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FISH, WILDLIFE PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

10 July 2017

Recommendations for Montana 2017 - 2018 Wolf Trapping Proposal

Mandatory 24 Hour Trap Check

Trapping of Montana wolves remains a very contentious issue with the hunting, mountain lion and non consumptive communities. Reflecting on this issue there is cause for concern and a visible lack of representation for the non consumptive community. In an attempt to find common ground wolf advocates have recommended a 24 hour trap check. This would reduce pain and suffering for wolves and other incidental captures. This would hopefully reduce trap and or cold related injuries.

The trapping and collaring of wolves is expensive and is required under Montana law when wolves are near proximity to livestock producers. Governor Bullock has requested both the trapping community and hunting community to avoid killing collared wolves. By implementing a 24 hour trap check we increase the likelihood of a successful release.

There is some concern from the trapping community that it is impossible to have a 24 hour trap check. One individual mentioned inclement weather could lead trappers to violating the law. This is just untrue because there is a degree of law enforcement discretion when issuing a violation citation.

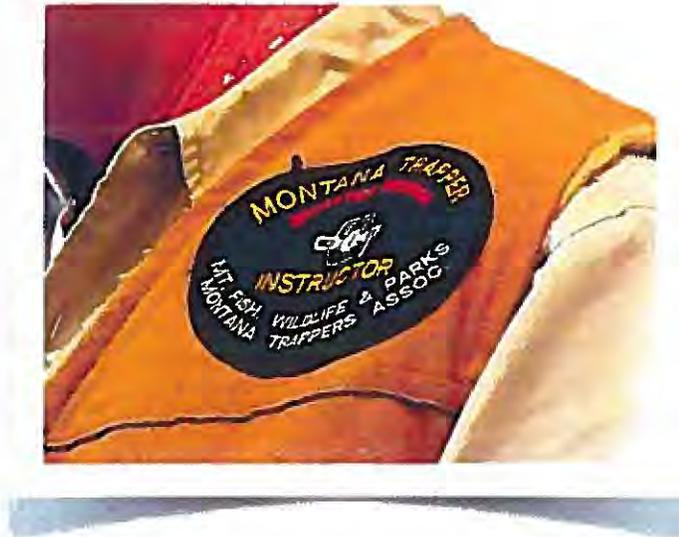
Mandatory 24 hour trap checking will not be going away till the non consumptive community achieves this. In the spirit of "Finding Common Ground" it would be a valued and a loud statement to the wolf community and others to propose and support this recommendation.

Mandatory Trap Modification Requirement

We strongly encourage the Department and Commission to **support** and implement immediate trap modifications. Cost should not be a factor in determining the timing of implementation. Trap modifications could help with reducing wolf injuries and capture myopathy.



Shoulder patch reads MTA & MtFWP as partners! Is this even legal?



~It is blatantly clear MtFWP has a unfair biased history and agenda with MTA Mandatory Trappers Education

We strongly oppose a mandatory trappers education course. The department has made it clear they don't have the staffing resources internally to teach this course. Therefore the department would rely heavily upon the Montana Trappers Association and their members to instruct new student trappers. It is already evident how the MTA feels about anyone or organization that opposes wolf trapping. On June 7th, 2017 Robert Sheppard of MTA and Board of Director, Committee Chair for Education called Marc Cooke and other opposed to wolf trapping "ARF's" or "Animal Right Fanatics." This comment was made while testifying in front of the Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks Director & Commission. Now myself and others are to believe that Mr. Sheppard and other MTA members would be entrusted to instruct a trappers education class fairly? We feel that by the department transferring this responsibility it creates a bias and takes away any level playing field. Furthermore by allowing the MTA to instruct this course it would be used for nothing more then a recruitment opportunity for Montana Trappers Association. Clearly this would be unjust and unfair to the non consumptive community, Public Trust Doctrine and all individuals that don't favor the trapping of wolves. A note of interest is currently the MTA does not have an active "Ethics" Committee member to promote ethics in trapping. How can we trust them to do what right when no one is there to watch over them.



Summary

- 1: *Support : Mandatory 24 Hour Trap Checks*
- 2: *Support: Immediate Mandatory Trap Modifications*
- 3: *Oppose: Mandatory Trapper Training Course*

On behalf of our 200,000 supporters and followers, many of which call Montana home. We encourage the Department and Commission to support our recommendations. If the department or commission has any questions or concerns please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marc Cooke
Executive Director
Wolves of the Rockies*

MTA webpage showing biased shoulder patch: <http://www.montanatrappers.org/programs/education.htm>

MTA webpage showing "Ethics" Position vacant: <http://www.montanatrappers.org/chairs.htm>

From: M. Eggum
Sent: Tuesday, June 27, 2017 7:19 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Montana Trapping Proposals

I am writing in reference to FWP proposals for trapping.

