



## *Shooting Straight for Better Bowhunting*

**United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania  
Address to House Game and Fisheries Committee  
In Consideration: House Bill 251  
Baiting/Feeding Issues  
May 24, 2007**

**Good Morning Chairman Staback, Minority Chairman Rohrer, members of the House Game & Fisheries Committee. My name is Wes Waldron; I am President of the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania.**

**We are very pleased to be invited to offer our input to your consideration of House Bill 251. Personally, I must offer that I have some measure of nervousness addressing this situation and issue, because I am a resident of Lycoming County. Therefore and in recognition of my constant involvement and evaluation of wildlife and habitat issues, I am keenly aware that a primary premise of this proposed legislation has a lot to do with citations issued at long standing, well known, large hunting clubs in my area. Notwithstanding, I believe I am quite able to render my organization's viewpoints of the proposed legislation, without bias. However, I do feel that, in expressing those viewpoints, my personal experiences in the outdoors, in areas immediately adjacent to these properties may well illustrate and substantiate more effectively, my organization's viewpoints.**

**While baiting *has* played a part in hunting in Pennsylvania it must be recognized that this was most noticeably in times when hunting was for subsistence, and not for recreation. For anyone who has ever erected a simple bird feeder there can be no doubt that the movement of wildlife can be effected and affected by providing a readily available and consistent source of food. I have noticed that the food service here in the Capitol seems to affect much the same movement of human beings at certain times of the day, and in a most predictable manner. There can be no denying the simple biological fact that at prescribed times all organisms find need to fill their bellies, so to speak. But, today we are speaking of feeding and baiting as it pertains to the sport and recreation those of us in this room refer to as hunting. Both my organization and I would agree with all of you, that this is a very complex consideration. However we nevertheless believe that approval of HB 251 will only increase the complexity of issue, and will fail to fairly serve the majority of Pennsylvania hunters.**

**We have a land base in this Commonwealth comprised of approximately 25 percent publicly held lands and 75 percent privately owned lands. Our conundrum is that, in a population that boasts one of the highest per capita hunter populations, a large percentage of them hunt those 25 percent of publicly owned lands. Of those**





## Shooting Straight for Better Bowhunting

publicly owned lands, roughly 35 percent has one legislatively mandated priority for management, 53 percent another legislatively mandated priority, and yet another for the remaining twelve percent. The 75 percent, privately owned lands, have neither a legislatively mandated priority nor a specified protocol for management. However, by law, the incredible wildlife resources of this Commonwealth belong to every single citizen of this Commonwealth, until reduced to possession of a single individual, under law and provision, and license thereof, as specified by statute and regulation.

The leadership of my organization certainly appreciates the monumental task for all of you who must make these decisions. How do we all keep things as 'fair' as possible for as many as of us as possible with all these intertwined points of consideration? The UBP might suggest that the rules of fair chase come into play, especially in light of the fact, that none of us hunt for subsistence any longer. This concern becomes of greater importance when one considers that to a large degree the non-hunting public's perception of baiting is that it *does not* fit the premise of *fair chase hunting*. Additionally neither do a significant percentage of Pennsylvania hunters.

And at this point, I will infuse my own personal experiences to illustrate the point. I see the northern tier habitats as severely damaged by a long history of both deer management mistakes, and natural calamity. The quite simple bottom line is, the availability of that most precious commodity, food, is limited. As I hunt the public lands adjacent to private lands, many mentioned above and which sustain feeding/baiting programs, I can tell within a short period of time, when those feeding/baiting programs open or begin for the year. There is a fairly rapid exodus of wildlife from that adjacent landscape, and for considerable miles in all directions... to the cafeteria one might say, down the mountain, quite similar, I've noticed, to the flow of humans down the escalator, here, at lunchtime. My concern, and that of my organization has a lot less to do with whether or not those conducting the feeding/baiting programs are observing the present legalities and rules of fair chase, than it does with the fact, that consciously or not, those who feed and bait have artificially altered the value of a day in the field for so many others. The United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania believe that this principle alone was the basis of the original tenants for the original statute that determined baiting/feeding should be an illegal activity, to preserve a more equal opportunity for all citizens of the Commonwealth to pursue the objectives of fair chase sport, and true scientific wildlife management, equally. In most of the state, those tenants have not changed.







## Shooting Straight for Better Bowhunting

We are firmly and adamantly opposed to the legislation as written, and encourage it not be endorsed by this committee. On the surface supplemental feeding during the winter months appears morally justifiable, however here in Pennsylvania any proof of actual effectiveness is lacking other than to heavily concentrate game and other wildlife, in feeding/baiting areas. Feeding during hunting seasons is at best, a questionable endeavor, and it is fairly obvious that *any* distance assigned to the current or proposed regulations cannot guarantee adherence to the law. In regard to suggestions that the current laws on baiting/feeding be clarified, it would seem a simple matter to eliminate *any* supplemental feeding from 30-days prior to, and until the end of, any big game hunting season. This would certainly validate our efforts at managing wildlife populations through fair chase hunting, as well as eliminate any need for language changes to the baiting regulations. Quite simply, feeding during any big game season would be baiting, and baiting is illegal.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee this morning.

