



---

# PAUL TITTL

---

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage,  
Assembly Bill 30  
February 10, 2021

First of all, I would like to thank you, Chairman Pronchinske and committee members, for allowing me to testify before you concerning Assembly Bill 30 relating to the use of wood to contain bear bait or feed in logs or stumps.

Under current law, bear hunters are permitted to place bait in hollow logs, holes in the ground and stumps. However, the bait must be capped with logs, rocks or other permitted substances so animals such as whitetail deer do not access it.

The bill before you today allows hunters to place a wood bottom under the bait so other animals cannot access it from below. That change creates a safer bait site, because it decreases the likelihood of the site becoming a congregation point for wolves. Without a bottom, wolves can tend to gather in the area, presenting an increased danger for hunting dogs.

AB 30 is more environmentally friendly than the approach taken in other states. For example, Minnesota allows bait to be placed in steel pans, buckets and barrels. However, those materials do not decompose. Therefore, Minnesota requires hunters to remove those steel and metal items within a certain number of days following the hunting season.

I hope they remove all of those barrels, but I am guessing that doesn't always happen.

The AB 30 approach is more environmentally friendly for one basic reason. What does wood do when it sits in the woods? It decomposes!

The bottom line is that our bill makes the sites safer and does so in an environmentally friendly manner.

Thanks for considering this bill. Following Senator Stafsholt's remarks, we will be happy to take any questions you might have.

---

**Capitol Office:** Post Office Box 8953 • Madison, WI 53708-8953

(608) 266-0315 • Toll-Free: (888) 529-0025 • Fax: (608) 282-3625 • **Email:** Rep.Tittl@legis.wi.gov



# ROB STAFSHOLT

STATE SENATOR • 10<sup>th</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

(608) 266-7745  
Toll Free: (800) 862-1092  
Sen.Stafsholt@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

**TO:** Members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage  
**FROM:** Senator Rob Stafsholt  
**DATE:** February 10, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 30

---

Thank you, fellow members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage for allowing me to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 30 regarding the types of materials allowed for containing bear bait.

This is a bill from last Session that passed the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage unanimously and also passed on the Assembly Floor. This bill also passed the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry unanimously and simply ran out of time to be scheduled on the Senate Floor. Under current law it is illegal for any person to place, use or hunt over bait placed for bears that is not enclosed in a hollow log, a hole in the ground or a stump which is capped with logs, rocks or other naturally occurring and unprocessed substances. As is, man-made or processed materials cannot be used. The purpose for the requirement to cover the bait is to prevent whitetail deer from accessing the material inside.

Without a properly secured bottom, animals such as wolves, coyotes, raccoons, squirrels, skunks, fishers and other small animals are able to dig under and/or tip the stump and access the material contained inside from underneath. This can unintentionally create an illegal bait site. This bill would allow a bottom made of wood or similar processed materials to be properly attached to the stump.

Making this change would allow hunters to create an easier legal bait site and help decrease the likelihood of the site becoming a congregation site for non-targeted animals.

Again, thank you for hearing this bill today. I encourage you all to join me in supporting this piece of legislation.



## Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

### *2021 Assembly Bill 30*

*Modifying administrative rules relating to the use of wood to contain bear bait or feed in logs or stumps.*

*February 10, 2021*

Good morning Chair Pronschinske and members of the Committee. My name is Sean Kennedy, and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 30 (AB 30).

Bear baiting is a popular and effective method used by hunters to harvest bear each fall. Current rules require that no processed materials may be used when placing bear bait on the landscape but allow bait to be placed in natural wood, such as hollow logs or stumps. A problem that arises when using hollow logs to place bait is that other animals are sometimes able to dig under the log and access the bait. After an animal accesses the bait, it can be distributed over a larger area and attract unintended species to the bait, including deer in areas where the baiting and feeding of deer is prohibited. This problem occurs less often with stumps, however, since stumps remain naturally attached to the ground.

AB 30 would allow processed materials to be affixed to the bottom of stumps and hollow logs. The department would like to ensure that there is no potential for processed materials to be left on public lands. We recommend that the bill authors consider adding language requiring all individuals to remove any processed materials after the close of the bear season. This would be consistent with other department rules on leaving other materials on public lands and would help ensure that materials which can take decades to decompose will not be abandoned on state lands. This requirement would also be consistent with Minnesota, which requires drums that are used for bear baiting be removed within seven days of the end of the bear season.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, I would like to thank you for your time today. If there are questions, I will step aside and allow Eric Lobner, Director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management, to respond.



