From:	Dennis Hunsinger
To:	Wildthing (DFW)
Cc:	Hayes, Dave; Smith, Norma; Bailey, Barbara
Subject:	Public Comments on Proposed 2015-17 Hunting Seasons
Date:	Wednesday, February 11, 2015 10:08:10 AM

I am officially protesting your arbitrary and patently political/social attempt to change the hunting culture of Washington State by making changes to rules that would ban the baiting of deer and elk. Specifically, sections 232-12-078 Baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk; 232-12-079 Bait volume limits for the purposes of hunting deer or elk; and, 232-12-088 Baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk with exceptions. Please consider the following:

1. By your own admission this is not a scientific issue, but a social one. How did this issue arise as a problem? I find it hard to believe that, suddenly, scores of hunters began calling in to complain about deer/elk baiting. If that's not the case, what prompted your office to raise this as an issue without some scientific basis for a deer/elk management problem? By all appearances, and without good science in hand, you seem to have launched on a random survey campaign to justify a rather political/social end. Why is that? In other Departments, "best available science" is the standard by which most policy decisions are made (Growth Management Act, for instance). You seem to have forgone that step in your deliberations. Why is that?
   I hold a doctorate in Sociology, and have done considerable survey research. I would like to review the methodology used in your research, to include how you selected your sample pool and the list of questions applied. Again, is there an under-population of deer in Washington State where you need to curtail the seasonal take? I suspect not. Had you done a scientific investigation we would know the answer to that question. However, anecdotally, I can tell you that in my area there is an overabundance of deer. My family manages a timber farm on Whidbey Island where the deer population has ravaged our crop. Our only recourse is to hunt (legally and responsibly), and an important aspect of that is our ability to "bait" the deer away from freshly planted fir trees. Accordingly, culling/controlling the deer population using sound, scientific, best practices should be an essential aspect of responsible farming; yet, your practice of game control seems to move from science to a rather arbitrary art form in its application. That is disturbing.
2. I am a disabled veteran, and licensed by Washington State as a disabled crossbow hunter. Most disabled hunters are unable to stalk deer through the woods. Simply put, they have to use methods that bring the deer to them and the use of bait is essential in being able to exercise their opportunities as disabled hunters. I have applauded past efforts by this state to create additional opportunities for disabled hunters. But this initiative is a step in the reverse, and will call into question the state's commitment in taking ADA compliance seriously. Your proposed initiative will cause harsh and undue hardship on disabled hunters who have limited access to hunting areas; particularly heavily wooded areas. I implore you, for this reason alone, to re-think your proposal to eliminate baiting.
3. There will be a general loss of interest and, consequently, a loss of state revenue. If your proposed initiative is approved, there will be a corresponding, precipitous drop in the number of licensed deer/elk hunters in the state of Washington. I suspect this action will discourage hunters from taking on the additional challenge; particularly archery hunters

who routinely need to be within 50 yards of their prey.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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