



# Act 159: Proposed Trapping Regulations



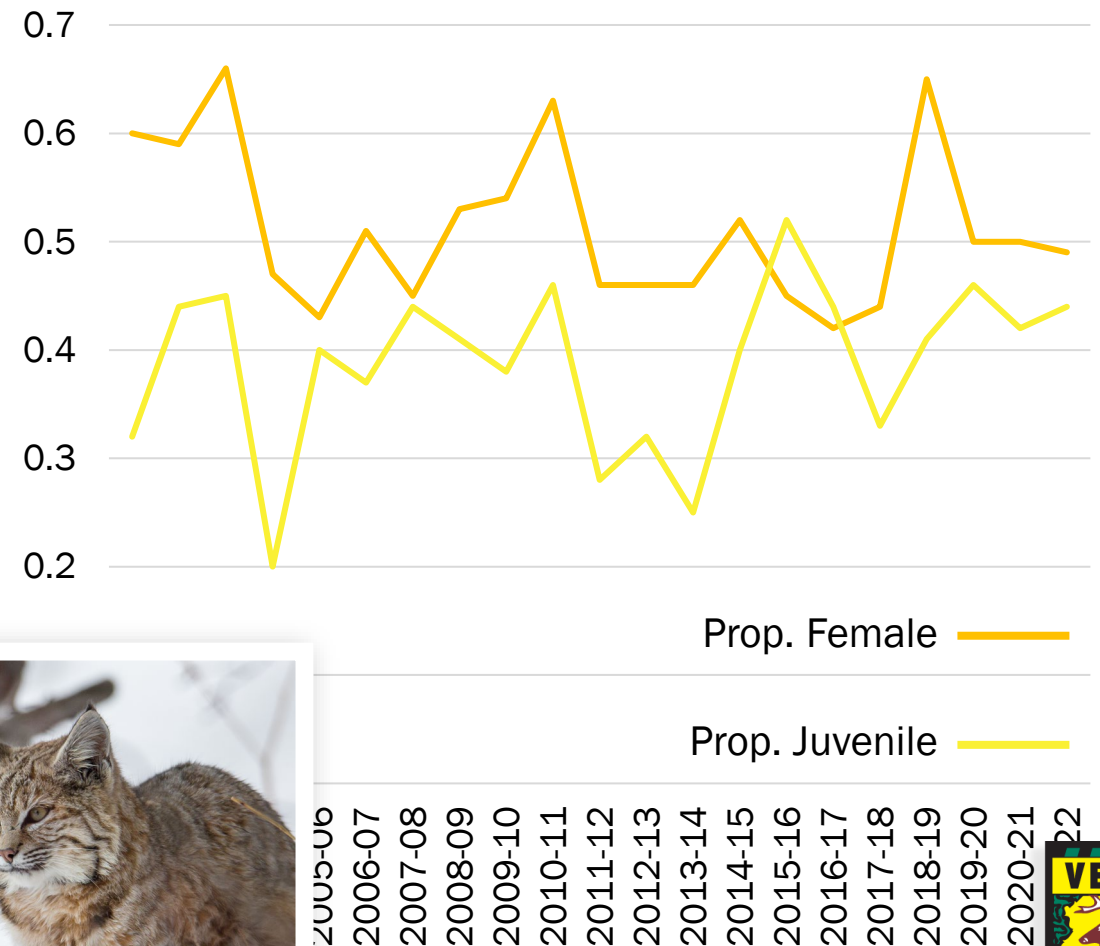
# Why VFWD Supports Trapping

The department supports regulated trapping in Vermont because it is part of a community science system that **provides irreplaceable data** for conservation efforts by the state and partners.

- Age, sex, physical condition data for population monitoring and modeling
- Tissue samples for environmental toxins, rabies, and covid monitoring
- Gene flow and population movement as a function of landscape fragmentation research



## Bobcat Harvest Proportions



# Act 159 Proposed Regulations

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We aim to **address legitimate concerns** about safety and the suffering of trapped animals while maintaining regulated trapping as a conservation tool in Vermont.

