

February 17, 2017

Testimony of Walter Medwid, Derby, Vermont, Orleans County (wmedwid@gmail.com)

Re: H. 60

My name is Walter Medwid and I live in the Northeast Kingdom. I have degrees in biology and have been involved in conservation and conservation education in my professional career. For some 13 years I worked on wolf issues and a highlight of my career was being in Hinton, Alberta Canada supporting the historic translocation of wolves to Idaho and Yellowstone National Park in 1995-an effort that has restored the natural landscape and forever changed the human experience in our nation's first national park. I have studied wolves in Minnesota, Yellowstone, Canada's Northwest Territories, New Mexico, Arizona, and most spectacularly on Ellesmere Island, Canada's most northerly island, where I had up close and personal experiences with arctic wolves largely unafraid of humans in this extremely remote area.

I want to thank the chairman and the committee for introducing H.60. The proposed study will build a foundation of information that will allow for an informed debate of coyote management helping to put emotion, prejudices and misinformation on the sidelines. However there are several changes that are critical I believe to make the report credible to all parties.

These changes include:

1. Identifying the methodology used in the department's determining coyote population
2. A clear statement by the department about what long term impact if any coyotes have had on Vermont's deer , turkey or other game populations
3. A clear statement on the ecological benefits from coyotes and predators in general
4. DFW data on coyote kills by hunters over the past decade by method
5. DFW data on the impact of year round hunting pressure on coyote population dynamics
6. Clarification on the nexus with the NA Wildlife Management Model-specifically wanton waste and privatization of a public resource-with current public policy on coyote mgmt.
7. Listing the options for addressing human-coyote conflicts

The report requests a review of other states management programs. I think this will only demonstrate that the iron triangle (as it is called in the literature) of DFW enmeshed with Fish and Wildlife Board or Commissions, and the hunter/trapper lobby have inordinate power over public resources to the exclusion of other voices. And as much as H. 60 is most desirable legislation, it does provide clear evidence that the two arms of VT governance-the DFW and the FWB-are not responding to concerns brought by the public to those bodies-bodies that are nominally charged to do just that. The legislature shouldn't be in the position of doing the jobs of two other governance bodies that seem to hold a deaf ear to those publics that don't fit the mold. As a corollary to this bill, I respectfully ask the committee to

Page 2.

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Re: H. 60 (cont.)

make a formal request to the governor to establish an independent panel to examine why the FWB and the DFW are unresponsive to public concerns with regard to game animal management. Such a request would be consistent with the recent blue ribbon panel of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies whose March 2016 report's second recommendation calls for a working group to "examine the impact of societal changes on the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation and make recommendations on how programs and agencies can transform to engage and serve broader constituencies."

And finally, it may be useful to put our debate on coyotes in some perspective. I lived for over a dozen years in Minnesota and these stats may prove of interest:

1. Minnesota has some 73,000 farms of all types
2. The 2015 deer harvest was 160,000 animals
3. Minnesota has the highest population of wolves in the contiguous US....some 3,000 animals.
4. Minnesotans highly value all those resources and have worked to find relative peace in balancing diverse viewpoints.
5. Vermonters can do the same.

WMM 2.17.17