

# **HUNTING WITH HOUNDS IN VIRGINIA: A WAY FORWARD**

## **CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE**

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# HUNTING WITH HOUNDS IN VIRGINIA: A WAY FORWARD

## CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

### INTRODUCTION

Hunting with hounds is an important tradition in Virginia, but has been challenged in recent years in Virginia and other states in the southeastern U.S. The goal of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* process initiated by Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) in 2007 is: “*To provide diverse opportunities for hunting with hounds in Virginia in a manner that is fair, sportsmanlike, and consistent with the rights of property owners and other citizens.*”

The process identified by the VDGIF and facilitated by Virginia Tech has included many opportunities for public input and participation. Since the inception of the *Hunting with Hounds* project, concerned citizens were encouraged to write to VDGIF and Virginia Tech to share their experiences, provide suggestions, and identify issues related to hunting with hounds. Letters and emails to the project were analyzed to quantify the types of events, proposals, ideas, and concerns expressed in these documents. The results of this analysis were used to guide the Hunting with Hounds Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) in the identification and prioritization of issues and development of recommendations. This content analysis represents the perspectives of those who cared enough to write; the results and conclusions should not be interpreted as representative of all hunters, landowners, or other Virginia citizens.

### METHODS

The contents of letters and emails sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a methodology used to quantify common themes, concepts, or ideas in texts or writings. Content analysis is specifically designed to enable researchers to count the number of times an idea, theme, or concept is written about over many individual pieces of writing. Text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories and words, phrases, or themes are classified into those categories. Content analysis can be used for many different types of analyses, including highlighting differences in content of communications materials, detecting the existence of propaganda, describing attitudes and behavioral responses to communications, or, as in this case, identifying the intentions, focus, or communication trends of an individual, group, or institution.

The purpose of the *Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward* content analysis of letters and emails was to identify trends and themes in communication by hound-hunters, nonhound-hunters, private landowners, and other stakeholder groups to help identify both positive attributes of hound-hunting and issues and concerns related to this activity. In this content analysis, an initial list of categories was developed based on themes stakeholders identified in focus group meetings held as part of the *Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward* public input process. New categories were added as the need arose (i.e., researchers noticed a prevalence of key phrases related to a concept not yet covered). Categories used in this content analysis are listed in Table 1.

Letters and emails submitted to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech and received on or before May 21, 2008 were included in this content analysis. The cutoff date was established to give Virginia Tech personnel time to complete the content analysis in time for the SAC to consider the information in their deliberations. Emails submitted to the SAC at [houndhuntingsac@vt.edu](mailto:houndhuntingsac@vt.edu) were not included in the content analysis. These emails were excluded because when passed on to the members of the SAC, as was intended, the confidentiality of the authors could no longer be guaranteed, as was required by Virginia Tech's Internal Review Board. Letters and emails were read all the way through to get a sense for overall intentions, tone, and topics covered. In a second reading, key words or phrases were selected to best represent the author's intentions and coded into the categories listed in Table 1. To ensure consistency, all letters and emails were read and coded by one individual who was familiar with hound-hunting. A key word or phrase assigned to any one category was counted only once per email or letter, even if it was repeated several times in a piece of correspondence.

For every key word and phrase recorded, the date of the letter or email and place of origin (county or independent city, if known) were recorded. In addition, authors were assigned to one or more stakeholder categories. Stakeholder categories included deer hound-hunters, bear hound-hunters, fox hound-hunters, rabbit hound-hunters, raccoon hound-hunters, hound-hunter general (if no species was mentioned or if many species were mentioned), private landowner, nonhound-hunter (i.e., still hunters or hunters who do not use hounds), nongovernment/government/corporate landowner, other, and stakeholder group not identified. The coder relied on the writer to specifically identify with a particular group and did not make assignments based on interpretations of the content of the correspondence.

Only 2% (n = 25) of all letters and emails came from individuals who identified themselves as being both hound-hunters and nonhound-hunters and/or private landowners. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, all key phrases attributed to hound-hunters (even if the writer also identified with another stakeholder group) were grouped together. In addition, only 4 key phrases were recorded for NGO/Corporate/Government Landowners. The key phrases recorded for this group fell into the following categories: Critical of Study/Process, Information/Participation Requests, Lost/Abandoned Hounds, and Other.

Table 1. Categories (in alphabetical order) used in content analysis of correspondence to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward public input process.

Adequate Existing Laws	Hunting Seasons
Aggressive Behavior of Hound-Hunters	Inadequate Existing Laws
Aggressive Behavior of Landowners	Inadequate Law Enforcement
Alcohol Related	Information/Participation Requests
Animal Rights	Interference with Nonhound-Hunting
Approaches of Other States	Interference with Traffic
Change Road Hunting	Lost/Abandoned Hounds
Changing Landscape	New Laws
Concern for Personal Safety	Noise Disturbance
Contiguous Acres	Other
Continue Hound-Hunting	Philanthropic Activities of Hunt Clubs
Critical of Study/Process	Poor Hound-Hunter Ethics
Disruption of Wildlife	Property Access Management
Economic Contribution of Hound-Hunting	Property Damage
Effects on Domestic Pets/Livestock	Public Education/Ethics
Eliminate Hound-Hunting	Right-to-Retrieve
Fair Chase/Welfare of Quarry	Road-Killed Dogs
Fate of Hounds	Suggestions for Licensing/Registration
Fellowship	Suggestions for Penalties
Good Hound-Hunter Ethics	Suggestions Regarding Hunting Seasons
Hound-Hunting Heritage	Suggestions Regarding Tracking Collars
Hound Trespassing	Supportive of Study/Process
Hunter Education	Treatment/Condition of Hounds
Hunter Recruitment and Retention	Trespassing
Hunting in the Road	Wildlife Management Tool

## RESULTS

A total of 832 letters and emails were evaluated for this content analysis. In the broadest sense, correspondence fit into one of 6 categories: favorable to hound-hunting, critical of hound-hunting, hunters who support hunting with hounds but have suggestions for improvement, landowners who support hunting with hounds but have suggestions for improvement, people looking for more information, and ‘other.’ A count of the number of pieces of correspondence in each of these very broad categories is provided in Table 2.

A total of 3,771 key phrases were included in the content analysis. Of those, 2,674 came from emails and 1,097 came from letters. Each individual piece of correspondence generated at least one key phrase. Key phrases were recorded from 21 cities and 77 counties. The number of key phrases per city and county is depicted in Figure 1. Key phrases were recorded for all types of stakeholders. The number and percentage of key phrases attributed to various stakeholders is listed in Table 3. Although distribution of emails and letters differed between groups, most letters and emails came from eastern Virginia where deer hunting with hounds is allowed. The number of key phrases per county for hound-hunters is shown separately from other stakeholder groups in Figures 2 and 3.



Table 2. Number of letters and emails that were generally supportive of hound-hunting, critical of hound-hunting, or supportive with suggestions for improvement sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward* public input process.

<b>Broad, General Categories</b>	<b>Number of Letters &amp; Emails</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Correspondence</b>
Support Hunting with Hounds	307	37%
Critical of Hunting with Hounds	275	33%
Hunters: Support with Suggestions for Improvement	70	8%
Landowners: Support with Suggestions for Improvement	45	5%
More Information	67	8%
Other	68	8%
Total	832	

Table 3. Number and percentage of key phrases in letters and emails from different stakeholders sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward* public input process.

