



The Right Thing To Do

By Mike Brust, Chairman
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Your bowhunting organization and the North American Bowhunting Coalition appreciate your membership. Not all bowhunters belong to bowhunting associations, but they should. It's the right thing to do.

It's important to understand that the tremendous opportunities and success that bowhunters enjoy today would not have happened without organizations like yours all across North America. And perhaps more importantly, the future we face as bowhunters may be even more dependent on bowhunters like yourself and the associations that speak for you.

It was only a couple generations ago that early bowhunters struggled to prove themselves. Game agencies were very leery about the lethal effectiveness of archery equipment, and frankly, gun hunters weren't too excited about deer being wounded and lost before the gun seasons began. Bowhunting pioneers like Glenn St. Charles, Fred Bear, and many others, were able to show how effective and humane bows and arrows could be. But in most cases it fell to individuals and groups in each state and province to convince both game agencies and other hunters that establishing and enhancing bowhunting seasons was a good idea.

In those early days, almost every avid bowhunter belonged to a bowhunting organization. They had to - if they wanted to keep up with their new sport. Together they could develop their equipment, practice, and compete with like-minded "radicals". And their united voice was critical to securing bowhunting opportunity.

Today, many of those reasons to join are far less important. Bowhunters are no longer a "fringe group". In fact, you can't pass a magazine stand or sporting goods department these days without being inundated with bowhunting-specific publications and videos, and more bowhunting equipment than you will ever need. And we already enjoy those long seasons and special opportunities that our predecessors fought for.

Because of this, many organizations are struggling to retain membership even though bowhunting is enjoying unprecedented popularity. Some members don't understand why, and are critical of their association or officers for declining membership. In fact, most associations are doing everything they can, and it's really up to us, the rank and file members to rejoin and bring in new members.

Is belonging to your state or provincial bowhunting organization still the right thing to do? ABSOLUTELY! But for different reasons. Natural resource management has become much more political, and politicians respond to **organized** individuals. The NRA is a good example. The other thing that's happening is that national and international groups with different agendas are beginning to focus their attacks at the state/provincial level, where they anticipate less resistance.

Bowhunting in your state may be in more peril than it's ever been, and a strong and organized state association is unquestionably your best defense.

- The Humane Society of the United States has stated that bowhunting is one of the most brutal forms of hunting in their opinion, and - because it is not as well entrenched with the support and traditions of older forms of hunting - it will be their first target, marked for elimination from our society.
- The crossbow industry, unsatisfied to fight for and develop a season for their product (like bowhunters did) have gone to extraordinary lengths to simply hijack successful state/provincial archery seasons, and try to effectively turn them into crossbow seasons.
- Due to the immense popularity of bowhunting and a perception of increased effectiveness (even without crossbows) firearms hunters in many states are calling for unjustified cut-backs in bowhunting opportunity.

For these and many more reasons you need to be an active member of your association and help your officers recruit more members.

Your membership is important and appreciated. Paying your dues each year may not seem to offer as many obvious benefits as it once did, but joining your organization - and getting as many other bowhunters to do the same - is more important than ever. It really is the right thing to do.