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Conserving, Enhancing and Protecting Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoors Heritage since 1937.
MUCC

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

House Committee on Agriculture
Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) testimony in opposition of HBs 4503-4507

Dear Chairman Daley and Members of the Committee,

Michigan United Conservation Clubs is a non-profit member-based organization with over 250 affiliated clubs and 42,000 members. For 74 years, MUCC has united citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and preserve our outdoor heritage.

We write to you today regarding our concerns over Michigan's growing wild hog (Sus scrofa Linnaeus) population and their threat to our state's wildlife and hunting, fishing and trapping traditions. Specifically, MUCC asks the Michigan Legislature to allow these invasive, dangerous threats to our state's wildlife and natural resource-based economy to become listed on the prohibited and restricted invasive species list through Invasive Species Order Amendment No. 1 of 2010.

In 2008, MUCC members adopted MUCC's official position on this issue by supporting a 2007 Joint Resolution adopted by the Commission on Agriculture and Natural Resources Commission that recommended aggressive action to eliminate feral swine (i.e, wild hogs) in Michigan in order to protect animal health, public health, and the environment. Since then, MUCC advocated for legislation signed into law in May, 2010 that allows hunters with a valid hunting license and landowners to shoot wild hogs on sight (House Bills 5822-23 and Senate Bill 1138 of 2010).

Last year MUCC also participated in a Swine Biosecurity Workgroup to make consensus recommendations for the minimal standards needed in a regulatory framework allowing the MDA and MDNR to better prevent the release and escape of wild hogs from captive shooting and breeding facilities. But for the issue of fencing height requirements for hog breeding facilities, the Workgroup's recommendations represented the consensus of diverse interest groups, including Michigan's agriculture and pork industries, hog shooting and breeding facilities, DNRE, MDA, and various conservation organizations, including MUCC, The Nature Conservancy, and Michigan Audubon.

Legislation introduced recently (HBs 4503-4507 and SBs 307-310) would enact regulatory measures that are significantly divergent from the consensus recommendations of the Swine Biosecurity Workgroup. Specifically, these bills fail to impose a moratorium on new hog shooting and breeding facilities, do not contain reporting, herd inventory, bonding or liability insurance requirements, do not

impose adequate hog identification measures, do not equip the MDA and DNR with adequate authority to enforce such a regulatory program, and most importantly, do not contain an adequate industry-supported funding mechanism to pay for regulations. Because MUCC believes that the Swine Biosecurity Workgroup's recommendations – at the very least – are required in order to ensure that the underlying source of Michigan's growing wild hog problem is "shut off," and because adequate funding to sustain a regulatory program is absolutely necessary to ensure such a program is effective, MUCC asks for your support in voting "no" on this legislation. Instead, we encourage you to allow Invasive Species Order No. 1 of 2010 to take effect on July 8, 2011. This "no action" alternative is the responsible choice for Michigan's agriculture and natural resource economies and is critical to eradicate wild boar in Michigan.

Just as most Michiganders would agree that regulating the farming of Asian carp in the Great Lakes or its tributaries would be irresponsible, short-sighted, and next to impossible, it is becoming more apparent the same will apply to regulating invasive wild hogs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the sporting and conservation community's concerns on this issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erin McDonough, Executive Director
Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Background

It's time for something to be done about wild boar running free in Michigan

- Four years ago the Commission on Agriculture and Natural Resource Commissions joined forces to make a strong statement that these animals should be prevented from establishing in Michigan and recommended "aggressive action to eliminate feral swine".
- MUCC agrees and has joined the *Coalition to Protect Michigan Agriculture and Natural Resources* to support the enactment of Invasive Species Order Amendment No. 1 of 2010, which places invasive wild hogs on the invasive and prohibited species list in Michigan. This Coalition consists of a diverse group of stakeholders, including the Michigan Pork Producers Association, Greenstone Farm Credit Services, Michigan Agri-Business Association, Michigan Allied Poultry Industries, Inc., Michigan Audubon, Michigan Corn Growers Association, Michigan Milk Producers Association, Michigan Pork Producers Association, Potato Growers of Michigan, Michigan Soybean Association, Michigan United Conservation Clubs and Michigan Wildlife Conservancy.

Invasive wild hogs (Sus scrofa) are to be distinguished apart from the domestic swine industry

- Among the type of animals Invasive Species Order No. 1 of 2010 addresses are the non-native species such as razorbacks and Eurasian and Russian Wild Boar that pose serious threats to Michigan's pork producers, who raise domestic swine. Unlike domestic pigs, wild boar dramatically alter ecosystems, destroy wildlife habitat, feed on wildlife (including fawns), and pose a significant public safety risk to hunters and other outdoor recreators. Wild boar are a competitor with deer and upland game birds for mast and forage. They have also been reported to prey on the eggs of ground nesting birds such as grouse, ducks, quail and turkeys.
- Like the Asian carp, wild hogs are an invasive species that will quickly displace native wildlife and significantly harm Michigan's economy if their points of entry are not completely blocked off to keep them out of Michigan permanently. However, unlike with Asian carp, Michigan has a real opportunity to take action in order to prevent a permanent infestation of this invasive species.

Wild hogs will significantly harm Michigan's economy if left uncontrolled

- The current economic devastation caused by wild hogs to crops, private property, wildlife habitat, coupled with the disease problems these animals create for current livestock farmers and native wildlife significantly outweighs the private benefit Michigan receives from the operation of ~64 hog hunting ranches. Sportsmen and women pay for wildlife conservation; we will not stand to see our license fee dollars to improve wildlife habitat go to waste. Further, restricted funds generated by sportsmen and women absolutely must not be used toward oversight/enforcement of the eradication process.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Nyberg
Legislative Affairs Manager