

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of this committee. I've supplied you with written testimony of which you all have copies.

To quickly summarize. I'm a native Vermonter originally from Worcester, Vermont and have lived in Shaftsbury since 1979. I'm a 1974 graduate from the University of Vermont School of Natural Resources. I've worked continuously outdoors in Vermont since then. That's 50 years in May. Back then I couldn't have dreamed that I would have such an intense and rewarding career. I like to call myself a true "dirt forester". Adding to my experience I worked 10 years for the Vermont Fish & Game Department as a Deputy Game Warden...that was well before the internet and before good radio communication. Those 10 years are full of stories and real hands-on experience with outdoorspeople and wildlife of all kinds.

I'm not a politician. This is out of my comfort zone. But I had to get involved with this issue. It is small and trivial compared to the other issues you legislators are dealing with....education, immigration, women's health issues to name a few. The Senate has already dealt with several of my objections to this legislation. They dropped the trapping changes from the legislation. I certainly can't object to non-outdoorsmen and women from being included on the board. To quote Mr. Rodney Elmer who wrote in an on-line group of which I have commented in several times "Real wildlife governance, with every part of nature and humanity in mind would never be exclusive of anyone." I find nature to be very complex. I constantly struggle to understand it even after all the years of working outdoors. I was coon hunting with dogs in 1976 in Pownal, Vermont when I saw my first opossum. They didn't belong in Vermont. We never studied them at UVM. Coyote barely existed. A few years later my redbone hound died of heartworm...that disease was unknown in Vermont then. Ticks have shown up and are a constant danger. Global warming wasn't heard of, but I felt the change coming. I felt it outdoors in my surroundings before it was a "thing".

My objections to this legislation have 2 major points:

1. Coyote hunting with dogs must not be abolished. The legislature charged the Department and the Board with rewriting legislation concerning coyote hunting. They did so. I wasn't crazy about the changes, but the Department and Board did their work and so be it. Before the changes were even implemented, special interest groups sued the Department. They lost in court. This is the way our system in Vermont works. Work within it. It has worked well. The history of the accomplishments of the Board and the Department is well documented. Let them do their jobs. Give the changes an opportunity to work.
2. This objection is a little more complex. Our forefathers set up a system of checks and balances in every branch of our government. The board is not, or shouldn't ever

be, a strictly advisory board. If the Board becomes strictly advisory, this is the last time we can truly have a say in writing regulations. The Board currently has the power to override the Commissioner if they don't feel a proposed regulation is in the best interest of their constituents and the state. If the Legislature doesn't like it, they have the power to step in. This system of checks and balances has worked well since the 1960's. The Commissioner and the Board negotiate and work out their differences. We move forward. If the regulations need to be changed, they are revisited. It has happened many times. The system works...don't change it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present my views to this Committee. Please don't rush to push new legislation through as you come to the end of your session. Give it time and think about it. It is truly the Vermont way.

Sincerely,

William Sargent

Shaftsbury, Vt.