

March 7, 2019

ATTN: House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife

RE: H. 357

My name is Dylan Bruce and I am writing in support of H. 357 – a bill on wanton waste.

I am a 9th generation Vermonter, a hunter, and environmentalist. I lived in New York while pursuing a baccalaureate degree in sociology, and then in Colorado for a graduate degree in research and policy. I now own a house in Montpelier, though I am originally from Addison County: I grew up in the Green Mountain National Forest in Ripton, the farmlands of Shoreham, and the college town Middlebury.

Like many native Vermonters, I was enrolled in a hunter education course at a young age and received a .22 caliber rifle before my 9th birthday. Without a doubt, hunting is engrained in our State's culture. Yet, hunting licenses are in decline. As per the *Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Strategic Plan 2017-2021*:

State fish and wildlife agencies across the country are experiencing a decline in traditional constituents and in many cases a concurrent decline in license sales and funding. Historically, Vermont Fish & Wildlife has been funded almost exclusively from these core constituents even though the mission is much broader and the department's work benefits all Vermonters. **The department will need to maintain its relevancy with all Vermonters to ensure future funding and credibility in the eyes of all Vermonters.**¹

Through my studies and travels I have met folks from all backgrounds. The subject of food ethics has always been an interest of mine. More often than not, opponents of hunting feel that hunting is unethical. In many cases, they are not wrong. However, food ethics is the reason that I still hunt: I want know where my meat comes from, that the animal did not suffer a cruel death, and that nothing goes to waste.

I support the idea of wanton waste regulation because this is just good common sense. It would appear as if the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department agrees. Attached is a photocopy from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's *2018 Hunting & Trapping Guide*. This page encourages hunters to display ethical behavior:

For a hunter or trapper, there may be nothing more self-fulfilling than the successful harvest of a game animal that you have pursued. But before you post about your success on social media, stop and ask yourself a few simple questions. Am I displaying a positive, ethical image of hunting? Am I showing the respect I have for the animal I just harvested? **Social Media may be many people's only exposure to hunting, and thus may be their sole source for forming an impression of this activity. Most hunters are mindful and ethical, but a single negative post can be spread across Vermont and create a negative impression of hunting.**²

The bottom line is that Vermont will not sell more hunting licenses by loosening requirements or finding new animals to kill. Rather, we hunters must raise our collective standards to reinforce our community values. By legislating ethics most of us already practice, we will ease the concerns of would-be hunters.

In my experience, non-hunting adults with an interest in hunting, are hesitant because of negative stereotypes. Wanton waste regulation would ease these concerns. Vermont's wildlife is a public trust resource. We hunters exercise a privilege to harvest this resource. Dead animal collection requirements, disposal requirements, and minimum meat harvesting laws, will prove to the non-hunting community that acts by bad apples are just that.

Thank you for your time,

Dylan Bruce

¹ *Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Strategic Plan 2017-2021*: page 19. Accessed (3/7/2019)

https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/About%20Us/Budget%20and%20Planning/VFWD_Strategic_Plan_2017-2021.pdf

² Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. *Vermont Hunting & Trapping Guide 2018: Official Regulations Digest*: page 15.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Hunt, Post, Share, Like

Presenting a positive image of hunting in the social media era

For a hunter or trapper, there may be nothing more self-fulfilling than the successful harvest of a game animal that you have pursued. But before you post about your success on social media, stop and ask yourself a few simple questions. Am I displaying a positive, ethical image of hunting? Am I showing the respect I have for the animal I just harvested? Social media may be many people's only exposure to hunting, and thus may be their sole source for forming an impression of this activity. Most hunters are mindful and ethical, but a single negative post can be spread across Vermont and create a negative impression of hunting.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife suggests the following tips to accurately reflect a positive hunting experience in social media. These tips are equally important for trappers.

1. Display respect for the animal in its life and in its death. Ask yourself if your non-hunting friends would view the photo as respectful of this animal's life.
2. Make sure the animal looks its best. Place the tongue back in mouth and try to minimize blood in the photo to instead focus on the beauty of the animal. Try to take a photo of a successful hunt in the animal's natural habitat. Blue sky, forest, and mountains places hunting in the context of its natural surroundings
3. Don't just post 'grab and grin' photos after a successful hunt. Show all the aspects of the hunt to give people a more complete picture of what hunting means to you. Post photos of a silent snowy forest or quality time spent outdoors with friends and family.
4. Include posts from after the hunt too. A photo of you enjoying a plate of tasty venison with friends and family will help people make the connection that wild meat is a healthy, local, sustainable food source.
5. If you see friends posting unethical behavior, don't be afraid to speak up. Please forward any posts that include illegal activity to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife's Facebook page so our wardens can look into it.

If done properly, social media can be a great opportunity to show non-hunters why you are passionate about hunting and to inspire conversation and spark interest.



John Hunter

Just now

Connected with this beautiful buck early today. A big thanks to my neighbor Joe Smith for letting me hunt on his land.



Like Comment



Jane Hunter

20 mins

A great day duck hunting with friends today! Beautiful weather, lots of wildlife, and some delicious meal for the freezer this winter.



Like Comment