As someone who has had 2 dogs caught in snares I have given much thought to this subject. I am against trapping in general.

But new proposals for regulations need to include lessor amounts of time between trap checks. 48 hours in way too long even if you ignore the fact that it is not really something that can be enforced.

How do you insure that the wrong meat eater won't be trapped? And survive 48 hours if it is?

Hunters knows the risks of killing the wrong species. Why is this so unimportant when it comes to trapping?

Please make trapping a more humane activity.

Mike Eggum

Red Lodge Montana

From:
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2017 7:59 PM
To: FWPCComm@mt.gov
Subject: trapping

Hello,

I am writing about wolf trapping. As I respect wildlife, I am, of course, vehemently against trapping. I ask you to consider releasing wolves from being recollared, have more law enforcement monitoring traps. Montana Trappers and MFWP should not be the sole authors of a trapping curriculum. I would love to support Montana with my tourist dollars if Montana can make the right decision for wildlife.

Thank you,

Melissa Dannelet

From:
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2017 6:09 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Proposed trapping regulations

Commissioners- As a current trapper and father of a teenage trapper, I would ask that you support mandatory trapper education. I would also ask that you leave the trap check times as recommended only. Trap modifications should be recommended only also. The trap modifications and trap check time can be addressed at the trapper education class.

Josh Harris

From: J'aime Angel
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2017 3:33 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping

Dear people,

Study's have shown rapid decline in wolves to the point may cause some breeds to extinction . Please do not do this especially in dens with pups moms we oppose this to the fullest extent to extinction should be placed on close to extinction list please stop this now

Sincerely ,J'aime Angel

Sent from my iPhone

From: L. R.
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2017 3:21 PM
To: FWP Commission;
Subject: Mandated 24 hr trap checks in Montana

**There's No Excuse for ADDED ABUSE!
Insist on 24 hr trap checks in Montana!**



I insist on mandated 24 hour trap checks in Montana!

I cannot support the mandatory trapper education class. I do support the trap modifications. I oppose increasing Regions 1 & 2 to 3 otter/trapper. TFMPL continues to request a quota and tagging of beaver, and I do, too!

There is no such thing as humane trapping, but other than cage traps, and even then, frequent trap checks would reduce the most amount of suffering, additional injury and indiscriminate deaths. The trap checks would apply to all lands!

Sincerely,
Line Ringgaard

From: Evi Meuris
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2017 3:13 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: We insist on mandated 24 hour trap checks

Hello,

Given the evidence, the motives, the bias, and the lack of inclusion with ALL user groups, we cannot support the mandatory trapper education class.

We do support the trap modifications.

We oppose increasing Regions 1 & 2 to 3 otter/trapper.

Most importantly now: we insist on mandated 24 hour trap checks! There is no such thing as humane trapping, but other than cage traps, and even then, frequent trap checks would reduce the most amount of suffering, additional injury and indiscriminate deaths.

Thank you.

Kind regards,
Evi Meuris

From: Jim Goss & Cathy Reich
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 8:43 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Public Comment on Trapping

I cannot support the mandatory trapper education classes, but I do support the trap modifications. I also oppose increasing Regions 1 & 2 to 3 otter/trapper. I would like a quota and tagging of beaver, although not trapping them would be better. *Most importantly, however, we need a mandate for 24-hour trap checks!* There is no such thing as humane trapping, other than cage traps, and even then, frequent trap checks would reduce the amount of suffering, additional injury, and indiscriminate deaths. Trap checks should apply to all lands and all animals that are trapped.

If we have to share our limited public lands with trappers, then they need to abide by some rules so that we, too, can enjoy our public lands. Trappers do not have a monopoly on our lands nor should this tiny minority have the right to dictate to non-trappers what we can and cannot do on these lands. I would like to hike and take out-of-state visitors into our beautiful wild lands, but am very hesitant to do so because of the traps and the trappers.

Please take into consideration the majority of the public (who are not trappers) who like to recreate on public lands. And would it be too much to ask you to take into account the welfare of the wildlife you are charged with protecting?

Thank you.

Cathy Reich

Superior, MT 59872

From: Billy 'The WiZaRd' Angus
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 8:41 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping For Fur Has No Place Anywhere In The 21st Century And Beyond!!!

