

**Pat Williams Investments
2000 Plaza Circle
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March 25, 2015

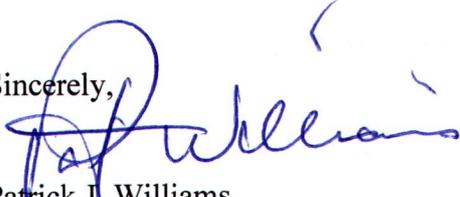
Governor Nikki Haley
800 Richland St.
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

Please review my comments on proposed changes in the deer season/limits in our Palmetto State. The proposed legislation would definitely effect your home county of Bamberg and many other Midlands and Low Country counties, as well. As I see it, the changes are not good.

Thank you for the good job you are doing for our state. You have had my support from Day One!

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Williams

PS I have a popular and unique restaurant in Santee, SC, Lone Star Barbecue and Mercantile. Lt. Governor McMaster has dined with us several times and a previous governor or two have been our guests. When can you and your family visit? We could host a Meet your Governor Day! Thanks, again, for leading South Carolina forward.

March 24, 2015

Personal Facts/Observations Concerning Deer Hunting

- 1. I attended one of the meetings concerning deer management several years ago at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College. I left the session feeling strongly that the spokesman for DNR had already reached his conclusion about South Carolina deer management. Questions, surveys and other data gathering, thereafter, has appeared to be geared to reach that pre-determined conclusion. Basically, that conclusion was - and is – to cut buck limits and to initiate a statewide trophy management program. In my opinion, this has very little to do with managing deer numbers and health of herd throughout the state.**
- 2. Not many years ago, I hit five deer with a single car I owned. The deer were hit in Orangeburg and Calhoun Counties. It was costly to both my insurance company and me. A year or so later, in yet another vehicle, I came very close to a serious accident when a full grown deer ran right out in front of me during a heavy rain storm. Fortunately, it was running in a crouch and went beneath my SUV rather than through my windshield.**
- 3. Deer continue to destroy the yards in my neighborhood, located about a mile east of St. Matthews. One night as I approached my home at about 8PM, multiple deer ran out of three different neighborhood yards, where they were grazing on lawn grass and eating shrubs. A week or two earlier, my dog had dragged an old sleeping bag into the yard from my garage. That evening, my wife drove up and a deer was bedded down on the sleeping bag in our side yard, 20 yards from my home's main entrance!**

- 4. I have a large tract of land. Its highest and best use is long term timber growth and outdoor recreation. Over the years, it has been managed for same. The tract includes a 75 acre pond and the South Edisto River, plus a number of smaller creeks and streams, run through the property. Other than periodic timber harvest, my single biggest source of annual income from the property is hunting rights. By curtailing buck limits, I am afraid it will have a negative effect on my being able to lease the property for deer hunting.**
- 5. Like other game in the state, whitetail deer are not evenly distributed in all counties and regions of the state. That's probably the reason for game zones. Because of uneven populations in counties/game zones, it took years before our wild turkey population warranted hunting in every county. The same is true with our state's deer population. There are counties and game zones that are overrun with deer today. Deer hunting, especially for bucks, should not be cut back in these areas. In some geographic areas of the state, if deer populations are substantially decreasing, perhaps, season length, limits on harvest, etc., should be modified (this is already the case in some counties/game zones). On the other hand, don't take away an outdoor, sportsmen's asset in other areas where deer are plentiful. In short, "one size" does not fit all!**
- 6. If you want to control the numbers of deer in the state, it's not the bucks that reproduce! Cut back on doe quotas or reduce them, as needed, in certain counties/game zones. The does – not the bucks – have the offspring!**
- 7. My hunting club has about 3,000 acres we manage and hunt. We put out mineral and salt blocks, plant food plots, put out corn, etc. There are 10 members in the club. We manage well and try to shoot only big, mature, bucks. Last year, the club had 30 doe tags and used only 6 – 7 of them. Our herd is balanced, big and healthy. Club membership is very minimal. It offers fellowship, friendship, good hunting, and great times in the outdoors.**

On the other hand, a third party hunter can lease 5 – 10 acres next to my large, well-managed, tract, plant a small food plot, attract deer from our large tract, and legally have the right to harvest the same number of deer per hunter as our much larger, properly managed, club does, based on upcoming deer herd management proposals. That, somehow, does not seem equitable. To take it a step farther, as I understand it, 25 hunters could lease or buy four acre tracts surrounding my 3,000 acre farm, totaling 100 acres. Each could acquire four buck tags and legally harvest a total of 100 bucks. On my large, well, managed, tract, I would also be able to acquire only four tags to harvest four bucks. Where is the fairness in this? Meanwhile, among other things, I am paying thousands of dollars in property taxes on my land!

