



February 16, 2017

To: House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife
Re: H.60 An act relating to the hunting of coyotes

Dear Committee members:

I write to you on behalf of Protect Our Wildlife, a Vermont nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose supporters represent a diverse cross-section of interests. Our supporters include wildlife biologists and rehabilitators, educators, farmers, landowners and a host of others who seek better protections for Vermont's wildlife. We are interested in bill H.60 and the potential impact it may have on Vermont's coyotes, while also helping to address some of the distasteful practices we've seen with respect to an open season and killing contests.

First, we would like to thank Chairman Deen for sponsoring this legislation. It is a critical first step in enhancing the understanding of an unfairly maligned and persecuted species who are, in fact, ecologically vital to Vermont's landscapes. However, upon review of the bill in its current form, our supporters and colleagues have expressed concern that without some edits, the bill will not meet the objectives that we believe it was written to address. We would like to recommend that the amendments outlined in the attached document, titled *H.60 suggested amendments*, be considered.

The bill focuses a great deal on population estimates, but the study should also look at the unintended consequences of the open season. There is evidence that coyote family units are less intrusive and less problematic to humans when the mated pair and family units are stable. With the reckless, "shoot every coyote you see" current practice, unnecessary disruptions to the family unit's social structure must be considered. There

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is also a biological response to mass, unregulated killing, whereby if you kill a mated pair who naturally have low reproductive rates and smaller litters, it actually stimulates greater pairing and larger litters. Larger litters create a demand for more food to feed those litters, which means more predation. “Shooting every coyote you see” in fact creates the very problem hunters are seeking to solve.

While I understand the Department cannot force ethics, nor can your committee legislate responsible and respectable hunting behavior, you can help address many of the myths and misconceptions that lead to much of the gratuitous violence we see inflicted on these animals. It has been accepted that coyotes have no intrinsic value – that they may be killed at any time for any reason. What that rhetoric creates is a culture of disrespect and disregard towards one of Vermont’s vital predators. We have seen countless photos and comments from coyote hunters that are reprehensible, displaying gratuitous acts of violence. If the Department is worried about fewer people purchasing hunting licenses and more people posting land due to a changing culture, then it should be doing everything it can to condemn these behaviors. Comments such as, “kill them all”; “stack them like a cord of wood”; “the only good coyote is a dead coyote” are omnipresent. These comments are not the exception to the norm, they appear to be the norm.

We also hear from hunters who say, “any season is coyote season.” If a hunter is out there in the spring turkey hunting and a coyote walks by minding her own business, the coyote is killed with zero regard for pups who may be waiting for her back in the den. This type of killing also presents clear wanton waste of the animal because the fur is certainly not useable in the spring/summer/fall months.

We look forward to tracking the progress of this bill as we believe it will only elevate Vermont’s reputation as a state that sets the bar on so many issues.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenna Galdenzi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brenna Galdenzi, POW Founder & President

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