- 25 ft – 50 ft. safety setback from trails on most state-owned public lands and public highways
- Outlaw meat-based baited body-gripping traps on land except when enclosed, in water, or 5 feet above ground
- Require meat-based baits to be covered
- Require selectivity and welfare BMPs
- Require humane dispatch (firearm, bow, crossbow) per 4/5 FW Board amendment



# Process and Next Steps

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The department arrived at these recommendations through:

- Collaborating with the legislature on Act 159
- Taking feedback from a stakeholder working group and public comments
- Referencing peer-reviewed research
- Conducting a state-wide representative survey

Our **next steps** are to follow the Fish and Wildlife Board rulemaking process, initiated on April 5, 2023.

## Next Steps

- FW Board 1<sup>st</sup> Vote (April 5<sup>th</sup>)
  - Furbearer Rule Amendments
- ICAR (May 8<sup>th</sup>)
- File with Secretary of State (May 12<sup>th</sup>)
- Public Comment Period Begins (May 17<sup>th</sup>)
- Two In-Person and One Virtual Public Hearings (June 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>)
- Public Comments End (June 30<sup>th</sup>)
- FW Board 2<sup>nd</sup> Vote (July 19<sup>th</sup>)
- LCAR (August 19<sup>th</sup>)
- FW Board 3<sup>rd</sup> Vote (Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> or Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>)







# Correcting Misinformation

**Misleading:** disturbing, widely circulated images and videos depict best management practices (BMP) traps in action.

**Accurate:** it is impossible to determine whether the traps in these videos conform to BMPs. The larger question is whether humans have a legitimate role utilizing animals for food and fiber.