Dear FWP Commissioners:

Now, I've said this many times before and I'm gonna continue saying it until this barbaric "tradition" is done away with forever or until this old Earth is blown to Kingdom Come, whichever comes first:

Trapping has NO place ANYWHERE in the 21st Century and beyond, and the vast majority of the people (including myself) on this planet are strongly AGAINST trapping and the time is now to end this outdated practice once and for all. We're not in the 1800's anymore and it's time for the so-called "hunters" to evolve into the modern era and find other ways of making a living instead of setting up those ugly monstrosities on public land to kill animals, and worse, pets and/or children run the risk of getting caught in, resulting in excruciating pain (and even death).

Animal fur is no longer fashionable in our modern time, and the time is now to end trapping once and for all!

No sugar-coated spin from a government official or death threat from a ruthless redneck hillbilly will make me change my position nor conform to a cruel and outdated practice from a dark past!!

If I am killed because I'm against trapping, just remember that I do not fear death and I shall die honorably and become a martyred spirit along side with Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse!! Hoka Hey!!

Billy "The WiZaRd" Angus

From:
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 7:45 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: comment on trapping proposal

I am from out of state but visit Montana often. I ask that you approve the new regulation of a 24 hour trap check. Animals should not be made to suffer.

Sincerely,

Lynne Beck
Denver, Colorado

From: mary shabbott
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 6:56 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping

Given the evidence, the motives, the bias, and the lack of inclusion with ALL user groups, I do not support the mandatory trapper education class. I do support the trap modifications. I oppose increasing Regions 1 & 2 to 3 otter/trapper. TFMPPL continues to request a quota and tagging of beaver, and asks that you do, too! I insist on mandated 24 hour trap checks! There is no such thing as humane trapping, but other than cage traps, and even then, frequent trap checks would reduce the most amount of suffering, additional injury and indiscriminate deaths. The trap checks would apply to all lands!

Thank you,
Mary Shabbott

From: Richard Firth
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 5:35 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping Proposals

Dear Commissioners:

Concerning your trapping proposals given the evidence, the motives, the bias, and the lack of inclusion with ALL user groups, **I cannot support the mandatory trapper education class. I do support the trap modifications. I oppose increasing Regions 1 & 2 to 3 otter/trapper. TFMPL continues to request a quota and tagging of beaver, and ask that you do, too! Most importantly now: I insist on mandated 24 hour trap checks!** There is no such thing as humane trapping, but other than cage traps, and even then, frequent trap checks would reduce the most amount of suffering, additional injury and indiscriminate deaths. The trap checks would apply to all lands! It is no secret I most vigorously oppose trapping as one of the cruelest methods to catch an animal, plus the fact **these traps don't discriminate in what they catch which can include pets, endangered species and even small children.**

Even though I am not from Montana I want you to know I will not spend my tourist dollars or desire to settle in any state that treats its wildlife as brutally as your state does

Sincerely,

Richard W. Firth

Mechanicsville, VA 23116

LENDER BEWARE: If a Marie Renee Wilson from Mechanicsville, VA asks you for money **GIVE IT AS A GIFT (NOT REQUIRING PAYBACK) RATHER THAN A LOAN (REQUIRES PAYBACK).** I have loaned her \$3,000.00 and she has only made one payment of \$100.00, bringing the balance down to \$2,900.00, missing five consecutive monthly cash payments of \$71.31. She will promise anything but **LENDER BEWARE!** I would never loan her money again

Some trust in chariots, some in horses and even some in guns but I trust in the Lord

From: Glenn Graham
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 4:39 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: 2017-18 wolf hunting and trapping season in Montana - my comments

Director Williams, Chairmen Vermillion, and Commissioners

I and millions of others come to Montana to see the wolves and the grizzlies. At best – killing them is a waste of resources. I oppose wolf hunting and trapping. Irrational and misplaced hatred of wolves has resulted in their killing in increasing numbers. 246 deaths were reported last year. This is too many.

Trapping should simply be banned because it's inhumane and unethical - 83 wolves were subject to this cruel death in 2016.

The wolf population decreased substantially in 2016. My comments are:-

- Last year more than the quota of wolves were killed in 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 & 400. The quota this year should be reduced.
- Revise SB 200 to 25.
- Lower the quota of bag take from 5 to 2.
- Rifle hunting season to close February 28th. Stop killing pregnant wolves.
- Discontinue trapping. If not, implement a 24-hour check minimum.
- More law enforcement directed towards wolf poaching.

Regards

Glenn Graham

California

From: Jim & Fran Buell
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2017 2:40 PM
To: Williams, Martha
Cc: FWP General
Subject: Comments - Please Fwd to MT FWPCommission

Director Williams
Chairman Vermillion
VChair Stucker
Member Brower
Member Colton
Member Aldrich

I am in favor of the proposed mandatory trapper education that is being considered; this will be a good thing for Montana sportsmen & women to be able to learn from experienced trappers.