<b>Stakeholder Type</b>	<b>Number of Key Phrases</b>	<b>Percent of Key Phrases</b>
Hound-Hunters	1157	30%
Nonhound-Hunters	617	16%
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner	772	20%
Private Landowners	706	19%
NGO/Corporate/Government	4	<1%
Other	131	3%
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	384	10%
Total	3771	

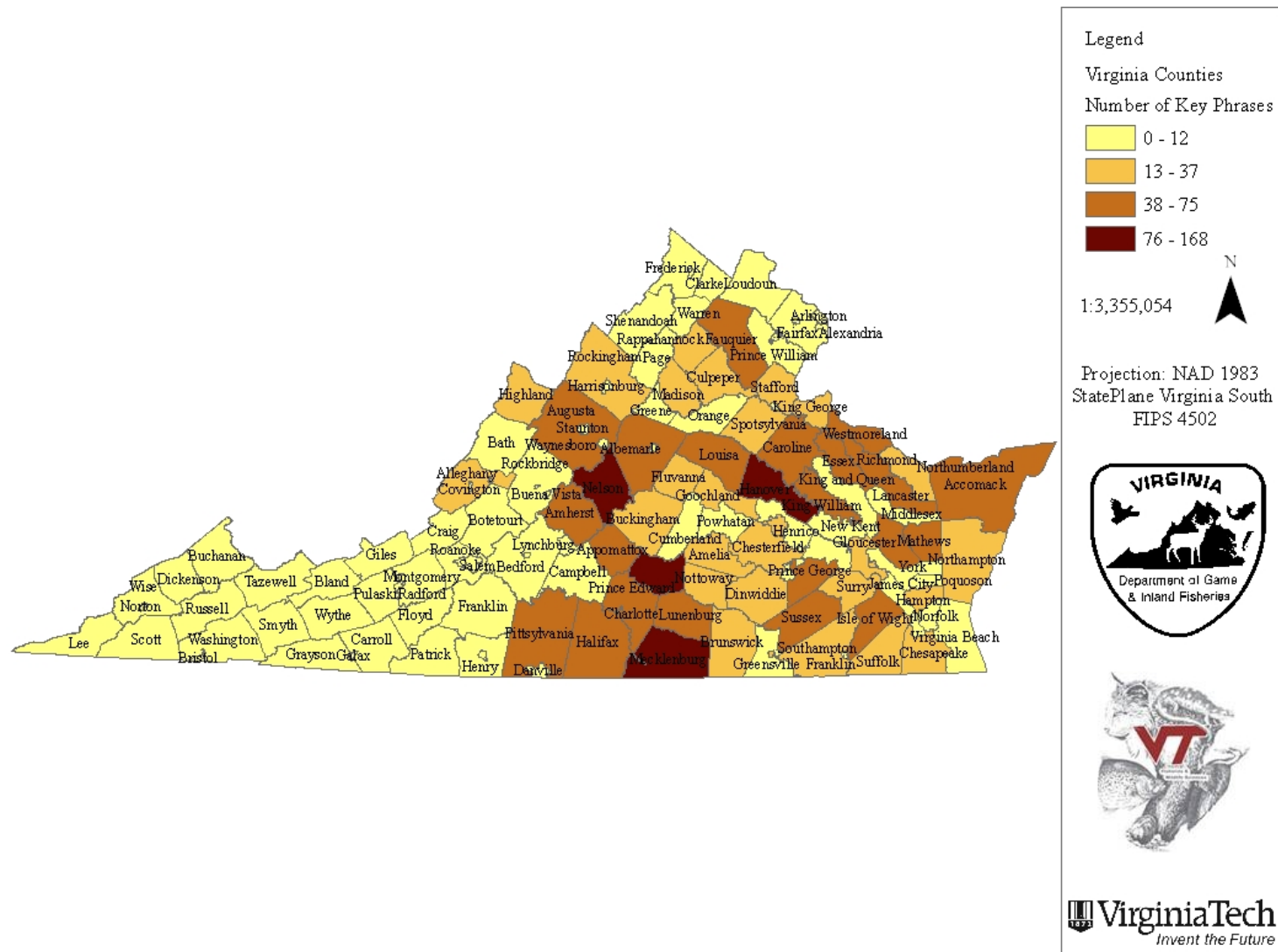


Figure 1. Number of key phrases per county in letters and emails sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

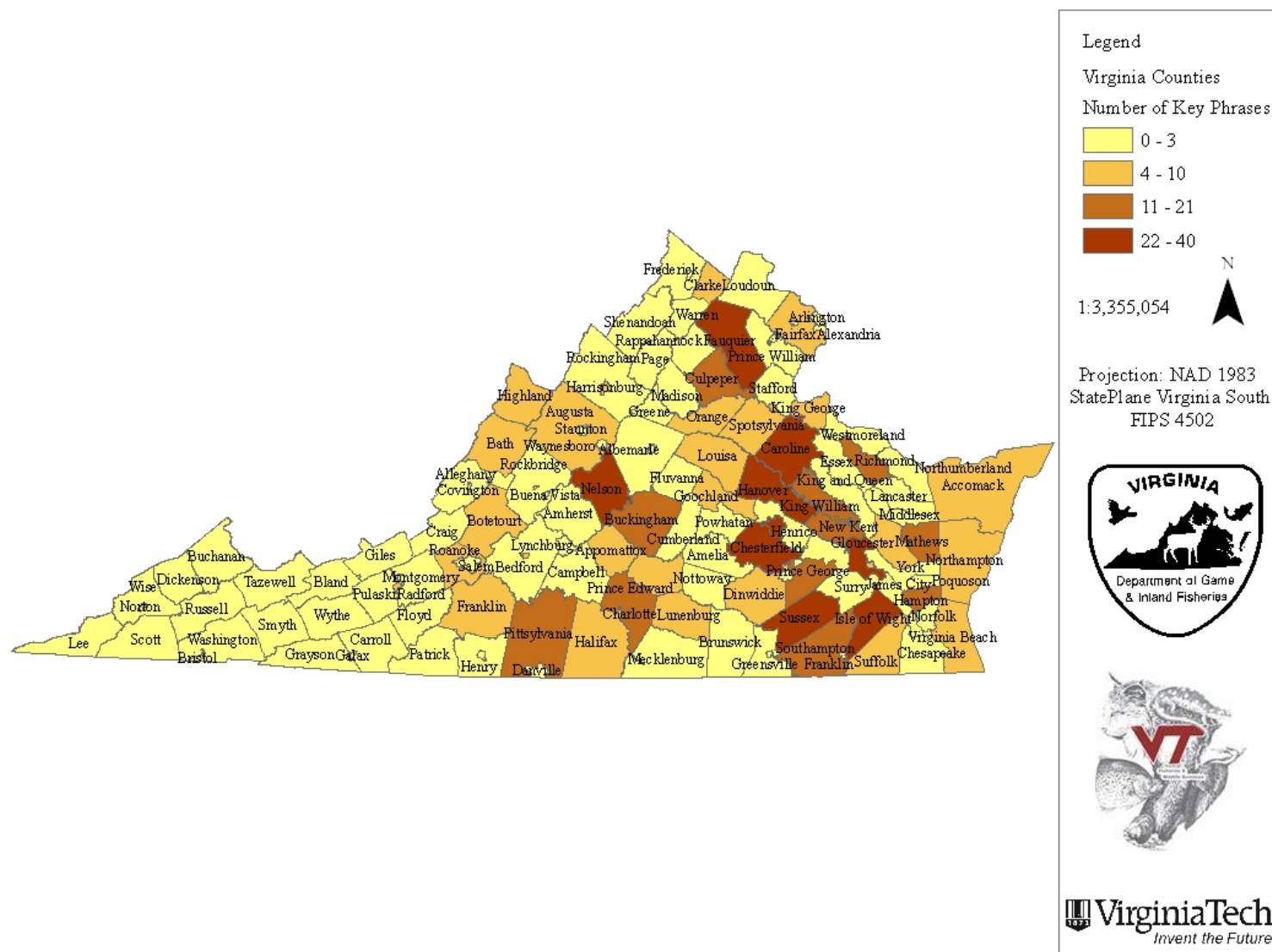


Figure 2. Number of key phrases per county from letters and emails written by hound-hunters and sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