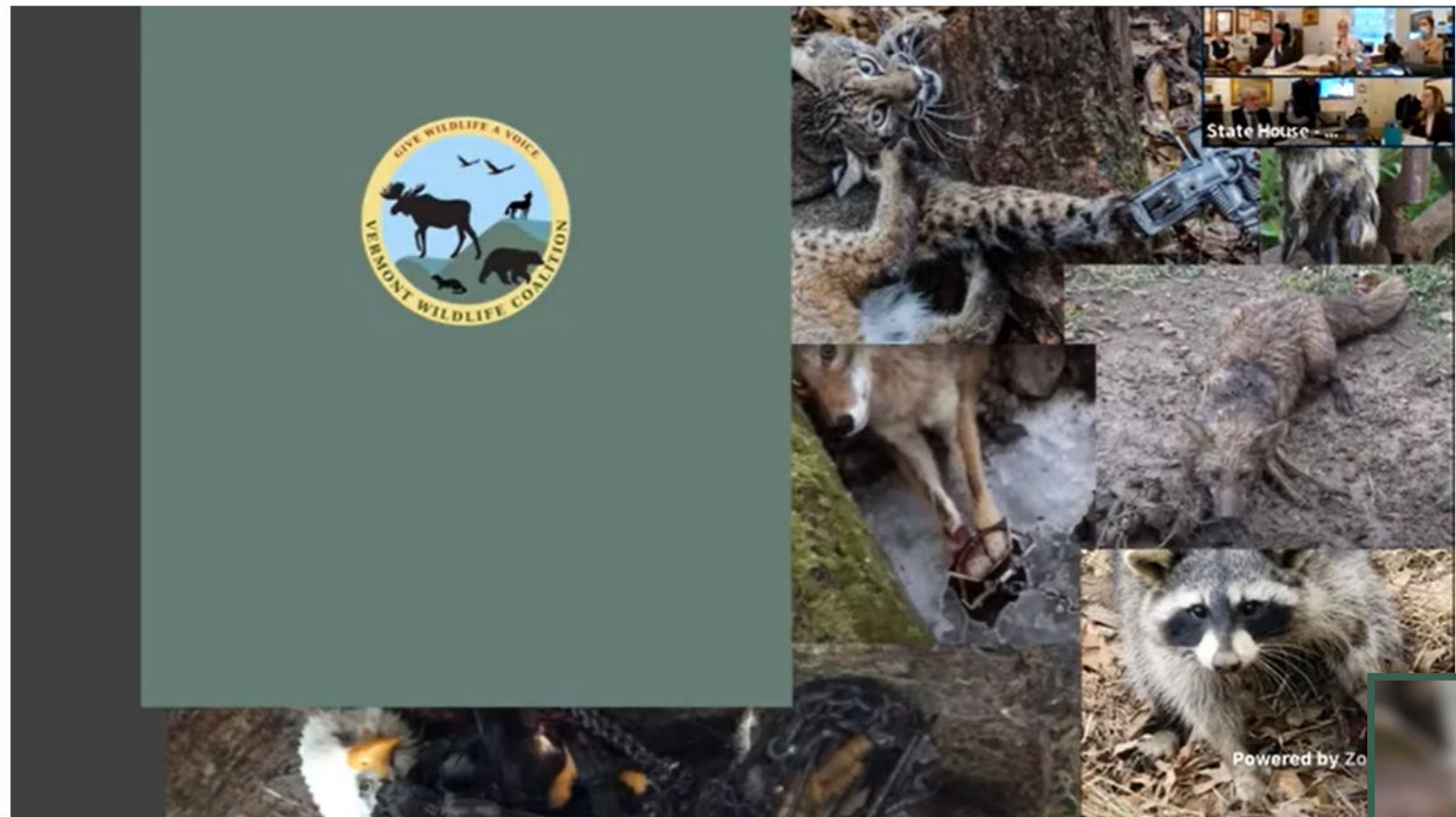


Fig 2. a clear image of a BMP trap

Sen. Natural Resources & Energy 03-23-2023 8:35AM



VT Senate Committee on Natural Res...  
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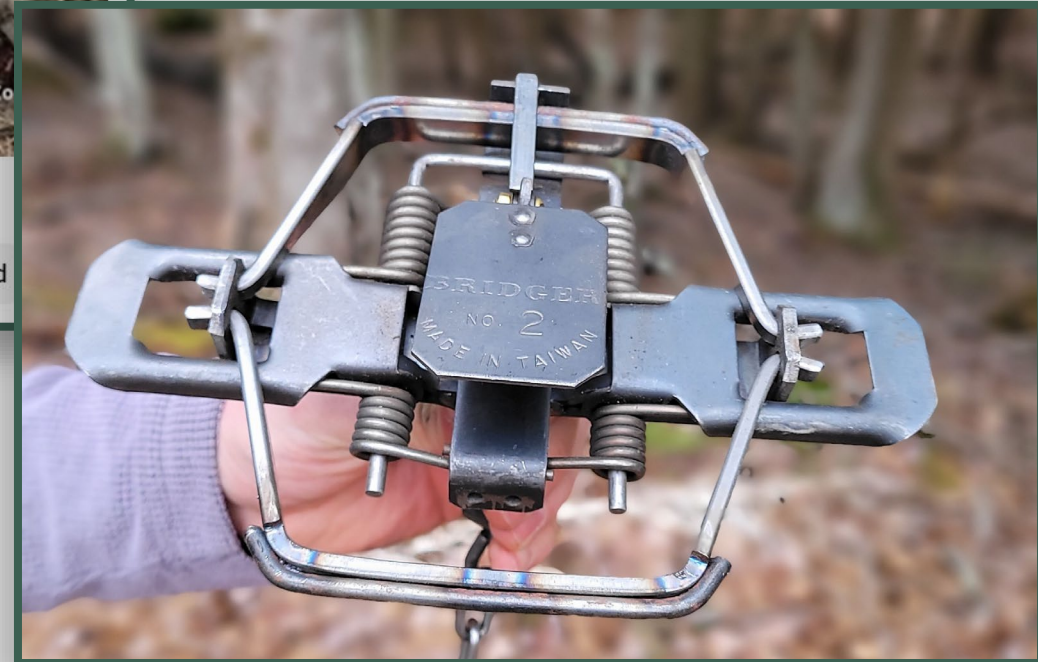


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Fig 1. unclear images of traps alleged to meet BMPs

