



In Support of H. 582

Vermont Wildlife Coalition

“What worked well for wildlife agencies in the first half of the 20th century won’t necessarily work well today. Conditions change.

From a human-centric perspective, my answer is that we must protect the full range of benefits wild animals provide to people, including ecological benefits, sustainable use, and aesthetic value. I and many others would add that animals have intrinsic value that alone warrants our compassion and care. Put another way, the first part of...(an agency’s) mission, to preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems, must be given higher priority in response to our current ecological and environmental conditions.”

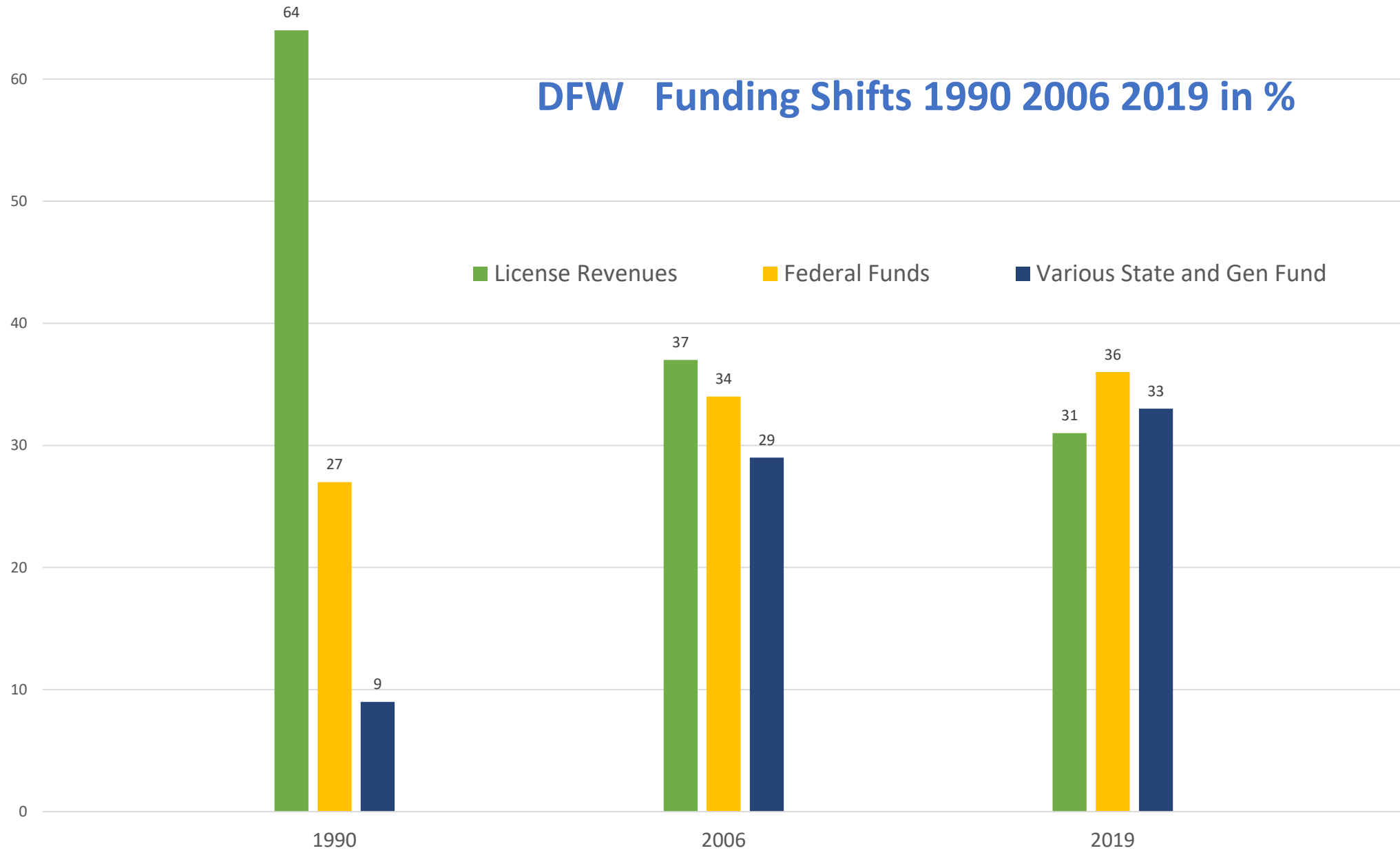
Dr. Fred Koontz, Conservation Biologist

H. 582 is a critically important step in establishing policy that reflects contemporary social-ecological conditions-it will help guide our institutions into alignment with modern expectations for governance of public natural resources. We urge the Committee to pass H.582.

