



49651 Shenandoah Circle
Canton, MI 48187

October 4, 2017

Representative Gary Howell
Chair, Natural Resources Committee
Michigan House of Representatives

Hand delivered and via email: Joy Brewer, Committee Clerk, joybrewer@house.mi.gov

Re: Opposition to HR 154, House Natural Resources Committee Meeting, October 4, 2017

Dear Rep. Howell and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to the committee. Attorneys for Animals, Inc. (AFA) is a Michigan non-profit and 501(c)(3) organization of legal professionals and animal advocates. The organization's Board of Directors voted to **oppose HR 154**.

Sandhill cranes have been protected in Michigan for 101 years, during which time their numbers have rebounded from near extinction. The result of a successful conservation effort to save these birds should not be a hunting season.

The reasons given in support of HR 154 are not persuasive.

- Crop damage: there is a current system whereby farmers obtain a USFWS permit to target "nuisance" birds at the time and place where they are creating the nuisance; there is no evidence that this system is not working
- Source of food ("offer Michigan residents an opportunity to harvest exceptional game meat"): most Michigan residents do not hunt (5% according to Michigan statistics in the 2011 US Fish and Wildlife Service National Surveyⁱ, the most recent) and because a few will eat the kill is not good reason to institute a season
- "A hunting season will benefit farmers, hunters, and the growing Sandhill crane population": no rationale has been provided as to how the Sandhill crane population will benefit

In September 2014, Russ Mason, the MDNR's wildlife division chief said of the possibility of a Sandhill crane season: "should it ever become a burning issue. rest assured that all interests will have an equal seat at the table and a strong voice."ⁱⁱ

www.attorneysforanimals.org
info@attorneysforanimals.org

Attorneys for Animals asks this Committee to give opponents to Sandhill crane hunting “an equal seat and a strong voice,” and to oppose HR 154.

Very Truly Yours,



Beatrice M. Friedlander, JD
President

¹ <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/fhw11-mi.pdf> U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. According to this study (at page 19 of 94: 501,000 hunters were MI residents. MI population in 2011 was 9,920,621:
<https://www.opendatane트워크.com/entity/0400000US26/Michigan/demographics.population.count?year=2011>

ⁱⁱ <https://howardmeyerson.com/2014/09/19/sandhill-cranes-rebound-in-michigan-opens-hunt-possibilities/>
This appears in the Jackpine Warbler, the magazine of [Michigan Audubon](#).

**ANIMAL LAW SECTION
Public Policy Position
HR 154**

The Animal Law Section is a voluntary membership section of the State Bar of Michigan, comprised of 210 members. The Animal Law Section is not the State Bar of Michigan and the position expressed herein is that of the Animal Law Section only and not the State Bar of Michigan. To date, the State Bar does not have a position on this item.

The Animal Law Section has a public policy decision-making body with 15 members. On September 29, 2017, the Section adopted its position after discussion and vote at a scheduled meeting. 8 members voted in favor of the Section's position on HR 154, 0 members voted against this position, 0 members abstained, 7 members did not vote.

The Animal Law Section Opposes HR 154

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Explanation:

According to Michigan Audubon, the sandhill crane was hunted nearly to extinction in Michigan a century ago.

Its recovery as a species is characterized as a conservation success story.

<https://www.michiganaudubon.org/michigan-audubon-opposes-proposal-state-sandhill-crane-hunt/> HR 154, which encourages the creation of a sandhill crane hunting season, estimates the sandhill crane population at more than 23,000. However, a two-year study cited by the Michigan DNR indicates that there are only 805 breeding pairs in the state.

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370_12145_12202-60858--,00.html While the stated purpose for the hunt is the need to control the crane population in order to protect corn crops, there are already legal hunting and permit measures in place to deal with cranes eating crops on a case-by-case basis. The creation of an annual hunt will not protect farmers' crops. A nonlethal, inexpensive crop treatment is available that deters cranes from eating young, sprouting corn, redirecting them to insects, which is a benefit to the farmers. There is no need to designate the sandhill crane as a game species and establish an annual hunt, which could again jeopardize this species' fragile comeback.

Contact Person: Ann M. Griffin

Email: annmgriffin@hotmail.com

