

The last thing our state needs is the working class to have less opportunity to practice traditions they have grown up with and that bring them into nature. Looking at the local obituaries every week and the "unexpected deaths" in Lamoille County where I live it is plain to see that as a group their mental health is suffering and they are not having an easy time of it. We need to preserve and STRENGTHEN the ability to hunt, fish, and trap which are activities that bring us closer to nature in a biological way which has been proven to increase positive mental and physical health.

Most people will not take up hiking, skiing, or mtn. biking if they did not grow up doing them and if we lose more hunting and trapping rights they will also be less invested in engaging with these activities that bring them into nature and help conserve the environment through their license purchases.

We need to keep activities alive that add to our independence as a state where we can harvest regulated, healthy, sustainable meat and hide out our back door. Through this bill we are in danger of losing this vital connection. If S.258 is enacted it will only weaken these activities as activists will corrupt the board which is why they are pushing for this and no checks will be in place if an activist, anti-hunter becomes the FandW chairperson.

Last but not least, as hunters we will have less trust in game regulations that are put in place by non-hunters and this will only lead to more violations of these vital laws that are already difficult to enforce and which protect wildlife from over-harvest. Right now I have good faith in these laws because they were signed off on by my hunting peers so I follow them to a T. I believe we have a good balance in place in the current structure of the Fish and Wildlife board and most hunters who the laws are there for, TRUST the laws.

Thank you for reading this. I am a registered Democrat but will be voting for reps who oppose this bill regardless of party affiliation. This has turned me into a one issue voter unfortunately.

Best,
Gabe