

NATIONAL DEER ASSOCIATION

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24 February, 2021

Michigan Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Room 403, Capitol Building
100 S. Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

RE: Senate Resolution 17

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Deer Association (NDA), I am writing to provide our comments on the Michigan Senate Resolution 17. NDA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting. We represent over 60,000 members nationwide and nearly 5,000 deer hunters in Michigan. Our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

As we opposed previous legislative and Natural Resources Commission (NRC) attempts to prematurely end the antler point restrictions (APRs) research study currently being conducted by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), we also oppose the language of SR 17 that urges the NRC and DNR to end the research study begun in 2019 concerning the effectiveness of APRs as a management tool in the chronic wasting disease (CWD) core area.

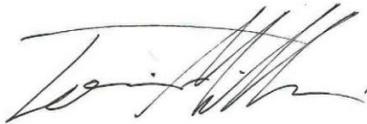
While still in its early stages, the study has provided positive results with respect to maintaining APRs in CWD areas and still meeting deer management objectives. Additionally, NDA believes that deer management decisions should be left to the agencies responsible for managing the resource. In this instance, we believe that the DNR is best situated to make science-based decisions regarding antler point restrictions with respect to disease management. Lastly, APRs are extremely popular with Michigan hunters, and engaged and satisfied hunters are a crucial component of disease and deer management in any state.

One of NDA's critical focus areas is deer diseases, and CWD more specifically. Through our extensive work on this issue across North America, we know that proactive research – especially in known CWD areas – is critically important to the management of the disease and wild deer herds. According to DNR research, “[a]bout 63% of the people hunting deer in the 5-county Core CWD Area supported the mandatory APRs and 68% supported conducting a study to investigate the effects of these mandatory APRs.” Additionally, the first year of the study was a success with hunters beating the DNR harvest goal of 1.1 antlerless per antlered deer with a ratio of 1.179 to 1. This is especially notable, given that the ratio previous year's ratio was only 0.8 to 1. Even more, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) released a [technical report on best management practices for CWD](#), which recommends utilizing “coordinated, adaptive management to provide for strategic application and evaluation of experimental CWD suppression strategies whereby the data gathered from these efforts would then be used to develop improved strategies.”

The NRC and DNR have already made their stances on this issue clear: the study should continue, at least for another year. Further, ending the study now would be a waste of already-spent resources. For the forgoing reasons, we oppose SR 17.

NDA continues to stand ready to help the Michigan Legislature, Michigan hunters, and wild deer in this perilous fight against CWD.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Torin Miller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Torin Miller
Director of Policy