

**SB2137 TESTIMONY
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Good morning. My name is Patricia Stockdill, rural Garrison. I come from a background of more than 35 years of natural resource, environmental, energy, and outdoor journalism, researching, interviewing people throughout the U.S., and writing for local, state, regional, and national media. My husband and I own pasture and cropland in two deer hunting units. I've hunted since I was old enough to stumble through buckbrush with my dad and have been in the field from Alaska to Arkansas.

Phasing into semi-retirement, the journalistic habit of researching and asking questions dies slowly. Before writing my testimony I researched and asked questions even though I've covered wildlife, natural resources, and wildlife diseases the majority of my career.

*What's the N.D. Game and Fish Department's Mission Statement? The answer is on their website home page: **"To protect, conserve, and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitat for sustained public use."**

*Who does North Dakota's fish and wildlife belong to? The answer is in the Constitution of the State of North Dakota –all of its citizens.

These are two important points: Let's face it; we're talking about transmissible spongiform encephalopathy – CWD - a disease that all scientific research explicitly has found to be contagious and 100 percent fatal. You get it, you die – showing few symptoms until it's well advanced. We're not talking EHD. People reading the research and readily available information regarding wildlife diseases know a tiny biting fly causes EHD – epizootic hemorrhagic disease - not abnormal proteins – prions – that cause CWD. There is zero correlation between the two.

Secondly, it illustrates baiting is not a private property or a landowner right. While we control who can access them, we don't own the deer, turkeys, grouse, pheasants, and moose on our land in 2K1 and 3A3. They rightfully belong to all North Dakotans, whether in a wheelchair in a Fargo care center or on a ranch south of Amidon.

As a writer, hunter, and landowner, I ask: Who can look into the future and know what wildlife diseases will and will not impact not just wildlife, but domestic animals – pets and livestock alike – or humans? Who has the knowledge to tell those who study the most current research, analyze working group studies, and network with scientists and professionals with a common

goal of protecting, conserving, and enhancing fish and wildlife populations and their habitat for sustained public use what they can and can't do in order to perform their job?

All mammals, humans and wildlife alike, specifically big game, share some amazing similarities: Several diseases – anthrax, tuberculosis, and rabies, for example – and yes, humans can contract those diseases from mammals, include members of the cervid family – the deer family of moose, elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer. So far, research hasn't showed CWD to be transmissible from cervids to humans, although there are human, bovine, and domestic sheep variants of CWD equally fatal to those mammals.

Humans and all mammals require basic things for survival: Shelter, water, food, and space – in other words, habitat. The reality is big game species hit the Easy Button when it comes to life in the wild as a survival method. Humans, on the other hand, hit the EZ Button because it's, well, it's EZ. Baiting and supplemental feeding is an unnatural concentration of wildlife, placing them in unnatural situation during a time of year that's not normal for them. When it's easy to find a pile of food in August, September, and October, whitetails in particular gather to eat it – a hauled out wheat field, silage pile, or big bait pile. They don't have to; it's their basic survival - the need to conserve energy and body resources year-around. In the winter congregating for species such as white-tailed deer IS survival. The ability for a managing agency to establish regulations restricting or eliminating baiting as a means to protect against contagious diseases is proven science.

I highly recommend learning the facts regarding CWD by going the website, (cwd-info.org). Just clicking the link "CWD: The Basics" is an "oh wow" educational opportunity. From a writer's perspective, it's a good read – done in layman's terms so it's not complex scientific lingo. Sadly, when I looked at it last week, North Dakota's report on its most recent number of confirmed cases was one of the headlines– along with a new CWD elk unit in western Wyoming.

North Dakota's hunting heritage is at a major crossroads. My hope is that we as North Dakotans can do more to protect our wildlife, providing opportunities for everyone to treasure the valuable intrinsic, economic, and environmental resource it is. Let's not do less by tying the hands of the agency charged with managing those resources for the populous of an entire state.

The potential exists, not just for CWD, but for other diseases to do more than kill off some deer. We don't know if CWD will morph into something transmittable to humans, pets, or domestic livestock. We don't know what other unforeseen wildlife diseases will be identified or their ramifications . By restricting an agency's ability to conduct valid disease management strategies, SB 2137 makes it OK to take that chance. North Dakota citizens and its wildlife deserves better.