

To the Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee,

My name is Tom Bullert, a Minnesota hunter from Brownton, Minnesota. I am deeply involved in my local archery community, regularly supporting and participating in youth archery events, programs, and competitions. I have witnessed the growing enthusiasm for traditional vertical bow archery among Minnesotans both young and old.

I respectfully request your support for an amendment to separate archery (vertical bow) and crossbow licenses into distinct types.

Vertical bows and crossbows differ significantly in required skill, effective range, ease of use, success rates, and accessibility. Combining both under one "archery" license hides crucial data on participation, harvest by method, and trends, preventing the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from accurately assessing impacts or managing seasons.

The DNR's October 2025 Crossbow Report, covering the temporary policy's first two years (2023–2024), underscores these data limitations. Two years is too short for reliable long-term conclusions, given fluctuations in deer and turkey populations from weather, winters, season timing, and regional factors. Full effects may take 4 to 6 years or more, per studies in other Midwest states.

Youth archery continues to rise in Minnesota through programs like Archery in the Schools and 4-H, drawing thousands annually. Archery license sales were already trending upward before full crossbow inclusion in 2023, even as firearms and other license types declined.

It would be unfortunate to see traditional archery and crossbows treated as the same, only to end up with broad, one-size-fits-all regulations driven largely by crossbow-related increases in participation or success. If seasons are shortened or antlerless opportunities reduced because of crossbow trends, young hunters who are drawn to the challenge of vertical bows may be more likely to be pushed towards crossbows instead. That shift would undermine the practice, patience, and skill that traditional vertical bow archery develops. In a world that often favors convenience and instant results, archery stands out as a discipline that builds perseverance, precision, and a deeper connection to conservation. The steady growth in archery license sales before 2023, at a time when many other license types were declining, shows that Minnesotans were actively choosing that challenge.

Separate licenses would enable precise tracking of participation and harvests by method, similar to existing firearms and muzzleloader distinctions, and provide these benefits:

1. **Accurate, reliable data** to guide science-based decisions and overcome self-reporting flaws. The report relies on prone-to-error self-reports; without separation, the DNR cannot determine

true crossbow vs. vertical bow usage, frequency, success differences, or what drove changes like the record-high 2024 archery harvest (crossbows at 43.8% in 2023, 48.2% in 2024, and rising).

2. Targeted, method-specific regulations if needed. The report urges monitoring in northeast Minnesota (high crossbow use, recovering deer herds, antlerless lottery areas) and spring turkey seasons, where crossbow effectiveness risks overharvest. Potential actions include restricting antlerless takes or shortening the turkey archery season. Under the current system, restrictions would hit both methods equally, limiting traditional archers unfairly. Separation allows independent adjustments, applying limits to one while protecting the other.

3. Consistency and fairness with Minnesota's licensing. Separate firearms and muzzleloader licenses already exist; the same logical structure for archery and crossbows would be straightforward and equitable.

4. Increased conservation revenue. Requiring separate licenses would generate additional funding because hunters who want to use both methods would purchase both licenses, just as they already do with firearms and muzzleloaders. Several other states use a model which offers a crossbow endorsement as an add-on to a traditional archery license. If Minnesota adopted a comparable structure, or priced crossbow licenses at a modest premium over vertical-bow licenses, it would create a significant new revenue stream. Those added dollars could be directed toward habitat restoration, wildlife management, improving access to quality hunting land, and youth hunting programs.

There is no harm in implementing separate licenses, in fact there are only benefits. This change would improve data quality, strengthen wildlife management, safeguard traditional archery's integrity, and secure sustainable opportunities for all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tom Bullert
Minnesota Hunter
Brownton, Minnesota