

Testimony of the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society
By Phil Mastrangelo (#1571)
SB 2137
HOUSE ENERGY and NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
March 7, 2025

Chairman Porter and Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. For the record, I'm Phil Mastrangelo representing the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society (the Chapter). The Chapter is a professional organization comprised of over 350 members who are employed throughout North Dakota as wildlife biologists, land managers, educators, wildlife law enforcement officers, and natural resource administrators. The mission of our organization is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain healthy wildlife populations and habitats in North Dakota through science-based management for the benefit of all. SB 2137 is directly at odds with that mission.

We understand the devastating toll that some issues like EHD take on our deer. Yet, no tools exist to alter the course of these outbreaks. However, there are ways to influence how quickly chronic wasting disease spreads, but SB 2137 compromises the health of wildlife populations. Putting lots of unrelated animals in close proximity with each other and their bodily fluids will increase CWD transmission. SB 2137 prevents the Department's ability to curtail this.

While SB 2137 is a reasonable debate over values, it is not science-based. The science on CWD is straightforward. For example, the Game and Fish Department's CWD Management plan references over 30 peer-reviewed scientific studies. That is a strong and robust foundation of evidence from which to base management decisions. We have heard several claims by individuals in favor of SB 2137 that contradict core principles in human and animal health, don't stand up to scientific rigor, cherry-pick or misinterpret single sentences out of context, or misrepresent Game and Fish's actions or intentions. The arguments used to support SB 2137 are not science-based.

Finally, SB 2137 is not for the benefit of all North Dakotans and all North Dakota deer hunters. With authority through the Governor's proclamation, NDGF can manage with flexibility. A core concept of good wildlife management is the ability to respond and adjust as things change on the landscape and as new science emerges. This "adaptive-management" approach is taken off the table when things are set into state law. NDGF has only enacted baiting restrictions where there is established CWD risk, but it has not employed this tool in other parts of the state. That's good, adaptive, and proactive management for the benefit of all. SB 2137 wipes that off the table.

The over 350 professionals the Chapter have devoted their careers to wildlife and habitat conservation in North Dakota. SB2137 is a step in the wrong direction. It compromises wildlife health, it is not science-based, and it is not for the benefit of all. Therefore, we respectfully request a "Do Not Pass" vote on SB 2137.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Phil Mastrangelo
Lobbyist #1571
North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society