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TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues
FROM: Senator Rob Stafsholt
DATE: February 2, 2021
SUBJECT: Testimony in favor of Senate Bill 45

Thank you, fellow members of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues for allowing me to testify in favor of Senate Bill 45 regarding the types of materials allowed for containing bear bait.

This is a bill from last Session that passed the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage unanimously and also passed on the Assembly Floor. This bill also passed the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry unanimously and simply ran out of time to be scheduled on the Senate Floor. Under current law it is illegal for any person to place, use or hunt over bait placed for bears that is not enclosed in a hollow log, a hole in the ground or a stump which is capped with logs, rocks or other naturally occurring and unprocessed substances. As is, man-made or processed materials cannot be used. The purpose for the requirement to cover the bait is to prevent whitetail deer from accessing the material inside.

Without a properly secured bottom, animals such as wolves, coyotes, raccoons, squirrels, skunks, fishers and other small animals are able to dig under and/or tip the stump and access the material contained inside from underneath. This can unintentionally create an illegal bait site. This bill would allow a bottom made of wood or similar processed materials to be properly attached to the stump.

Making this change would allow hunters to create an easier legal bait site and help decrease the likelihood of the site becoming a congregation site for non-targeted animals.

Again, thank you for hearing this bill today. I encourage you all to join me in supporting this piece of legislation.



PAUL TITTL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage,
Small Business and Rural Issues

Senate Bill 45

February 2, 2021

First of all, I would like to thank you for allowing me to testify before you concerning Senate Bill 45 relating to the use of wood to contain bear bait or feed in logs or stumps.

Senator Stafsholt has very nicely mentioned the reasons these changes make sense. In the interest of time I'll not reiterate those points. However, I would like to highlight one matter of particular importance.

As we look to allowing hunters to place bottoms under the bait, it is important we permit them to do so in an environmentally friendly manner. For that reason, the bill specifies the use of wood which decomposes, rather than other material such as steel, which does not decompose. This provision enables hunters to engage in the sport in a manner which is environmentally friendly.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. Senator Stafsholt and I are pleased to take any questions you might have.

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Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues

2021 Senate Bill 45

Modifying administrative rules relating to the use of wood to contain bear bait or feed in logs or stumps.

February 2, 2021

Good morning Chair Stafsholt and members of the Committee. My name is Steven Little, and I am the Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 45 (SB 45).

Bear baiting is a popular and effective method used by hunters to harvest bear each fall. Current rules require that no processed materials may be used when placing bear bait on the landscape but allow bait to be placed in natural wood, such as hollow logs or stumps. A problem that arises when using hollow logs to place bait is that other animals are sometimes able to dig under the log and access the bait. After an animal accesses the bait, it can be distributed over a larger area and attract unintended species to the bait, including deer in areas where the baiting and feeding of deer is prohibited. This problem occurs less often with stumps, however, since stumps remain naturally attached to the ground.

SB 45 would allow processed materials to be affixed to the bottom of stumps and hollow logs. The department would like to ensure that there is no potential for processed materials to be left on public lands. We recommend that the bill authors consider adding language requiring all individuals to remove any processed materials after the close of the bear season. This would be consistent with other department rules on leaving other materials on public lands and would help ensure that materials which can take decades to decompose will not be abandoned on state lands. This requirement would also be consistent with Minnesota, which requires drums that are used for bear baiting be removed within seven days of the end of the bear season.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, I would like to thank you for your time today. If there are questions, I will step aside and allow Scott Karel, Regulatory Policy Specialist for the Bureau of Wildlife Management, to respond.