Vermont Fishing, Hunting, Trapping License Sales Trends 1985-2019

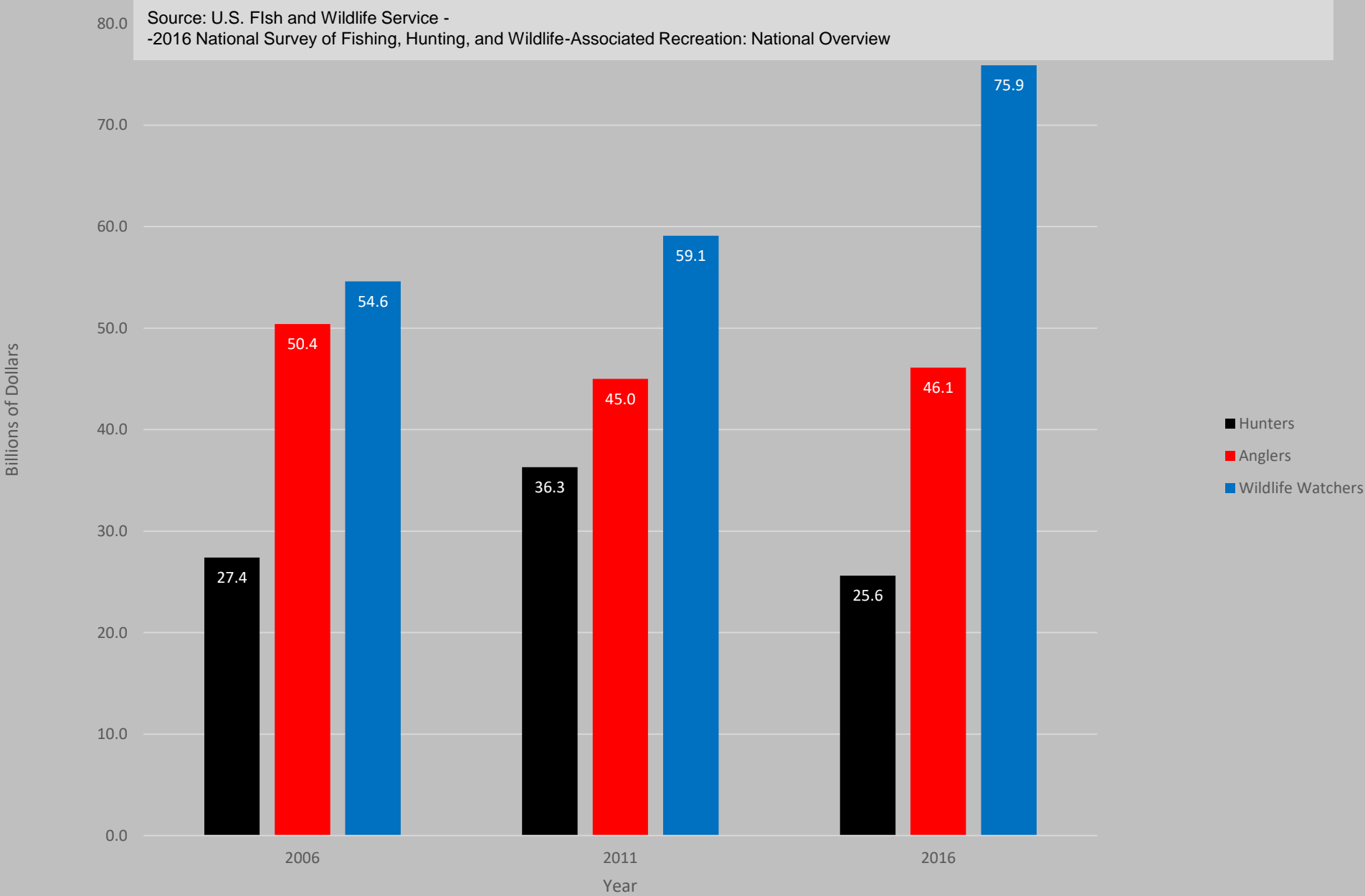
<u>Fishing</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Resident	54,747	41,442	-25%
Non-Res	19,053	14,556	-24%
 <u>Hunting</u>			
Resident	47,068	20,805	-56%
Non-Res	16,935	5,835	-66%
Combo Res	49,283	25,960	-47%
Combo Non	2,427	1,548	-36%
Youth Res	7,507 (1993)	3,744	-50%
 <u>Trapping</u>			
	1,483	738	-48%

