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MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

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Senate Committee on Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Wednesday, September 30, 2015
Re: SB 446- Deer Feeding Authority

Dear Senators,

In order to ensure that the Natural Resources Commission has the authority to regulate and issue feeding orders beyond January 1, 2016, MUCC respectfully asks for your support for Senate Bill 446 as it was introduced. This bill will extend the NRC's current authority to regulate supplemental and recreational feeding of white-tailed deer and elk beyond the current sunset of January 1, 2016.

This bill does not address the issue of baiting, which is already within the NRC's authority under Proposal G of 1996 and, more recently, the Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.

MUCC fully supports SB 446. Further, given the approaching deadline of January 1, 2016, MUCC urges expedient action on the bill and with immediate effect.

The intent of this legislation is to give the Natural Resources Commission full authority to regulate the feeding of deer and elk according to sound-scientific principles. MUCC fully supports eliminating the sunset so that our resources could be managed in an effective and transparent manner, with input from biologists.

Deer hunting alone is a half-billion dollar industry in this state and an outdoor tradition enjoyed by more than 700,000 residents. Because deer are an integral part of Michigan's ecosystem and economy, the conveyance of disease among deer, other wildlife, and humans should not be taken lightly. Deer and elk feeding congregates animals in a manner that increases the risk of spreading diseases. As such, it is critical for the NRC to have the requisite authority to issue appropriate feeding orders consistent with disease management objectives.

MUCC believes that effective, transparent, science-based natural resource management is paramount to the collective conservation and recreational opportunities our organization supports for the benefit of future generations. SB 446 would continue to enable our resource managers to use transparent, science-based management principles in controlling, and hopefully eliminating harmful wildlife diseases that pose a critical threat not only to Michigan's outdoor heritage, but also to its tourism and agriculture industries.

Thank you for your time and consideration of MUCC's input.

Sincerely,

Amy Trotter
Deputy Director