

HAT Working Group Public Feedback Form
Public Feedback Summary
3/17/2025

Summary Data

- 267 comments received as of 3/17/2025 at 9am
- 257 comments were from Idaho residents
- 10 out of state comments (4 WA, 2 MT, 1 CA, 1 OR, 1 WY, 1 OK)
- In summation of the comments received as of 3/17/2025 at 9am, IDFG has received 267 comments from unique commentors through the Hunting and Technology Public Feedback Form. Multiple comments from the same individual were combined into a single comment. A form letter that opposed thermal imaging, drones, and cellular trail cameras from 8 unique commentors were included as individual comments in the feedback counts. Comments received that were blank were deleted. It is important to note that public feedback comments reflect the opinions of a self-selected group of hunters rather than an unbiased, representative sample of the general hunting population.

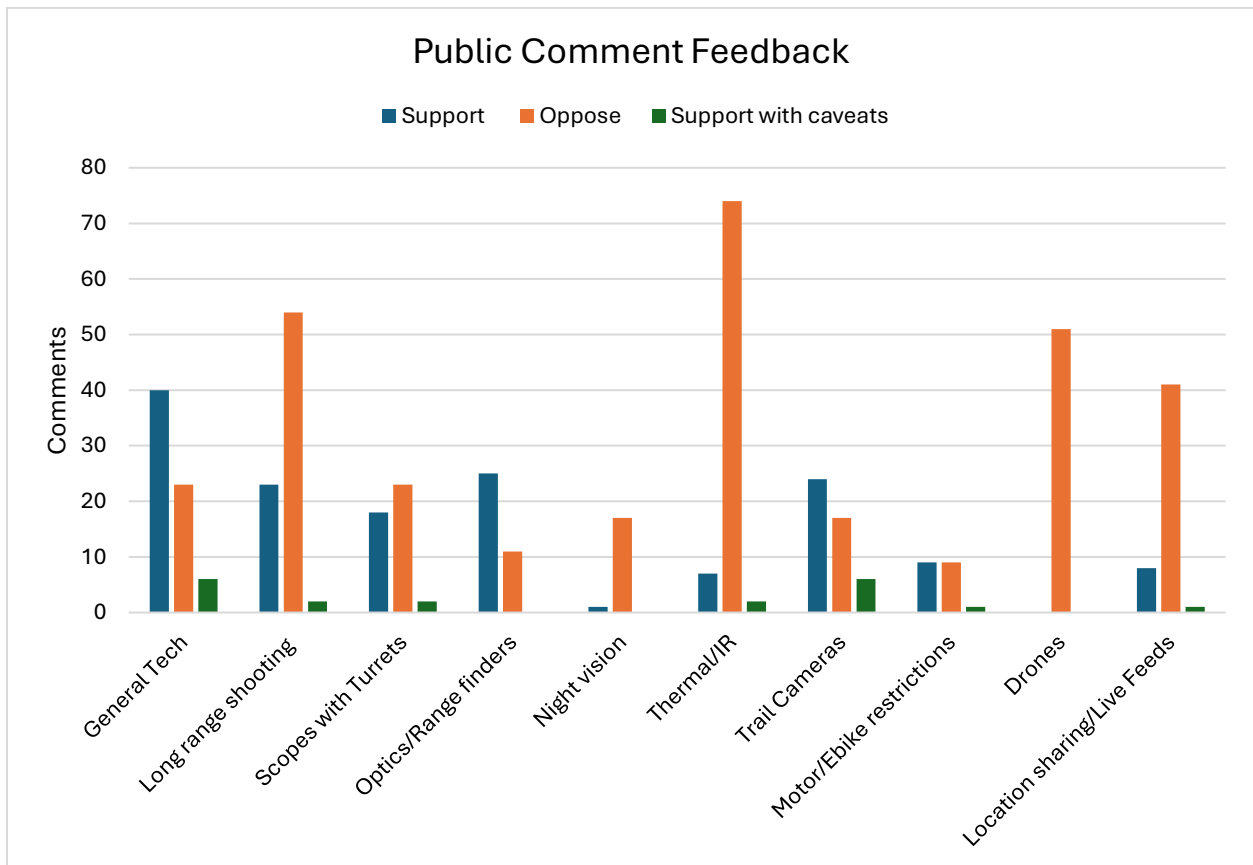


Figure 1. A summation of common feedback topics and their support or opposition.

Some commentators voiced a broad statement of support for hunting technology and less restrictions on hunters (40), while others voiced opposition (23), or support with some caveats (6). It is worth noting that commentators that were opposed advanced technologies often gave more directed responses that included specific restrictions or opposition for a specific technology. Hunter support or opposition widely varies between specific technologies, though some topics have strong support for more restrictions.