DFW Funding Shifts 1990 2006 2019 in %



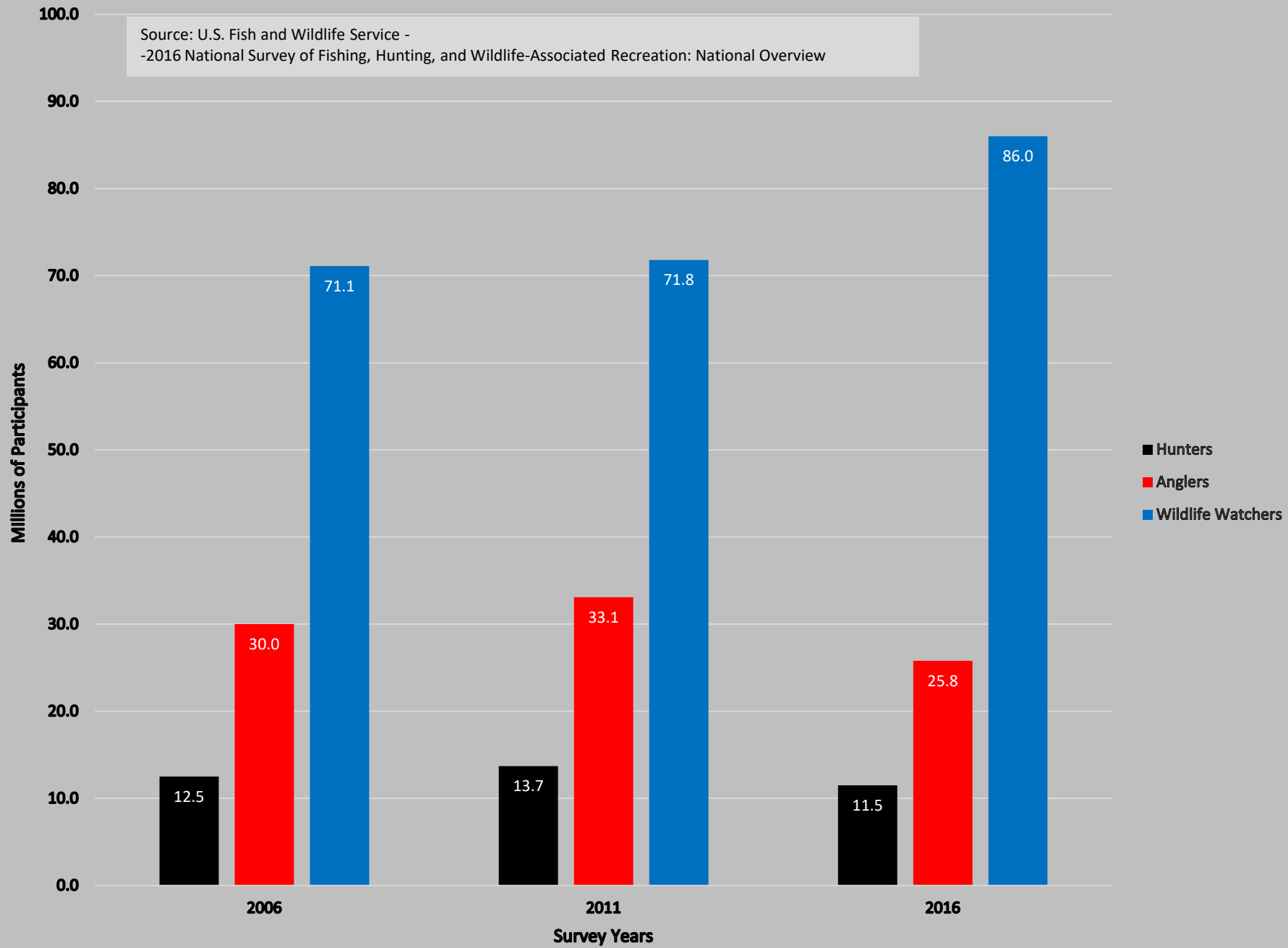
Public Expenditures

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -
-2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: National Overview



Number of Participants 2006-2016

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -
-2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: National Overview



DFW Staff Perspectives on Change from 2018 Survey

- 62% of employees surveyed feel DFW should focus more on adapting to change.
- 85% of employees recognize that the views of the public are changing with regard to wildlife management.

