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**We Support S.258**

**Improving Vermont  
Fish & Wildlife  
Governance**

*For future generations, the  
environment and wildlife*



Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

Presented by Brenna Galdenzi, President & Co-founder Protect Our Wildlife • Stowe, Vermont  
February 20, 2024



# The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Board

## A Barrier to Addressing Major Challenges

- Makes public policy on a shared public *resource* (wildlife) **without representation from a diverse public**
- Why should only 14 people—who are not elected and do not represent the majority of Vermonters—**hold the ultimate power** to pass regulations that impact all of us?
- All members are either trappers, hunters, anglers or hounders—there is little to **no diversity of values, politics and other factors**
- The non-consumptive public doesn't feel comfortable speaking before the Board due to a history of hostile behavior ([Exhibits 1-6](#))



**FOX GUARDING THE HENHOUSE**  
Image source: Seven Days

# Governor's Board Appointments Lack Transparency

On at least two occasions, that we know of, Board members **were appointed without even submitting an application**, a written statement of interest, or resume, even though there were a number of qualified individuals who had formally applied, including submitting resumes etc. ([Exhibit 7](#))

Concerns ignored by the Administration (*see 2021 letter to Governor Scott, [Exhibit 7](#)*)

# **S.258 invites diverse voices to the table to share concerns, ideas, and recommendations to Department staff**

**Accessibility is  
being able to get in  
the building.**

**Diversity is getting  
invited to the table.**

**Inclusion is having  
a voice at the table.**

**Belonging is  
having your voice  
heard at the table!**



# 2019 Survey Conducted by UVM's Center for Rural Studies Indicates Vermonters Support the Goal of S.258!



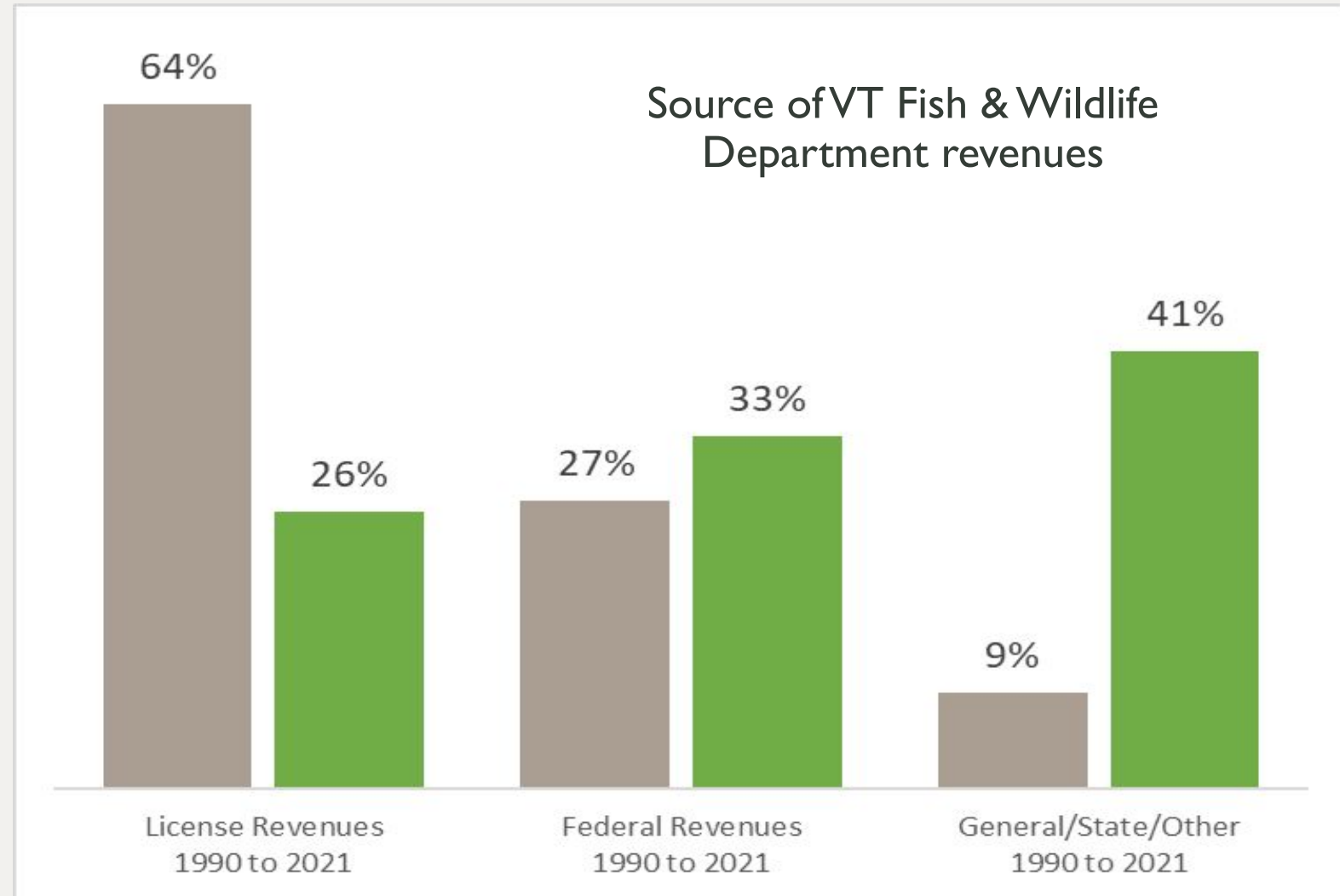
## Center for Rural Studies, 2019 Vermonter Poll Results

