



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Date: 3 June 2019
To: Rhode Island Senate Judiciary
From: Jacob Pries, Policy Intern
Re: Support for S0880

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), we would like to state our support for S0880 prohibiting “canned hunting” in the state of Rhode Island. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. Founded in 1988, the QDMA has over 60,000 members nationwide and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

The members of QDMA support the concept that wildlife is held in trust by the state for all of Rhode Island’s citizenry to enjoy. This public ownership of wildlife is an instrumental component of the successful North American Model for Wildlife Conservation. Ethical sportsmen and women created and have supported the North American Model for the past century. “Canned hunting” runs directly contrary to what all ethical sportsmen and women believe in. The North American Model for Wildlife Conservation runs parallel with the notion of Fair Chase. This is a concept that ethical hunters hold in the highest regard. When hunters pursue an animal, this should be done with skill, woodsmanship and should be a challenge. “Canned hunting” does not represent the hunting tradition that is so deeply engrained in American history. Trapping animals in a confined area with no route of escape does not comport with the principle of Fair Chase and is not supported by QDMA.

Additionally, the importation of animals into the state of Rhode Island for “canned hunting” places in danger Rhode Island’s entire native ecosystem. The existence and vast spreading of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has placed ecosystems across the country in jeopardy and by allowing the importation of animals for “canned hunting” this places Rhode Island at an increased risk for a CWD outbreak. This outbreak could substantially damage Rhode Island’s deer population, leading to negative effects on Rhode Island’s \$4.0 billion outdoor economy and negative effects on a nationwide \$16.7 billion hunting industry. CWD is nothing short of an epidemic within the wildlife community. CWD is an always fatal disease found in all native North American cervids (members of the deer family) including elk, moose, mule and white-tailed deer, and it has now been identified in 26 U.S. states, three Canadian provinces, Korea, Finland and Norway. Contagions spread through urine, feces, saliva, blood, deer parts, and especially via live animals. Importantly, there is no vaccine, no cure and no practical live animal test to date. By allowing the importation of animals, the state of Rhode Island significantly increases the risk of damaging the delicate ecosystem that exists within the state.

The QDMA supports the changes outlined by the New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. There are as follows:

- Modify the definition of “canned hunt” in paragraph (a) to focus on the taking of or attempting to take confined animals within an enclosure created by the deliberate use of fences, man-made structures, and natural barriers. Remove the terminology “trophy” and the language “increasing the hunter’s chances of success” and “the animal is hunted primarily for the purposes of

entertainment or the collection of all or part of the animal as a trophy.” New England BHA supports hunters and anglers who legally pursue mature game animals that could be considered trophies using fair chase methods, and a successful hunt is often contingent on employing a strategy that has a high chance of success. It is likely impossible to prove one’s intention or motive to engage in the practice of hunting, and we believe that this language unnecessarily reaches beyond the purpose of the bill.

- Expand “(b) No wild animal that is not native or domestic to this state may be imported into the state for purposes of conducting canned hunting” to prohibit the importation of any animal for the purposes of conducting a canned hunt.
- Expand “(c) No animal which has been genetically altered or cloned...” to also prohibit artificial breeding of animals for the purposes of conducting a canned hunt.
- Add a statement to prohibit the confinement of native wildlife or use of domestic animals from within the state for the purpose of conducting a canned hunt, including but not limited to native wildlife such as whitetail deer and animals related to domestic livestock such as wild hogs, and to prohibit any animal that is imported as livestock or that animal’s offspring or descendants from ultimately being used for the purpose of conducting a canned hunt.

“Canned hunting” poses a serious risk to the health of Rhode Island’s ecosystems and longstanding tradition of hunting. It is important that you take into consideration the best interests of the constituents you have promised to zealously represent by supporting S0880. This is more than a mere piece of legislation to take into consideration, it is a moral imperative to act in support of S0880. There is a precedent that you have the opportunity to set for the ethical pursuit of game within your state and we respectfully request that you seize this opportunity.

Respectfully,



Jacob D. Pries
Policy Intern
Quality Deer Management Association