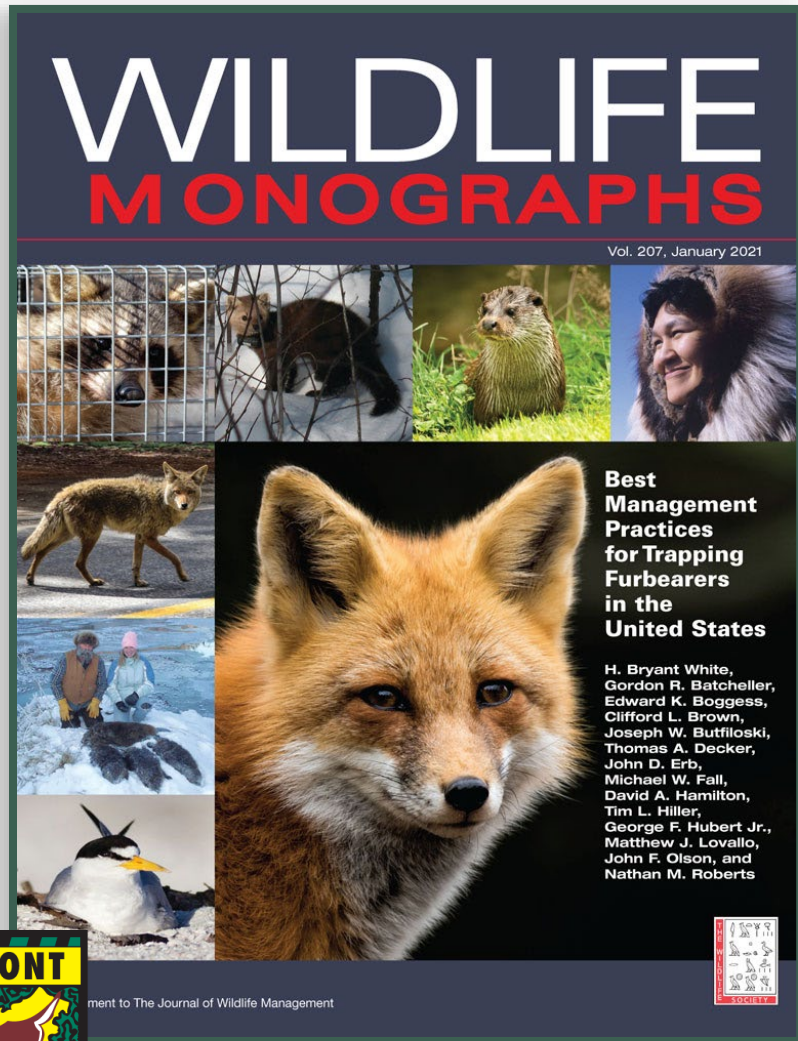


**False:** the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) best management practices (BMPs) will not improve the welfare of trapped animals.

**True:** the peer-reviewed BMP study quantified and compared injury levels across trap models using standardized protocols, and rigorously demonstrated improved animal welfare outcomes.

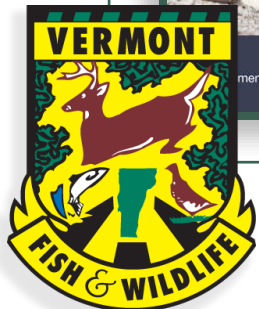






**False:** the AFWA best management practices (BMPs) study relied on untrustworthy field technicians.

**True:** the study was vetted and published in *Wildlife Monographs*, a credible peer-reviewed journal. This process considers all elements of data collection.



**Misleading:** department biologists disagree about the ways trapping is used for conservation in Vermont.

**Accurate:** department biologists have nuanced discussions on a project-by-project basis before deciding on any recommendations.





**Misleading:** it is a problem that there are no bag limits for trapped species during Vermont's regulated seasons.

**Accurate:** the level of trapper harvest in Vermont is compatible with healthy—often growing—furbearer populations; is not a threat to furbearer or non-target species populations; and is appropriate to data collection needs given the number of active trappers in the state.



**False:** the department's proposed trapping recommendations are not enforceable.

**True:** our game wardens helped craft these recommendations to ensure that they will be enforceable.





**Misleading:** meeting minutes from the Act 159 working group misrepresent some stakeholders' positions.

**Accurate:** all minutes are consistent with the meeting recordings, and staff worked with participants to clarify issues raised during the minute approval window. Both minutes and recordings are available on our website.



