

Overview of Vermont Fish and Wildlife Legislation— H.589

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department January, 14, 2014

- Comm. H. 589
had some
issues
- (1) **Elimination (or modification) of the snaring statute:** The Fish & Wildlife Department is pursuing options that would make trapping more effective, safe, and humane. Recent national studies have shown that cable restraints are efficient, inexpensive, and more humane devices that can be used in place of body-gripping traps in certain situations. Technically, a cable restraint is a live-restraining snare currently prohibited by statute and rule. Shifting the authority to the Fish and Wildlife Board would allow for a robust public discussion based on the most up-to-date research and findings.
- (2) **Captive hunt facilities:** The State of Vermont's policy has been to discontinue captive hunting facilities due to the risk they pose in spreading disease and threatening wildlife as a public trust. Existing regulation prohibits the permitting of any new captive hunting facilities; however, a loophole exists in current statute that would allow for cooperative ventures to create new fenced/captive hunting operations. The Department recommends closing the loophole with clarifying language that prohibits individuals, hunt clubs, associations, corporations, or multiple landowners from transporting, possessing, and fencing animals in an enclosure for the purposes of hunting.
- (3) **Results of "road hunting" study committee:** A legislative working group tasked with reviewing Act 78 related to shooting from the traveled portion of the highway has developed specific recommended statutory changes. In addition to these recommendations, the Department proposes modifying the definition of "public highway."
- (4) **Rule making process for migratory birds:** Under current law, the Department annually proposes the migratory bird hunting regulations, including seasons and bag limits, to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board through APA rule-making process. In order to expedite this process and provide timely information on seasons and dates, the Department proposes following a procedure similar to the one approved by the legislature in 2013 for deer and moose permits.
- (5) **Veteran disabilities:** Currently, veterans must be certified to be 100 percent disabled in order to be eligible for a free hunting or fishing license. The federal threshold to be eligible for disability benefits is 60 percent. The Department recommends reducing the disability requirement to 60 percent, which will also be in line with the practice in neighboring states.
- (6) **Deer rifle season:** The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board has regulatory authority for all deer hunting regulations with the unique exception of the 16-day deer rifle season. Shifting this authority to the Board would enable the Department and the Board to look at deer management in a broader context if any comprehensive changes were proposed in the future.
- (7) **Conservation license plates:** In order to meet the desires of a broader section of Vermonters, the Department is currently updating the images appearing on the conservation license plates. In addition to supporting the nongame wildlife fund and the watershed grant program, the Department requests the flexibility to use funds generated by a greater variety of conservation license plates, specifically game images, to raise funds for the Green Mountain Conservation Camps for children.