

Chairman Bray and members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing to provide support for and some comment on the current version of H.552, "An act relating to threatened and endangered species." The Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club is supportive of this act and is pleased that the Senate Natural Resources Committee is giving serious review and consideration to this act. Protection of endangered and threatened species and their habitat is critical to preserving Vermont's natural resources for future generations.

We have a few comments related to the current version.

1) Section 5403 (f) and (g) of the current version of H.552 has the term "knowingly" as the criteria for when a criminal action can be brought and for when a person may be required to pay restitution for violations against protected and endangered species. However, the term "knowingly" is not defined in the document. Using the term "knowingly" without definition might create a very high standard of proof in order to bring a criminal action and require restitution. We would suggest that the term "knowingly" be defined or that the term be removed altogether.

2) In the current version of H.552, The penalties for violations against endangered or threatened species are the same penalties as those applied for violations against normal fish and game protections. We would suggest that violations against protected or endangered species would require higher fines than violations against normal fish and game species.

Thank you again for the your time and consideration of this important bill and for considering our suggestions. Please let me know if you have any questions about this email.

Sincerely,
Mark Nelson
Chair, Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club
Explore, enjoy and protect the planet