



January 24, 2022

Rep. Amy Sheldon, Chair, House Committee  
on Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT

RE: H.411

Dear Rep. Sheldon,

I am writing on behalf of the Vermont Wildlife Coalition, Inc. ("the VWC") to express the VWC's strong support for draft 1.1 (January 11, 2022) of H.411.

The VWC is a nonprofit organization that advocates for scientifically based, ethical practices regarding the management of wildlife in Vermont. The VWC supports most forms of hunting, as a means for scientifically managing wildlife populations, as a healthful source of food, and as a reflection of long-standing, honorable traditions in rural Vermont.

The VWC does not, however, support state-sanctioned, indiscriminate hunting of eastern coyotes for the purpose of simply killing them, regardless of whether such hunting is a "tradition" or placates those with misguided or outdated fears. The Fish & Wildlife Department (FWD) needs to consistently lead on this issue, not acquiesce to the lowest common denominator. The notion that eastern coyotes are a nuisance or invasive animal and therefore should be killed has no scientific basis and is patently unethical. FWD biologists readily acknowledge that eastern coyotes play an important ecological role in Vermont, are genetically part wolf, and have naturally migrated to Vermont due to the ecological niche vacated by the extirpation of native wolves over 100 years ago. It is scientifically established that eastern coyotes do not have a long-term detrimental impact on the state's deer population. It is also scientifically established that killing coyotes does not, over time, diminish their population. In sum, it is entirely appropriate that H.411/draft 1.1 includes coyotes as a "covered animal."

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The notion that a closed season for hunting coyotes should be established in lieu of including them as a “covered animal” in H.411 is flawed. First, in an ethical society, not condoning, even tacitly, the wanton waste of any animal should be a First Principle underpinning all hunting seasons. The fact that protection against wanton waste undermines the current 24/365 no-bag-limit open season on coyotes simply highlights the ethical shortcomings of such an open season. Second, the FWD vigorously opposed, and the FW Board unanimously denied, a petition for a five-month-long fall/winter season for coyotes in 2019, making the prospects of such a solution being implemented remote.

Given that a principal, legitimate purpose for hunting coyotes would be to take one for its pelt, the best means of obtaining a coyote’s pelt is to trap them as shooting a coyote or taking it with hounds is likely to damage or ruin its pelt. Since a trapping season already exists, a closed hunting season should be carefully considered lest it simply allows people to shoot coyotes just for the sake of killing them. This is an example of why a stricture against wanton waste should undergird any hunting, fishing, or trapping season. Unless it is done in the defense of a person or property (already allowed under separate statutes and explicitly authorized in the bill) wild fur-bearing animals should not be killed unless they are then used for food, for their fur, or as an object of taxidermy. To do otherwise is unethical and to the extent killing coyotes just for the sake of killing them is a “tradition” then that is a tradition that should be discarded.

Thank you for you and your committee’s work on H.411 and for considering the foregoing.

Respectfully,



Rob Mullen, Board Chair  
Vermont Wildlife Coalition

Cc: Members of the House Committee on  
Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife