

**Fish and Wildlife Board
Meeting Agenda**

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board will hold an in-person meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 6, 2022, at the National Life Dewey Conference Room in Montpelier.

To attend the meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams, click on the following link:

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 802-828-7667,,833827964#](#) United States, Montpelier

Phone Conference ID: 833 827 964#

Agenda:

- 1) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes.
 - February 16, 2022
- 2) Public Comments (Limited to 2 minutes per speaker)
- 3) 2022 Migratory Game Bird Season – Final Procedural Vote
- 4) 2022 Moose Season Recommendation – Final Procedural Vote
- 5) Petition Acknowledgement and Discussion
 - Petition to amend furbearer management rule on trapping (*attached*)
 - Petition to have a regulated coyote hunting season (*attached*)
- 6) Commissioner's Update

The mission of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.

Commissioner Herrick and members of the Fish and Wildlife Board,

The Vermont Trappers Association (VTA) encourages that specific criteria be adopted for the design of foothold traps when trapping terrestrial furbearers in Vermont. All of the research partners chosen in Vermont to test the different restraining devices used as part of the Northeast Best Management Practices (BMP) program were members of the VTA, so we are very familiar with the devices tested and the process of testing them. These suggestions are an amalgam of both experience developing the BMPs and several decades (perhaps centuries) of collective experience in the field, and we are confident that these are the best features to ensure the welfare of trapped animals.

A wide variety of devices were tested in this thirty-year research project, however, not every device in current use was available at that time. For that reason, the VTA cannot endorse one brand of trap over another just because it was tested, but we can reliably endorse certain features that are proven to improve animal welfare. It is the position of the VTA that any device from any manufacturer should be approved for use so long as it has been manufactured with, or modified to include, the following features.

On behalf of the Vermont Trappers Association, I would like to submit a petition to the Fish and Wildlife Board that foothold traps set on land require the following:

- 1) Jaws are padded, off-set, laminated, or have jaws with a minimum thickness of 5/16”.
- 2) Base plates feature a center chain attachment.
- 3) The trap can be adjusted for pan tension.
- 4) There are at least two swiveling devices in the chain.
- 5) An anchored trap has a minimum of 12” and a maximum of 18” of chain from the point where it exits the ground once an animal is caught.
- 6) No foothold trap shall be set on land with a spread of more than 6-1/4 inches as measured inside the jaws.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me via email or at (914) 610-0650.

Thank you for your consideration.



Bruce Martin
VTA Vice-President
Montpelier, VT

From: [Tim Biebel](#)
To: [Vermont Coyote Coalition](#)
Cc: [fwboard.orleans](#); [Kevin Lawrence](#); [Wendy Butler](#); [Theresa Elmer](#); [David Fielding](#); [Cheryl Frank Sullivan](#); [Mike Kolsun](#); [Bryan McCarthy](#); [Dennis Mewes](#); [Bill Pickens](#); [Brian Wiles](#); [Peter Allard](#); [Johanna Laggis](#); [Herrick Christopher](#); [Amy Sheldon](#); [plefebvre@leg.state.vt.us](#); [sbongartz@leg.state.vt.us](#); [kdolan@leg.state.vt.us](#); [jmccullough@leg.state.vt.us](#); [lmorgan@leg.state.vt.us](#); [nbrownell@leg.state.vt.us](#); [hsmith@leg.state.vt.us](#); [kmorris2@leg.state.vt.us](#); [lsatcowitz@leg.state.vt.us](#); [Christopher Bray](#); [rawestman@gmail.com](#); [mmacdonald@leg.state.vt.us](#); [Richard McCormack](#); [bcampion@leg.state.vt.us](#); [Scott, Mark](#); [Giessing, Catherine](#)
Subject: Re: Petition for a coyote season
Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 4:29:37 PM
Attachments: [page6image21304192.png](#)
[page6image21304384.png](#)
[page7image21306496.png](#)
[page8image21308224.png](#)
[page8image21308416.png](#)
[page8image21308608.png](#)
[page8image21308800.png](#)

EXTERNAL SENDER: Do not open attachments or click on links unless you recognize and trust the sender.

