

VTFSC Testimony on H.411
House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife
Wednesday February 2nd, 2022
Chris Bradley – President & Executive Director, Vermont Federation of Sportsman’s Clubs

My name is Chris Bradley, and I am the President and Executive Director of the Vermont Federation of Sportsman's Clubs (VTFSC). In the interests of full disclosure: I am a registered lobbyist for the VTFSC, I am at present a completely unpaid volunteer, and I have been an unpaid volunteer for my full tenure with the Federation.

You can think of the Federation as being an “umbrella” organization that represents approximately 55 member clubs across the State of Vermont; the majority of those are Fish & Game clubs; with membership totaling well over 12,000 sportspeople (not counting their families).

I’d like to start by thanking Chair Sheldon, as well as all the members of this committee, for exempting coyotes from this bill. The discussion on coyote, which is a non-game species that is not a native species to Vermont (I.E. “invasive species”), is an intense one as you well know. Setting that issue aside allows this bill to move forward in applying coverage to the large number of other species that will be on the final list of “covered wild animals”.

Similar to the discussion of coyote, we believe that the issue of taking crows should likewise be set aside. Certainly, there is a number of species not covered by what is listed as a “covered wild animal”, and any animal not otherwise listed as covered can apparently be dispatched and left behind without issue. For some of those unlisted species, that may be because of their relative size and over-abundance, or perhaps there is no group yet advocating for them. In many cases however: Unlisted species are likely to be generally considered as “pests”. For many, many people: Crow is a pest, and a wily one at that, if you hunt them. The Federation respectfully requests that crow be removed.

Unless something has changed, I believe I am speaking to the latest version, version 2.1 (alternate version), which is the 2022 version of 2.1, not the 2021 version of 2.1.

Page 1, line 12: As discussed above, we respectfully request that “crow” be removed.

Page 1 lines 15 thru 17: We respectfully request that the definition for “Unfit for consumption or use” be modified to include an additional criterion of “damaged”. Depending on how an animal is taken, and how that method affected the overall animal, the result could be something that is not “decayed, rotting, diseased or infected”.

Page 2, Line 5: We respectfully request an addition of “or their representative/agent” as another individual who can retrieve.

Page 2, line 7: In previous testimony, it was suggested that “bones” be added as a possible category of “use” that results from processing. This seems like a reasonable addition.

Page 2, line 13 thru 15: We respectfully suggest that either crows be added into this section, or a new section be created that exempts the taking of crow in a similar fashion to the new exemption for coyote. As we also represent the VTA, we understand that they have no problem with the reference to trapping coyote.

Page 3, line 3: We respectfully request that this be modified to include “trespass” in addition to signage that prohibits hunting.

Page 3 line 7: While redundancy is not necessarily bad, this may already be covered under the definition of “Unfit for consumption or use”.

Page 3 lines 11 thru 16: This is new wording from previous versions of the bill, with previous versions ending with a period after the word “animal” on line 12. Subsection (A) seems superfluous given the scope of the bill. In regard to subsection (B), this is a whole new facet being introduced into a highly controversial bill after years of discussion on this topic and as worded, it apparently tasks the Commissioner to define ALL best hunting practices across all “covered games species”, which is incredibly broad.

As noted above, there are a number of species that, as pests, can be dispatched without regard, and as of yet no group has expressed opposition to the majority of them. In the interests of getting this bill passed, moving forward with the least amount of objection, we believe it best to return to the wording where a period followed “animal” on line 12, striking the remainder.

Summary

I believe that that is the extent of our suggested changes, and I want to stress with the committee that the Federation fully supports the concept of wanton waste for all “covered wild animals”, with the noted current exemption of coyote (which is a fur-bearer but not a game species); and the additional exemption of crow, which is Federally regulated as a migratory non-game bird.

In 20/20 hindsight: The Federation could have vocally supported v2.1 or v3.1 from last year, with 2.1 being the version that came forth from the Working Group, and version 3.1 being improved by Commissioner Porter.

We are exceptionally close to having something that sportspeople can support, and while it most certainly will not appease all – the controversial animals require their own intense discussions – and setting them aside now allows a multitude of other species to gain wanton waste protection which almost all of us agree on.

Thank You

