done for eons during man's existence in pursuit of wild game. This is

often the only chance many will have, especially those who don't own their own land to develop into a wildlife sanctuary.

Let's also consider other user groups that I especially support the use of bait for, and it is quite a large group of outdoor enthusiasts. This would include our elderly, youth and those who are disadvantaged by potential health issues or those with disabilities. Who are we to limit this large group's opportunities simply because our Game and Fish chooses to ignore hard factual data from other states' trials, that despite banning the practice of baiting, CWD continues to march across their landscape...It can easily be determined that the use of bait is not the detrimental threat to our deer herd they would have us believe.

This is going to be a controversial topic and there will be very good points made from both sides of the issue, but I urge you to look at the data that will be brought forth, information that contradicts the AFWA document and consider that the use of baiting for hunting is a far more beneficial tool to hunters than the benefit of eliminating it altogether. I implore you to consider that this is an issue that affects the future of hunting in North Dakota (as we know it) and to not just blindly follow opinions from a document that has so far proven to be a complete disaster in slowing the spread of CWD in other states who have adopted and utilized its "best management practices".

Let us be the state that thinks for itself and allows common sense, data and science to prevail so our sportsmen can hunt and keep the use of a vital tool to help effectively and efficiently harvest and manage deer within our state. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Matt Williamson
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