A Time of Unprecedented Environmental Threats

- 6th Mass extinction-population of wild animals halved since 1970
- One third of American wildlife species are at increased risk of extinction
- Our Wildlife Action Plan reports that 976 Vermont species qualify as species of greatest conservation need
- Moose, Bats, Monarchs, Reptiles and Amphibians, Honeybees-all in decline
- One third of wild birds in US and Canada have vanished since 1970
- Climate Change
- Habitat Loss and Fragmentation
- Invasive Species
- Disease
- Pollution

We are surrounded by voices calling for change.

H. 582 is no magic bullet however it is a critical step towards acknowledging we must change.

H. 582 offers an opportunity to realign of our out-of-alignment governance.

H. 582 offers a vision and a foundation that aligns wildlife governance with:

- Leadership in the wildlife profession calling for a focus on conservation systems.
- The Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and their Blue Ribbon Report calling for “transformation.”
- DFW staff’s call for more focus on/adapting to change-knowing the public’s views on management are changing.
- A culture that has evolved to understand and appreciate wildlife values and not just wildlife uses.
- A culture that recognizes that natural systems are under grave threat.

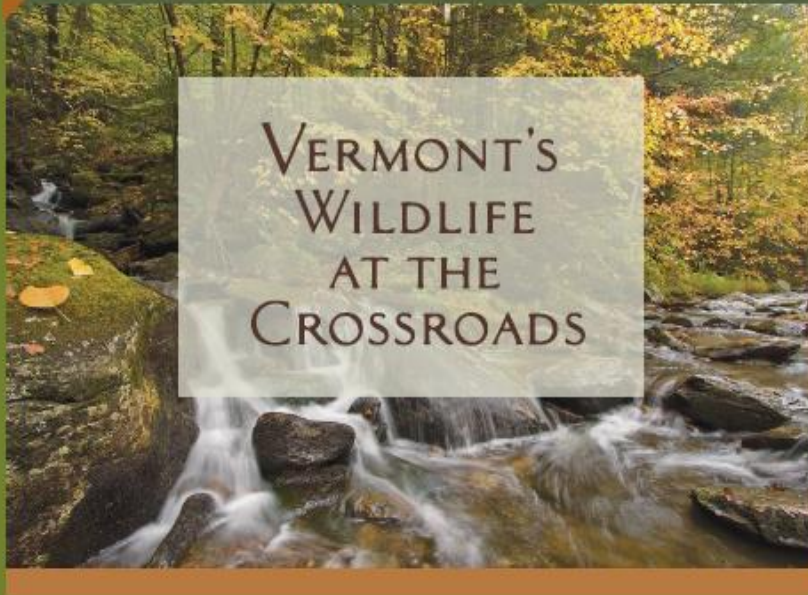
In light of the full circle of change facing us, is there any public or private institution, profit or not for profit organization, governmental or non-governmental agency that would not reexamine its core operations and direction, and begin a path to address that storm of change facing it? H.582 is a guide to change in a way that doesn’t throw a wrench into the gears of current operations. H. 582 helps ensure continuity of management approach as administrations change.

Vermont's Wildlife Policy in Law

There exists an absence of clear, contemporary and guiding policy in current statute. Existing policy is antiquated and inadequate.

H. 582 fills that very significant deficiency with policy language that is grounded in ecology, in science, in the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, in contemporary social-ecological conditions, incorporating multiple and diverse perspectives, and citizen input in order to serve all the citizenry. Does any of that contradict our values?

H. 582 clarifies the agency purpose for the public; H.582 provides a foundation at a time when we very badly need one.



VERMONT'S WILDLIFE AT THE CROSSROADS



Funding and the Future of Fish and Wildlife in the Green Mountain State

Traditional Services and New Roles

For decades, the responsibilities of state fish and wildlife agencies centered on law enforcement, management of game species, biological research, management of state lands designated for wildlife habitat and public education.

