

Join you fellow members for our monthly General Members Meeting, Tuesday, April 2, 2019 at 7:00 PM at the BGSL Clubhouse. Topics to include;

- Second reading of the change to our By-Laws to allow for electronic meetings of the Board of Directors
- The drawing for the annual turkey hunting tags
- And a discussion of the proposal in the Kentucky Legislature to change the rules on hunting in Kentucky. Background is below
- Join us for the meeting, fellowship with other members and share a meal with everyone on the club! See you Tuesday!

Issue 1: Expanding the crossbow deer season. The regulation changes before you for approval expand the current crossbow deer season an additional 5 weeks, from 13 weeks to 18 weeks.

Discussion: Hunters already had 13 weeks of crossbow season, any argument that says allowing an additional 5 weeks will somehow “tip the scales” to finally help recruit more hunters or help even more youth start hunting is a partial truth at best, which means it’s also a partial untruth. This additional 5 weeks of crossbow season are some of the weeks that buck deer are most vulnerable, that’s a biological fact. I am not a practicing biologist, but one of my degrees is in biology, so I’m not a layperson either. This expanded season will certainly give deer hunters more opportunity to kill a buck deer, but that does very little to help our deer herd. Our own KDFWR 2017-2018 deer study says, *“Despite a statewide bag limit of unlimited antlerless deer in zone 1 and up to four antlerless deer in zones 2-4, there appears to be a limit on the number of deer that hunters are willing to, or able to harvest, as **71.8% of all hunters only harvest one deer.** Of the 99,861 total successful hunters in the 2017-18 season, the **average hunter harvested 1.36 deer,** which was a slight increase from last season. However, **this rate usually does not fluctuate** statewide between years and has **remained stable over time.**”* Their own data suggests that expanded crossbow season will only allow hunters to more efficiently harvest their one deer, which in all likelihood, will be a buck. The data presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the sportsmen and women about expanded statewide crossbow seasons was from other states. While that data is a good example of possible outcomes, we do not know for **sure** what the results of expanded crossbow seasons will be in **Kentucky.**

Recommendation: Disapprove the expanded crossbow season as it is currently written. Amend the changed expansion of 18 weeks total crossbow season to apply in **zone 1 counties only,** where we have an overabundance of deer. Further, amend the KAR to require the KDFWR study the impact of the expanded crossbow season in our zone 1 counties for 3 full hunting seasons, and until that study is over, no other changes to crossbow season will be allowed. Then with that data, let us make an informed decision of how an expanded season impacts Kentucky. The deer herd is more important than one faction of our hunters and their chosen method of harvest. Testing first before such changes should be our methodology, not guessing we’re right, based on what worked or didn’t work in other states. The positive economic impact of deer hunting in Kentucky cannot be over stated and any changes which could hurt our herd, jeopardize our economic well being as well.

Issue 2: Very limited public comment. Less than 1% of the licensed hunters in the state had an opportunity to comment on these changes prior to the Fish and Wildlife Commission voting and presenting them to you. The last deer regulation changes were hotly debated at the LRC for this same reason – there's **not enough** public comment **prior** to sending changes to the LRC for approval.

Discussion: All public comment allowed by the KDFWR **prior** to the changes being approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission **had to be done in person, yes in person.** Those meetings were scheduled during the work week, usually at 8:30 or 9:00am. The vast majority of hardworking voters in your districts cannot take off work to attend such meetings. What's worse - written public comment is only accepted by the KDFWR **after** the Fish and Wildlife Commission voted and sent these changes to you. There was no online public comment. The Fish and Wildlife Commissioners held a few local meetings to discuss these issues with their constituents in their districts. There were over 250,000 deer hunters licensed in Kentucky last year. An inventory of the statewide meetings that were held prior to the Commission voting on these regulation changes determined that approximately **0.7% of sportsmen and women** provided public comment. **That's less than one half of one percent.** The KDFWR will tell you that they met the legal requirements of public comment and are in total compliance with the KRS that governs public comment - **which is the minimum standard, nothing extra.** The outpouring of angst you'll witness, once again, about changes to deer regulations proves that the public comment system is broken. Hunter numbers have declined by nearly 20% in the last 3 years. Any process or procedure that marginalizes hunters can only hurt our numbers and our future, which impacts the bottom line financially. The less hunters that buy a license, the less revenue the KDFWR generates. The cascading effects of this cannot be overstated. The KDFWR is a budget neutral agency in the Commonwealth, as they receive no money from the general fund. Sportsmen and women pay for 92% of the KDFWR's annual revenue. We have enough budget issues elsewhere in the Commonwealth, we do not need to self-inflict any further challenges.

Recommendation: Modernize the system of public comment and use online means to do it. The KDFWR should work to help sportsmen and women feel included in the process from start to finish. The KDFWR should publish the potential changes that require public comment after the Fish and Wildlife Commission Committee meetings, which are held approximately 90 days in advance of a vote by the full Fish and Wildlife Commission. The KDFWR should use the time between Committee and full Commission meetings to receive public comment and compile that public comment to better inform the Fish and Wildlife Commissioners prior to them voting on any changes or issues. The Fish and Wildlife Commissioners are volunteers and cannot possibly solicit the input of over 600,000 hunters and fishers across the state. They have been voting on issues with only limited input. **That is why contentious unresolved issues from KDFWR arrive at the LRC.** Specifically, the KDFWR should improve the personal profile of each sportsman or woman in their database to include their email. The KDFWR should push out potential changes in regulations, updates and any other notification to the sportsmen and women via email. Those emails should alert the public that their input is **required** and how they can participate during the public comment period. Those sportsmen and women who don't comment, after being notified, have commented in absentia. The KDFWR should develop simple surveys and general text comment procedures that allow the majority of license holders to provide public comment. The KDFWR should not use Social Security Numbers (SSN) but should develop a unique Customer Identification Number (CID) for each individual license holder. That CID number can be used to prevent "vote stacking" and limit individuals to one vote/comment per issue. These public comment techniques have been used by some of the most successful "Fish and Game" or "Game and Parks" Departments in the Nation **to prevent the unresolved issues** from arriving

partially cooked at their legislatures for contentious debate that should have been done elsewhere.