Dear Ms. Fitzwilliam,

Thank you for submitting this petition. We will be in touch in the future about the next steps.

Best,
Tim

On Tue, Mar 22, 2022 at 1:29 PM Vermont Coyote Coalition <vecc.inquiries@gmail.com> wrote:



March 22, 2022

Re: Petition for a regulated coyote hunting season

Dear Chairman Biebel,

This petition and supporting data will serve as follow up on testimony on January 19, 2022 before the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife from VT Fish & Wildlife Department (FWD), Commissioner Herrick and Furbearer Biologist Kim Royar regarding H.411, a bill seeking to address wanton waste of wildlife in Vermont. The bill was written in part to address the concerns of a retired game warden with 25 years of experience. In 2018, he submitted a petition in the form of an email to the Fish & Wildlife Board (FWB) asking for a ban on wanton waste, but the Board failed to act. The warden showed graphic evidence of wanton waste, specifically involving coyotes and also referenced the

wanton waste he witnessed of deer, bear and turkey. Since the FWB took no action, the issue was brought to the legislature and after three years of efforts by multiple parties, a wanton waste bill was voted out of committee and has since been passed by the full House.

The current bill language includes a carve out exempting coyotes that are hunted, at the behest of Commissioner Herrick and a minority of members in the committee who felt that including coyotes would be creating a de facto season. Commissioner Herrick, along with Ms. Royar, spoke very specifically that the committee was not the appropriate venue to address a season on coyotes. Chair Sheldon agreed and indicated that such authority was indeed granted to the FWB. **Commissioner Herrick stated that any discussion around a season needed due deliberation, and that such a discussion would merit our time and**

effort. His comment about a coyote season, "Let's have that discussion," couldn't have been any clearer. Biologist Royar indicated that she, too, supported a robust and respectful conversation around the establishment of a coyote season.

Therefore, this letter will serve as a direct follow up of Commissioner Herrick's and Ms. Royar's support for that discussion to begin. And in order to formally expedite that discussion, we have prepared this petition on behalf of our 5,500 + followers from across the state to establish

a regulated season on coyotes that takes pup rearing into consideration. I am copying members of the House Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Committee and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources because of their interest in this issue, as expressed during this legislative session. Because of the substantive legislative interest in this issue we would respectfully ask that the FWB reply to the petition and include a written commentary in support of whatever position it takes that addresses each of the points we raise. This commentary will serve to update legislators and guide future

steps and decision-making if necessary.

FWD would likely agree with this statement:

Lethal attempts at coyote control don't work.

Approximately 2/3 of coyotes live in packs. 1/3 roam, waiting for an opportunity to join a pack. A stable pack consists of a monogamous breeding pair that only mates once a year. Other pack members do not breed. The self-regulated pack requires about 4-8 miles, which it guards against other coyotes. Left to their own, coyotes self-regulate. The majority of females don't ever breed!

Indiscriminate killing of a breeding male or female, forces the mate to leave to find a new mate. A roamer (or disperser) comes in and breeds with as many females as he can causing a 'burst' in the local population. This means MORE coyotes on the landscape.

Without the leadership of the alpha pack members, the other pack members are likely unskilled at hunting and may cause problems with humans where there weren't any before.

The current open season is not rooted in sound science.

VCC's Petition: We request that Vermont establish a regulated coyote hunting season from October 1st – December 31st. This season would allow for a recreational hunting opportunity and optimizes utilization of the animals killed.

We believe there is more than ample data and reason to establish a season at this time as follows:

1. FWD supports the initiation of a coyote season discussion

Commissioner Herrick and Biologist Royar have testified that we should begin the conversation about establishing a season on coyotes and the **FWD is the venue for this process.**

2. Long Standing Evidence of Wanton Waste

A retired Vermont state game warden's 25 years of experience and first-hand account of the wanton waste of coyotes objectively establishes that Vermont has a long-standing problem that has not been addressed by FWD or FWB. The longer we fail to address this situation, the greater spread of the subculture of hunters who kill solely for the sake of killing, often by using bait piles. Not only is this antithetical to sound science, but it also violates all standards of ethical hunting practices and damages the overall image of hunting. We believe further that the FWB, as the arbiters of Vermont's public policy on game, have a duty to address and correct this wasteful behavior that is not rooted in sound science and fundamentally is contrary to ecological principles.