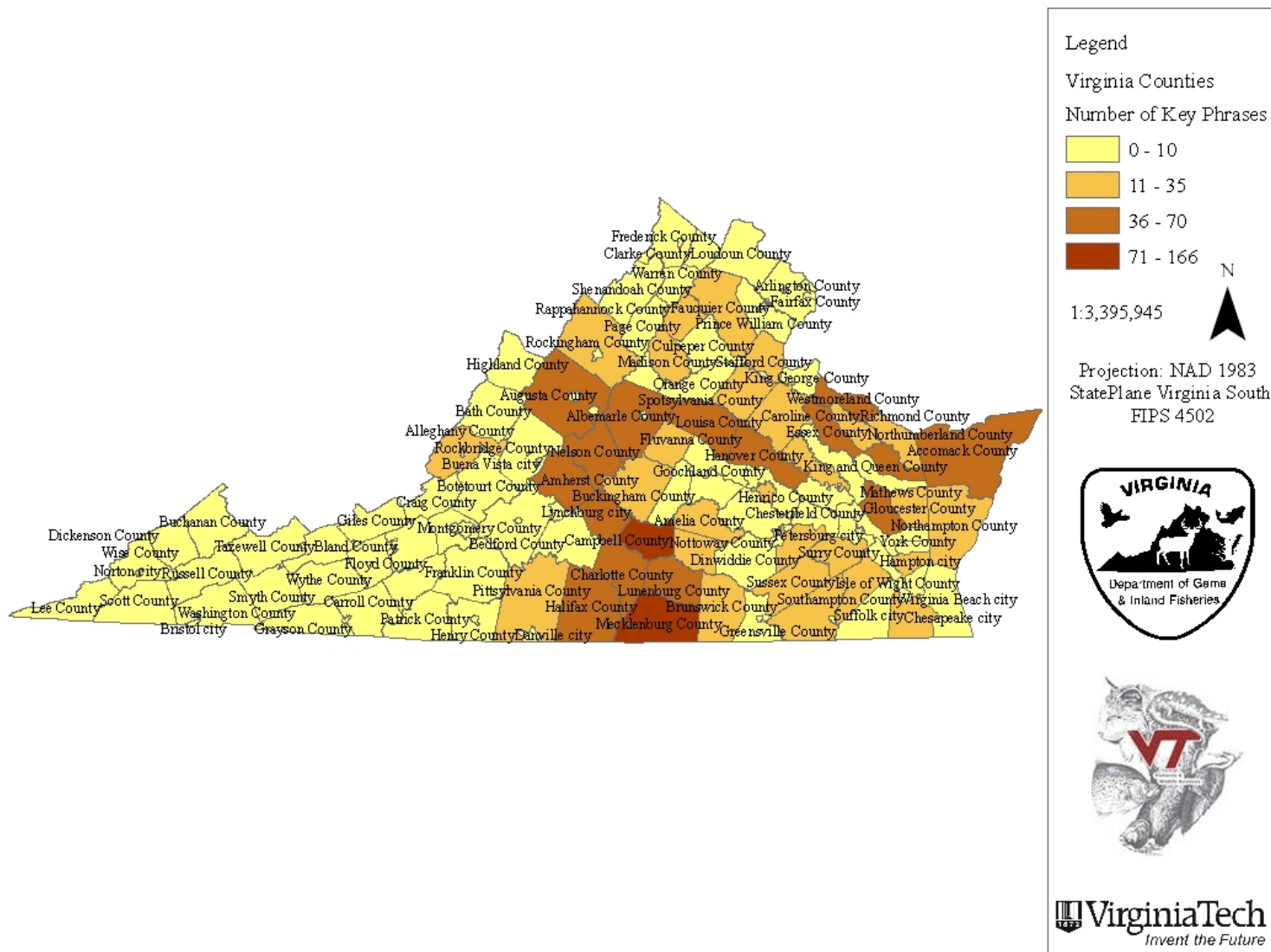


Figure 3. Number of key phrases per county from letters and emails written by private landowners, nonhound-hunters, etc., and sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

## POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES OF HOUND-HUNTING

Many key phrases in the letters and emails received addressed positive attributes of hound-hunting. These key phrases generally called for a continuation of hound-hunting, or addressed the economic contribution of hound-hunting, fellowship of hound-hunters, hound-hunting heritage, hunter recruitment and retention, philanthropic activities of hound-hunters, good ethics of hound-hunters, or the role of hound-hunting as a wildlife management tool.

Hound-hunters were the vast majority of authors of these positive comments (Figure 4). Some key phrases related to positive attributes of hound-hunting were contained in form letters sent in by hound-hunters. The number of letters and emails that addressed the positive attributes of hound-hunting, example key phrases, and stakeholder groups attributed to those key phrases are summarized in Table 4. Eighty-one percent of the key phrases in the category Continue Hound-Hunting were attributed to hound-hunters. Positive attributes of hound-hunting most often mentioned in letters and emails address the importance of Virginia's hound-hunting heritage (28% of all correspondence), the role hound-hunting plays as a wildlife management tool (14% of all correspondence), and the economic contribution hound-hunting makes to local economies and the VDGIF (10% of all correspondence).

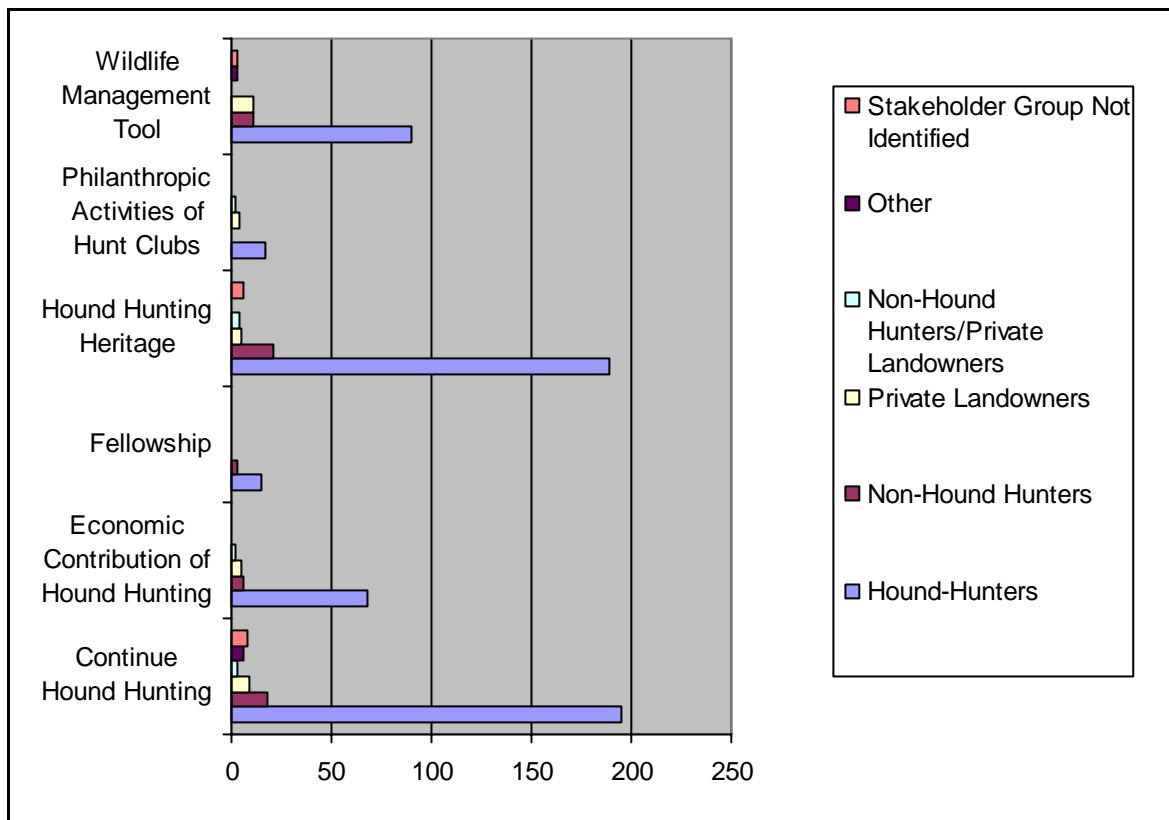


Figure 4. Number of emails and letters from different stakeholder groups sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process in categories related to the positive attributes of hunting with hounds.

Table 4. Summary of various positive attributes of hunting with hounds expressed in emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process. No total is provided because more than one positive attribute may have been listed per letter.

