

## Testimony on S.258

### Submitted to the Senate Natural Resources Committee

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#### Diminishment of Democracy

A fundamental argument given by the committee members is when moving from citizen decision makers to bureaucratic decision makers it improves the democratic process and leave the decision in the hands of bureaucrats. I believe this is a false assumption.

While it is true that the governor currently appoints all of the F/W board members, once they are appointed, they are independent and **not** subject to pressure by a governor. And next time around a different political party may occupy the governorship and they appoint their own choices - and so on year after year. So, the board has a chance of remaining politically neutral with respect to political influence over time - in addition to it already being independent.

No so with the Dept of F/W. It is part of the administration so can have direct political pressure put on it by any sitting governor. It has been made clear to the many lakes and ponds associations around the state that our current governor has a heavy hand on the wheel with regard to legalizing waters for wake boats. But that power/influence flows indirectly from the governor's office downward and with unofficial "runners/fixers; that via innuendo threaten lake associations relative state funding for programs like invasive weeds control - so they fall in line. All with plausible deniability.

The issue is how close these wake boats can run to shore and how deep the water is under them The ANR had a tentative agreement with the associations of proposing 1000 ft from shore but when that proposal went up the chain of command to the governor's administration, it came back at 500 ft. Under pressure, lake associations muted their demands and now support 500 ft.

Wakes created from those boats are currently at a max. of about 4 ft. Newer larger more expensive boats will create 5 ft. wakes.

At 500 ft from the boats line of travel the waves from a 4 ft wake will enter the official 200-ft-from shore shoreline safety or no-wake zone - at 2 ft high. For 5 ft wakes the waves will enter that zone at 2.5 ft. To propose that is totally and blatantly irresponsible and makes a complete mockery of the shoreline safety zone / no wake zone of 200 ft.

The former Water Resources Board, an analog of the current F/W board was independent of the governor. Both the former WRB and the current F/W board boards brought government closer to citizens - the essence of democracy. Move those functions under the administration's

umbrella and exposure to political influence is what you get. This bill's sponsors now propose to do the same thing as was done to the WRB.

So democracy suffers - the last thing we need these days.

Why the political influence over "Use of Public Waters" proposal for wake boats?

Strong circumstantial evidence, including written, indicates Joe's Pond has five wake boats on it one of them belonging to the Secretary of Commerce's - a friend of the governor and campaign fundraiser for him. The cutoff of 500 ft assures those boats can continue operating on Joe's Pond. There's more evidence to support it requires confidentiality necessary to protect some individuals.

If anyone has any contradictory information to this, I would like to hear it.

### **Contradiction within Animal Rights Groups (ARGs) testimony.**

Certainly, it has not escaped the committee member's' attention that for the ARGs to claim that removing coyotes from the population increases its size since it encouraged reproduction, increasing their numbers, then in the same few minutes of testimony claim that trapping is making worse the mass extinction of animals. Under any circumstances such confusion would laughable, but they are especially serious in the context of what the hearing was all about.

Furthermore, hunting and trapping are regulated activities which has the advantage of monitoring populations solely through trappers' catches and observations. Also, that service come at no cost. There are almost no tools to do so otherwise for furbearers.

Monitoring deer populations by solely doing field measurements in deer wintering yards in insufficient by itself. The count of numbers of deer harvested each year contributes to that monitoring giving more accurate indicators of the size and health of the deer herd both statewide and by region of the state.

### **Department of Fish and Wildlife and Use of Science**

I am both a retired high school physics teacher and a retired IBM engineer/scientist. I earned three technical, full, college degrees including a masters at major universities. When I joined IBM I soon learned that science did not provide answers simply through data. Usually there was so little data to make decision on one had to make best guesses. It took clear judgement.

That is the way of all science – to gradually improve based on what you already know. You do not NOT make decisions by not having all the data you feel well proves a point. Thus, it was said that if a scientist/engineer was making more than 50% of his/her decisions correctly based on available data they were moving forward.

Thus, the claim of the ARGs that the department of F/W does not use science is either deliberately spurious or they are simply ignorant of what science is and how it operates.

While at the first hearing on S.258, several senators said, in effect, the bills opponents cannot read senator's minds. Of course, they cannot. However, when the opponents' criticism was aimed at the ARGs, for individual senators to take umbrage and claim nobody can read their mind(s), the very fact of responding revealed all that needed to be revealed. If you think you harbor no bias in this matter, I would strongly recommend you look more deeply into yourself and be honest with yourself. Furthermore, your record of introducing anti-trapping, anti-hunting bills is sufficient for this bill's opponents to understand all they need to.

Conclusions: This bill would result in just the opposite of what it is claimed to accomplish with respect to good governance. It diminishes the democratic process and is apparently designed to first end trapping.

Then if that get accomplished, the proponents will set their sights on hunting – which is already one of the components of this bill. Although one of the three ARGs testifying has some credibility in stating they were not opposed to hunting, the other three stated life-long goals are to do exactly that.

Check out third video of the husband of one of those ARGs testifying. This guy encourages property owners to post their property and actually takes a group out to do the posting for them. Of course, that is not anti-hunting, is it? That is just altruism at work.

Natural Cultural Change or Attempts to Force Cultural Change.

The president of POW stated that cultural change is natural and the public does not want traditional trapping and hunting practices to continue. This a pretty presumptive statement. What is really happening is a well-orchestrated campaign for a few to influence the public against these traditions. There is nothing natural about this.

### **Addendum – my advocacy profile:**

In my youth in the early 1950s, I started a local chapter of the Audubon Society, and belonged to Defenders of Wildlife.

After coming to Vermont in 1980,

I brought a Boston sub-group of the Sierra Club into full chapterhood as the Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club in the early -1990s, chairing it for six years.

Later, I was a founding member of Vermont Conservation Voters.

I created the Vermont Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club then disbanded it two yrs. later recognizing it had too much competition from existing Vermont organizations such as the Sierra Club and Canoe Club.

I served two terms on Governor Howard Dean's Council of Environmental Advisors.

I was instrumental in organizing for and lobbying various sportsmen's and environmental organizations creating the Vermont Rivers Alliance that gave increased protection for Vermont's rivers from graveling (garnering a U.S. Presidential award to VNRC as part of that process) and led to the establishment of the Outstanding Resource Waters designation process.

**I have received:**

certificates of achievement awards from Governor Madeleine Kunin and the Agency of Natural Resources,

letters of appreciation from the Vt. Dept of Parks and Recreation, the Sierra Club, and Friends of the Earth,

letters of commendation from US. Senators Bob Stafford and George Mitchell and from the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The latest recognition was a lifetime achievement award from the South Burlington Land Trust for fighting advocating for issues important to their mission.

(This list recognizes my accomplishments but does not list what they are. That would take more pages to detail.)

*Currently, I am very active in protecting wildlife habitat here in South Burlington as both recent past chair of the South Burlington Natural Resource and Conservation Committee and recent co-founder of VOTE which as part of its mission is trying to protect wildlife habitat via land use regulations. .All of these advocacy efforts by me along with many like-minded colleagues were primarily geared to protection of wildlife of one sort or another.*