

Idaho Fish and Game Commission Proposal

Issue: Legalize the Use of Lighted Nocks during Big Game Archery Season's in the State of Idaho

Discussion (Data and Explanation of Use): At the present time, there is a no electronics rule on bows and/or arrows in the State of Idaho. We are asking to change the rule to: no electronics on bows and/or arrows with the exception of a lighted nock on arrows, specifically: No electronic or battery-powered devices shall be attached to the bow/arrow, with the exception of a lighted nock, which only emits light and is not capable of telemetry, Bluetooth, or GPS tracking functions. This rule change does not in any way change the definition of "fair chase" bowhunting, nor does it assist the bowhunter with shooting an animal.

The common principle uniting all bowhunters is our belief in "fair chase". Any rules or precepts should reflect that principle. Therefore, equipment change regulations such as lighted nocks, which still remain within "fair chase" guidelines should be acceptable. Lighted nocks are an increasingly popular tool which are legal in all of the lower 48 states, except Idaho. The lighted nocks only advantage is visual, improving a shooter's ability to follow fast-flying arrows, pinpoint their point of impact and aiding in the recovery of the arrow. By determining point of impact and analyzing the blood on the arrow, the hunter may then determine the next course of action in the recovery process, leading to less animals lost in the field.

Lighted nocks on arrows have been recognized as being within "fair chase" guidelines as described by the Pope & Young Club. The proposed change to the Idaho rule would align Idaho's fair chase standards with those now accepted by this major National bowhunting conservation and record-keeping organization. This is a quote from an article crafted by the

Board of Directors of Pope & Young. “It is desirable and possible for the Pope and Young Club to balance its traditional values and its position on bowhunting’s principles with the reality of twenty-first century bowhunting, embracing our heritage while accepting change.” Pope and Young Club changed their by-laws in 2014 to allow trophy animals to be entered into the record books that were taken with the use of lighted nocks. (Ref. 1)

The Boone and Crockett Club, who have trademarked the term “fair chase,” define it as the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit and taking of a free-ranging wild, big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper or unfair advantage over the game animals (Ref. 2). Fair chase is part of an overall hunting ethic, ethics are subjective to the individual and should not be legislated. Ethical decisions in hunting, however, ultimately rest with the individual in what feels right or wrong, and what technologies or methods are acceptable or unacceptable for them to be successful.

There is no evidence that the legalization of lighted nocks in other States has led to additional technological advances. Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Nevada all legalized lighted nocks since 2014. (Ref. 3) According to their state Fish and Game departments, the acceptance of lighted nocks has not opened the door for other electronic devices. (Ref. 4)

The reality is, bowhunting in Idaho has changed by the use of faster bows, higher let-offs, rangefinders, and numerous other accessories which aid the hunter in more ethically taking an animal. Lighted nocks do not aid in shooting the animal, only in the possible recovery of the animal.

The following is from the Boone and Crockett website, “The Boone and Crockett Club encourages all hunters to be united behind the banner of a conservation ethic and fair chase, and police themselves and other but to do so in a way that is not divisive or unduly critical unless

there is tangible justification. Just because a person may not follow the same customs or standards you have set for yourself, it does not necessarily make them unethical. Knowing the difference begins with a complete understanding of hunting ethics and fair chase.” (Ref. 5)

For these reasons we request that lighted nocks be legalized for use during big game archery seasons in the State of Idaho.

This Proposal is being overwhelmingly supported by Regional archery clubs, bow shops, as well as the majority of Idaho Bowhunters. The leading state and one of the largest archery organizations in Idaho, Idaho Field Archery Association, has and will conduct polling of its associated clubs for more data on this issue. Preliminary findings show an overwhelming percentage of archers support this proposal throughout the entire State of Idaho.

References:

- 1) https://pope-young.org/information/news_detail.asp?news=14
- 2) https://www.boone-crockett.org/huntingEthics/ethics_fairchase.asp?area=huntingEthics
- 3) <https://www.nockout.com/lighted-nocks-legal-for-bow-hunting-except-one-state/>
- 4) Sources via email and telephone conversations
- 5) https://www.boone-crockett.org/about/positions_FairChase.asp?area=about&ID=6B455080&se=1&te=1