While I am a believer in trap modification; I am not in favor of mandatory trap modification. Trap modification as recommended by the AFWA BMPs are a good thing; however (I feel) that if made mandatory it would put a halt to future benefits which may occur and therefore ask that you not impose mandatory trap modification on the sportspersons of Montana – rather deal with modification through the education process.

Also, not now nor in the future, would I be in favor of a mandatory trap check time. While not really apples to apples it would be akin to limiting the number of bullets a rifle hunter could carry or the number of shafts bowhunters would be allowed to take into the field.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

James Buell

Gildford MT 59525



Virus-free. www.avast.com

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- Discontinue trapping. If not, implement a 24-hour check minimum.
- More law enforcement directed towards wolf poaching.

Regards

Glenn Graham

California

From:
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 8:51 PM
To: FWP Commission; FWP Wildlife
Subject: Wolf 2017/2018 proposals

Dear Director Williams, Chairman Vermillion and Wildlife Commissioners,

One commonality shared by many pro-wolf and anti-wolf advocates is the **need for science based management.**

The research provides the evidence of suffering for trapped wildlife. Wolves are being harvested without being trapped and therefore there is no need to trap them. Unlike a trap, a hunter is there to see and know their target.

Prior to legalized trapping of wolves in Montana, public comments were in the tens of thousands. Those opposing trapping of wolves were 375:1. In our experience this has not waned but instead intensified and creates a black eye for Montana. **We urge for a moratorium on trapping wolves other than for science and beneficial purposes.**

As it stands, the facts expose the longer an animal is trapped the more damage that occurs. Wolves reportedly fight traps hard. Permitting wolves to linger in traps for 48 hrs is inhumane and diminishes the chance for any trapped animal to be released uninjured. Your scientists implement **24 hour trap checks**, at most, and so should recreational users be required to do so.

Wolf trapping classes and regulations need to more strongly **emphasize the requirement that all incidental catches** in traps set for wolves need to be reported, i.e. highlight in writing, state repeatedly. **Wolf trapping classes should spend time educating participants** on the scientific role wolves play, their impacts on ungulates, livestock losses, non-lethal preventative actions and dismissing the claims these are the "wrong" wolf species in Montana. Given the potential severe impacts of trapping for wolves, combined with witnessing many class attendees playing on their phone, and the blatant communicated disregard for the law, **trappers should need to pass a test for their wolf trapping certification just as hunters need to for their hunting license.**

Trappers, actually officers of Montana Trappers Association, publicly advocated the ease of trapping wolves by using **hay to cover their traps on public lands.** It is highly doubtful it is certified weed free which lends to more irresponsible and damaging behavior.

It cannot be ignored those that **support, empower and encourage poaching are rampant even publicly.** Perhaps they are simply a very vocal minority. However, how much destruction could they be doing? What would they do given the opportunity? How many are ever caught? Worse, how difficult it has to be to even catch law breakers, especially trappers. It is past time for FWP to regain control and send a clear message that poachers and those that entice them will not be tolerated. Despite the proposition, hunting and trapping of wolves has not increased social tolerance. It has created fear and avoidance among wolf supporters and empowered and fueled wolf haters.

While FWP often catches heat from both sides, management should be based on science as the majority states they agree. **We do not see the science in permitting 5 wolves per trapper?** We do see elk populations are over objective. **Harvesting of wolves in elk over objective areas should be closed. A buffer around national parks at minimum prohibiting traps** for wolves is necessary. These animals don't know of the imaginary line and trappers have reportedly placed baited traps right along park borders. **Areas going over wolf quota should face the consequences in the following season. The same should be true of suspected poaching and the rare proof of poaching.**

FWP needs to provide **more and frequent educational information** to the public to offset the prevalent ignorance that is being spewed and to foster more social norms that align with science based wolf management decisions.

Wolf management needs to actively support, too, the value of these wolves alive to many, to our economy, to their role in the ecosystem. **The non-consumptive user should be rewarded and facilitated to provide financial incentives for non-lethal management thereby fostering economical benefits to the department and to the state.**

Given the precarious nature of large carnivores, and the polarizing public positions on wolves, **wolf management plans should be revisited annually.**

In addition, we feel the **language of SB 200 needs clarification** to prevent misuse as an animal simply being seen could be deemed a threat or a potential threat. A trapper had also communicated with us his setting of traps as a deterrent under SB200. One of our questions is where are the non-lethal deterrents to help avoid the use or ongoing use of SB200?