<b>Content Analysis Category</b>	<b>Number of Letters &amp; Emails (% of total)</b>	<b>Example Key Phrases with County/City, and Stakeholder Group of Author</b>
Continue Hound-Hunting	239 (29%)	<p>"continue to allow hunting with dogs"—Hound-Hunter, Westmoreland County</p> <p>"I support hunting with hounds"—Hound-Hunter, Fauquier County</p>
Economic Contribution of Hound-Hunting	83 (10%)	<p>"I spend thousands of dollars a year on my hounds feed, medicine, vet bill, etc"—Hound-Hunter, Orange County</p> <p>"There would also be a tremendous loss of revenue for the DGIF"—Hound-Hunter, Chesterfield County</p> <p>"accomplishing the goals of...keeping crop damage to a minimal...minimizing vehicle collisions"—Hound-Hunter, King George County</p>
Fellowship	20 (2%)	<p>"A tradition, where friends and family get together to do something they love"—Hound-Hunter, Loudoun County</p> <p>"It's also about the fellowship with family and friends"—Hound-Hunter, Mecklenburg County</p>
Good Hound-Hunter Ethics	28 (3%)	<p>"no matter what we always to the home of the property owner first to ask permission to go and look for our dogs"—Hound-Hunter, King William County</p> <p>"as a group we understand the concerns of citizens who opposed hunting but we have always taken pride in training and handling our hounds."—Hound-Hunter, James City County</p>
Hound-Hunting Heritage	231 (28%)	<p>"been a tradition since before George Washington"—Hound-Hunter, Goochland County</p> <p>"we been doing it all of our lives"—Hound-Hunter, Henrico County</p>
Hunter Recruitment & Retention	33 (4%)	<p>"Some of these men are older guys and can't climb the mountains."—Hound-Hunter, Nelson County</p> <p>"Dogs make hunting fun for kids... This is a great way to introduce and educate our future hunters to the sport"—Hound-Hunter</p>
Philanthropic Activities of Hound-Hunting Clubs	24 (3%)	<p>"perform farm labor for the privilege of to hunt"—Hound-Hunter, Nelson County</p> <p>"donated several thousand dollars to different organizations such as the Children's Hospital of Richmond"—Hound-Hunter, New Kent County</p>
Wildlife Management Tool	119 (14%)	<p>"Hound hunting will keep the population of some of the animals to the level needed."—Hound Hunter, Franklin County</p> <p>"provide a means to control the deer population"—Hound Hunter, Isle of Wight County</p>



## ISSUES AND CONCERNS RELATED TO HUNTING WITH HOUNDS

Many key phrases in the letters and emails addressed issues and concerns related to hunting with hounds. These key phrases related broadly to unethical or unlawful behavior of hound-hunters; noise, traffic, or domestic (pets/livestock) disturbances; loss of recreation opportunities; interpersonal conflicts; or called for an end to hound-hunting. Letters and emails also contained key phrases that addressed concerns about the inadequacy of existing laws and law enforcement.

Of all the categories related to issues and concerns about hunting with hounds, Hound “Trespassing”—hounds on lands of another without permission—was addressed more often than any other topic with 242 key phrases representing 29% of all letters and emails received. Key phrases in the Hound Trespassing category came primarily from nonhound-hunters. Nonhound-hunters (19%) and nonhound-hunter/private landowners (28%) combined made up nearly half (47%) of all letters and emails in this category. Private landowners, who did not also identify themselves as nonhound-hunters, comprised an additional 31% of letters and emails in this category. Both nonhound-hunters and private landowners were displeased to have hounds running onto private land where they were not wanted. The number of letters and emails that addressed hound trespassing, example key phrases, and stakeholder groups attributed to those key phrases are summarized in Table 5.

Interference with Nonhound-Hunting was the second most commonly addressed category in the content analysis. In total, 177 letters and emails (21%) of all correspondence addressed this issue. Letters and emails from nonhound-hunters (38%) and nonhound-hunter/private landowners (45%) comprised 83% of this category. Overall, nonhound-hunters wrote about their frustration with having individual hunting experiences or an entire season disrupted by hound-hunting activities. Table 6 contains a summary of the letters and emails in this category.

Although part of the goal of the *Hunting with Hounds* public input process is to provide diverse opportunities for hound-hunting, 18% of the letters and emails sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech called for an end to this practice. Most of these letters and emails came from nonhound-hunters (32%), private landowners (26%), and nonhound-hunter/private landowners (20%). Most comments in this category expressed opposition to hunting with hounds or called for its elimination. Letters and emails in this category are summarized in Table 7. Four percent of letters and emails expressed concern with the Fate of Hounds, both individual animals and entire breeds, if hunting with hounds were to be eliminated. Letters and emails in the Fate of Hounds category were all written by hound-hunters.

Condition/Treatment of Hounds was addressed in 136 letters and emails, representing 16% of all letters and emails written to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech. Half the letters and emails in this category came from private landowners (30%) and writers who did not identify with a particular stakeholder group (20%). Comments in this category related to the physical condition of hounds, often reflecting concerns that hounds are “too skinny” or “underfed”. Comments also referenced the way hounds are treated with regard to their housing or presence of physical injuries. A summary of the letters and emails in this category is provided in Table 8.

Table 5. Summary of comments related to Hound Trespassing from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	17 (7%)	<p>"hounds released on one side of a posted property and hunters stationed on the opposite side ... to kill the deer as they are chased off of the posted land"—No Location Given</p> <p>"you really can't stop the dogs from going on posted property"—King William County</p>
Nonhound-Hunters	47 (19%)	<p>"They're putting their dogs out on the property of others without permission."—No Location Given</p> <p>"they are known to loose their dogs, usually on Friday after work, and simply let them run"—Mecklenburg County</p> <p>"dogging my land and every adjacent parcel that the dogs could set foot on"—Accomack County</p> <p>"there will be a group of dogs running through the property"—Charlotte County</p>
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	68 (28%)	<p>"dog owners deliberately drop their dogs ...and run every deer off of the property."—Halifax County</p> <p>"dogs running deer on our property"—Southampton County</p> <p>"run their dogs constantly over my personal property"—Lancaster County</p> <p>"dogs being released on our property"—Hanover County</p>
Private Landowners	81 (31%)	<p>"They deliberately send their dogs through private and posted lands"—Lunenburg County</p> <p>"There is not a hunting season that goes by that I do not chase hound dogs off my property"—Isle of Wight County</p> <p>"I regularly have hounds on my property"—Rockbridge County</p> <p>"hunt clubs using dogs to push deer through private property"—Westmoreland County</p>
Other	4 (1%)	"trespassing by the dogs"—No Location Given
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	25 (10%)	<p>"they continually put their dogs out on private property"—Gloucester County</p> <p>"They release their dogs on posted land"—Nelson County</p>
TOTAL	242 (29% of all letters and emails)	



Table 6. Summary of comments related to Interference with Nonhound-Hunting from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	5 (2%)	"Give the still hunter a chance to expand his type of hunting" —No Location Given
Nonhound-Hunters	68 (38%)	<p>"Once the regular deer season comes in it's almost impossible to "still hunt" after dogs have been run" —Richmond County</p> <p>"My hunts have been ruined by dogs running through the land" —No Location Given</p> <p>"It is very hard to find property now a days where you can hunt and not be disturbed by a bunch of dogs" —Gloucester County</p> <p>"After a couple weeks into the season the chances of seeing deer are slim. They ruin it for people like me" —Halifax County</p>
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	80 (45%)	<p>"We have scouted and watched these deer all year and then the deer are scattered all over the county"—Prince Edward County</p> <p>"On too many occasions hounds and their owners have ruined a day of hunting for me" —Amherst County</p> <p>"Deer are flushed away from my property" —Prince Edward County</p> <p>"I cannot manage any deer herds on any of the lands I own" —Richmond City</p>
Private Landowners	15 (8%)	<p>"This is extremely disruptive to both our enjoyment of the property and to my guests who are still-hunting deer" —Lunenburg</p> <p>"We rent our land to tree stand hunters and the dogs interfere" —Westmoreland County</p>
Other	5 (2%)	"When dog hunters hunt next to a still hunting club their activities do affect the still hunter's efforts" —No Location Given
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	4 (2%)	"A dog is allowed to cross property lines and disturb hunters that are fair and ethically hunting on property they pay to lease" —No Location Given
TOTAL	177 (21% of all letters and emails)	

Table 7. Summary of comments in the category Eliminate Hound-Hunting from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	2 (1%)	"I wish deer hunting with hounds would be abolished" —Caroline County
Nonhound-Hunters	49 (32%)	"Hunting with dogs should be outlawed" —King George County  "In favor of eliminating dog hunting for deer and bear" —Roanoke County  "I would like to see the sport of hound hunting abolished in Virginia" —Rappahannock County  "Dog hunting should be stopped before someone gets hurt or killed" —Westmoreland County
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	32 (20%)	"Rather see the deer hunting stopped completely than to put up with the current situation" — Richmond City  "Consider a total ban on hound hunting in Virginia" —Augusta County
Private Landowners	40 (26%)	"Hunting with hounds should be completely outlawed unless they are on a leash" — No Location Given  "Hunting with hounds will be impractical within fifteen years, so it seems logical to diminish the sport" —Goochland County  "Deer hunting with dogs should be banned" —Halifax County
Other	8 (5%)	"They should ban using hunting dogs" —Mecklenburg County
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	22 (14%)	"It will be a significant positive decision on the State of Virginia not to continue hunting with dogs" —Mecklenburg County  "This is an unnecessary and dangerous practice for any state. Please do not allow it in Virginia" —Albemarle County
TOTAL	153 (18%)	