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty

## Testimony to the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage, in Opposition to Assembly Bill 30

Feb. 10, 2021

Dear Committee members:

I am Megan Nicholson, State Director for the Humane Society of the United States, and on behalf of our Wisconsin supporters, **we stand in opposition to AB30, which would ease black bear baiting** so that trophy bear hunters can more readily kill these highly sentient animals who are beloved by a majority of Wisconsin residents.

**Baiting bears** is *not* a solution for population management. In fact, sound science shows baiting unnaturally **increases Wisconsin's bear population**, according to a recent Wisconsin study.<sup>1</sup> This is common sense, as diet and nutrition are the most important factors driving bears' reproduction. The science is clear: Bears who have access to supplemental foods from human sources are more productive and cub survival increases. Females with access to human foods start reproduction *years* earlier than bears that rely only upon natural foods. When bears obtain human foods, the interval of time between litters decreases while the numbers of cubs increase. Furthermore, baiting is bad because it can amplify human-bear conflicts because it accustoms bears to human food and the smell of humans at bait sites.

According to Beringer et al. (2016), baits that contain toxic elements can lead to various negative outcomes such as death, thermoregulatory stress, suppression of the immune system, increased predation and the transference of toxins to young via lactation.<sup>2</sup> The physical effects are varied and include stimulation of the central nervous system, seizures, vomiting, heart arrhythmias and mortality.<sup>3</sup> Wildlife are exposed to theobromine (an element that contains caffeine) by consuming livestock feed, but more commonly through the consumption of waste food production used to specifically bait wildlife.<sup>4</sup>

### **i. Baiting bears creates enormous welfare problems**

- Baiting is considered unsporting, even among many sportsmen. It is not "fair chase," the cornerstone of ethical hunting.<sup>5</sup> Bears readily consume baits set out for deer.<sup>6</sup>
- Bait piles make females with cubs vulnerable to trophy hunters, and cubs who are orphaned are less likely to survive.<sup>7</sup>
- Bait sites concentrate bears – putting young bears in harm's way. Adult bears may prey upon cubs or small bears.<sup>8</sup>
- Spoiled baits are also toxic and even fatal to bears and other wildlife.<sup>9</sup>
- Bait sites concentrate wildlife of different species and thus increase the potential for disease and parasite transmission between species, especially rabies and chronic wasting disease, and potentially mange.<sup>10</sup>

### **ii. Baiting increases human-bear conflicts (the opposite of Wisconsin's goals)**

- Outfitters and baiters place bait piles into the environment at the time when bears go into a frenzied eating behavior, called *hyperphagia*, in late summer or fall when bears need to gain 20 to 40 pounds per week to survive hibernation. Baiting habituates bears to human scents and can stimulate negative bear-human interactions.<sup>11</sup>
- Bears that become habituated to human foods become less shy and more unpredictable.<sup>12</sup> As a result of placing junk food in the woods, bears associate food with the smells of humans, and even livestock.<sup>13</sup> We cannot emphasize it enough: Feeding bears with bait (including bait for deer) increases the likelihood of conflicts.



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty

- Baited bears experience serious behavior modifications, which are sometimes irreversible.<sup>14</sup> Food-conditioned bears change their eating habits, home ranges, and movement patterns.<sup>15</sup>

### **iii. Baiting destroys habitats**

- Bait sites require ease of access and biologists have noted habitat destruction at these places, including the spread of invasive plants.<sup>16</sup>
- Bait piles are smelly and irritating to other outdoor recreationists (who could be in harm's way if they stumble unknowingly onto a bear-occupied bait site), and if they are near roadways, can endanger bears who travel near or on roadways to access bait piles.<sup>17</sup>

**More than a dozen peer-reviewed, published studies indicate that hunting bears does nothing to resolve conflicts.** Bear hunters do not target problem bears but are instead out in the woods trying to find the biggest trophy. Public education campaigns, on the other hand, can work to alleviate human-bear conflicts.

**Bear conflict mitigation for landowners involves employing commonsense, non-lethal solutions** across entire landscapes, such as using the right kind of electric fencing around calving and lambing pens, boneyards, stored animal feed and around crops. Other strategies include using bear-proof trash receptacles and creating secured dumps in rural communities.

**Black bears are an important umbrella species and are ecological actors who increase the biodiversity of their forest ecosystems.** They disperse seeds across vast distances—even more seeds than birds—open up canopies, and amend soils through their various behaviors. Black bears are one of the most photographed of wildlife in America.

