

Hello and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I am a resident of the Whiting/Shoreham area in Addison County. Before the moratorium I was negatively impacted by coyote hounders for several winters in a row. I am here speaking to you all because I believe that the proposed regulations from the Department of Fish & Wildlife regarding this activity are a complete smoke screen. The proposed regulations, as they are currently written, will do almost nothing to curb a dangerous and reckless activity.

The argument that hounds on GPS and/or shock collars are "under control" just does not hold water. In my experience hounds cover miles of terrain with great speed. They are following the scents of animals that weave in and out of property lines constantly. The hounders are separated from their hounds by a great distance (oftentimes miles). Even in proximity, I have witnessed hounders unable to recall their dogs, and I saw one incident where a hounder had to chase two of his dogs across a field (while trespassing) before catching them. I have also seen hounds run across and into roads -- this is a car accident waiting to happen. The hounds make an awful baying racket that you can hear from miles away, for hours on end. In addition, the hounds disturb and displace all the other local wildlife.

**If there is any point I want people to take away from my testimony today, it is this: The hounds that ended up at my house, numerous times, over several winters, scaring my children, alarming my dog, and spooking my horses in their paddock -- I repeat, numerous times -- every single one of those hounds had a GPS/shock collar on. My land was posted. So, I am asking, what in these proposed regulations changes any of that?**

Put yourself in my shoes: I am out on a walk with my three-year-old son and my dog (who is on a leash), and a hound or a pack of hounds arrives. Their handlers never informed me they were coming and never asked my permission. Their handlers are oftentimes parked miles away, sitting in their trucks while they let their dogs run all over the area. These handlers would have no idea that their dogs have come upon other humans and/or their animals -- because the GPS collars do not give them any of that information. I have no way of reaching the handlers to inform them of an encounter, or to get them to call off their dogs. I am literally at the mercy of these hounds and unable to defend myself, my dog, or my child. When I raised this scenario with the game warden, he told me I should always carry mace. On my own property.

So how do I make this calculation? Is it worth it for me to risk my family's well-being in order to take a walk on a Saturday morning, and enjoy the land that I work all week to pay taxes on? How would I feel if my three-year-old witnessed a dog fight? Or worse? Why am I even being put in this position? I am not bothering anybody. Why do the interests of a few individuals pursuing their idea of fun, take priority over the dozens of residents in my area who are minding their own business?

The argument that if you have a GPS tracker on your dog, then you are in control of its whereabouts and its activity, even when it is out of your sight -- that is called magical thinking. It is not real. And even if it gave you a modicum of control in the best of all scenarios, there are way too many instances where things could go array; there is way too much potential for adverse outcomes. Do you know why? Because other humans and animals live here too. We live here

too. And name one person who likes the feeling of an unknown dog approaching them whose owner is nowhere to be found and nowhere to be seen. Who of even the most avid dog lovers, myself included, likes that experience?

I wish I could keep open, unposted borders on my land. I have many agreements with neighbors to that affect: my next-door neighbor hunts turkey on my land in season, and his daughter rides her horse in my forest. The hounders are not my neighbors and they did not ask permission. They never asked me if I had a problem with a coyote, because that is not why they are pursuing this activity.

Last week I spoke with a law enforcement official at the Department of Fish & Wildlife. He said that with the proposed regulations if dogs trespassed on my posted land, I could file a complaint. So, I currently have a 9-month-old baby. I don't know when the hounders will show up. How do I just drop everything in the moment to chase hounds, or follow hounders' pick-up trucks so I can get a photo of their license plate? I feel that the Department of Fish & Wildlife is just setting up inevitable confrontations between people. This is an activity that puts landowners on edge and on the defensive. And to serve what exactly? I'm still waiting for that answer ...

Thanks to the moratorium I can tell you that last winter in my area, it was calm and quiet. I am asking my representatives and other governing bodies to keep it that way -- to do the right thing: to prioritize the rights of the people paying taxes on their land, who are stewards of the land, and who want to authorize ethical activity, not reckless endangerment. I do not understand the point in creating regulations that, by their very nature, cannot be followed. If these proposals are authorized, we will inevitably find ourselves here again, having the same conversation, after further incidents ensue. Coyote hounding should be banned because it is an activity that cannot be effectively regulated. Maybe in theory ... but in reality -- it will all fall apart.

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