Table 8. Summary of comments related to Treatment/Condition of Hounds from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	12 (8%)	"They looked like skeletons with skin stretched across them" — Hanover County
Nonhound-Hunters	16 (11%)	"If a dog does not perform to his standards, he sees nothing wrong with putting a bullet in its head" —James City County
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	22 (16%)	"The dogs are always in awful shape and locked in squalid kennels for 11 months a year." —Louisa County  "The care of the dogs is inhumane. They have come up to our door thin with ribs showing, scared and shaking" —Halifax County
Private Landowners	42 (30%)	"Dog lots can be smelled miles before you get to them. Typical lots have too many animals in the space and no sanitation." — Appomattox County  "The dogs are malnourished and filthy and full of ticks" —Mecklenburg County  "Starve their dogs so they will be hungry and chase the wild animals" —Hanover County  "The dogs always look malnourished, & torn up by briars, etc." —Buckingham County
Other	16 (11%)	"Many of these hounds I find are nothing but skin and bones, infested with fleas, ticks, wounded" — Colonial Heights
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	28 (20%)	"They are usually kept in small pens the majority of their lives, underfed and if they do not run as expected they are taken in the woods and shot" —No Location Given  "The dogs are poorly treating, appearing starved and malnourished" —Northumberland County  "I am totally against hound hunting because of how these dogs are treated" —Surry County
TOTAL	136 (16% of all letters and emails)	

Fifteen percent of all letters and emails expressed concern about Hunting in the Road. Most letters and emails in this category were written by nonhound-hunter/private landowners (36%), private landowners (22%) and nonhound-hunters (20%). Comments in this category describe experiences and/or express concern with hound-hunters parked, shooting, and hunting from the side of the road. Letters and emails in this category are summarized in Table 9.

Trespassing (by hunters, not dogs) was addressed in 17% of letters and emails sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech. Over half of the letters and emails that referred to trespassing came from private landowners (34%) and nonhound-hunter/private landowners (31%). Although comments in this category generally referred to the illegal activity of trespassing, they may include accounts of lawful retrieval of hounds under the Right-to-Retrieve law (see below) that were perceived as trespassing by landowners. A summary of this category is provided in Table 10.

The category Interference with Traffic contained key phrases from letters and emails written primarily by landowners and comprised 14% of all correspondence. Nonhound-hunter/private landowners (35%) private landowners (24%) wrote over half the letters and emails in this category, followed by nonhound-hunters (22%). Letters and emails in this category recounted experiences or expressed concern with hound-hunters who speed, block roads, or line the roads in order to keep up with or gather dogs, or intercept game animals. Comments in this category are summarized in Table 11.

Letters and emails that addressed Virginia's Right-to-Retrieve law comprised 11% of all correspondence received by the VDGIF and Virginia Tech. Private landowners most frequently wrote about the Right-to-Retrieve (34%), followed by nonhound-hunter/private landowners (30%) and nonhound-hunters (16%). Comments in this category generally express disapproval with Virginia's Right-to-Retrieve law, although a few hound-hunters emphasized the need to maintain the Right-to-Retrieve law. Comments are summarized by stakeholder group in Table 12.

Concerns related to Fair Chase were mentioned in 11% of letters and emails received by the VDGIF and Virginia Tech. Primarily written by nonhound-hunters (32%), these comments reflected concerns that the pursuit of game animals with dogs is unsportsmanlike because it gives hunters an unfair advantage. Comments in this category also came from nonhound-hunter/private landowners (21%), private landowners (21%), and those who did not identify a stakeholder group (18%). Letters and emails in this category are summarized in Table 13.

In addition to those described above, stakeholders wrote in about a number of other issues and concerns related to hunting with hounds in Virginia. Issues and concerns in other categories each made up <10% of the total number of letters and emails received by the VDGIF and Virginia Tech. The comments in the remaining issues and concerns categories are summarized in Table 14.

Table 9. Summary of comments related to Hunting From the Road from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	11 (8%)	"Clubs placing their stand hunters up and down state/county maintained roadways" —No Location Given
Nonhound-Hunters	26 (20%)	"They hunt from the highway and shoot at deer running across the road" —Charlotte County  "The way bear hunting is done around here is no more than road hunting" —Alleghany County  "Display of orange on the roadsides is disturbing to non-hunters" —Louisa County
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	46 (36%)	"Shoot off the road and out of their vehicles" —Accomack County  "Standing in the road with guns in hand" —Amherst County  "Hound hunters are road hunters" —Madison County  "Many of the hunters who turn the deer dogs loose hunt from the road, shoot from the road" —Louisa County
Private Landowners	28 (22%)	"Seen the hunters sitting in their trucks, gun aimed out the window" —Lancaster County
Other	3 (2%)	"Shooting from and across roads" —Mecklenburg County
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	16 (12%)	"Standing beside their vehicle with a shotgun" —Northumberland County  "They are the group of hunters that line up on public roads and shoot deer as they approach/cross the road" —Gloucester County
TOTAL	127 (15% of all letters and emails)	

Table 10. Summary of comments related to Trespassing from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	10 (8%)	"Hunting on land which they have not been granted permission." —Nelson County
Nonhound-Hunters	24 (20%)	"There are more calls for trespassing because of the use of dog hunting" —King William County  "Deer hunters continuously, irresponsibly, trespass on our hunting property" —Pittsylvania County  "Owners of these dogs don't care whose land they chase deer on" —Accomack County
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	37 (31%)	"It is impossible to stop anyone from hunting or running game off your land as long as they have the right to hunt with dogs" — Richmond City  "Hound hunters have trespassed on my posted property" —No Location Given  "Many hound hunters think it is their right to run deer out of and through my and my neighbors land" —No Location Given  "Had problems with trespassers and it has always been due to dogs" —Stafford County
Private Landowners	40 (34%)	"The hunters disregard Posted signs, cross our property" —York County  "The clubs who use hounds have no consideration for private land owners" —Lunenburg County  "They trespass on anyone's land they want to" —Halifax County  "Bear hunters come and go as they please on private land" —Highland County
Other	0	
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	6 (5%)	"Posted land is ignored" — No Location Given
TOTAL	117 (14% of all letters and emails)	

Table 11. Summary of comments related to Interference with Traffic from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	6 (5%)	"A hunter was in the middle of the highway attempting to stop or slow traffic" —Bath County
Nonhound-Hunters	26 (22%)	"Parking, blocking, and operating their trucks on the shoulders of the road" —No Location Given  "When a deer is being chased by dogs, it is possible the deer can run out in the road in front of cars" —Nelson County  "They drive fast and careless down local roads" —No Location Given
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	41 (35%)	"Block roads, stop traffic, park in road, race to cut off dogs, run people out of the road" —No Location Given  "Vehicles line up on state maintained roads and private driveways, as many as 20 vehicles" —Essex County  "Hunters drive up and down the roads" —Richmond City  "The hunt becomes a game of speeding trucks" —Mecklenburg County
Private Landowners	28 (24%)	"During dog season they block the roadway, pull out in front of you without looking" —Halifax County  "Dogs and deer running into roads can cause accidents" —Prince Edward County  "Many times I have had to come to a complete stop on our roadway because of all the dogs" —Mathews County
Other	2 (1%)	"Many car collisions are caused by deer hounds in this area" —Nottoway County
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	12 (10%)	"Deer hunters takeover the secondary roads during hunting season" —Westmoreland County
TOTAL	115 (14% of all letters and emails)	

