



GEORGIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION*

Georgia Wildlife Federation
11600 Hazelbrand Road, Covington, GA 30014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 29, 2018

CONTACT: Mike Worley

info@gwf.org

770-787-7887

PUSH FOR HUNTING DEER OVER BAIT IGNORES SOUND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES Executive Order Attempts to Circumvent Wildlife Professionals and Expand Deer Baiting

Covington, GA – On April 9, 2018, Governor Deal signed an Executive Order directing the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to determine an appropriate expansion of the Southern Zone which would in turn expand the practice of shooting deer over bait in Georgia. The Order uses hunter inequality and a lack of evidence connecting baiting with a decrease in herd health as justification to reexamine the issue. DNR's findings, which will be presented to the DNR Board for action, are to be based on "sound wildlife management principles." However, after three failed legislative attempts to expand baiting during the 2018 General Assembly, opening the issue again in this unusual manner is counter to longstanding practice in Georgia. Furthermore, the proposal is contrary to virtually all peer-reviewed wildlife science.

In the face of consistent professional opposition to hunting deer over bait, Georgia has traditionally dealt with the issue as a legislative matter. As suggested by the Executive Order's reference to HB 277 from 2011, shooting deer over bait was approved in a portion of the state by the General Assembly despite long-standing concerns by Georgia's wildlife professionals. By the Executive Order's own reference, HB 277 resulted in an inequity between the northern and southern zone hunters. This inequity, however, is not the result of professional wildlife management recommendations, but instead the result of treating a wildlife management issue as a social and/or political issue. The solution to correct the inequity is certainly not to expand a practice that has been seen by the majority of wildlife professionals as counter to "sound wildlife management principles."

The Executive Order also maintains Georgia has seen no evidence of impact to deer herd health or harvest numbers. It implies there is no direct link to disease transmission via baiting. The Order fails to explain that seldom does one make such findings about deer health unless one is looking for those things. DNR has specifically not looked for any linkage to deer herd health since 2011. Furthermore, research from other states show the concentration of animals in small areas such as bait stations leads to more rapid transmission of diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease and Bovine Tuberculosis. Baiting doesn't cause these diseases, but it certainly does facilitate the rapid spread of disease.

In a recent letter to the Georgia DNR Board, wildlife professionals from business, non-profit and governmental sectors agreed to the following statement.

"Consider the science and the sound wildlife management principles that the Executive Order ignores. Perhaps even ask yourself why professional wildlife biologists are not the ones recommending baiting. Ignoring any principle of sound wildlife management, this proposal damages the integrity of our Department by disregarding wildlife professionals and by usurping our own 2015-2024 Georgia Deer

Management Plan; a plan developed through broad scaled public input and approved by GA DNR Commissioner Mark Williams.”

The community of wildlife professionals, in as close to unanimity as one can get in science, is opposed to baiting of wildlife in all but a few exceptions. Wildlife experts in our own state have historically opposed baiting deer. Governor Deal and his administration have done remarkably good work in protecting and conserving lands for future generations and providing funding for wildlife conservation. However, this Executive Order ignores decades of successful wildlife management by professionals and instead attempts to manage our wildlife resources based on social and political opinions rather than “sound wildlife management principles” by professionals.

Additional Resources:

[Governor Deal’s Executive Order](#)

[Signed statement from wildlife professionals in opposition to baiting](#)

[2015-2024 Georgia Deer Management Plan, pp. 33-35](#)

About Georgia Wildlife Federation

Georgia Wildlife Federation was founded as a sportsman’s organization in 1936 and is Georgia’s oldest and largest conservation organization. Today, members include hunters, anglers, bird watchers, hikers, educators, and all Georgians who are interested in preserving our natural resources and outdoor heritage.

###