

Chairwoman Sheldon and the Committee on Environment and Energy,

My name is Ethan Dreissigacker. I live in Albany, VT. I have been following your committee proceedings on bill S.258 and have some concerns. I will highlight a few of them below that I feel have not been addressed adequately to the committee.

Changes to Wildlife Governance:

If this bill were about equity and enhancing collaboration across all stakeholders, it would **add seats to the existing board with more diverse perspectives and stop there. I think most people could agree that this would be a good thing, and could be a productive step forward.** If this change to the board was implemented, all non-hunting board members should be required to complete a Hunter's and Trappers Education course to ensure they have some understanding of the activities they are regulating.

Unfortunately, S.258 goes on to remove rule-making authority from the board and effectively hand that authority over to the commissioner of F&W. **Unlike our current F&W board, the commissioner is *an individual* who happens to be in a position of power over the F&W biologists we rely on for the science behind our management. I feel this will over-politicize the F&W dept and negatively impact its scientific process.**

I question the intent of this bill when its proponents repeatedly discredit and disrespect the Fish & Wildlife Department and the work they do. Aren't these the scientists and managers that the bill's proponents say they want to hand rule making authority to? I fear that the intent here is not about equity or science, and that this may actually set the stage for inequity. It seems that if this bill were to pass as written, there is a very real possibility of a future governor appointing a F&W commissioner whose values are more political, emotional, and/or aligned with a specific agenda, rather than focused on the best outcomes for wildlife on a population and ecosystem level. This would be a problem for wildlife. It would also be a problem for the many Vermonters who fund and participate in a very successful wildlife management system, and have built their lives around the food, livelihood, and experiences that hunting, fishing and trapping provide them.

What problem does this bill solve for wildlife?

I feel strongly that any bill pertaining to the management of wildlife should address a clear problem that exists *for wildlife*. **Climate change and development are having profound impacts on wildlife habitat and biodiversity. Proponents of this bill acknowledge and cite these problems, yet *this bill does nothing to actually address these issues*.** Despite the challenges we face, Vermont has thriving and growing wildlife populations, amazingly low levels of human-wildlife conflict, and robust opportunities for Vermonters to interact closely with wildlife through hunting, fishing, trapping, and viewing. This is a testament to the effective and successful system we currently have in place.

Hounding & Baiting:

This bill bans coyote hunting with dogs and bait. As someone that has two hunting dogs and hunts with them daily when seasons are open, I feel strongly that the use of dogs in hunting, like hunting in general, should be regulated--but not banned. **The use of hounds and baiting, along with the use of any technology in hunting, fishing or trapping, are means by which the efficacy and impacts of said activities can be adjusted to achieve different management goals. These are the tools in the tool kit that allow science-based management to work. These tools should be regulated, but they should be done so by people who know how they work, with consultation of the scientists who know what needs to be accomplished with them.**

Thank you for reading,

Ethan Dreissigacker