We urge you to please make the necessary science based corrections. Montana can and should lead the way!

Thank you on behalf of the board of directors and supporters at Trap Free Montana Public Lands.

KC York
President



Exposing the truths in trapping & promoting ethics, modern science & responsible stewardship for trapping reform. We partner with our sister organization, Trap Free Montana, a 501-c3, charitable organization.

Trap Free Montana Public Lands, Inc.
PO Box 1347
Hamilton, Montana 59840
406-218-1170
www.tfmpl.org

From: Todd Werner
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:56 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: My comments for 2017-18 wolf hunting and trapping season in Montana.

Dear Director Williams, Chairmen Vermillion, and Commissioners.

Wolves are being killed at an alarming rate in Montana. Many in Montana and elsewhere want and appreciate wolves on the landscape. Wolves provide many unintended positive actions. From helping with Chronic Wasting Disease, producing sustainable revenue in Yellowstone to controlling other predator population numbers and much more. Changing elk and other ungulate behavior helps forage for other wildlife. Depredation continues to fall in Montana while elk population numbers are increasing. Because wolf population numbers in Montana continue to fall we strongly encourage you to stop trapping wolves or at least implement a 24-hour trap check. Lower SB 200 to 25 wolves per year. Place quotas in areas that we feel have been over hunted or trapped 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 and 400. Please direct more energy towards solving wolf poaching in Montana. Because of the recent Yellowstone wolf poaching it should come off the quota's in 313 and 316 either this year or next year. Close hunting and trapping season at the end of February. It's particularly disturbing killing pregnant wolves and we are better than this.

The trapping of wolves should be discontinued but if not implement a 24 trap check.

The rifle hunting season should close when the trapping season closes on February 28, 2018

More law enforcement directed towards solving wolf poaching.

Lower the quota of bag take from 5 to 2 wolves.

Quota's in 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 & 400 these areas have been over harvested.

Revise SB 200 to be 25 wolves only

Because of the recent Yellowstone wolf poaching it should come off the quota's in 313 and 316 either this year or next year.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Todd Werner
A concerned citizen and potential tourist to Montana

Sent from my iPad

From: Mike Laird
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 11:07 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: My comments for 2017-18 wolf hunting and trapping season in Montana.

With the hunting season lasting 6 months and the trapping season lasting only 2 months but accounting for about 40% of the wolves taken trapping is the most effective means of maintaining wolf populations at intended levels. With the cost of 1 wolf trap being near \$100 far fewer people participant than hunting as well. When statewide quotas were set they were never met with hunting and trapping. Allowing the use of snares (like Idaho) would enable more people to participate in the trapping opportunity offered by Montana. A hunter can hike and explore remote areas and not ever have to return but trappers must return routinely to check traps which presently is 48 hours. A 72 hour check interval (like Idaho) would make it more feasible for people to participant in wolf trapping. Forcing a trap check at 24 hour intervals in December-February in sub zero or blizzard conditions puts people who trap and FWP enforcement at unnecessary risk. By FWP wildlife management principles "Good wildlife management must benefit plants and other animals, not just one species of wildlife.". Wolves have a legitimate place in Montana and must be protected to perpetually sustainable populations, but should not be given difference over anything else.

Respectfully,
Mike Laird
Dillon

From: elisa solaro
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 2:11 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: My comments for 2017-18 wolf hunting and trapping season in Montana.

Dear Director Williams, Chairmen
Vermillion, and Commissioners.

Wolves are being killed at an alarming rate in Montana. Many in Montana and elsewhere want and appreciate wolves on the landscape. Wolves provide many unintended positive actions. From helping with Chronic Wasting Disease to controlling other predator population numbers. Changing elk and other ungulate behavior helps forage for other wildlife. Depredation continues to fall while elk population numbers are increasing. Because wolf population numbers in Montana continue to fall we strongly encourage you to stop trapping wolves or at least implement a 24-hour trap check. Lower SB 200 to 25 wolves per year. Place quotas in areas that we feel have been over hunted or trapped 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 and 400. Please direct more energy towards solving wolf poaching in Montana. End hunting and trapping seas at the end of February. It's particularly disturbing killing pregnant wolves.

Thank you for considering my
comments,

Elisa Solaro

From: Rick Wight
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 5:55 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Subject line: My comments for 2017-18 wolf hunting and trapping season in Montana.

Dear Director Williams, Chairmen Vermillion, and Commissioners.