In these areas alone, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department provides a wide array of public services for which there is an ever-increasing demand. In education, for example: as part of a nationwide effort to "leave no child inside" and increase young people's interest in hunting, fishing and conservation, the Department offers Conservation Camps, Hunter Education, Project WILD, and Let's Go Fishing programs. It also offers Women in the Outdoors, Becoming an Outdoor Family and training workshops for teachers.

But the Department's charge is broader: "the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont." Over the years, its roles have become more numerous and more complex: helping local communities meet their development goals without harming sensitive habitat, conducting environmental assessments, protecting Vermont's streams (and the

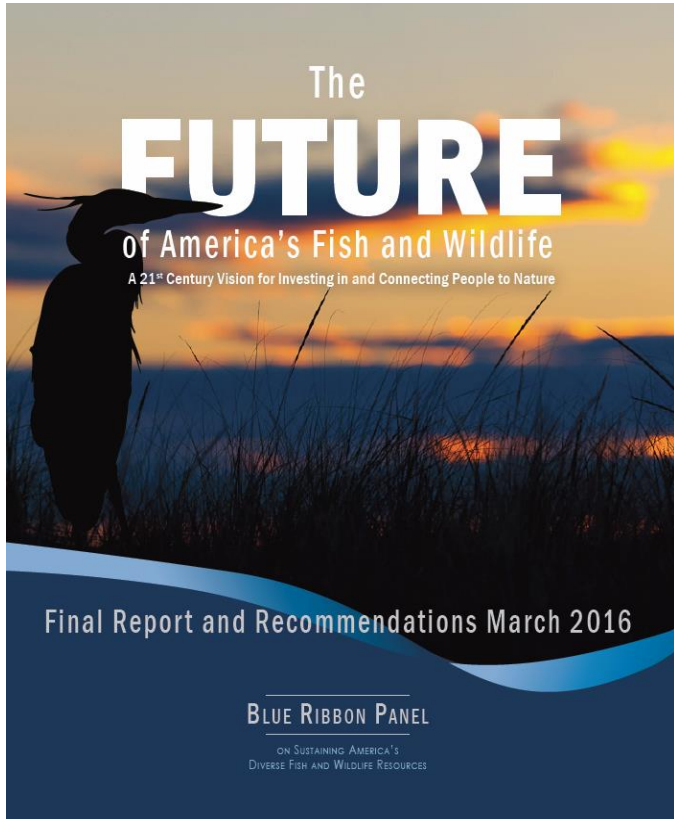
endangered species that live in them) from toxic chemicals, providing search-and-rescue services and more.

The traditional model of financing wildlife agencies with sporting revenues was developed long before the challenges of overdevelopment, habitat fragmentation and Act 250 hearings. Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson and Wallop-Breaux funds were never intended to address these issues. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department tackles these challenges for everyone's benefit and we all need to contribute to the effort.

"It's like on public highways, if everyone could use the roads but only the people who are driving red trucks paid for them. What is everyone else going to do if there are fewer red trucks on the road? The long-term business model sees us essentially closing up shop at some point in the future if we don't find a solution."

— Paul A. Peditto, Wildlife and Heritage Service Director, Maryland Department of Natural Resources





“Every citizen has a stake in and benefits from healthy fish and wildlife, but most have little contact with or understanding of the state agency responsible for their stewardship. To remain relevant, state fish and wildlife agencies will need to transform their structures, operations and cultures to meet the changing expectations of their customers. If state fish and wildlife agencies fail to adapt, their ability to manage fish and wildlife will be hindered and their public and political support compromised. “

From the final report of the Blue Ribbon Panel-Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies-2016

I will close with comments from Amanda Wuestefeld, Indiana's first female director of fish and wildlife-appointed just this month. "When I started in Fish & Wildlife ... we (division staff) all looked the same. We enjoyed the same things, we were all motivated in the same ways," Amanda Wuestefeld said.



"Fish and wildlife agencies as a whole are at a point in time where we have to change. We have to become a different beast than what we've been."



- H. 582 is a vital step to Vermont's wildlife governance becoming "a different beast."
- The Green Mountain State must be a leader in addressing change.
- The Vermont Wildlife Coalition urges you to pass this bill. Thank you

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