3. Damage to the Standing of Vermont 's Wildlife Governance Infrastructure

The failure to address this long-standing issue undermines the credibility of Vermont's wildlife governance infrastructure and erodes public confidence in our conservation stewards. Further, the state-sanctioned wanton killing of a public "resource" simply for the sake of killing, is at odds with Fish & Wildlife's duty to protect and conserve wildlife—to include coyotes—under title 10 §4081.

4. Contradictory and Confusing Public Policy

Vermont's public policy towards coyotes is at best confusing and clearly paradoxical. On the one hand, FWD states the following on their website, "We believe, however, that coyotes are important members of the ecosystem and have evolved together with many of nature's existing prey species; Conservation of the coyote is important to maintaining ecosystem integrity because of the vital role they play as predators; Coyotes fill the role of a natural predator, a role that is important for maintaining the dynamics and health of our ecosystems." These statements reflect an ecological and

scientific understanding of the species. However, at the same time, FWD references the ecological benefits of coyotes, they and the FWB have established a public policy of treating coyotes as vermin in that they may be killed year-round, day and night, with or without dogs, with the use of bait, and with the use of high-tech weaponry, including thermal scopes for night hunting and game-calling devices.

It is ecologically and intellectually impossible to hold those opposing views at the same time, yet this tortured logic serves as the public policy FWD has endorsed. The FWB now has an opportunity to address FWD's "split personality" public policy muddle by establishing a season consistent with how we manage other game species. It's time for the double standard to end.

5. State Sanctioned Violations of the North American Model Wildlife Conservation as Public Policy

The FWB's current policy on coyotes is a clear violation of at least one principle of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (NAM), which establishes the following value: ***Wildlife can only be killed for a legitimate purpose.*** It should be noted that FWD's report to the legislature on coyotes in January, 2018, stated that current public policy treating coyotes as vermin, did not violate NAM, yet the Department offered no data on what legitimate purpose was served in the public policy of sanctioning the wanton waste of coyotes. Digging deeper into this issue, we find that the Department has an extreme institutional bias favoring ungulates (89%) over carnivores (11%) as documented in an internal survey

(<https://content.warnercnr.colostate.edu/AWV/VT-AgencyCultureMemo.pdf>) This extreme institutional bias is reflected in the Department's support for the wanton waste of Vermont's apex predator, a position that cannot be supported by science yet is fully supported by the documented political agenda of FWD. We find the FWB and FWD's support of this gross disrespect for the coyote an abject failure of our wildlife

governance standards in putting politics above science.

6. Board Policy that Chooses Wildlife Winners and Losers

Establishing a season would serve to change the message that coyotes are a "bad" species while deer are a "good" species. This emotional basis for establishing attitudes towards wildlife has no place in sound ecological science. An established season would help defuse the emotional and irrational basis for considering coyotes "bad." Along with the notion that coyotes are a bad species, is a belief out there that coyotes are an invasive species. This notion, too, is not based on an understanding of ecology, natural systems, or species range expansions and contractions. If coyotes are invasive, then so too are cardinals, Carolina wrens, opossums, and black vultures, to name a few. Public policy solely established on the basis of emotions is bad public policy. The FWB can serve to reinforce rational and science-based understanding of species like the coyote. Shouldn't that be one of your important jobs to take steps to undermine the mythology held by the subculture within the hunting community?

7. The Other Big Lie: Coyotes impact Deer Populations

Establishing a season would also address the other big myth around coyote impacts on deer populations. FWD states the following on their website, "We are not aware of any scientific evidence from studies done in the Northeast that indicate coyotes either control or limit the numbers of deer. Although coyotes and people, both predators, do vie for deer and other prey, in almost all cases, study results suggest that coyotes have no long term negative impact on these populations." Changing public policy is the most effective step we can take. All the education programs won't impact attitudes when public policy condones the idea of coyotes as vermin.

