

House E&E Committee,

One of you responded to let me know that I would be better served with a much shorter letter. Below is a list of bulleted points on why I strongly oppose S258. If any of my points aren't quite fleshed out, the full letter below contains a better explanation. Even bulleted, there are still a lot of reasons why this is a terrible bill, so thank you for taking the time to understand the nuance of this important issue that will directly affect me and so many Vermonters before you enact any drastic changes to it.

- I am a Vermont resident and conservationist, and **strongly oppose S258** because it will negatively affect wildlife and wildlife habitat.
  - The bill is trying to address a small subset of problems with hunting, fishing and trapping regulations via a total overhaul of the overwhelmingly successful existing process, in a way that is designed specifically to limit future hunting opportunity. This opportunity directly translates to conservation funding, and will be a direct loss to future wildlife and habitat conservation efforts.
  - It creates redundancy and inefficiency at the Dept of F&W that will further detract from accomplishing their mission—this will directly harm the conservation work the department does.
  - The bill will increase the influence of politics and reduce our reliance on science because it consolidates regulatory authority under only 1 political appointee. This is dangerous, and people on both sides of this topic should not accept this.
- If there is a dispute between LCAR and the Fish and Wildlife board regarding the specific language of the trapping BMP's and the coyote hunting regulations adopted this past fall, that should be addressed through the existing administrative procedures act, not via a total overhaul of the board and regulatory process.
- The citizen board already takes into account the advice of department biologists, but at least it is consensus-driven rather than putting ultimate authority in the hands of only one political appointee, who also has hiring/firing power over the biologists whose info we need to rely on. This is no more scientific, more dangerous and less democratic than the current system.
- Hunters, anglers and trappers have a large role in this process because they fund almost 2/3 of the dept's budget between license sales and federal excise taxes on hunting, shooting and fishing equipment, and because these activities are specifically protected in our State constitution. This makes them a critical stakeholder group in setting regulations that is different from people who consume wildlife and habitat without a gun, bow, trap or rod, who are not regulated or required to contribute to this public trust in order to utilize it, despite also having a significant impact on wildlife and habitat.
- It is not the everyday person who is asking for this, it is a small group of people who are opposed to these activities in the first place seeking to limit hunting opportunity by influencing regulations. With hunting opportunity translating

- directly into conservation funding for both game and non-game species, limiting this without a scientific need to do so necessarily detracts from conservation work. After having been extirpated 150 years ago, hunted species of wildlife are either thriving in Vermont, or if not, it is directly attributed to climate and habitat problems—not hunting, angling or trapping. This is a lose/lose.
- It is not clear why the new board needs to have its purview expanded beyond setting regulations for hunting, fishing and trapping. The department has already testified that this unfunded mandate will require additional time and staff, for which there is no funding source other than to take away from existing conservation work. Another loss for everyone.
  - s258 also requires a non-game plan. The Vermont Wildlife Action Plan already exists, which is a comprehensive blueprint for conservation of species of greatest conservation need. This is one of the most comprehensive and progressive in the US and already incorporates public feedback, yet the bill calls for another plan without any statement of need. Why?
  - This bill and others like it are directly preventing the collaboration we need in order to find and build on our common shared values around wildlife. The legislature needs to play a leading role in this by ensuring that any legislation recognizes the continued relevance and value of hunting, angling and trapping, and the critical role these activities continue to play in recovering and maintaining our game species and habitat, as well as the part that has played in non-game species conservation, and that these activities continue to be important parts of Vermont's cultural, food and health landscape that should be celebrated and maintained.
  - If you truly value wildlife and want to help wildlife populations, work to develop a dedicated funding source for non-game wildlife and habitat conservation that DOESNT negatively affect the existing conservation tools we have around hunting, fishing and trapping, but adds to them.

Thank you,  
Dave Furman  
Jericho, VT