**Trophy hunting is unpopular with most Americans.** A 2019 survey of Americans' values towards hunting, conducted by the pro-hunting groups, the National Shooting Sports Foundation and Responsive Management, found that 71 percent of Americans disapprove of trophy hunting.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge you to vote “NO!” on AB30 and move to eliminate the cruelties involved with Wisconsin's trophy bear hunting practices.



Sources cited:

- <sup>1</sup> R. Kirby, D. M. Macfarland, and J. N. Pauli, "Consumption of Intentional Food Subsidies by a Hunted Carnivore," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 81, no. 7 (2017).
- <sup>2</sup> Jeff Beringer, Andrew Timmins, and Tim L. Hiller, "Unintentional Toxicosis from Methylxanthines in Chocolate-Based Baits Consumed by American Black Bears," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 40, no. 2 (2016).
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> J. Posewitz, *Beyond Fair Chase: The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting* (Helena, Montana: Falcon Press, 1994); T. L. Teel, R. S. Krannich, and R. H. Schmidt, "Utah Stakeholders' Attitudes toward Selected Cougar and Black Bear Management Practices," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 30, no. 1 (2002); C.W. Ryan, J.W. Edwards, and M.D. Duda, "West Virginia Residents: Attitudes and Opinions toward American Black Bear Hunting," *Ursus* 2, (2009); C. A. Loker and D. J. Decker, "Colorado Black Bear Hunting Referendum: What Was Behind the Vote?," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 23, no. 3 (1995).
- <sup>6</sup> Rebecca Kirby, David M. Macfarland, and Jonathan N. Pauli, "Consumption of Intentional Food Subsidies by a Hunted Carnivore," *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 81, no. 7 (2017).
- <sup>7</sup> K. V. Noyce and D. L. Garshelis, "Influence of Natural Food Abundance on Black Bear Harvests in Minnesota," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 61, no. 4 (1997); K. D. Malcolm and T. R. Van Deelen, "Effects of Habitat and Hunting Framework on American Black Bear Harvest Structure in Wisconsin," *Ursus* 21, no. 1 (2010).
- <sup>8</sup> M. Elfstrom et al., "Ultimate and Proximate Mechanisms Underlying the Occurrence of Bears Close to Human Settlements: Review and Management Implications," *Mammal Review* 44, no. 1 (2014).
- <sup>9</sup> Dunkley and Cattet, "A Comprehensive Review of the Ecological and Human Social Effects of Artificial Feeding and Baiting of Wildlife."
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid; Inslerman et al., "Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species. The Wildlife Society." Amanda Sommerer, "A Spatial Analysis of the Relationship between the Occurrence of Mangle in Pennsylvania's Black Bear Population and Impervious Land Cover" (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2014); Kirby, Macfarland, and Pauli, "Consumption of Intentional Food Subsidies by a Hunted Carnivore."
- <sup>11</sup> L. Dunkley and M. R. L. Cattet, "A Comprehensive Review of the Ecological and Human Social Effects of Artificial Feeding and Baiting of Wildlife," <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=icwdmccwhcnews> (2003); R.A. Inslerman et al., "Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species. The Wildlife Society.," <http://wildlife.org/documents/technical-reviews/docs/Baiting06-1.pdf>, no. Technical Review. 58p. (2006); Kirby, Macfarland, and Pauli, "Consumption of Intentional Food Subsidies by a Hunted Carnivore."
- <sup>12</sup> Inslerman et al., "Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species. The Wildlife Society.; Dunkley and Cattet, "A Comprehensive Review of the Ecological and Human Social Effects of Artificial Feeding and Baiting of Wildlife."
- <sup>13</sup> Beck et al., "Sociological and Ethical Considerations of Black Bear Hunting." Inslerman et al., "Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species. The Wildlife Society.; Dunkley and Cattet, "A Comprehensive Review of the Ecological and Human Social Effects of Artificial Feeding and Baiting of Wildlife."
- <sup>14</sup> Inslerman et al., "Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species. The Wildlife Society."
- <sup>15</sup> J. P. Beckmann and J. Berger, "Rapid Ecological and Behavioural Changes in Carnivores: The Responses of Black Bears (*Ursus Americanus*) to Altered Food," *Journal of Zoology* 261, (2003).
- <sup>16</sup> Hank Hristienko and Jr. McDonald, John E., "Going in the 21st Century: A Perspective on Trends and Controversies in the Management of the Black Bear " *Ursus* 18, no. 1 (2007).
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.