- 8. By all indications, the biggest obstacles to the state's deer herd is not the hunter but, instead, the rampant growth of its coyote and wild hog populations. Both are real predators to virtually all small game (turkeys, rabbits, squirrels, opossums, quail, raccoons, etc.) and whitetail deer, as well. Needless to say, fawns are easy prey for coyotes. Decreasing/eliminating these predators should be emphasized in any and every way by DNR. This, in itself, should allow substantial deer population increases in any area of the state where there might be a serious threat to the numbers today. Instead of cutting back on hunter deer limits, DNR needs to spend the same time and energy on research, getting data from other states, offering bounties, all year-round hunting, etc., to get rid of the coyotes and wild hogs!**
- 9. Economic benefits. Some of the counties/game zones that would be hardest hit by cutting back on buck harvest and incorporating a trophy management plan, statewide, are, in many instances, the most rural – the ones that need all the help they can get economy-wise. With fewer deer allowed to be harvested in these areas that are blessed with good deer populations, economically, it would be a chain reaction that would effect**

many businesses that need the hunter/outdoorsmen dollar, including money spent on recreation land sales/purchases, recreation land leases, motels, restaurants, conveniences stores, bait and tackle and hunting shops, feed and seed businesses, grocery stores, etc. Hunters spend major dollars pursuing their hobby. Ask DNR!

10. Another statement I keep hearing from DNR is that South Carolina has the longest deer season in the nation, with no limit on bucks in some of its game zones. If our deer population supports these seasons, what is wrong with it? We promote our beaches as being the best, so why can't we also be glad and proud of our deer resources that allow the long season and liberal harvests? Unfortunately, our state gets labeled at or near the bottom of the heap in so many things on a national level, there is absolutely nothing wrong with being a top state for deer hunting and hunters.

11. With trophy management an issue, let me say a trophy is relative to the hunter. To me, an 8 – 10 point buck is a good one. For a young hunter, a spike horn would be a trophy. My high school football coach, a real role model to me, began deer hunting with me when he was 70+ years old. On his second or third hunt, a trophy and a small buck came out near him. He excitedly shot the small buck – a three pointer. His wife later said his kill brought the biggest smile on his face that she had ever seen. That three pointer was this big tough, old man's trophy and , ultimately, the only deer he ever killed before his death not long, thereafter.

Finally, let me re-emphasize to major points:

- A. If you want more – or less – deer in certain game zones in the state, regulate the doe harvest. More does, the larger the population will be; fewer does, the less the population will be. You don't have to be a wildfire biologist to figure that out!
- B. Strictly for political reasons, all game zones in the state should not be the same, as game populations can be substantially different

from one game zone to another. For example, I believe there is a bear season in the Up-Country, which we do not have in the Midlands. Why? Because our mountainous region has a bear population and we, in the Midlands, do not! Let the game zones with an abundant deer population keep their seasons/limits as they are.

In the midlands and coastal areas of our state, thanks to swamps, rivers, and abundant agricultural practices, among other things, we have large deer populations. In fact, farmers get special permits to shoot large numbers of deer out of season to prevent excessive crop damage. It's not the hunter that is greatly effecting the deer population. Where the state's deer herd is not abundant in numbers, look at the geographical, ecological conditions, lack of croplands, predators, development, etc.

Thank you for hearing me out. Hopefully, my comments will give you food for thought when deer management proposals come before you, probably in the immediate future.

If I can provide additional thoughts, please feel free to call. I can be reached at (803)515-3938, email Santeepat24@yahoo.com.

Thank you for the job you do.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Williams

Property Tax Payer in Calhoun, Orangeburg, Clarendon, and Barnwell Counties

Enc: 2015 Deer Management Thoughts