VT wildlife is by law, a resource for all Vermonters. Regulations about non-game wildlife, that is, wildlife not trapped, hunted or fished are made by professional staff at the department of fish and wildlife. Regulations about game wildlife, that is, wildlife that are trapped, hunted or fished are made by the volunteer fish and wildlife board. Governor Scott has stated that appointments to that board are overwhelmingly drawn from trappers, hunters and anglers. Should regulations that impact wildlife that is trapped hunted or fished be made by a volunteer board appointed by the governor, or by professional staff from the department of fish and wildlife?

	Frequency	Percent
Volunteer board appointed by the governor	111	16.6
Professional staff from the Department of Fish & Wildlife	452	67.7
[Don't Read] Don't know	105	15.7
Total	668	100.0

# Everyone pays into conservation, yet only license holders have power in decision making

*As revenue from licenses decrease, revenue from federal and general funds increase.*



# License sales have diminished over time



Vermont Wildlife at the Crossroads: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/cl/fi/ejt0aajexr5vgfbo4f6k5/2007-VTWildlifePartnership-VermontWildlifeAtTheCrossroads.pdf?rlkey=6a9bgt9a8kqszn17qzfidbrkk&dl=0>  
VT Fish & Wildlife 2021 Budget: <https://anr.vermont.gov/sites/anr/files/co/ms/documents/budget/fy21-fish-and-wildlife-budget.pdf>

# Coyote Hounding

*A recreational activity where large, powerful hounds hunt coyotes while hunters attempt to track the hounds on GPS from their vehicles. There is no control of hounds that are running a mile or more away from the hounder by merely wearing a GPS and shock collar.*



Hounds biting at coyote:  
Vermont



# Coyote Hounding

## Violation of Landowner Rights



This coyote had been terrorized for miles through the Vermont woods by radio collared hounds until the exhausted animal sought refuge near a private residence, as seen here. The hound hunters showed up and shot the cornered animal.