Table 12. Summary of comments related to Virginia’s Right-to-Retrieve law from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	9 (9%)	<p>“dog retrieval is a vital tenant of the current law that needs to be maintained”—Prince George County</p> <p>“As for a dog owner being able to go on prohibited land to retrieve dogs. I think that law is very much out dated.”—No Location Given</p>
Nonhound-Hunters	16 (16%)	<p>“Another irritation one faces is the constant visits from hunters asking to search for dogs on farm property.”—Prince George County</p> <p>“take advantage of the Virginia law that allows them to Trespass without owner permission as long as they claim they are looking for their dogs.”—Charlotte County</p> <p>“the other thing that concerns me is the right to come on someone else's property to look for dogs, the temptation to put some dogs out on a deer drive is too great.”—Surry County</p>
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	29 (30%)	<p>“The law to retrieve dogs from prohibited land is very unfair to that Private Land owner”—Lunenburg County</p> <p>“drives me crazy that a dog owner can legally come on to my land to retrieve his hound even without my permission.”—Amherst County</p> <p>“dog owners driving in on our lands looking for their dogs”—Prince Edward County</p>
Private Landowners	33 (34%)	<p>“they can go anywhere on our land, including near our house, all under the protection of Virginia statute.”—Albemarle County</p> <p>“how can you call land yours if every dog hunter can say they are looking for their dogs and access it.”—Halifax County</p> <p>“When confronted as to why they are on our land they quickly site the words ‘we are here to retrieve the dogs’”—Essex County</p>
Other	2 (2%)	“trespassing by the dogs and those who try to catch the dogs”—No Location Given
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	5 (5%)	“sit there waiting for deer to come across and you can tell them they're on posted land and they will say I'm trying to catch my dogs.”—Nelson County
TOTAL	95 (11% of all letters and emails)	



Table 13. Summary of comments related to Fair Chase/Welfare of Quarry from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	3 (3%)	<p>"How much fair chase is involved with hunters lining the roads with their radio direction finding devices?"—Bath County</p> <p>"organized, military style methods of slaughter."—Spotsylvania County</p>
Nonhound-Hunters	31 (32%)	<p>"It is unfair to the animal to run dogs after them."—Appomattox County</p> <p>"I believe in hunting 1 on 1 you and the animal, not a pack of dogs hunting while you ride in your warm truck until the dog trees"—Augusta County</p> <p>"after it has been chased for miles by dogs..it is a pitiful site foaming at the mouth"—No Location Given</p>
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	20 (21%)	<p>"What is sportsmanship about following 40 hound dogs with radar collars in 25 pickup trucks until you run the poor deer down and then shoot it"—No Location Given</p> <p>"it is unfair chase and unsportsmanlike."—Prince Edward County</p> <p>"seen a deer bleeding from the nose after it has been run by dogs...seen a pack of dogs catch a small deer and kill it"—Essex County</p>
Private Landowners	20 (21%)	<p>"a deer was running in terror, mouth gaping, with saliva hanging out, as dogs chased close behind"—Nelson County</p> <p>"it's not sportsmanlike and creates an unfair advantage for the hunter."—No Location Given</p>
Other	3 (3%)	"how inhumane it is to both the wildlife and the dogs"—No Location Given
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	17 (18%)	<p>"The deer are no longer being pursued under fair chase conditions."—No Location Given</p> <p>"Anytime you force an animal out of his natural routine and environment to kill it, that is nothing but unfair."—No Location Given</p>
TOTAL	94 (11% of letters and emails)	

Table 14. Summary of issues and concerns categories that each made up <10% of the total number of letters and emails sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

<b>Content Analysis Category</b>	<b>Number of Letters &amp; Emails (% of total)</b>	<b>Example Key Phrases with County/City, and Stakeholder Group of Author</b>
Effects on Domestic Pets/Livestock	83 (8%)	<p>"unable to let our dogs go out...there are strange hounds on the property...fear that a dog fight might breakout."—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Sussex County</p> <p>"create a problem for me as my dogs, pets, go wild"—Private Landowner, Mecklenburg County</p> <p>"harassing my livestock"—Private Landowner, Isle of Wight County</p>
Property Damage	71 (9%)	<p>"had fences broken"—Nonhound-hunter/Private Landowner, Prince Edward County</p> <p>"have to deal with other people's trash and sometimes damage in spite of the signs."—Private Landowner, Nelson County</p>
Concern for Personal Safety	62 (8%)	<p>"With the hunters trespassing and running their dogs...I wonder just how safe I really am."—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Louisa County</p> <p>"It has put them in danger not only in the woods while hunting, but while driving."—Nonhound-Hunter, Isle of Wight County</p>
Lost/Abandoned Hounds	68 (8%)	<p>"if a dog does not do his job, he...left behind"—Private Landowner, Mecklenburg County</p> <p>"lost dogs I find on my farm."—Private Landowner, Southampton County</p>
Poor Hound-Hunter Ethics	51 (6%)	<p>"There are very few hunt clubs that have good hunting ethics and respect for other landowners and common sense."—Nonhound-Hunter, Halifax County</p> <p>"you can't blame all hunters for the mistakes and disrespect of the few"—Hound-Hunter, King William County</p>
Aggressive Behavior of Hound-Hunters	50 (6%)	<p>"verbal altercation between several members and a land owner...escalated until it nearly became physical"—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner</p> <p>"We have been threatened when the hunters parked in our driveway."—Private Landowner, Westmoreland County</p>
Noise Disturbance	42 (5%)	<p>"Hound hunting ruins the peace and tranquility I find by being in the woods."—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Stafford County</p> <p>"tired of having to put up with dogs barking and disturbing my sleep"—Private Landowner, Hanover County</p>

Table 14 Continued.

<b>Content Analysis Category</b>	<b>Number of Letters &amp; Emails (% of total)</b>	<b>Example Key Phrases with County/City, and Stakeholder Group of Author</b>
Disruption of Wildlife	31 (4%)	“run their dogs during the times when the deer are having their young”—Private Landowner, Mecklenburg County  “other animals are also disturbed while dogs are being trained.”—Nonhound-Hunter, Rockingham County
Road-killed Dogs	27 (3%)	“see countless hounds on the side of the road dead”—Nonhound-Hunter, No Location Given  “dogs being struck by cars”—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Prince Edward Island
Alcohol Related	11 (1%)	“drink while hunting”—Private Landowner, Mecklenburg County
Aggressive Behavior of Landowners	8 (1%)	“threats of shooting the dogs, get them off my land, calling the law.”—Hound-Hunter, No Location Given
Animal Rights	6 (<1%)	“It’s a barbaric and cruel sport”—Other, Nottoway County

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Virginia’s Changing Landscape was cited more often than any other factor as contributing to issues and concerns related to hunting with hounds. Fifteen percent of letters and emails, 56% of which were written by hound-hunters, referred to Changing Landscape. Overall, letters and emails described changes in the amount of open space, hunting access, and make-up of communities, noting that rural areas are being subdivided, open space is being fragmented, and new residents are moving into rural parts of Virginia.

Inadequate Law Enforcement was also cited as a factor that contributes to issues and concerns related to hunting with hounds in 12% of letters and emails. Nonhound-hunter/private landowners most often complained of inadequate law enforcement (33%), followed by nonhound-hunters (18%) and private landowners (16%), and hound-hunters (13%). Inadequate law enforcement was described by slow response times, failure to address complaints, and inconsistencies in enforcement of existing laws.

Similarly, but less frequently (7%), Inadequate Existing Laws were mentioned in letters and emails written to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech. Private landowners (40%) and nonhound-hunter/private landowners (25%) wrote most of the comments in this category. Comments in this category addressed loopholes, vagaries, and perceived bias in Virginia’s laws related to hunting with hounds in general terms (vs. specific mention of the right-to-retrieve law, for example).

Eight percent of letters and emails were included in the Adequate Existing Laws category. Unlike the category Inadequate Existing Laws, most of the letters and emails in this category were written by hound-hunters (95%). Further, nearly all of the letters written by hound-hunters came from 2 form letters. The key phrase, “current laws which are adequate to protect private property rights” was written in 14 letters to the VDGIF from hound-hunters in Sussex County

and the phrase, “The current laws protect the property rights of landowners” was written in 47 emails to the VDGIF.

Comments regarding factors that contribute to issues and concerns related to hunting with hounds in Virginia are summarized in Table 15.

## SUGGESTIONS

A number of letters and emails contained suggestions. Stakeholders proposed changes to laws and regulations, licensing and registration, education of hunters and landowners, and penalties for unlawful or unethical behavior.

Most often, letters and emails contained Suggestions Regarding Hunting Seasons (9%). Nonhound-hunter/private landowners (31%) and nonhound-hunters (29%) wrote most of the letters and emails that were included in this category. Suggestions in this category focused on reducing overlap between hound-hunting and other types of hunting, primarily muzzleloader and archery by either extending muzzleloader/archery season or reducing hound-hunting seasons. The prevalence of this suggestion reflects the concerns of nonhound-hunters about hounds trespassing on private property and hound-hunting activities interfering with nonhound-hunting, both of which were frequently written about (see above). Suggestions Regarding Hunting Seasons are summarized in Table 16.