Wolves are being killed at an alarming rate in Montana. Many in Montana and elsewhere want and appreciate wolves on the landscape. Wolves provide many unintended positive actions. From helping with Chronic Wasting Disease to controlling other predator population numbers. Changing elk and other ungulate behavior helps forage for other wildlife. Depredation continues to fall while elk population numbers are increasing. Because wolf population numbers in Montana continue to fall we strongly encourage you to stop trapping wolves or at least implement a 24-hour trap check. Lower SB 200 to 25 wolves per year. Place quotas in areas that we feel have been over hunted or trapped 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 and 400. Please direct more energy towards solving wolf poaching in Montana. End hunting and trapping seas at the end of February. It's particularly disturbing killing pregnant wolves.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Ricky Wight

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

From:
Sent: Sunday, May 28, 2017 3:51 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: 2017/18 Wolf Hunting & Trapping comment

Dear Director Williams, chairman Vermillion, and commissioners

Today I send you my comment about the upcoming 2017-2018 wolf hunting and trapping season for the state of Montana. I would like to thank you for lowering the quota in units 313 and 316 to 2 wolves which I do appreciate..I do ask you to please consider changing the quota in units 313 and 316 from 2 to 0 wolves being allowed to be killed. Last year these units went over the quota....And also the recent illegal poaching of the alpha female of the Canyon Pack and in 2015 the illegal poaching of the male yearling of the Lamar Canyon Pack and going over the quota in units 316 and 316...these should be taken off of the quota's in units 316 and 313 either this year or next year.

Wildlife watching and photography brings millions of dollars to the local gateway towns of Yellowstone National Park...People from all over the world come in hopes of seeing a wild wolf in their natural environment. We must keep wolves that venture out of the park safe in units 313 and 316...why a 0 quota in these units is a must and so very important to the economy of these gateway towns..wolves are worth more alive than dead.

I have heard that units 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 and 400 have been over harvested and because of this they should all have quota's

Please lower SB 200 to only 25 wolves or less.

The trapping of wolves is a dark age cruel way to kill any animal and should not be allowed in a civilized world...please think about that and if still allowed please implement a 24 hour or less trap check...no animal should have to suffer in a trap for any length of time.

Rifle season should close when trapping season closes on February 28th, 2018...pregnant wolves should not be allowed to be trapped or shot. Please do more to fight illegal killing/poaching of wolves..this seems to be a big problem in Montana in all units...but especially the Park border units 313 and 316...again why those units should have a 0 quota.

Yellowstone National Park is one place where one can come and see a wild wolf in their natural environment..we need to protect them...this is very special. The beautiful 12 year old alpha female of the Canyon Pack...known by millions of people as the White Lady..recently illegally shot killed poached when she was inside the park..where she was suppose to be safe! The reward to find her killer/s is close to \$32,000 and it will get larger...people are outraged and disgusted that the poaching of wolves continues and nothing is being done to catch them. It's been over 2 years since the illegal killing of the male Lamar Canyon yearling wolf and still no justice on his killer/s. Where is the justice for the illegal killing of Scarface the icon grizzly bear that was killed/shot just outside the park boundary by Gardiner, Mt...Scarface is protected under the Endangered Species Act and is a protected animal..horrible how he died...again millions of people loved him and looked forward on seeing him..myself included and now I will never get that chance as I will never get the chance to see the alpha female of the Canyon Pack or the Lamar yearling.

The world is watching what is happening in Montana and around the park..and we want to see change. We come and visit Yellowstone National Park several times a year and we plan on living in the area part of the year when we retire...we are one of the millions that spend thousands of dollars during our visits. We want to know that we are going to continue to be able to see these amazing wolves. They are needed for healthy landscapes and healthy prey populations, they have a right to be here.

Please I ask again to lower the quota in units 313 and 316 from 2 to 0 wolves.

I would like to end my thoughts to you and let you know that the number 3 animals that people want to see while in the park are wolves, grizzlies and bison..and the same they want one of those animals on an item when they shop for a souvenir..this is a known fact and was told to me by one of the buyers for the gift shops...please keep that in mind and realize just how important wolves are.

Thank you so very much for giving me the opportunity to let you know my feelings and thoughts on an issue that is very dear and important to me.

Anita Chittenden

From: Anne Laloge
Sent: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 11:28 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Comments for 2017-18 Wolf Trapping Season

Wolf trapping is cruel and unnecessary. I do not support the killing of wolves at any time, but killing wolves during denning season, or killing wolves in a fashion that involves suffering and fear, is unworthy of us. Montana is valued for its wild and scenic areas; if we clear it of wolves, and bears, and mountain lions, what do you have left? It isn't wilderness if there is nothing in it that is "wild". Please reconsider.

