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January 21, 2009

Gentlemen:

The attached NRA-ILA letter of January 16th regarding “the growing debate concerning the use of crossbows in Pennsylvania” highlights what appears to be a growing disconnect between the NRA and the hunters of this country.

You must be aware that a substantial percentage of your membership is made up of bowhunters that support the NRA’s position on the Second Amendment. Most bowhunters also own and hunt with firearms. With that in mind, it’s hard to believe the NRA would take a position contrary to the wishes of so many of its members on a matter that it apparently doesn’t fully understand.

While the proliferation of crossbows has been directed by those that stand to profit from that action, the bowhunters of this continent stand almost universally opposed to it. Why? The crossbow lobby will suggest that the millions of bowhunters are elitists or just don’t want the competition. These manufacturers and trade groups have spent huge sums of money and influence trying to make that case to the public, outdoor writers, game managers, game commissioners, legislators, and apparently now the NRA. At the same time they have been desperately trying to downplay the effectiveness of their own modern crossbows until they have been legalized as archery equipment.

However, what they won’t say is that bowhunters oppose crossbows in archery seasons because bowhunters understand that it will change the dynamic of a sport that thrives for almost the opposite reason from results-oriented firearms seasons. Bowhunting has flourished when other hunting sports have floundered because it is diametrically different. Bowhunting exists exactly because it is difficult and challenging by definition, and because it requires a higher level of commitment that not all hunters choose to make.

Your letter recites many of the half-truths often published by crossbow promoters. Unfortunately you have neglected to research them enough to discover that the gains in “recruitment and retention” have often been short-lived, and there is mounting evidence to suggest that after an initial surge, interest in an “easier” bowhunt dwindles even beyond where it was before it was changed to a crossbow season - where conventional archery equipment could also be used. If the NRA is really concerned about “declining” hunter numbers and preserving “our hunting

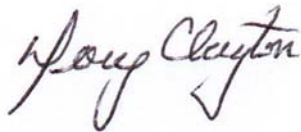
heritage” you would do well to listen to those same hunters about the long-term consequences of replacing one of hunting’s greatest success stories, bowhunting, with a season that’s not being requested by hunters but by commercial interests. You would think that the NRA, once considered a bastion of American rights and ideals, would be leading the fight against such a gross erosion of the Public Trust Doctrine.

The North American Bowhunting Coalition is a coalition of most state, national and provincial bowhunting organizations with tens of thousands of active bowhunting members, many of which are also NRA members. These organizations have gone on record, unanimously, in opposition to crossbows as archery equipment; and notably not in opposition to increased hunting opportunity, which we avidly support, or even crossbows as hunting equipment outside of archery seasons. We have no interest in discouraging any hunting opportunity, quite the contrary. However, the North American Bowhunting Coalition and all of our members will aggressively fight to safeguard the heritage of bowhunting just as you fight for the heritage to keep and bear arms. Hopefully we can fight together and not with each other.

The North American Bowhunting Coalition respectfully requests that if the NRA cannot find your way to supporting bowhunters in this ongoing conflict with the commercial promotion of crossbows as archery equipment, that you at least defer this matter to the organizations and countless individuals that have a direct stake in it.

Your immediate response is critical. It can be transmitted via email to NABC@nabowhuntingcoalition.com. The hunters of Pennsylvania deserve to know where the NRA stands before their Game Commission convenes on January 25th.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Clayton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Doug Clayton
National Chairman
North American Bowhunting Coalition

Attach: NRA-ILA transmittal, Jan. 16, 2009
NABC member letter on crossbows

CC: United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Game Commission
NABC member organizations