Seven percent of letters and emails contained more general suggestions about New Laws to regulate various aspects of hunting with hounds. Hound-hunters made some of the suggestions in this category (20%), as did nonhound-hunters (17%); however most letters and emails were written by private landowners (14% private landowners + 35% nonhound-hunter/private landowners). Letters and emails in the New Laws category are summarized in Table 17.

Seven percent of letters and emails contained comments related to Contiguous Acres. Hound-hunters wrote 24% of the letters and emails in this category. Most of the comments made by hound-hunters reflect concern and disapproval of establishing a minimum acreage requirement for hunting with hounds (as has been adopted in Georgia). In contrast, comments made by nonhound-hunter/private landowners (35%), nonhound-hunters (19%), and private landowners (19%) generally called for establishment of a minimum acreage requirement. A few letters and emails from nonhound-hunters and private landowners expressed concern about the effectiveness of this type of measure. As with Suggestions Regarding Hunting Seasons, above, suggestions regarding Contiguous Acres made by nonhound-hunters and private landowners reflect concerns about hound trespassing and interference with nonhound-hunting activities, both of which were frequently addressed in letters and emails (see above). Comments made regarding Contiguous Acres are summarized in Table 18.

Six percent of letters and emails included comments related to Property Access Management. Comments in this category called for requirements and/or restrictions on hound-hunters and their hounds prior to accessing private land. Most letters and emails in this category were written by nonhound-hunter/private landowners (39%) and private landowners (33%). Comments in this category are summarized in Table 19.

Table 15. Summary of factors contributing to issues and concerns related to hunting with hounds from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

<b>Content Analysis Category</b>	<b>Number of Letters &amp; Emails (% of total)</b>	<b>Example Key Phrases with County/City, and Stakeholder Group of Author</b>
Changing Landscape	126 (15%)	<p>"The only problem is the newly transplanted Northerners and the massive influx of liberal city dwellers that have moved into the state"—Hound-Hunter, No Location Given</p> <p>"Prince Edward County is growing in population, more vehicle traffic, and land ownership is changing."—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Prince Edward County</p>
Inadequate Law Enforcement	103 (14%)	<p>"The response time is too slow for most violations."—Nonhound-Hunter, Charlotte County</p> <p>"problem is solved by increased law enforcement"—Hound-Hunter, Fauquier County</p>
Adequate Existing Laws	67 (8%)	<p>"The current laws protect the property rights of landowners"—Hound-Hunter, No Location Given</p> <p>"current laws which are adequate to protect property rights"—Hound-Hunter, Sussex County</p>
Inadequate Existing Laws	54 (7%)	<p>"the current laws are woefully inadequate, virtually impossible to enforce and..a joke to these hunt clubs"—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Essex County</p> <p>"There are serious problems with laws for hunting"—Private Landowner, Halifax County</p>

Other suggestions, including those related to the use of tracking collars, the need for additional education, and changes to road hunting each comprise <5% of the letters and emails received by the VDGIF and Virginia Tech. These suggestions are summarized in Table 20.

#### HOUND-HUNTING PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Some key phrases analyzed in the content analysis addressed the *Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward* public input process itself. Key phrases in this broad category were critical of the project, praised the project, were requests for information, or requests to participate in the process. The number of letters and emails that addressed the public input process, example key phrases, and the stakeholder groups attributed to those key phrases are summarized in Table 21.

Table 16. Summary of Suggestions Regarding Hunting Seasons from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	4 (5%)	"extended seasons"—Accomack County
Nonhound-Hunters	23 (29%)	"Fairness to all would be a month of bow season, a month of black powder season, and a month of dog season."—Surry County  "shorten the season, less hound hunting"—Augusta County  "compromise with the use of hounds restricted to certain days of the season"—Gloucester County
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	24 (31%)	"consider prohibiting hound hunting during the 1st week of general firearms season"—Amelia County  "limit deer hunting with dogs to perhaps the last two weeks of the gun season."—Mecklenburg County  "extend the seasons to accommodate everyone's hunting styles"—Lunenburg County
Private Landowners	15 (19%)	"introduce a 'still' hunting season while extending the black powder and bow hunting seasons"—Goochland County  "support increased doe days and additional doe tags"—Gloucester County
Other	4 (5%)	"the first few weeks of firearm season should be still hunting only"—Campbell County
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	4 (5%)	"I also feel that training season for bear should be eliminated"—No Location Given
TOTAL	78 (9% of all letters and emails)	

Table 17. Summary of comments in the New Laws category from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	13 (20%)	<p>"If the hounds were required to wear an ID tag or collar...the chances of their being returned...would be greater"—No Location Given</p> <p>"I hope that if laws do change for hound hunting that they reflect the different type of game being pursued"—No Location Given</p>
Nonhound-Hunters	11 (17%)	<p>"set strict limits on the use of dogs"—No Location Given</p> <p>"I would like to see Virginia impose a requirement that hound hunters be restricted to areas that are large and preferably fenced to keep dogs within the area"—Nelson County</p>
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	23 (64%)	<p>"change the laws east of the Blue Ridge to match the west"—Rappahannock County</p> <p>"let's get it right by enacting new and enforceable regulations"—Essex County</p> <p>"Since there are concerns about hound hunting, a little more identification, oversight, and accountability of those using this hunting method is needed"—No Location Given</p>
Private Landowners	9 (14%)	<p>"Restrict dog hunting to counties and population areas where a specific population density exists"—No Location Given</p> <p>"strongly support restricting running of dogs"—Mathews County</p>
Other	4 (6%)	"more structure and rules to drive more ethical and safe behaviors."—No Location Given
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	4 (6%)	"We...wish to put forward a case for some type of regulation/oversight/control for the treatment of deer hounds"—No Location Given
TOTAL	64 (8% of all letters and emails)	

Table 18. Summary of comments in the Contiguous Acres category from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	14 (24%)	<p>"restricting hound hunting to property of 1,000 acres or more... is totally unacceptable to us and..most other hound hunters."—No Location Given</p> <p>"The use and expense of dogs is vital to the hunting experience and any limitation to the amount of contiguous land for dog hunting would be extremely detrimental"—Prince George County</p> <p>"Guidelines need to be set ... limiting a hunter or hunters in hunting tracts of land that are to small"—No Location Given</p>
Nonhound-Hunters	11 (19%)	<p>"require a substantial size, solid block of land to hunt."—Accomack County</p> <p>"There should be at least a 1000 acre tracts minimal for hunting with dogs"—Southampton County</p>
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	20 (35%)	<p>"Hound hunters or owners should have a minimum of 200 acres of land they own, lease or club property to run their dogs. At all other times, dogs should not be released to run at will on adjacent or other posted land."—No Location Given</p> <p>"I have absolutely no problem with traditional dog hunting clubs on large tracks of land"—Prince Edward County</p> <p>"Proposed restrictions I have read about on the size of land tracts needed for this form of hunting simply will not work."—Pittsylvania County</p>
Private Landowners	11 (19%)	<p>"restrict some hound owners from releasing their dogs on small tracts"—Nelson County</p> <p>"restricting hunting with dogs to acreages of 250 acres or more"—Fluvanna County</p>
Other	0	
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	1 (1%)	"Confining the hunting to large tracts minimizes the chance of dogs straying onto others' land"—Rockingham County
TOTAL	57 (7% of all letters and emails)	



Table 19. Summary of comments in the Property Access Management category from emails and letters sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

Stakeholder Group	Number of Letters & Emails (% of total in category)	Example Key Phrases with County/City
Hound-Hunters	3 (6%)	"No person, to include but not limited to coon, fox and deer hunters using dogs (hounds), shall be allowed to go upon prohibited lands without first obtaining written permission from the landowner or his agent to retrieve dogs or for any other purpose."—Culpepper County
Nonhound-Hunters	7 (14%)	"anybody who wants to trespass onto posted property should be required to have written permission from the land owner or lease holder"—Charlotte County  "the State of Virginia violates our rights by saying you do not have the choice who comes on your property."—Nottoway County
Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowners	19 (39%)	"Prior to going on or hunting on private property, written permission should be obtained."—Amherst County  "they should be required to contact a landowner before trespassing on their land to look for dogs"—Louisa County  "a way must be found to STOP the abuse of those who do not wish to have hounds run through their property without consequence"—Lancaster County
Private Landowners	15 (33%)	"keep your dogs off the property"—No Location Given  "It's time the law be changed to get in step with private property rights"—Spotsylvania County
Other	0	
Stakeholder Group Not Identified	3 (6%)	"the policy in place now which allows trespassing onto private property should be abolished immediately."—No Location Given
TOTAL	47 (6% of all letters and emails)	