From: Lauren Tess
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 4:37 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Ban Wolf Hunting and Trapping near Yellowstone

Dear Commissioners:

Please don't succumb to hunting interests by putting the shame of allowing wolf trophy hunting and trapping near Yellowstone on your consciences. Hunters have the resources to pursue other hobbies or hunt elsewhere; they are adults and can find alternatives. Show your respect for the barely intact ecosystems of our country by protecting the natural resources we all need to continue to live on the planet in decades and hopefully centuries to come.

Thank you for your time.

Lauren Tess

From: Strong, Zack
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2017 4:38 PM
To: FWP General
Cc: fwpcomm@mt.gov
Subject: NRDC Request for Proposal for 24-Hr or Daily Trap Inspection
Attachments: NRDC Ltr to FWP re 24-Hour or Daily Trap Inspection.pdf

Dear Director Williams and Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission,

Attached is a letter requesting that FWP propose a 24-hour or daily trap-check requirement to the Commission during the upcoming furbearer season-setting process.

Thank you for considering this request.

Zack

ZACK STRONG
Staff Attorney
Wildlife Conservation Project

**NATURAL RESOURCES
DEFENSE COUNCIL**
317 EAST MENDENHALL STREET, SUITES D & E
BOZEMAN, MT 59715
T 406.556.9302
ZSTRONG@NRDC.ORG
NRDC.ORG

Please save paper.
Think before printing



May 11, 2017

Martha Williams
Director, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
fwpgen@mt.gov

Re: Daily or 24-Hour Trap Check Requirement for Restraining Traps and Snares

Dear Director Williams:

On behalf of our more than 6,000 members and supporters in Montana, we write to request that Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) propose a daily or 24-hour trap check requirement for all restraining traps (including foothold and leghold traps, Conibear traps, and snares) during the upcoming June 7 Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting. Unlike nearly every other state, Montana currently does not require traps to be regularly checked (other than those set for wolves and, in some places, bobcats). Regular trap checks—particularly for restraining traps and snares designed to grip or crush the limb or body of an animal—would help reduce the severity of injuries to target and non-target animals and increase the likelihood that non-target animals could be released alive.

Below we have explained the need for trap check requirements in Montana, why daily or 24-hour trap inspections for restraining traps make sense, and the legal authority by which FWP could propose, and the Commission could adopt, such a regulation. Thank you for considering this request.

I. Need for Trap Check Requirements in Montana

Trap and snare inspection requirements are needed in Montana in order to help reduce the severity of injuries and suffering experienced by all trapped animals, and to help reduce mortality of animals caught unintentionally. They are particularly needed for those traps and snares designed to slam down on or tighten around an animal's appendage or body.

Montana law currently allows traps or snares to be set for a wide range of wildlife, including wolves, “fur-bearing animals” (such as bobcats, beavers, and swift foxes), “predatory animals” (such as coyotes, weasels, and skunks), and “non-game wildlife” (such as badgers, raccoons, and red foxes).¹ Yet the only traps or snares required to be visually inspected with any regularity are those set for wolves (every 48 hours), and those set for bobcats within “Lynx Protection Zones” (also every 48 hours).²

Montana trapping regulations state that trappers “should” check traps set for other species every 48 hours, but do not require it.³ State law and regulations prohibit “wasting” furbearers by failing to attend or pick up traps at the end of the trapping season—but weeks could go by between inspections, trapping seasons are months long, and these provisions do not apply to predatory or non-game animals.⁴

Thus, it appears to be lawful in Montana to set traps or snares for dozens of species of wildlife but not check them for days or even weeks at a time. This is a problem because trapped animals may be left to suffer for prolonged periods before eventually succumbing to starvation, dehydration, exposure, predation, or other causes of death. It is particularly a problem with respect to restraining and body-gripping devices such as foothold traps, Conibear traps, and snares that can cause severe pain and stress when they grip or crush an animal’s limb, body, or neck.

Montana is one of the only states left in the country that do not require traps and snares to be regularly checked.⁵ Nearly every other state that allows trapping limits the amount of time that may pass before all or most types of traps must be inspected in person. Adopting trap inspection requirements in Montana would thus better align trapping practices in our state with practices already followed in other states throughout the West and the nation.

Adopting trap inspection regulations would also benefit an enormous number of animals. During the 2013-2014 recreational trapping season alone, nearly 53,000 furbearers, predators, and non-game animals were legally trapped and reported in Montana.⁶ Many thousands of these animals were caught by foothold traps or other devices that did not kill them quickly or at all. Requiring those traps to be regularly checked would reduce the amount of needless suffering experienced by thousands of Montana’s wild animals each year.

¹ See § 87-2-101, M.C.A.