*\*Video footage available.\**

# Coyote Hounding

Every year landowners report violations of private property rights due to hounds

## Coyote Hunters with Dogs

• Smith Street, Shoreham

### Discussion

We had a run in with a group of hunters running dogs to take coyotes on Smith St. in Shoreham. One of their dogs ran through our posted orchard and by our yard causing one of our dogs to blow through the invisible fence to chase it off the property. The hunters captured their dog and were totally unapologetic. Our dog was fine. Our local game warden came by as this was going on (just by chance) and had word with them. Turns out that unless you repost your property every year, register with the town clerk in January, and have an uninterrupted perimeter with dated signs every 400 feet, the hunters can come on your property without notice, even if there is only one gap in the perimeter. Crazy. Anyway, I have no objection to folks exercising their god given right to hunt in Vermont. And if my land is not properly posted, that's on me. Not that I think proper signage would make a difference. But, simple courtesy would dictate that the hunters let the only house around that they are going to run dogs in the woods behind the house before loosing the hounds. Indeed, there were teams of guys out in the adjoining orchard pruning while these fellows were on the hunt and it would have been nice to know what they were up to. These guys came in three pick ups and were pretty intimidating and didn't seem to have any interest in good relations with their neighbors. Not in the finest traditions of our State. The game warden, a lovely guy, says there is not much they can do as there is no law requiring good manners. I grew up here and respect the hunting tradition. But how about a little consideration for your fellow Vermonters?

[Email Author](#)

[Reply to Forum](#)

# Coyote Hounding

Hounds running uncontrolled are a public safety concern

From an email sent to the legislature February 7, 2024

*As a dog owner and resident of Fairlee VT, I am writing in regards to Senate bill S.258. Early on Easter Sunday 2021, my dog Spider and I were mountain biking in the Fairlee town forest when four radio-collared hounds tracked and pursued us for 2.5-3 miles in a clear attempt to kill my dog. We rushed to get to safety barreling over treacherous and icy class-4 roads with the dogs in close pursuit. Spider's athleticism and willingness to take direction saved his life.*

Exhibit 8 for warden report

# Coyote Hounding

Hounds running uncontrolled into roads

 Create room



802 Hunt Crew



54m · 

there's a dead coyote hound with a GPS collar on it near mile marker 275 to 273 Southbound Ln. before Bethel exit. Looks like a walker mostly tan. Looked like it had an orange gps collar on. We couldn't stop to read collar. Hoping the owner sees this so they know where their dog is..

# Coyote Hounding

**Antithetical** to Fish and Wildlife's Own Science

**“Coyotes can increase their reproductive rates in response to hunting, so populations rebound quickly from efforts to control their numbers directly by hunting or trapping.”**

Source: [vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Hunt/trapping/Eastern-Coyote-Position-Statement.pdf](http://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Hunt/trapping/Eastern-Coyote-Position-Statement.pdf)

**“Coyotes fill the role of a natural predator, a role that is important for maintaining the dynamics and health of our ecosystems.”**

Source:  
[vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/vermont-critters/mammals/coyote#:~:text=In%20Vermont%2C%20coyotes%20can%20be,can%20be%20experienced%20with%20coyotes.](http://vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/vermont-critters/mammals/coyote#:~:text=In%20Vermont%2C%20coyotes%20can%20be,can%20be%20experienced%20with%20coyotes.)

# Coyote Hounding

## Compared to Legalized Dog Fighting



Places both hounds and wildlife in danger when hounds confront the wild animal on the ground and a fight ensues.  
Photo:Vermont

Hounder refers to it as legalized dog-fighting.



# Baiting Coyotes

## Draws Wildlife into Communities

Vermont Fish & Wildlife tells the public not to feed wildlife because it may habituate coyotes and other wild animals and cause problems for communities.

We need to follow the science and stop baiting.



Bait pile: Sutton, VT • Feb 2024

# Baiting Coyotes

Bait draws in domestic dogs who may be mistaken for coyotes and shot

This just happened in November 2023 in [Dummerston](#) when this dog, Sadie, was shot over a bait pile set for coyotes. It also happened in [Barre](#) and in [Tunbridge](#) in 2022. These are only the cases we know about!





# S.258, a win for ...

- Wildlife
  - The public
    - Democracy
      - The future of conservation



END

