

Commissioner Christopher Herrick

Department of Fish and Wildlife

1 National Life Drive

Montpelier, VT 05620

Dear Commissioner Herrick:

I am writing regarding the Fish & Wildlife Board and draft bill S.129 which is currently in front of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy. Specifically, I am focusing on the Board and ensuring that a diversity of the voices and opinions of Vermonters interested and concerned about the important issues surrounding hunting, fishing and trapping are participate effectively in it's process.

As you know the draft bill looks to modify the role of the Fish & Wildlife Board by assigning many of the current responsibilities with respect to rules and regulations regarding hunting and fishing activities directly to the Office of the Commissioner of Fish & Wildlife. The Board would retain a strong advisory role to the Commissioner. Additionally, the draft bill would have appointments to the Board, which are currently the sole responsibility of the Governor, become a responsibility shared with the General Assembly.

In drafting this bill, the Committee is seeking to broaden the range of voices that are engaged in the work of the Department and the Board – the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont – ensuring a diversity of interests and perspectives are considered in the crafting rules and regulations.

With that in mind, I am requesting that the Department develop recommendations for processes and methods which will support a more inclusive process, including better opportunities for with respect to the best management practices of the Vermont's wildlife. Specifically, I am requesting that you submit to the committee a memo, by September 30th, 2022, that identifies steps the Department and the Board will take to encourage the true exchange of ideas and further an understanding across the range of wildlife-related interests in Vermont.

I recognize your commitment to the wildlife in the state and also your understanding that Vermonters do not speak with one singular voice. I thank you in advance for the work this will require and look forward to seeing your recommendations for ways to ensure a range of perspectives are fully discussed and considered in the shared work around important issues related to hunting, fishing and trapping.

Please let me know if you have any questions or desire clarification.

Sincerely,

Sen. Christopher Bray

Chair, Senate Committee on Natural Resources

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