

16 January 2025

I strongly oppose Senate Bill No. 2137. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department exists to protect and manage common resources, such as public lands and big game animals, ensuring they are available for the benefit of all North Dakotans. Responsible wildlife management, particularly for species like white-tailed deer, requires science-based policies that include harvest limits and restrictions on activities that could negatively impact population health.

One of the key concerns in managing white-tailed deer populations is the spread of disease, particularly Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). CWD is a fatal, highly transmissible neurological disease that affects deer and other cervids, causing severe population declines over time. Scientific research has consistently shown that baiting—placing food to attract and concentrate deer in one area—significantly increases the likelihood of disease transmission. By artificially congregating deer, baiting creates an environment where infected individuals are more likely to spread CWD to healthy deer through saliva, urine, and feces.

SB 2137 would prohibit the North Dakota Game and Fish Department from banning baiting, stripping wildlife professionals of their ability to implement necessary disease-prevention measures. This bill directly contradicts established science and undermines the department's ability to fulfill its mission of conservation and responsible management.

Supporting SB 2137 prioritizes the short-term interests of a select few over the long-term health of North Dakota's white-tailed deer populations and the many hunters, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts who depend on a sustainable and healthy ecosystem. Wildlife management decisions should be based on research and expert recommendations, not on political interference or pressure from anti-science lobbying efforts. I urge lawmakers to reject this bill and support policies that promote the long-term well-being of North Dakota's wildlife and natural resources.

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