

Dear Chair Squirrell and members of the Committee,

December 11, 2023

I would like to provide public testimony on 10 V.S.A. Appendix § 44, Furbearing Species Rules and the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's continued insistence that trapping does not pose a serious risk to pets and non-target species. As a resident of Orange, I have witnessed first hand the decimation of our local furbearer population by "regulated" trappers. All of the beaver trapping I have documented has been within fifty feet of roads and state highways and has targeted beavers that were, and were not causing conflicts. Since last October when I first discovered trappers in our town on opening day of trapping season, I have been documenting the occurrence of other wildlife in locations where both foot-hold and body-gripping traps are set for beaver in the town of Orange. On trail cameras I have captured black bear, bobcat, coyote, fox, mink, muskrat, raccoon, deer, turkey, waterfowl and other birds recreating in our beaver ponds. For these reasons I remind you that every trap is indiscriminate and potentially deadly to many more species than those targeted.

The public's concerns about trapping in Vermont mirror those of LCAR, only our voices have been routinely ignored by both the Department and Fish & Wildlife Board. While attending the last Board meeting related to LCAR's objections on November 30, 2023, I was again shocked at the focus of the board on the ability of this state's few hundred licensed to continue to set traps within fifty feet of trails and roads. Both the public and LCAR's objections to the exemption of traps in the water from required setbacks is seen only as an impediment to trapping, not concern for public safety. When I attend Vermont Fish & Wildlife Board meetings I feel more like I'm attending a sportsman's show where all hunting and trapping is staunchly defended, not a public hearing for an agency charged with protecting animals and plants for all the people of Vermont.

You've heard the Department refer to those of us opposed to some of these proposed trapping rules as "a minority" and "sophisticated animal rights activists." This saddens me as an indigenous person who has attended every public meeting on these rules and spoken from the base of knowledge inherent with my people whom have lived continuously on these lands for centuries before European trappers came. To know that the Department so easily dismissed and categorized critics should be of great concern to our Legislature.

Indigenous people such as myself who do not trap, animal rights activists, ethical hunters and regular Vermonters have all spoken during this process in the spirit of compromise. Some of us are strongly opposed to all trapping and hunting yet we have never asked for more than was expected from the legislative intents of both Act 159 and 165. That is because we believe in the word of the law, and trust that LCAR's ignored objections will not be without consequence. I respectfully request that LCAR certify its objections to the proposed furbearer rule.

Rod Coronado, Town of Orange Cemetery Commissioner/ Director, Vermont Wildlife Patrol

