

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION
STAFF ANALYSIS
2017-02**

Title: Baiting with Barrels
Date of Analysis: September 13th 2016

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM:

Michigan is one of approximately 13 states in the U.S. that allows hunting for bears over bait. Regulations vary by state on when baiting can occur, where it can occur, what it can contain, and other rules that may regulate both baiting and recreational feeding of bears.

Michigan has no restrictions on the volume of bait a bear hunter may use, but does have restrictions for its contents based on whether they would congregate deer in areas of deer disease. There is no known bear disease issue related to baiting, but there is a concern for the impact that chocolate in bear bait may have on bears.

There is growing interest in the State of Michigan for allowing the use of barrels to bait bear, however the use of barrels for bait currently is only legal on private property in the State of Michigan. In some states and in Canada, the use of barrels to bait bear is legal.

RESOLUTION CONTENT:

- Would allow the use of bait barrels on public property.
- Hunters who plan on using the barrels on public property would be required to purchase 3 tags identifying the owner from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that must be posted at the bait site.
- The bait barrels must be anchored to a post in the ground with a chain or cable no more than 8 feet in length, which would prevent bait sites from becoming littered.
- The barrels would have a maximum of 3 holes no more than ½” in diameter for bait to disperse from, making it a slow release and limiting the attraction of non-target species.
- Hunters would be required to remove bait barrels at the end of the season.

MUCC CURRENT & PAST POLICY STANDINGS:

- While MUCC remains opposed to harvesting deer over bait due to concerns with disease, we generally support the practice of bear baiting.
- In 2012, MUCC approved a resolution requesting that MUCC actively oppose any Legislation or Commission Order that would legalize the use of tethered, large volume, bait containers on public land. This proposed resolution would reverse this policy and allow MUCC to support the use of barrel baiting for bears on public land.
- In 2016, MUCC approved a resolution to pursue 2017 regulation change that would ban the use of solid chocolate in bear bait.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION:

- Beneficial in determining whether a bear is a cub based on its relative size to the barrel
- With the growing problem of wolves in the Upper Peninsula, the use of steel barrels with secure lids would limit wolf and other non-target wildlife's access to bait.
- For hunters that live outside of the area they hunt, it would allow them to keep a bait site active through the slow release container that a barrel would provide.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION OF RESOLUTION:

- There could be a tendency or possibility for litter to be left on public land.
- Potential conflicts between hunters could arise over baiting locations.
- There is the potential for damage to trees, etc.

POSITIONS:

SUPPORT: Michigan Hunting Dog Federation

OPPOSED: In their comments from the 2016 Annual Convention, the Department of Natural Resources indicated their concerns. The DNR reviewed the potential for using barrels or other containers on public lands during the 2012 bear regulations cycle. The use of containers on public lands is not supported by the DNR or the U.S. Forest Service and lacks support from many bear hunting stakeholders. Concerns include hunter conflicts over baiting locations, litter left on public lands, and damage to trees used to anchor barrels. The DNR recommends other methods to judge the size of a bear, rather than using a barrel, such as marking height on a stick or tree with temporary paint near a bait site. Changes to current regulations are not recommended.

NEUTRAL: