

Dear Senators,

I am writing to you today to express my concerns with S.258. I was appointed by Governor Douglas to serve on the Fish and Wildlife Board in the early 2000's. If you are familiar with the timeline, this was the transition to a 14 member Board, one from each (geographic..) county in Vermont. The Legislature made this change in an effort to ensure that all regions/counties in Vermont were fairly represented. Prior to that, there was 1 member representing 2 counties. Vermont people, geographies, habitat, interests, and traditions are so diverse, that people felt they were not being well represented by the 1 board member for 2 counties. Essex County didn't always have the same perspective as Orleans, same with Chittenden and the more rural Addison, etc... The Legislature heard this and agreed with expanding the Board to how it is composed today.

I can speak first-hand to how the Board functions and makes decisions. Let me address some of the false claims that are being spread;

The Board is not diverse enough – By what standard? State region, sex, background? There are many forms of diversity and one is certainly perspective and experiences. At that time, I had been roaming Vermonts woods and waters for 35+ years and thought that I knew a lot. The different backgrounds and geographic locations of the other 13 Board Members was eye opening to me. The learning and debating was intense. Someone living along the shores of Lake Champlain sees a much different outdoor life than someone hiking the ridges of Caledonia County.

The Board is uneducated – By who's standard? The form of education most valuable in a Board Member is real life spent in the outdoors, not something learned in a book. I can't speak to today, but in my Board orientation I was handed a stack of books; the classics of fair chase, ethics, and conservation; North American Wildlife Conservation, Sand County Almanac, Rifle In Hand, etc. etc.. It was a lot of material, and we were expected to read it, understand it, refer to it, and discuss it. The F&W Dept has plenty of highly educated and talented scientists, biologists, law enforcement, and policy makers. They are always available to answer questions, quick to correct inaccuracies, and 99.9% of the time are the originators of the issues/topics and language in front of the Board.

The Board needs non-consumptive users – Actually just the opposite. The Board needs to be made up of people who understand the nuances of hunting, fishing, and trapping and the various methods used throughout the different regions of the State, as it is exactly these users that are going to be impacted by the very rules and regulations that the Board passes! I saw many examples of language crafted by Dept biologists, lawyers, and law enforcement that when run through the checks and balances of a review by Board Members who spend 50-100 days a year hunting, fishing, and trapping, revealed that the language as written would never deliver the intended outcome. All inputs, experiences, and scenarios were considered, and the re-crafted product was a much more effective regulation.

The Board is self-serving – I laughed at this at first, and then when realizing that some people were believing the lies being spread I became upset. In my short time on the Board, do have any idea how many regulations we passed for the greater good, but that reduced opportunity or convenience for

hunters, trappers, and anglers? Do you imagine that our email was filled with love letters? Far from it. I am personally very insulted by the suggestion that the Board is or ever has been self-serving.

Vermont has an effective and functional system for regulating Fish and Wildlife. It is a model used all over the country. I urge you to leave it alone. What would Government look like if every time somebody with power disagreed with a decision made by one of our many State Boards, they could simply disband the Board and manipulate the newly appointed members such that they agreed with their own views?

Those of us that have been here for generations are generally a pretty quiet bunch. We mind our own business and were taught "to each his own" but sadly we don't get the same respect in return anymore. We're waking up, slowly but surely.

Thanks for your consideration,

Bruce Therrien
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