

Moose for sale: Lynch auctions stewardship

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GOV. JOHN Lynch hopes New Hampshire's moose population will raise money for the financially struggling Fish and Game Department - by getting shot by wealthy hunters.

The governor has proposed auctioning 50 moose hunting permits to the highest bidder. But as Carroll County Commissioner Nelson Russell said on Wednesday, the state "should not be auctioning off our fish and game."

The state manages hunting so it can prevent the profit motive, among other factors, from depleting our wild game populations. Lynch's proposal puts revenue ahead of stewardship, which is exactly backwards.

That is not to say that revenue should never be a consideration in the management of Fish and Game. Of course it should be. But sound wildlife management should come first. As one letter writer put it, our moose should not be treated as cash cows.

Auctioning a handful of moose permits, as Fish and Game has proposed and as is done in Vermont and Maine, is sensible. It raises a little revenue while not threatening to let cash flow trump good wildlife management in determining the number of permits made available.

While advocating the auctioning of moose hunting permits - effectively selling New Hampshire's moose to the highest bidder - Gov. Lynch stands firmly against merely leasing Cannon Mountain to a private contractor.

Of course, the moose permit auction could carry this disclaimer: No state employees were harmed while generating this revenue. That would not necessarily apply to a Cannon Mountain lease, which could turn the ski area to profitability in part by switching from state to private employees.

If only the moose were unionized.

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