



To: **House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee**
Legislative Office Building, Room 210-211
107 N Main St.
Concord, NH 03301

Re: **HB 1504 – An Act Establishing a Committee to Study Prohibiting
Recreational Trapping.**

Position: **Oppose**

Date: **February 13, 2020**

Honorable Members of the House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee:

My name is Joseph Mullin and I am the New England States Coordinator for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 1504 (HB 1504) – legislation that would establish a Committee to study prohibiting recreational trapping in New Hampshire. Along with being one of America's most time-honored traditions, trapping is an essential and effective method in managing wildlife damage and protecting threatened ecosystems.

For more than 80 years, sportsmen and women have been the primary funders of state-level conservation efforts in this state and are thus an important constituency that provides benefits for all New Hampshire residents. In 2019 alone, New Hampshire's sportsmen and women generated over \$19 million dollars for conservation through revenue derived from license sales and excise taxes on sporting-related goods in the unique "*user-pays, public-benefits*" structure known as the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). The funds collected through this program are the lifeblood of state fish and wildlife agencies (including the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department) – the primary managers of our nation's fish and wildlife resources. These critical conservation dollars fund a variety of efforts including: enhanced fish and wildlife habitat and populations, recreational access to public and private lands, shooting ranges and boat access facilities, wetlands protection and its associated water filtration and flood retention functions, and improved soil and water conservation – all which benefit the public at large, not just sportsmen and women.

HB 1504 would establish a Committee that is tasked with defining recreational trapping and the feasibility of prohibiting its practice within New Hampshire, and it is comprised solely of members of the legislature – three members of the House of Representatives and two members of the Senate. The Committee would also only seek advice and testimony regarding "information relevant to the committee's objective." Fish and wildlife management decisions must be left to the NHFG Department – the body best equipped to make informed, science-backed decisions through the established regulatory framework. The composition and objective of this Committee is in complete disregard of the unquestionable experience and expertise held by the individuals who comprise the NHFG. The Department's mission statement reads as follows:

As the guardian of the state's fish, wildlife and marine resources, the New Hampshire Fish and Game

Department works in partnership with the public to: conserve, manage and protect these resources and their habitats; inform and educate the public about these resources; and provide the public with opportunities to use and appreciate these resources.¹

The NHFG is specifically designated the responsibility of conserving and managing New Hampshire's fish and game resources and their habitats, and the attempt outlined in HB 1504 to undermine these efforts is antithetical to the best interest of the State and its natural resources. Decisions regarding trapping should and must be left to the discretion of the NHFG.

Trapping and regulated take are important components of modern wildlife management. The varying instruments used in this practice have all been rigorously evaluated for their efficiency, selectivity, practicality, safety, and animal welfare; and, are able to uniquely address a wide-breadth of wildlife management challenges in New Hampshire.

Extensive research on restraining traps has been conducted through annual appropriations from Congress to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Since 1996, Best Management Practices (BMPs) have incorporated trapping methods developed from this research for fur-bearing species. All common trap designs have been field tested for each species and all captured animals were examined by veterinarians. State fish and wildlife agencies, including the NHFG, have adopted these BMPs through their regulatory processes to ensure that the most effective, selective, and humane technology is being used by their resident trappers. Trapping is a highly regulated activity, and the sportsmen's community has supported both the vigorous enforcement of the relevant laws and the implementation of severe penalties for illegalities.

Regarding its role in conservation efforts, trapping is a primary tool in wildlife damage management programs that involves the eradication of invasive species that cause extensive habitat degradation and threaten ecosystem health. Properly regulated and monitored traps can minimize potential for non-target capture and restore ecosystems to better support abundant native wildlife populations. Likewise, trapping is often utilized by professional wildlife managers as a useful research tool for compiling data for disease control and studies. Therefore, efforts to potentially end trapping in New Hampshire undermine the ability of the NHFG Department to effectively carry out its mission.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to reject HB 1504.

Sincerely,



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¹ *About NH Fish and Game*. Accessed February 13, 2020. <https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/about/index.html>.