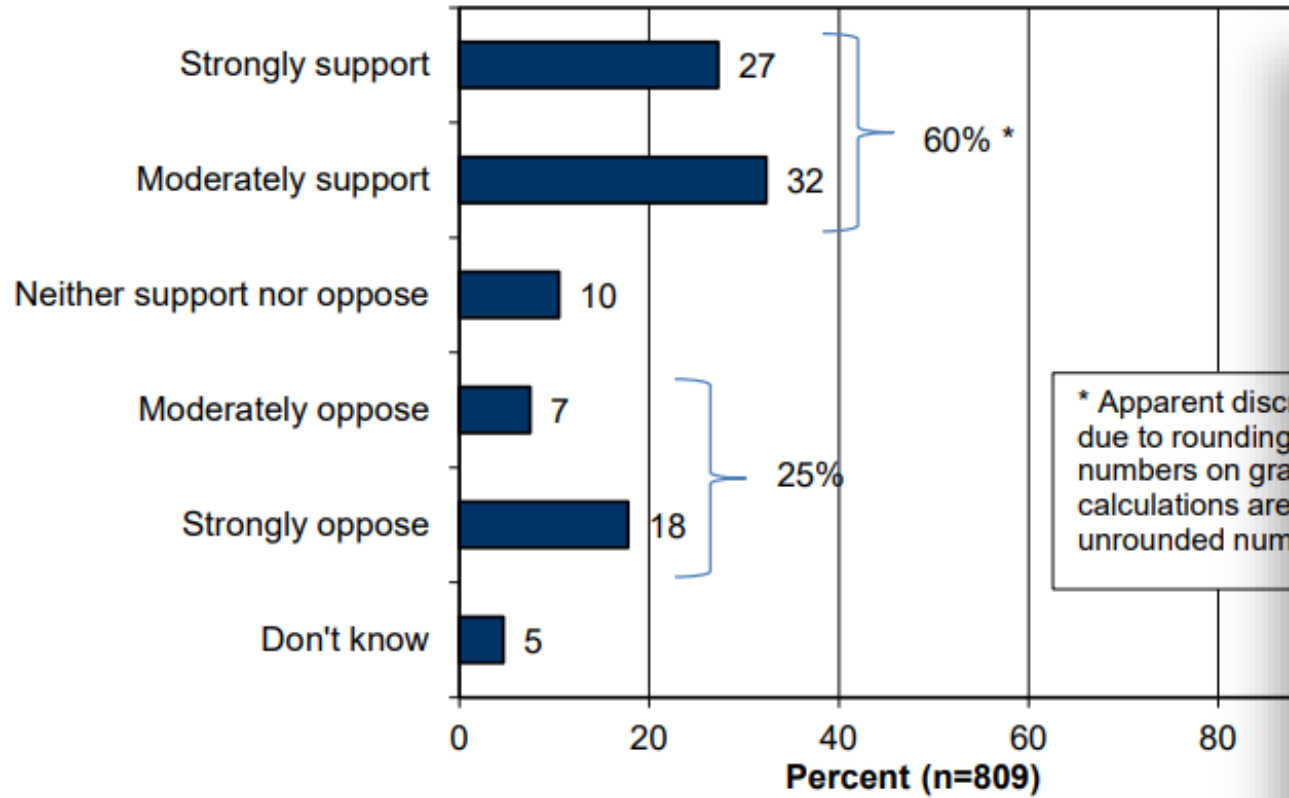
**Misleading:** the department's 2022 furbearer survey shows that Vermonters want to ban recreational trapping.

**Accurate:** 68% of Vermonters do not approve of recreation as a reason to trap, within the context that 60% approve of regulated trapping as a whole and 60% support the rights of others to trap regardless of personal opinion.

