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## MFHA Must Continue to Champion the Countryside Point of View

Headwaters Hounds in Colorado is experiencing a nasty dispute with some relatively new neighbors who have initiated an online misinformation campaign design to influence the local government and restrict non-commercial agriculture practices. This could impact sporting dogs, horse keeping, and small home farming all the way down to the local 4H Club projects. Through the MFHA, I will continue to support Headwater Hounds in all ways possible.

In reality this is a land use issue that farming communities are all too familiar with. The rural culture has shaped this wonderful landscape, lifestyle, and traditions through good farming practices, wildlife habitat conservation and the responsible sporting activities. These tie a community together. This has also created an environment attractive to urbanites and suburbanites alike.

Many of these are welcomed to the countryside and become part of that ongoing rural community. Others insist on bringing urban and suburban viewpoints and values too impose on these long established community cultures. The family that purchases a home beside the beautiful cattle farm suddenly finds they are "offended" by the realities of a farm operation. "We don't like the smell, the noise, and they start to work on their tractors too early when we want to sleep in..." are common responses I have heard again and again.

It has taken hundreds of years for the landscape to be shaped by these land management practices. Wildlife habitat has been created and conserved to provide for healthy and diverse populations. The community relationships are established through years of neighborly concern and camaraderie. The countryside is not simply unutilized open space. It is a diverse rural economy and a sophisticated system of community relations based on the collective values and norms of the people of the countryside. It is localism and mixed use economy at its best but it has values based on the realities of the rural point of view. It is informed by our closer relationship to nature, knowing the realities of where our food comes from, and the interrelated nature of all the people of the countryside.

The urban and suburban point of view is often not compatible with countryside realities. I love vacationing in big cities but would never think I could graze my cattle in Central Park or keep my sporting dogs kenneled at a town house South of Broad. I would rather have my chickens free ranging but I know I can't do this in the suburbs. These geography based point of views are not wrong they are just based on specific realities of place. The rural point of view would no more work in the city than the converse does. That doesn't mean it is a less sophisticated or nuanced set of values and community standards.

It is unfortunate when someone moves to an area and finds that the reality is not to their liking. "The fields are beautiful but they fertilize with chicken litter and control burn the

woodlots. We have to make them stop!" Life in the countryside is not the bucolic scene depicted in paintings. It is hard work; planting, harvesting, and livestock being livestock. It is foxes, raccoons, and coyotes eating your small animals and poultry. It is losing your rabbits to a bobcat or chickens to a hawk. It also is the understanding that all this is part of the nature of the countryside.

Just as importantly, communities come together to celebrate their lifestyle through the sporting traditions of that region. Foxhounds, raccoon hounds, bird dogs, wildfowl dogs, and stock dogs are our daily companions and our working partners. There is a knowledge gained through a close relationship with any working animal that cannot be replicated in any other way; be that hounds, the horses, or the wildlife we come to know so well.

Beyond the positive economic impact these sporting traditions have on the community, it ties the sportsman to the farmer, the forester, the land owner, and the larger community. It is a social bond these rural communities have been built around these common sporting interests for hundreds of years. These are as important to the community culture as the fair, church picnics, and high school homecomings.

In the past someone moving to an area that does not fit their worldview would be resolve it by either slowly assimilating and eventually appreciating the local point of view or another move to a place better suited. Unfortunately for the Headwater Hounds, it now means the newly offended resident jumping online to create an inflammatory movement, petition or page to vilify the parts of the countryside lifestyle that do not fit their sub-urban viewpoint. We have seemed to become an entitled society where people feel everyone else should bend to their viewpoint and damn the facts, the truth or the wishes of the local community. It is people making accusation without merit or understanding.

Localism has been such a dynamic movement over the past decade spawning farm to table, field to fork, and great farmer community relationships. All that will be lost when a local community decides to let their decisions be made by thousands of people who never have or will be part of that community. It is easy and quick to start a widespread online protest; it is the work of decades to build a cohesive neighborly community.

We will tirelessly carry out our responsibilities at the Masters of Foxhounds Association to champion our rural point of view and educate others on the sophisticated nature of our countryside values. We are the true conservationists and preservationists of farmland, wildlife, and the countryside traditions. We live it every day. Thanks for your support of the MFHA.



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