Long range shooting and optics

The idea of placing restrictions on long range shooting through limits on scopes and optics is one of the more divisive topics for Idaho hunters. Commentors would often provide multiple remarks on long range shooting and optics, including scopes and range finders, within the same comment. Broader comments about optics and range finders are supportive (25), rather than opposing (11). Technology for long range shooting leans towards opposition (54) rather than support (23) or support with caveats (2). There is a more even split between scopes and scopes with turrets, with 18 comments supporting, 2 comments supporting with caveats, and 23 comments opposing.

Proponents say that long range shooting and optic technology can provide a more ethical hunt and can aid disabled hunters, while opponents say that it does not provide fair chase and can lead to shots that are more likely to injure or lose the animal. Many opponents to long range shooting would like to see some level of distance restriction enforced, limit the range of scopes and remove turrets, and reduce the amount of technology allowed on range finders. Some opponents point out that enforcing an ethical shot or harvest would be difficult, and some hunters will shoot further than an ethical range whether they are allowed advanced technology or not. Both opponents and supporters would like to see more hunter education on ethical shooting, so hunters are less likely to injure and lose the animal.

Thermal/infrared (IR) and night vision

There is strong opposition to using thermal/IR and night vision technologies among hunters. Opponents of night vision specifically (17) often comment that it does not give the animal a chance to rest. Opponents of thermal/IR (74) argue that it does not give fair chase to the animal. Proponents of thermal/IR (7) often provide additional caveats that it should only be used during the day, or specifically for predator management. Others would like to see thermal technology allowed during certain seasons. Comments in support of Thermal/IR imaging are often specific to the recovery of the animal, rather than using it as an aid during hunting, though opponents point out that this would make enforcement more difficult.

Drones

There is strong opposition to drone technology (51). Comments similarly argue that it does not give fair chase, and the current rules are difficult to enforce. There is also some confusion among hunters about drone use, many considering it currently illegal, and further clarification might be needed. There are anecdotes of hunting groups being able to have one party member not actively hunting while running drones and relaying live information to hunters within their party, which is difficult to catch and enforce. Other commentors say that the ability to scout the day beforehand still gives too much advantage to the hunter. Some opponents welcomed any further changes in the rules that would make the restrictions on drones more enforceable. There were no comments in support of drones.

Trail cameras, live feeds, and location sharing

Comments regarding trail cameras were relatively split (24 support, 17 oppose, and 6 support with caveats). Supporters often cite the ability to identify and target species and landowners being able to monitor their property and trespassers. There were also concerns about the ability to identify bear species to ensure a safe hunt. Opponents are often concerned with the ability to “couch hunt,” and suggest modifications to trail camera rules including their removal during active hunting seasons. There is much stronger opposition to live feeds or “cell cams,” that relay live information to hunters, or any social media or tech that might share location data (41 oppose, 8 support, 1 support with caveats). The concern is that it gives an unfair advantage to hunters and allows no fair chase, and a perception that trail cams can indicate that hunters in the area and might deter other hunters from public lands. There were also some concerns that social media was being used to share real time information about hunting locations and animals and incentivize large concentrations of hunters in popular areas. Comments suggest removing live/cell cameras while leaving trail cameras that require active retrieval of the data (e.g. SIM cards).

Motorized Vehicles/Ebike restrictions

Comments were generally split between motorized vehicles and Ebike restrictions (9 support, 1 support with caveats, 9 oppose). Supporters of restrictions cite how Ebikes, ATVs, and UTVs can allow much greater hunter range and access than traditional hunting methods, while opponents say this can provide access for hunters that are disabled or have mobility issues. Some supporters would like to see less access sites for Ebikes and motorized vehicles.

Other Comments

Some commentors would like to see more transparency from the HAT Working Group, including meeting notes/minutes and publishing the meetings online in some format. IDFG has and will continue to post video recordings of the meetings and written minutes to the Hunting and Advanced Technology webpage on the IDFG website.

Comments received that are not germane to the charter of the HAT Working Group included:

- Season setting and rules, including adjusting the length and timing of seasons, adding hunting seasons with different restrictions, or antler point restrictions (43 comments)
- Predator management, particularly wolves (23). Some commentors specified that any technology restrictions should not apply to wolf management. Restricting certain technologies for specific hunts could be a topic of discussion.
- Tag sales, including limiting the number of tags within specific units or for non-resident hunting, or increasing the number of hunts with technology restrictions (27)
- HAT Working Group structure, membership, and selection processes (10)
- Non-resident hunting (7)