



MICHIGAN UNITED *Since 1937* CONSERVATION CLUBS

Uniting Citizens to Conserve, Protect and Enhance Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoor Heritage
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June 14, 2021

Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners
201 West Kalamazoo Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

RE: Wildlife Killing Contests Proclamation

Dear Kalamazoo County Commissioners,

Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) is a 501(c)3 conservation organization representing more than 200 affiliate clubs and 40,000 members in Michigan. Founded in 1937, our mission is to unite citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage. Our membership is a diverse collection of organizations and individual members whose missions involve conservation of fisheries, wildlife and natural resources, as well as the promotion of hunting, fishing and trapping activities. MUCC is the largest statewide conservation organization in the nation. Today, we are reaching out to you to express the concerns our organization and its members have regarding the proposed proclamation "opposing wildlife killing contests and asking Michigan policymakers to ban them."

In 2020, through the organization's grassroots process, MUCC members passed a resolution supporting predator-hunting contests as legal hunting opportunities that promote the benefits of R3 (recruitment, retention and reactivation), reinforce the social and community aspects of hunting and bring economic benefits to local communities. The MUCC resolution states that the organization will work with its affiliate clubs on best management practices for public relations surrounding contests and that the organization continue to support the use of fur as a legitimate driver of wildlife management and that these contests should be encouraged to utilize the fur and wild game to its fullest extent.

Furthermore, there is no generally-accepted definition of the phrase "wildlife killing contests" among scientific fish and wildlife managers, and as such, the definition must be interpreted broadly. Michigan hunters and anglers, including MUCC members, participate in bass fishing tournaments, hunt tests with dogs, small game hunting competitions and big buck poles. All of these events award prizes or incentives for submission of game, and all of them could be interpreted as "wildlife killing contests."

The exclusive authority over the manner and method of take of game species in Michigan resides with the Natural Resources Commission (NRC). Working with the NRC, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) biologists have recommended predator-hunting regulations that align with the best available science, and the NRC, adhering to Proposal G, implemented those regulations and revisits them regularly.

Stating “buck poles” should be accepted events in the proclamation because “Michigan deer are hunted only under strict regulation that dictate seasons, methods of take and bag limits” is a thinly-veiled and egregious attempt to make the comparison that predator hunting in Michigan is not well-regulated and managed by Michigan’s DNR. This is a slap in the face to the many Michigan wildlife managers who work hard recommending and proposing scientifically-sound regulations applicable to predator hunting. State managers have recommended the liberalized regulations for coyotes currently in place because there has not been scientific evidence presented that previous restrictions were necessary.

Much of the proclamation contains emotional rhetoric often aimed at disparaging hunters, including the term “trophy hunter,” which has been used by anti-hunting organizations during public testimony at the NRC to describe any hunter who legally and ethically pursues any kind of game species.

Ultimately, it is MUCC’s opinion that support of this proclamation is a slippery slope. Anti-hunting organizations have already taken aim at youth small game competitions held as fundraisers. Supporters of this resolution have no intention to only end predator-hunting competitions — they have strategically picked this topic to slowly try and chip away at Michigan’s rich outdoor heritage and sporting traditions.

The appropriate venue to hear regulations related to hunting, trapping and fishing is the NRC. This body is granted exclusive authority to regulate the taking of game in this state using, to the greatest extent practicable, principles of sound scientific management in making decisions regarding the taking of game. Proposal G was a legislatively-referred statute adopted in 1996 garnering about 69 percent of the popular vote.

While this proclamation carries no binding action, MUCC urges the commission to carefully consider our organization's comments before voting on this proclamation. We can make ourselves available at a future date for any questions, comments or concerns you may have.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Green", written in a cursive style.

Nick Green, *Public Information Officer*

CC:

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director Daniel Eichinger

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Furbearer Specialist Adam Bump

Senator Sean McCann

Representative Christine Morse