



THE ALABAMA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

April 9, 2025

Re: Opposition to HB509

To: The Honorable Members of the Alabama Legislature

On behalf of the Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS), we are writing to express our opposition to the recently introduced legislation **House Bill 509 (HB509)**. The proposed changes will create unnecessary detrimental impacts on the state's wildlife resources. We urge you to vote **NO** on **HB509**, which would prohibit state agencies from killing, testing, and restricting the transfer of captive cervids due to disease except under certain circumstances and would establish that cervids possessed by or under the care of a game breeder licensee are the personal property of that licensee.

Founded in 1978, The Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society works to empower and enable wildlife biologists and managers to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation. The ACTWS has a current membership of approximately 125 wildlife professionals representing academia, state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private industry. ACTWS, along with other professional societies and conservation organizations, oppose the House Bill 509.

We support the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) in its administration and management of Alabama's deer population, including those held in captivity within licensed game breeder facilities and high-fenced hunting enclosures. This legislation threatens our state's \$2.0 billion hunting industry, which is vital to most of Alabama's rural economies and ADCNR's conservation funding.

Additionally, this legislation would weaken Alabama's chronic wasting disease (CWD) and other disease surveillance, monitoring, and response options, potentially leading to undue harm, while also allowing transfer of potentially diseased animals to any captive facility, high-fenced hunting enclosure, free-ranging cervids within the state. Currently, any captive cervid deer that dies of natural means is required to be tested for diseases, including CWD. HB509 would prevent the state's ability to do this monitoring. To mitigate the risk of further CWD spread and other wildlife diseases, ADCNR must maintain its authority over both free-range and captive cervid populations, including those held in licensed captive breeding facilities and high-fenced hunting enclosures.

This bill poses ethical issues as it pertains to Alabama's hunting heritage. The changes proposed by HB509 contribute nothing towards promoting fair chase, ethical hunting, science-based wildlife management, or anything of value to the deer hunting/management community. However, the proposed changes create unnecessary hurdles to maintaining current wildlife management options. These hurdles would affect hunting, eroding the public support for fair and ethical hunting, a deeply ingrained tradition and pursuit valued by over 230,000 Alabama hunters.

Finally, this legislation violates the tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Wildlife is a public trust resource managed for the benefit of all, meaning all deer, regardless of a fence, should fall under the authority of the state wildlife agency. Laws and regulations developed by the people and enforced by state and federal agencies should guide the proper use of our wildlife resources.

We respectfully ask that you vote **NO** on **HB509** and welcome any questions about this legislation.

Respectfully submitted by the Executive Board of the Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society.