

Testimony before the Legislature
3/7/25

Good morning. My name is Bill Mitzel. I've been involved with our outdoors for nearly 60 years, as a writer, radio broadcaster and as publisher/editor of Dakota Country magazine for 46 years.

I realized long ago that our natural resources, especially our wildlife, were always the underdogs. They have to constantly survive the elements, they have to fight predators, and they have to fight us.

I find this particularly interesting because we here in North Dakota and the Midwest enjoy some of the best natural resources in America, if not the world. Yet we often seem to lean more toward more disrespect and destruction than preservation and promotion.

Fortunately, as a concerned society, we have specialists who dedicate their lives to maintain our resources. These people do their jobs very well and were it not for these professionals and many more people in the private sector who place high value on our outdoor world, our opportunities to enjoy our great resources would be diminished. As we watch wildlife struggle with continuing loss of habitat, adverse weather and ever-present disease, including a relatively new one -- chronic waste disease, we should be highly concerned with taking care of what we have. That includes, in this case, baiting.

In our quest to conquer the outdoor world, we seem to always be looking for easier ways to catch fish, kill wild game, much of the time with disregard for the real value of the resource. I sometimes think that if there were no rules in the outdoor world and no dedicated people to manage it, we probably wouldn't have much left.

With today's technology involving our outdoor legacy, there are also responsibilities. The line between legal and ethical is often gray. In this case, it's important to let those highly qualified to deal with the problem of CWD. It's the right thing to do. Ethics aren't regulated, they're voluntary.


Baiting deer is presently illegal in 36 states, including Montana, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota and provinces in Canada -- mostly because of CWD, but also because of a long-standing unwritten outdoor rule -- fair chase.

We aren't allowed to dump 5-gallon buckets of store-bought shrimp into a rocky point on Lake Sakakawea to attract walleyes. We aren't allowed to dump corn and other feed piles into sheet water in cornfields to attract waterfowl. Why are we targeting deer?

We guard our property rights deeply here in the Dakotas and the Midwest. But it also comes with responsibility to protect and respect the resource. It's unfortunate that has to be regulated, since many of us won't adopt that practice on our own. It seems like when technology isn't enough, we've always got a pile of corn.

We need to trust those in charge of managing our wildlife to do the right thing. It's not about politics or private property rights. It's about maintaining our resources so vital to our way of life and our culture. We do have a responsibility to take care of it.

Thank you for your time today. •



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