

February 16, 2021

Chairman Cervantes & Senate Judiciary Committee Members
New Mexico Senate - Conservation Committee
New Mexico Capitol
490 Old Santa Fe trail, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

RE: SB 32 – 2021

Dear Chairman Cervantes and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

We the undersigned organizations, write to you in combined opposition to New Mexico Senate Bill 32 – Wildlife Conservation and Public Safety Act (SB 32). This legislation would prohibit all forms of trapping on public land throughout the state. Enacting a prohibition on public land trapping will have far-reaching negative impacts on New Mexico's science-based wildlife conservation and management efforts, agriculture and livestock industry and set a dangerous precedent of prejudicial treatment by excluding a law-abiding user group from public lands. We urge the Judiciary Committee to join us in opposition of New Mexico Senate Bill 32.

North American Model of Conservation

As a key component of the North American Model of Conservation, trapping is one of the methods of legal science-based harvest used to manage wildlife. A common misconception is that trapping is in direct conflict with the second tenant – the elimination of markets for game – due to the ability of trappers to sell the pelts of legally harvested animals. Market hunting is the unregulated harvest and selling of game. Because New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) uses the best available science in setting and enforcing strict regulations on trapping seasons, bag limits, and method of take, trappers are not in violation of tenet two of the North American Model of Conservation.

Trapping also is in compliance with the fourth tenant of the North American Model of Conservation that states wildlife can only be killed for legitimate purposes. Trapping is not conducted indiscriminately or without legitimate reasons. Trappers directly assist the NMDGF in managing furbearer populations and human-wildlife conflicts, in addition to providing invaluable information on overall population numbers, sex ratios, age structure, disease prevalence, and numerous other factors that influence the overall health and sustainability of wildlife populations.

The use of science-based wildlife management is a pillar of the North American Model of Conservation and explicitly stated in the sixth tenet. The regulations set forth by state wildlife agencies on trapping methods are among the most detailed and comprehensive of any laws concerning wildlife harvest today. According to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the United States and Canada have conducted the most extensive scientific testing of traps in the world to develop Best Management Practices for Trapping, a program that ensures that modern traps are humane, efficient, safe and selective. Standards are applied and enforced to ensure animal welfare throughout the country, including New Mexico. This, combined with harvest regulations set by the NMDGF, once again places trapping well within the North American Model of Conservation.

Trappers vs Poachers

As the origin of most trapping conflicts, poachers are going to continue to poach, regardless of a statewide public lands trapping ban. SB 32 does nothing to address the issue of poaching. Instead, by attempting to ban all trapping on public lands, SB 32 is essentially punishing law abiding trappers for the actions of poachers. The undersigned organizations do not condone the illegal acts of poachers and would support working with the NMDGF, Commission, and the legislature to increase the penalties for poachers in the state where necessary and help address illegal trapping concerns.

Untold Impact on NMDGF

If SB 32 were to pass, the NMDGF's ability to utilize trapping as a necessary and critical tool in science-based wildlife management would be severely limited, and it would no longer be able to rely on trappers for their assistance with population control, data collection, depredation mitigation or human-wildlife conflict resolution. Without the participation by the trapping community, these needs would often go unmet, and NMDGF would otherwise be forced to take personnel and funding away from other conservation priorities to continue these basic yet essential efforts in the state.

Between 2018 and 2020, 1556 wildlife complaints were resolved by the NMDGF, of which over 700 were just for furbearer species, including badger, beaver, fox, ringtail, bobcat and racoons. By eliminating the assistance of trappers, the burden on NMDGF would only increase, requiring the NMDGF to find additional personnel, resources, and money to fulfill the role that the trapping community currently occupies and which generates funding to the state through the purchase of trapping licenses.

Economic Impact to Agriculture and Livestock Industry

Trapping is the most effective method for managing nuisance animals such as coyotes that prey on livestock resulting in millions of dollars in cattle and sheep losses in New Mexico. In 2010, the National Agriculture Statistics Service reported that, predators throughout New Mexico killed 9,900 head of cattle, a \$5.3 million loss. In 2009, 8,200 sheep and lamb were lost to depredation, valued at \$901,000. Research conducted by the USDA suggests that these losses would be two to three times higher without a livestock protection program in place. Additionally, trapping is crucial in maintaining proper flow of irrigation waters as beavers frequently cause blockages that can have extremely costly consequences if not promptly addressed.

Trapping Concerns Addressed by Game Commission

The NMDGF recently finished a collaborative effort involving a working group comprised of proponents, opponents and NMDGF staff to address concerns related to trapping on public lands. As a result, substantial and commendable changes were made to the trapping regulations which took effect during the 2020 trapping season a few short months ago. These changes included a mandatory trapper education class, a minimum setback distance of ½ mile from all trailheads, maintained public campgrounds, boat launches, roadside rest areas, picnic areas, and occupied dwellings, a minimum setback distance for land sets of 150 feet from any man-made water sources, a setback distance of 75 feet from the edge of any public road or trail and the prohibition of trapping in several highly trafficked areas in the state. SB 32 has not allowed sufficient time to see the on the ground results of these regulatory changes or allowed adequate time for the NMDGF to educate New Mexico's trappers about the regulation changes. The below signed organizations urge you to allow these regulatory changes the time necessary to display results.

Exclusion of Key Stakeholder Groups

SB 32 was conceived and written without inclusion of the stakeholder groups that would be directly impacted by its enactment. Little to no consultation occurred between the bill proponents and sponsors and the NMDGF, agricultural and livestock community, the outdoor sporting community, or most concerning, the trapping community. This is clearly highlighted by the current online petition in opposition of SB 32 that has garnered over 13,700 individual signatures thus far. If these key stakeholder groups had been consulted, SB 32's sponsors and proponents would have been aware of the far-reaching negative impacts and consequences if this bill were allowed to pass through the legislature.

Public Lands are for Everyone, Trappers Included

America's public lands are owned by the people, trappers included, and managed on our collective behalf by federal and state governments. In addition to being unethical and discriminatory, SB 32 would set a dangerous precedent of prejudicial treatment of excluding a single user group from public lands and wildlife resources. Trappers have the same rights to public lands and wildlife resources as do hikers, dog walkers, hunters, cyclists, bird-watchers, anglers and all other user groups. In addition to the mandatory yearly taxes that support our public lands, sportsmen and women pay additional fees to be able to legally harvest wildlife which in turn funds state wildlife conservation and management through the NMDGF. In 2020 alone, New Mexico sportsmen and women, trappers included, contributed over \$40 million dollars to state-based conservation.

Fish and wildlife management decisions, such as this, must be left to the NMDGF – the body best equipped to make informed, science-based decisions based off of the North American Model of Conservation, and cannot be left to individuals who lack the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions. For this and the above stated reasons, the below signed organizations urge you to oppose SB 32 – Wildlife Conservation and Public Safety Act.

Sincerely,

Dallas Safari Club New Mexico

Dona Ana County Associated Sportsmen

National Wild Turkey Federation New Mexico Chapter

New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association

New Mexico Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

New Mexico Conservation Officers Association

New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides

New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau

New Mexico Houndsman Association

New Mexico Shooting Sports Association

New Mexico Sportsman's and Conservationists Alliance

New Mexico Trappers Association

New Mexico Wild Sheep Foundation

New Mexico Wool Growers Inc.

Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen

Wild Turkey Sportsman's Association

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Dallas Safari Club

Fur Takers of America

Mule Deer Foundation

National Deer Association

National Rifle Association

National Trappers Association

Pheasants Forever Quail Forever

Safari Club International

Sportsmen's Alliance