

Testimony Opposing HB1099
State, Veterans, & Military Affairs
February 9, 2015
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On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and our supporters in Colorado, The HSUS is vigorously opposed to HB1099. In part, 1099 overturns Amendment 10, a ballot initiative passed in 1992 by a 72% majority.¹ In 2011, HB 1294, a similar bill failed to pass because of the public's opposition.

The Colorado voting majority wants bears to be hunted using only "fair chase" methods; it has demanded protections for mother bears who have dependent cubs; and it wants bears managed using the best available science.

Proponents of this bill may believe that hunting more bears will alleviate human-bear conflicts, but the science does not support this. Numerous studies show that hunting bears does not alleviate human-bear conflicts. That is because trophy hunters target the bears in the forest, not the problem bears in human habitats. The best methods for dealing with problems bears is public education programs that teach people not to lure bears with human foods coupled with stringent law enforcement.

Baiting grows the bear population:

- While some tout baiting as a means to control the bear population, it actually has the reverse effect. Bear populations are largely regulated by the amount of food in the environment.
- When baiters and guides place millions of calories of junk food in the woods, Colorado's bear population will inevitably grow.

Baiting habituates bears to humans:

- As a result of placing junk food in the woods, bears associate that food with the smells of humans and even livestock.
- Bears that become habituated to human foods become unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Baiting increases human-bear conflicts.

Bait is also bad for bears and other wildlife:

- Bear bait usually consists of donuts, candy, grease, rotting garbage, corn, fish, meat and other foods. Some of the baits that hunters use are made from waste candy that

¹ Amendment 10 banned the use of bait and dogs to hunt bears and prohibits bear hunting between March 1 and Sept. 1 to protect female bears with dependent cubs

contains Theobromine, which is toxic to many species, and recently documented as fatal to bears. Spoiled baits are also toxic and can cause fatalities.

- Bait piles are particularly attractive to female bears with cubs because feeding a family is a difficult, all-consuming business for a mother bear. Baiting can increase the likelihood of leaving orphaned cubs, who will die by starvation, predation or exposure.
- Bait sites also concentrate wildlife, which will increase the potential for disease and parasite transmission between species, especially rabies from raccoons.

Hunting bears in August will orphan some young-of-the year bears and create potentially dangerous conflicts between hunters and other recreationists:

Black bear cubs, usually born during the months between December and February, emerge from hibernation with their mothers in April and May. Mother bears care for and protect their cubs until they are 16 to 17 months old. Mothers spend two winters hibernating with her cubs; the family breaks up typically between May and July, after the cubs' second winter.

Starting the bear-hunting season one month earlier will mean the death for some young cubs, whose mothers are shot. This has huge moral implications for most Coloradans, who overwhelmingly passed Amendment 10, and caused HB 1294 to fail in 2011.

Finally, 1099 puts hunters on Colorado's public lands in the month of August, increasingly the likelihood of conflicts with other outdoor recreationists such as families camping and hiking.

The Colorado public wants bears hunted using fair chase methods; and it wants mother bears and cubs protected from trophy hunters. Baiting bears grows the bear population; habituates bears to humans; causes unwanted bear mortalities—especially to dependent cubs; and spreads disease. Hunting bears does not alleviate human-bear conflicts. For all of these reasons, the HSUS encourages this committee to vote "no" on HB1099.