



Chairman Flynn and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jerry Davis. I represent the Montana Bowhunters Association in this testimony.

The Montana Bowhunters Association's mission is to preserve and promote bowhunting opportunities.

MBA stands in opposition to HB 176, a bill that would allow crossbows to be used during Montana's Archery-Only season.

I will touch on some key points why MBA opposes HB 176. Other MBA testimony provides additional reasons.

One argument often used to allow crossbows in an archery-only season is that a crossbow is archery equipment.

A crossbow is not archery equipment. A crossbow shares a trait with archery equipment in that it relies on stored energy from flexed limbs to propel a projectile toward a target. But that is where the similarities end. A crossbow is a shoulder mounted weapon with a trigger and sights similar to a firearm.

The skillset required to accurately shoot archery equipment includes but is not limited to drawing the bowstring, holding the string at an anchor point, aligning the arrow and upper body for aiming and sighting (with or without a sighting aid), and releasing the bowstring without causing torque to the bow (which would subject the arrow to inaccuracy).

A crossbow on the other hand requires a different skillset, the same skills used to shoot a rifle. Skills used to accurately shoot a rifle include mounting the rifle to the shoulder and cheek correctly, aiming with a rigid front and rear rifle type sight or scope, controlled breathing, and squeezing the trigger.

A crossbow may be carried in a loaded position where carrying a bow with a nocked arrow is dangerous and quite cumbersome.

Another argument is that allowing crossbows during Archery-Only season will introduce more people to archery hunting. Well because a crossbow is not archery equipment I think the

~~SECRET~~

(3) 1-10-15

better statement is that it will substantially increase the number of people hunting during Archery-Only season and thusly negatively impact the wildlife resource.

To argue this point I will use the analogy of a river that is designated as catch-release only. On catch-release sections of streams in Montana, FWP has determined that only barbless flies and lures may be used. This requirement is in place to allow fishing opportunities while still protecting the resource.

So what would happen to the resource if it was decided to increase opportunity by allowing the use of baited hooks with barbs? Though the stream would remain catch-release there would be negative impacts to the resource. There would be increased mortality to fish caught with barbed and baited hooks in comparison to fish caught with lures and flies with no barbs. Though initially there would be increased opportunity eventually the negative impacts to the resource would most likely lead to the closure of the stream to all fishing.

The Archery-Only season was also created to allow increased opportunity while having a negligible impact to the resource. If a bow limb powered rifle is allowed during the Archery-Only season there will be a significant impact to the wildlife resource. Those impacts will be caused by an influx of individuals who choose not to acquire the skills to shoot a bow but yet desire to extend their hunting season. Assuming that the number of hunters would increase it can only be assumed that the number of animals taken will also increase. This does not even consider the increased effectiveness of a crossbow. If the impacts to the resource are large enough the FWP will have no choice but to restrict the Archery-Only season, including shortening the season and changing more and more over the counter archery hunting districts into restricted permit hunting districts.

But there are plenty of hunters already taking advantage of Montana's Archery-Only season and there is no need to include crossbows. Montana FWP reports that last year there were a little over 148,000 elk licenses sold. Also last year there were a few more than 43,000 archery licenses sold. So if one assumes that each individual with an archery license purchased an elk license then it appears that at a minimum close to 30% of the hunting public already hunts with a bow during Montana's Archery-Only season. If one assumes that 50% of people who bought an archery license also hunted with a rifle then the percentage of hunters in Montana who take advantage of the Archery-Only season climbs to 40%. Do we really need to include crossbows in Archery-Only season? MBA thinks not.

Some have argued that with crossbows, women, children and handicapped persons will also be able to take advantage of the Archery-Only Season.

Contrary to that argument I point to the 2014 Winter edition of the "Montana Bowhunter" a publication of the Montana Bowhunters Association. In that issue a 7th grade girl from Lincoln Public School was featured. During the 2014 hunting season she harvested not only two deer but also a Pope and Young class 6 point bull elk.

Additionally Montana allows archery equipment to be modified to meet the needs of handicapped persons. To that end, MBA partnered with FWP over a decade ago to develop the Permit To Modify Archery Equipment (PTMAE). In addition, we have dedicated \$500 per year to assist with the modification of bows to suit the specific needs of those individuals.

Then there is the issue of who should be setting the equipment standards for Montana's Archery-Only season. MBA believes that this is a matter that should be heard in front of the FWP Commission. Section 87-1-301 of the MCA defines Powers of commission. Under subsection (2) of that section it states "The commission may adopt rules regarding the use and type of archery equipment that may be employed for hunting and fishing purposes, taking into account applicable standards as technical innovations in archery equipment change." The commission has used that authority to set equipment standards for archery equipment used during Archery-Only season. For this reason MBA believes this as well as other equipment change requests should be requested through the Tenatives process of the FWP Commision.

I will wrap up this testimony by stating comments directed toward HB 176 posted on MBA's Facebook page were overwhelmingly opposed to allowing crossbows into Montana's Archery-Only season. Of around 50 or so comments we received within a couple of hours after posting only a couple supported such a bill.

There are plenty of opportunities for those interested in using a crossbow to use it during general rifle season and within Weapons Restricted Areas around the state of Montana.

Our mission is to preserve and promote bowhunting, and we feel that passage of HB 176 would degrade bowhunting in Montana. We urge you to vote "do not pass" to HB 176.

Thank you,

Jerry Davis

Montana Bowhunters Association

1000

1000