

Hello Representatives,

The Vermont Trappers Association (VTA) had already been having discussions about the topic and working to develop something meaningful and functional with regard to an implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) as rule. When it was clear that the legislature had an interest in seeing this work done as well, the decision was made to move forward and start the process by submitting a petition.

As stated yesterday, we will be the first state to undertake this, and that was cause for concern for some, and reasonably so. The legislature, rather than being overly prescriptive, should trust those with an intimate knowledge of the activity to work through the possibilities and come up with the most meaningful, practicable, functional approach to such implementation of BMPs. The proactive approach already being taken by the VTA was already well underway when S.281 was released, and when it was shifted from a ban to BMPs it meshed with ideas the VTA had already embraced.

That said, when it becomes too prescriptive, the process is abridged by legislative fiat. Without an intimate knowledge of what works here on the ground the legislature can create inadvertent pitfalls that can, in turn, cause more problems than they solve.

This bill has a great deal of merit in that it establishes beyond a shadow of a doubt the value the legislature sees in trapping as a practice and a wildlife management tool. The potential funding for modernization of traps among the roughly 20% of trappers who have not already moved to BMP certified designs shows a willingness among this body to ensure the future of trapping in Vermont, and we appreciate that.

Representative Dolan's edits are largely superfluous from our perspective with the exception of the requirement to report incidental take. We are supportive of the amendment in 4861(c) to require reporting of incidental captures as Representative Dolan has offered it. In fact, we look forward to seeing those data sets as they will disprove the outrageous claims that those opposed to trapping often make about the volume of incidental capture.

The amendment in Section 1(a)(3) is redundant in that all of the preceding aspects of 1(a)(3) are the specific topics that lead to reduced bycatch. More importantly, this is already addressed by portions of the petition the VTA has previously submitted to the Board.

Regarding 1(a)(5), the VTA has a long-standing policy that the proper means of dispatch for live captured animals is to dispatch them by shooting. As I mentioned in my testimony yesterday, when done properly this does not cause an issue with the value of the fur, and it is standard practice.

The VTA sees no issue with 1(a)(6) as the educational materials are already up to par in that regard with BMPs playing a significant role in trapper education.

My Best Regards,

Mike Covey  
Executive Director  
Vermont Traditions Coalition