

Protects Private Property Rights on Poaching Issues

BACKGROUND

House Bill 343 sponsored by Chairman Trey Rhodes (R-Greensboro) seeks to strengthen Georgia's current hunting without permission statute to address the issue of poaching on private property that GFA members have reported on their lands. GFA worked closely with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)—whose game wardens enforce this law on the ground—to come up with the best changes to improve their ability to catch, charge, and ultimately deter poachers.

HB 343 KEY PROVISIONS

Closes Key Loophole – GFA has heard reports that individuals hunting on private property who are decked out in hunting gear have claimed to be “looking for arrowheads” (instead of hunting) to get out of the hunting without permission penalties. By making clear that law enforcement has the discretion to use the possession of hunting paraphernalia to help charge an individual they deem to be violating this law, this loophole will be hereby closed.

Increases Penalties on Repeat Offenders – raising the fines on second- and third-time offenders will serve to strengthen the deterrent effect this law provides to would be poachers.

WHY ITS IMPORTANT

- **Preservation of Private Property Rights** – A GFA Core Principle
- **Safety** – deterring poachers decreases the likelihood of a confrontation between an armed poacher and an armed hunt club member or landowner
- **Hunt Club Revenue** – ensuring individuals hunt legally through hunting leases protects a critical revenue stream for forest landowners
- **Wildlife** – those breaking our hunting without permission law likely aren't following a host of other wildlife regulations intended to conserve game species

CONTACT

For questions on this issue, please reach out to the Georgia Forestry Association.

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