Table 20. Summary of suggestion categories that each made up <5% of the total number of letters and emails sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

<b>Content Analysis Category</b>	<b>Number of Letters &amp; Emails (% of total)</b>	<b>Example Key Phrases with County/City, and Stakeholder Group of Author</b>
Suggestions for Penalties	34 (4%)	<p>"state should maybe look into posting stricter fines or penalties instead of letting go of a tradition"—Hound-Hunter, Prince George County</p> <p>"enforce some type of penalty for the gross misconduct which hunting with dogs has created"—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Sussex County</p>
Suggestions for Licensing/Registration	30 (4%)	<p>"have to buy a dog permit to run dogs"—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Lunenburg County</p> <p>"Require dog hunting clubs to register with the game commission."—Hound-Hunter, No Location Given</p>
Public Education/Ethics	30 (4%)	<p>"education of the public about dog hunting"—Hound-Hunter, No Location Given</p> <p>"the use of hounds has caused some concern among some citizens...education and communication is the best way to address these concerns"—Private Landowner, Gloucester County</p>
Approaches Used in Other States	18 (2%)	<p>"adopt laws similar to those in GA."—Private Landowner, Lancaster County</p> <p>"Please take a look at what Florida and Georgia have done."—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, No Location Given</p>
Hunter Education	14 (2%)	<p>"there should be a... "Hunting dog handlers course" or "certification" that educates the hunter."—Stakeholder Group Not Identified, Spotsylvania County</p> <p>"Educate houndsmen"—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Augusta County</p>
Change Road Hunting	10 (1%)	<p>"Place restrictions on where you can hunt such as no hunting with dogs 50-100 feet from a road"—Nonhound-Hunter, No Location Given</p> <p>"state law should prohibit the carrying of loaded firearms in vehicles on state roads while engaged in hunting, and there should be a minimum distance from a public road before discharging a firearm"—Private Landowner, Lunenburg County</p>
Suggestions Regarding Tracking Collars	8 (1%)	<p>"we just need to pass a law so that all deer hunting dogs must have the tracking collars."—Hound-Hunter, No Location Given</p> <p>feel as if tracking collars should not be allowed on the dogs"—Nonhound-Hunter/Private Landowner, Highland County</p>

Table 21. Summary of comments about the study/process sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech between July 1, 2007 and May 21, 2008 as part of the *Hunting with Hounds: A Way Forward* public input process.

<b>Content Analysis Category</b>	<b>Number of Letters &amp; Emails (% of total)</b>	<b>Example Key Phrases with County/City, and Stakeholder Group of Author</b>
Critical of Study/Process	108 (29%)	<p>“End this unjust "hunting with hounds" study that is currently on-going” —Isle of Wight County, Hound-Hunter General</p> <p>“The purported mailing of information to all hunting license holders had clearly gone awry since so few of us, all duly licensed, had actually received any contact at all” —Fauquier County, Fox Hound-Hunter</p> <p>“Your Stakeholders Committee is stacked with hunting groups and may not provide for the concerns of rural property owners who suffer from the various impacts of dog hunting” —King William County, Private Landowner</p> <p>“The website for the game commission seems distorted” —Charlotte County, Stakeholder Group Not Identified</p>
Information/Participation Requests	179 (22%)	<p>“I would very much like to be able to interject some insights into this topic” —Bedford County, Private Landowner</p> <p>“I would like to formally make a request to the VDGIF that, I be considered as a participant in this study” —Prince George County, Hound-Hunter General</p> <p>“What printed materials are available that I could use to hand out among my hunting friends” —Gloucester County, Raccoon Hound-Hunter</p> <p>“Who is complaining? Do they have a legitimate gripe?” —Williamsburg, Stakeholder Group Not Identified</p>
Supportive of Study/Process	8 (1%)	<p>“I applaud your effort in supporting our rights and look forward to advancing the study” — Caroline County, Fox Hound-Hunter</p> <p>“Thank you for bringing this to the public’s attention” —No Location Given, Deer Hound-Hunter</p>

## OTHER

A number of issues unrelated to hunting with hounds were recorded in key phrases in the content analysis under the category “other”. Primarily, key phrases in the ‘other’ category referenced Sunday hunting, management of the VDGIF, and suggestions about game department actions and regulations unrelated to hunting with hounds.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis represent perspectives of those who cared enough to write, but are not necessarily representative of all hunters, landowner, or other Virginia citizens. The letters and emails written to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech as part of the *Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward* public input process originated primarily from counties in eastern Virginia where hunting deer with dogs is allowed. Few letters or emails came from counties in Southwest Virginia. In addition, relatively few letters and emails came from Northern Virginia where fox hound-hunting is popular. Some areas along the I-64 and I-95 corridors are experiencing rapid growth in human populations, likely contributing to landscape changes that contribute to issues and concerns related to hunting with hounds (VDGIF 2008).

Letters and emails from hound-hunters reflected their passion for this activity. Many echoed the goal of the *Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward* public input process to continue hound-hunting in Virginia, citing the long standing tradition of the activity and its utility as a wildlife management tool. Fifty percent (Table 2) of letters and emails expressed support for hound-hunting. Although hound-hunters are primarily responsible for these letters and emails, some were written by nonhound-hunters and private landowners.

It is not surprising that letters and emails from nonhound-hunters and private landowners most often addressed issues of property access and conflicts between resource user groups (i.e., hound-hunters and “still” hunters) such as hound trespassing, hunter trespassing, and the right-to-retrieve. Hound-hunters did not often mention issues or concerns in their letters and emails. There could be several explanations for this. It may be that hound-hunters do not have the same types of negative experiences as nonhound-hunters and private landowners or that hound-hunters do not view these experiences and activities as concerns. It is also possible that anticipation about potential restrictions and negative comments by other groups motivated hound-hunters to focus on the positive aspects of their sport. Conversely, personal dissatisfaction or problems with hound-hunting may have led other groups to focus more on negative aspects of hound-hunting.

Suggestions most often mentioned in letters and emails, including proposed changes to hunting seasons, minimum acreage requirements, and property access management, appear to directly address the issues and concerns identified by nonhound-hunters and private landowners. Hound-hunters—not private landowners—wrote that existing laws are adequate, especially in their ability to protect private property rights. Private landowners (including nonhound-hunter/private landowners) disagreed, writing that existing laws are inadequate and calling for change. In addition, the call for new laws and changes to hunting seasons by nonhound-hunters and private

landowners reflected their desire to regulate currently lawful/allowed practices (i.e., hound trespassing, hound-hunting during muzzleloader/archery season for deer). Suggestions that would indirectly address issues related to property access and disruption of nonhound-hunting activities, such as education and use of tracking collars, were not made as frequently.

Concern over the condition/treatment of hounds was expressed in 16% of letters and emails, primarily from private landowners and those who did not identify with a stakeholder group. Treatment/condition of hounds was addressed at about the same frequency as the right-to-retrieve law in letters and emails written by private landowners (including nonhound-hunter/private landowners; ~4%). It should be noted, however, that perceptions and judgments of condition and treatment of hounds likely vary with exposure to and understanding of hound-hunting practices, as suggested above. Hound-hunters often characterize their dogs as “athletic” and acknowledge that those unfamiliar with the sport may perceive them as “too skinny.”

Overall, the content analysis of letters and emails sent to the VDGIF and Virginia Tech confirmed the sharp divide in perceptions between hound-hunters and nonhound-hunters and private landowners that was evident in focus groups and in the informal surveys (McMullin et al. 2008). Hound-hunters applauded the positive attributes of their sport and rarely expressed a desire for change while nonhound-hunters and private landowners frequently identified issues and concerns related to hound-hunting practices and made suggestions to address them.

## LITERATURE CITED

- McMullin, S., S. G. Lupis Kozlowski, and B. Wright. 2008. Summary of responses to web-based and paper informal surveys regarding hunting with hounds in Virginia. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA.
- VDGIF. 2008. Hunting with Hounds in Virginia: A Way Forward Technical Report. Hound-Hunting Technical Committee, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Richmond, Virginia, USA.