

Reform Vermont's Wildlife Governance and Funding

Support H.190, Introduced by Reps. Jim McCullough, Amy Sheldon and Kate Webb

Why do we need to reform wildlife governance and funding in Vermont?

- The fish and wildlife of Vermont are held in trust by the State for the benefit of the citizens of Vermont and shall not be reduced to private ownership. Despite this fact, many Vermonters rightly feel locked out of the decision-making process. Many feel that their views on wildlife issues are discounted.
- Even the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the national voice for state wildlife agencies, issued a report in 2016 that made the following observation: "To remain relevant, state fish and wildlife agencies will need to transform their structures, operations and cultures to meet the changing expectations of their customers. If state fish and wildlife agencies fail to adapt, their ability to manage fish and wildlife will be hindered and their public and political support compromised."



Changing wildlife-related activities and declining license revenue

- Since 1985, resident hunting license sales have decreased by 56 percent, resident trapping licenses sales have decreased by 43 percent, and resident fishing license sales have decreased by 23 percent.
- By contrast, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data indicates that since 2006 the number of Vermonters identifying as wildlife watchers has increased to 86 percent of the population. This compares to 11.5 percent of the population who now identify as hunters.
- As a result, the Department of Fish and Wildlife has recognized that as Vermont's population continues to age and interest in hunting and trapping continues to decline, Department revenues from the sale of licenses and permits will also continue to decline. The Department has called this trend a crisis.

How would H.190 help solve the problem?

- This bill would establish a six-member legislative working group to find collaborative, long-term solutions to ensure our state's wildlife is protected for future generations. Specifically, it would make recommendations after examining:
 1. recent trends in expenditures and revenue sources for Vermont's wildlife programs and the types of wildlife activities most common in the state;
 2. the impact of shifting demographics and changing cultural attitudes on fish and wildlife conservation efforts in Vermont;
 3. options for broadening stakeholder representation to ensure fish and wildlife conservation remains relevant and supported by the general public, including changes to the authority and structure of the Fish and Wildlife Board;
 4. improvements to Vermont hunting, trapping and fishing laws and regulations to bring them into alignment with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and 21st century wildlife governance principles; and
 5. alternate, long-term, sustainable revenue streams for FWD wildlife conservation activities and the changes needed to align revenue with DFW program activities.

