

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).

Dear Energy and Natural Resource Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration in hearing the general public input on a serious matter here in North Dakota.

I have been an avid outdoorsman my entire life, thus it was somewhat natural to pursue a degree in Biological Sciences from North Dakota State University, along with graduate studies at Northwestern. I have been following the CWD discussion closely over the last 10 years, when it became more mainstream in states to our east. I understand that this is a hot topic all around, and I do see both sides of this argument, but I hold my support in favor of HB 1151, due to my in depth Biology background, but more for common sense regarding this topic.

Until recently, my wife and I owned land along the Little Knife River, just west of Hebron. This area provides some of the best deer habitat in that county. 7 years ago we decided to start planting food plots and habitat for the wildlife. Over the years the food plots started getting larger; the final year of food plots was around 10 acres. During the fall and winter months, it was common to see 60-70 deer on our food plots in the evenings. During the cold spells, it was not uncommon for us to winter 100-125 deer every single evening. Simply put, the deer congregate, for survival, where there is food. Currently food plots are considered legal in North Dakota, but a 5 gallon bucket of corn or supplement feed is not, in the current banned units. I can say without hesitation, that food plots have congregated 10x more deer, than any 5 gallon bucket of corn that I have put on the ground. If there is concern about CWD and how it is spread, the game and fish is going down a very slippery road. The idea of stopping CWD in the game and fish's eyes, is to stop the congregation of deer from passing saliva to one another. There lies a huge problem. Deer naturally will congregate in the winters here in ND, and it doesn't matter if it's over a bucket of corn, cut corn field, standing beans or cut beans, the deer will congregate where they can survive, and they will always be in touch/contact with one another.

Following the science has been a huge topic from both sides of this argument. There is multiple sources to support both sides of the argument, but I think we need to look at these other states from a common sense standpoint. Some of these states have had baiting bans in place for many, many years, but CWD has not stopped or declined in many areas. Less than 1% of the deer tested in ND have tested positive for CWD. 40,000 deer tested showed positive results in 70 or so total deer. These were hunter harvested deer, not deer found deceased from "CWD" and then tested. This number alone should send shockwaves if we are "following the science". I think we all know we have heard that saying before, which focuses on my next point. Private land ownership.

While the game and fish talks about having great relationships with private landowners, these relationships are becoming more and more strained over the years, whether they want to admit it or not. Having the game and fish tell private land owners what they can, or cannot put on their own property will only heighten this strain. What is going to happen is we will go down another road of "Lock Out" that we saw the past couple years regarding private property ownership and access of those

properties. North Dakotans are getting very tired of being told of what they can, or cannot do in their own homes, or on their own lands.

My intent is not to rip apart our game and fish department. I am thankful for many of the things that they do to try to help our wildlife, however, in recent years, there has been a severe mismanagement of deer tags. For many in central and western ND, we saw the devastating effects of EHD on our whitetail population. For many units, there should have been no whitetail tags given out, but yet, there still was. The population was decimated in areas, yet, still tags were given out. The voices of ranchers and farmers telling the game and fish about these dire times fell on deaf ears. Only until a second year in a row of EHD, did the game and fish significantly drop tag numbers, but only in some units. While this is an entirely different topic, it does follow in with the bait ban discussion. Why are we not spending more time and funds focusing on how to ensure herd health, when we've lost estimated 100X-200X more deer to EHD death, than to that of CWD death? These are questions that need answers, but taking away more private landowner rights, is never going to fix the current issue at hand. For reference, on our old property in Hebron, and our neighbor's property to the west of us in Hebron, we found 100 dead deer in one season. This is on less than 300 acres of total property with the Little Knife River meandering through most of it. If we are following the science, we need to concentrate our efforts on EHD compared to that of CWD, because only one of those is the real threat to our deer herd in North Dakota.

I would like to sincerely thank you for your time reading this. I hope that you will continue to fight for us private landowners and hunters in North Dakota.

Sincerely,

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