

S. 321

- Oppose Sec 1 where it expands F&W Commissioner's authority

Hounding Bears (Sec 17-Sec 18)

- Control of Dogs
 - No one has control of any dog when that dog is visually out of sight. It is irresponsible and unsafe to purposefully release a bunch of dogs to target, chase and harass wildlife completely unsupervised.
 - A GPS collar is not a control mechanism.
- Treatment of Dogs
 - Dogs used for hounding are 'tools' and a means to an end. They are often killed when no longer useful. They live outside 24/7 in cages and kennels. They are exposed to severe injuries by attacking wildlife, including deep wounds, disembowelment, and death, and they receive no medical care or attention. Hound hunting is a form of dog-fighting. There is no sophistication in the training of dogs used for hounding. The hounder, whose dogs attacked the couple and their large breed puppy, 40 minutes after the attack, walked up to one of his dogs and punched the dog in the face. This is the training mentality.
- F&W and hounding enthusiasts lament that if hounding dogs have to be within visual sight, then hounding will be banned outright. It should be. In medieval times and currently in Britain where dogs are used to chase and tear apart foxes, hound hunters keep up with the dogs on horseback. They stay within a quick distance or visual sight of the dogs. They are not miles away, nor do they sit in their trucks.
- The argument that hounding bears is necessary to keep them frightened of people and away from urban neighborhoods is a fallacy. If bears are in urban or suburban areas then releasing a pack of unsupervised dogs to chase them is completely inappropriate and a safety risk to the public. If bears are in the woods, where they belong, then there is no need to chase or harass them with dogs.
 - By sending dogs out to chase bears, bears are chased out of woods, end up in unknown territories, or on other people's properties, and public roadways. The hounders expect their dogs to make the decisions for them. Hounding has absolutely nothing to do with hazing bears. They are two different things.

- Public Safety Hazard – Hound hunting and using packs of dogs unsupervised to chase and kill wildlife is a serious safety risk to the public – children, adults, farm animals and pets. And in VT there is no legal liability or culpability if there are serious injuries to others. This is inexcusable.
- Cruelty to Animals – The cruelty to the animals who are chased and attacked by hunting dogs is extreme and completely unnecessary. There is no conservation ethic or rationale for it whatsoever. Anybody who has been chased or attacked by dogs, or anyone, for that matter, knows how scary it can be.

F&W Board – Governance (Sec 14-Sec 15)

- There are no consequences or liability for hounders or trappers. Trappers can take all species, put people at risk, hurt and injure pets, and trap and kill protected species because there is no oversight. They don't have to report – but, the general public is not allowed to kill a protected or endangered species.
- There are complete double standards that non-hunters have to live with – all the time. For instance, if you find or see an injured or hurt animal – fox, raccoon, skunk (unless they are neonates) you are not allowed to help that animal, nor are rehabbers. Even if that animal can easily be aided or treated (For instance, mange is treatable). It does not matter if you are an expert in wildlife, a veterinarian, a rehabber, or have a medical background. It does not matter if, additionally, you are vaccinated against rabies. The impression that people have or that F&W promotes is that these animals are 'rabies vectors.' But, you can asphyxiate and drown them (I am thinking specifically of raccoons) -- all of which put you at severe risk of being bitten. You can trap and skin them, coming in direct contact with their bodily fluids, if you have a hunting or trapping license from Fish and Game. No rabies vaccinations necessary or education required.
 - Non-hunters, if they want to help many species of wildlife, are too often instructed to call the game warden to shoot the animal in the head, again, even if that animal can be helped. You are not able to help or rehab fawns. They will be immediately killed. But there are no consequences if you are a hunter and made those fawns orphans – this is a point of contention for me. The flagrant double standards that the Fish and Wildlife Board expects the 'public' to adhere to – but not themselves or hunters and trappers. Educational background, animal handling experience, and scientific knowledge are irrelevant.

- The F&W commissioner regularly compares VT with NH. Why not Massachusetts?
 - In MA, it is illegal to use dogs to hunt bear and bobcats. But dogs can be used to hunt other animals and waterfowl.
 - All traps except cage or box traps and common mouse or rat traps are illegal for taking fur-bearing mammals, including beaver. Traps designed to capture and hold a furbearing mammal by gripping the animal's body or body parts including steel jaw leghold traps, padded leghold traps, and snares are banned.
 - Discharge of any firearm or release of any arrow upon or within 500 feet of any dwelling or building in use, except as authorized by the owner or occupant is prohibited.
- Vermont animals and wildlife are everybody's and therefore what the VT F&W Board decides effects everyone.
- Vt Fish and Wildlife biologists, ecologists and conservationists should be deciding hunting laws, bag limits, length of seasons and so on – not the hunters and trappers themselves.
- The F&W Board should in no way be able to override the Fish and Wildlife Department's biologists' recommendations.

Native American comparison (From Feb 21 Friday's discourse)

- It is not the "Native American" way to sit in pick up trucks while dogs on radio collars run and chase wildlife, then to drive as far as you can to where those dogs are to see what they have targeted or are attacking, sometimes an hour or more later.
- It is not "Native American" to have killing contests – this is what white Europeans did to the bison and buffalo and native Americans were horrified (This horror has been documented and written about by Native Americans themselves).
- It is not the "Native American" way to place leghold and body-gripping traps near public trails frequented by people, children, dogs and other animals. These are traps that arbitrarily kill anything, putting people at risk, as well as endangered and protected species.
- It is not "Native American" to kill animals for recreation or sport.

- Hounding is not a Native American activity at all, from any tribe. It's simply animal cruelty and a modified form of dog and animal fighting for recreation. There is no conservation aspect or rationale to it whatsoever.
- It's a pretty basic and sane rule for public safety that dogs should not be released to chase and kill wildlife unless they are under direct 'control' or supervision. Minimally, this means hunters should be within visual sight of their dogs. Pet dogs do not apply here as they are not being purposefully released to target, kill, and attack wildlife, nor are they being purposefully released in groups to chase wildlife unsupervised.

Killing of Swine (Sec 10-Sec 12)

- Calling domestic escaped 'swine' or pigs *feral* – is deceiving and factually incorrect. It's far more accurate and appropriate to use the word roaming, words like wandering or lost, or to keep "escaped." Language is important.
- You cannot tell if any animal is 'feral' nor what 'species' or 'breed' they are by physical appearances, and who is to determine these 'nuances' in appearances?
- (How is this proven?) Is there any research, statistics, or facts on any of this?
The 'removal' of swine shall be deemed reasonable where the Dept has determined the pig has damaged or is damaging natural resources, including wetlands, vernal pools, wildlife and its habitat, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, or rare, threatened, or endangered species. (How is this determined? This is such an all-encompassing broad sentence.)