

JUST WHAT IS FAIR CHASE?

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Central to hunting in North America is the notion of fair chase. Aside from being safe and legal, hunters are also expected to be responsible and ethical. Within the framework set by laws and regulations, hunters are encouraged to voluntarily limit their actions to those that society finds acceptable. There are many suggestions and interpretations of what constitutes fair chase hunting, and most hunters consider themselves to be fair chase hunters. Yet, despite the central importance the concept has played in the history of recreational hunting and will play in its future, it's surprising how little the hunting community and state wildlife agencies have invested in developing this concept as a practical guide and ethical compass for hunters in the field. This void has led to a broadening of what constitutes acceptable hunter behavior in this country largely in response to advances in technology, science-based wildlife management, and the democratic ideal central to the North American model of wildlife conservation. Today, hunters and non-hunters alike lament the erosion of hunter behavior and ethics. The presenter attempts to define fair chase as a practical concept in hopes of advancing the use of it as a means to draw a distinction between practices that meet the standard of fair chase and those that don't. The presenter will include a discussion on the role of technology, the difference between what's legal versus what's ethical, and suggest criteria for determining whether a particular hunting method meets the standard of fair chase.