8. The Folly of Too Many Coyotes

It should also be noted that the Department states, "...coyotes are density dependent breeder. As the number of coyotes in an area decreases, their reproductive rates increase. Coyote control efforts are therefore often unsuccessful because they tend to stimulate reproduction."

(<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/vermont-critters/mammals/coyote>). If our concern is too many coyotes, establishing a season would actually help to reduce the disruption of packs, dampen reproduction and stabilize or reduce the population. Establishing a season on coyotes would impact the notion that actively seeking out and killing coyotes is somehow a good deed. Obviously science does not support that subculture mythology. You can read more from Project Coyote's carnivore biologist [here](#).

9. Perceived Threats to Humans

One of the justifications for the current public policy is that a 365/day/night season is that such a season creates a wariness in coyotes thus helping to reduce negative interactions with humans. This is not supported by any independent peer review science. Randomly killing coyotes does nothing to instill fear. As well- respected coyote expert, and former sheep farmer, Chris Schadler has said, "A dead coyote learns nothing."

If there is a specific coyote that is causing problems, then the law already allows the public to kill coyotes under title 10 §4828. Prevention — not killing — is the best method for minimizing conflicts with wildlife in both urban and rural settings. Eliminating access to easy food sources, such as bird seed and garbage, supervising pets while outside, and keeping cats indoors reduces conflicts with pets and humans. Practicing good animal husbandry and using strategic, nonlethal methods to protect livestock (such as electric fences, guard animals, fladry, and removing dead livestock)

are more effective than lethal control at preventing conflicts and reducing associated costs over time.

And to play devil's advocate, even *if* FWD's position was accurate, a limited hunting season would still accomplish the purpose of "keeping coyotes wary of people." In short, coyotes may become problematic when they are habituated to people and that can be solved by prevention and also by killing problem coyotes under title 10 §4828.

10. A Very, Very Low Bar Justifying An Open Session

FWD's justification for the 365 day/night season is that the population is not at risk so allowing an open season will not impact population. Is that the standard of wildlife professionals at FWD for managing wildlife now?

11. Coyote Killing Contests

FWD's report to the legislature stated this, "Unlike its counterparts in some states, Vermont's Fish and Wildlife Department does not sponsor or promote or encourage coyote hunting tournaments and we do not believe that such short-term hunts will have any measurable impact on prey such as deer." Vermont now has a law prohibiting coyote killing contests, yet FWD took no position on the bill when actually standing up for its beliefs would have mattered. We find FWD's documented inconsistency a distinct revelation that its political agenda is always paramount.

12. Wildlife Congress-Building Bridges

FWD's coyote report to the legislature stated the following, "Therefore, bringing disparate groups together to work on common threats is critical to our future. To that end, the Department has sponsored two "Wildlife Congresses" in an attempt to find and agree on common issues that can be tackled together to maintain wildlife populations into the

future.” We applaud the FWD for sponsoring this attempt at building bridges between groups that see wildlife in starkly different ways. The second Wildlife Congress resulted in the establishment of a working group to wrestle with the issues of finding common ground. Regretfully, FWD failed to nominate a representative from staff to serve on the working group causing the group to dissolve having never met even once.

13. Valuing the role of Predators

The following statement is in FWD’s coyote report to the legislature, “Regardless, the Department values the role predators play in maintaining healthy and dynamic ecosystems and endeavors to promote management strategies for these species, including coyotes, that foster a broad public understanding of, and appreciation for, their intrinsic values while ensuring the sustainability and health of their populations.” We applaud this clear ecologically based statement very much, on the mark. But once again, it is impossible to embrace that statement while embracing public policy that treats Vermont’s apex predator as vermin. No one can square that circle.

Thank you for your consideration of this petition and the background in support of it.

Jane Fitzwilliam

Coalition Lead

<http://vermontcoyote.org>

Putney VT 802.376.9449

Link to DFW Coyote Report to legislature

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Hunt/trapping/Vermont%20Coyote%20Population%20R>

[eport%20to%20Legislature-2018.pdf](#)