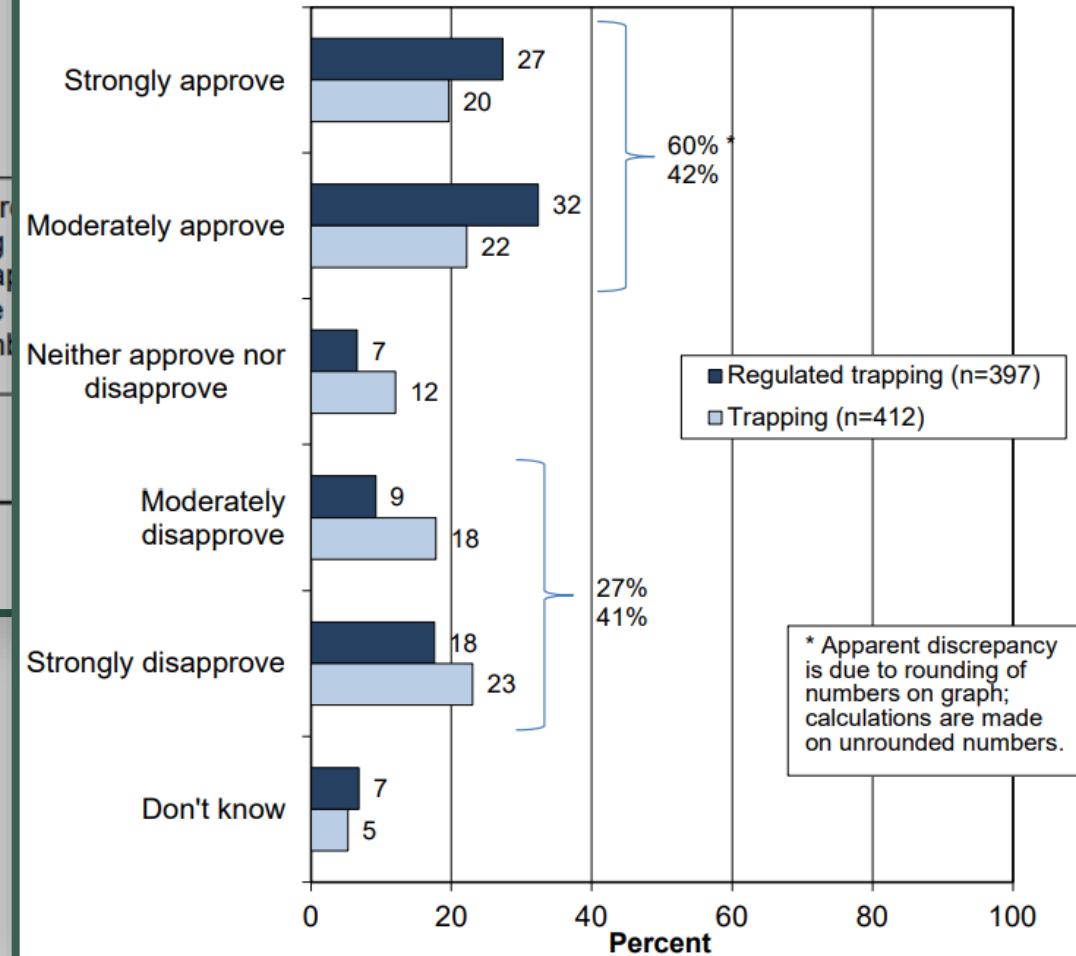




**Regardless of your personal opinion on trapping, do you support or oppose the right of others to participate in trapping in Vermont if they want to do so?**



**Do you approve or disapprove of [regulated trapping / trapping] in Vermont?**



**False:** the department is biased and making its position on trapping based on values, not science.

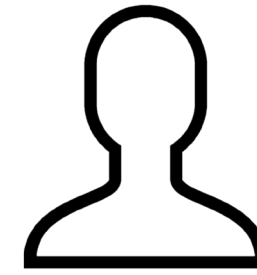
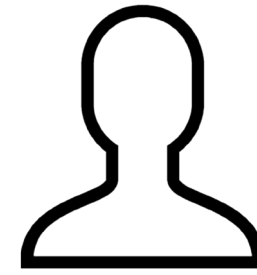
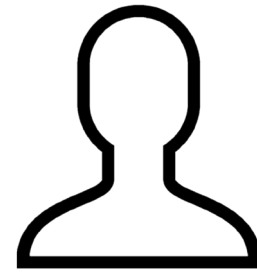
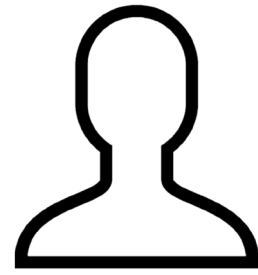
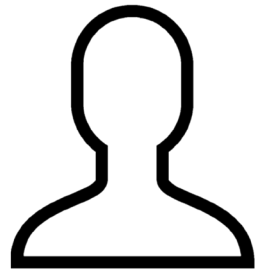
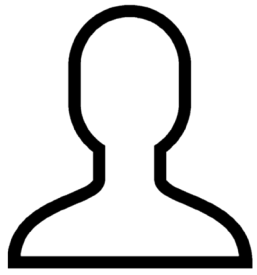
**True:** ecological data and values are involved in all conservation decisions, and department staff are required by our mission—and are highly qualified—to consider both.











### Wildlife Activists (3)

- HSUS (1)
- POW (1)
- VWC (1)

### Sporting Groups (3)

- FS (1)
- VTA (2)

## Stakeholder Participants



### Game Wardens (2)

## Expert Participants



AFWA Rep (1)

FW Board (2)



### Legislators (2)

