

No. 159. An act relating to best management practices for trapping.

(S.201)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE; BEST MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES FOR TRAPPING

(a) On or before January 15, 2023, the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife shall submit to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife, and the Fish and Wildlife Board recommended best management practices (BMPs) for trapping that propose criteria and equipment designed to modernize trapping and improve the welfare of animals subject to trapping programs. The BMPs shall be based on investigation and research conducted by scientists and experts at the Department of Fish and Wildlife and shall use the “Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States” issued by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies as the minimum standards for BMP development. The BMPs shall include recommended:

(1) trapping devices and components of trapping devices that are more humane than currently authorized devices and are designed to minimize injury to a captured animal;

(2) criteria for adjusting or maintaining trapping devices so that they operate correctly and humanely;

(3) trapping techniques, including the appropriate size and type of a trap for target animals, use of lures or other attractants, trap safety, and methods to avoid nontarget animals;

(4) requirements for the location of traps, including the placing of traps for purposes other than nuisance trapping at a safe distance, from public trails, class 4 roads, playgrounds, parks, and other public locations where persons may reasonably be expected to recreate;

(5) criteria for when and how live, captured animals should be released or dispatched; and

(6) revisions to trapper education materials and instructions that incorporate the recommendations or requirements set forth in subdivisions (1)–(5) of this subsection.

(b) The report required under subsection (a) of this section shall include a recommendation from the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife for funding the replacement of currently authorized trapping devices with trapping devices that are compliant with the recommended BMPs. The Commissioner’s recommendation shall include alternatives financed with public funding, private funding, or some combination of public and private funding.

(c) In developing the BMPs required under subsection (a) of this section, the Commissioner shall provide an opportunity for public review and comment and shall hold at least one public hearing regarding the proposed BMPs.

(d) As used in this section, “trapping” means to take or attempt to take furbearing animals with traps, including the dispatching of lawfully trapped furbearing animals.

Sec. 2. 10 V.S.A. § 4861 is amended to read:

§ 4861. FUR-BEARING ANIMALS; TAKING; POSSESSION

(a) Fur-bearing animals shall not be taken except in accordance with the provisions of this part; and of rules of the Board. The fur or skins of fur-bearing animals may be possessed at any time unless otherwise provided by this part, rules of the Board, or orders of the Commissioner.

(b) On or before January 1, 2024, the Fish and Wildlife Board shall revise the rules regulating the trapping of fur-bearing animals in the State. The revised rules shall be at least as stringent as best management practices for trapping recommended by the Department of Fish and Wildlife to the General Assembly.

(c) On or before January 1, 2024 and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife shall submit in writing to the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy information regarding the species and number of nontarget animals killed or injured by trapping in the preceding calendar year.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

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Date Governor signed bill: June 1, 2022