² See Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 2016 Wolf Hunting Regulations, p. 5; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 2016 Furbearer Hunting and Trapping Regulations, p. 4.

³ See Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 2016 Furbearer Hunting and Trapping Regulations, p. 3.

⁴ See § 87-6-603, M.C.A.

⁵ The only other state that does not have regular trap inspection requirements appears to be North Dakota. See 2016 North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Furbearer Hunting and Trapping Guide, p. 2.

⁶ Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Furbearer Program, Statewide Harvest & Management Report, 2013-2014, p. 14.

Further, such a regulation would benefit a wide variety of non-target species. Between 2010 and 2014, traps and snares in Montana unintentionally captured, injured, or killed at least 89 mountain lions, 12 black bears, three grizzly bears,* four wolves, 21 bobcats, 31 river otters, four wolverines,* three lynx,* three fishers,* nine deer, one elk, one pronghorn antelope, 5 raptors,* and ten badgers, among other species.^{7, 8} These are just the reported incidents. Requiring traps to be checked frequently would increase the chances that these species would be able to be released alive and less seriously injured.

II. Need for Daily or 24-Hour Trap Checks for Restraining Traps

FWP should propose that all restraining traps and snares be visually inspected at least once each day, or at least once within each 24-hour period. Such time intervals would help reduce suffering, injuries, and unintentional mortality; are recommended and adhered to by scientists and trapping professionals; and have been adopted by a majority of state fish and wildlife agencies in the U.S. for at least some trapping situations. Importantly, such a requirement is needed even for restraining traps and snares designed to kill instantly because they do not always do so—particularly when non-target animals are captured.

Daily or 24-hour trap inspections would help reduce suffering, injury, and unintentional mortality of captured animals. The longer an animal remains in a snare or trap, the higher the likelihood of injury or death. As one report on the impacts of snaring explains:

The extent of injuries and distress experienced by a trapped animal is strongly influenced by the length of time it is restrained in the trap. A long restraint time is a factor in the development of dehydration (Powell 2005, Marks 2010), starvation, effects of exposure (e.g. hypothermia), and capture myopathy.⁹ . . . Females may be prevented from returning to their offspring, who will subsequently die of starvation.¹⁰

Likewise, “[i]ncreased periods of confinement in leg-hold traps are associated with correspondingly larger exertion, struggling and injury.”¹¹ Thus, using “daily or almost daily (1.4

⁷ See https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/sa_reports/sa_pdrs (last visited May 11, 2017); Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Incidental Captures in Montana 2009-2014 License Years (provided Jan. 2016).

⁸ Those species with an asterisk (*) following their name are currently designated as “species of concern” in Montana. From records provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, it is not clear which raptors were captured; multiple raptor species are designated as species of concern in the state.

⁹ “Capture” or “exertional” myopathy is a degenerative disease that can lead to illness or death “characterized by damage to skeletal and cardiac muscles and associated with physiological imbalances following extreme exertion, struggle, and stress.” Cattet et al. 2008, p. 984.

¹⁰ Ochlitz, Dr. Irene, OneKind Report on Snaring: The Impacts of Snares on Animal Welfare, Center for Animal Welfare and Anthrozoology (Oct. 2010), p. 8.

¹¹ Nocturnal Wildlife Research Pty Ltd, Welfare Outcomes of Leg-hold Trap Use in Victoria (“Leg-hold Trap Use in Victoria”) (Sept. 2008), p. 76.

days), early-morning trap checks have reduced injuries to trapped animals.” Andelt et al. 1999 (citing Novak 1987, Saunders et al. 1988, Proulx et al. 1994).

The American Veterinary Medical Association has expressed concern with animals being subjected to fear and injury caused by limb restraint in leghold traps for even as long as 24 hours, not to mention days or weeks.¹² Indeed, devices such as remote trap monitors have been developed in order to “reduce the amount of time an animal spends in the trap or snare, thus minimizing injury to animals that are captured.” Darrow and Shivik 2008 (citing Larkin et al. 2003, O’Neill et al. 2007). In a study involving the trapping of black bears and other large carnivores, Wildlife Services researchers explained that “[d]eferred time between trap checks could also ensure quicker responses by trappers, thus reducing the likelihood of stress or injury to captured animals.” Halstead et al. 1995.

Daily trap inspections have long been a widely recommended and adopted standard. In 1999, Andelt et al. noted that “Bogges and Henderson (1981) and the Fur Institute of Canada (1989) recommended that all live-holding devices set on land should be checked daily.” In a review of 27 studies regarding trap-related injuries and trap-injury mitigation, Turnbull et al. 2013 found that at least 81% involved trap-check intervals of 24 hours or less.

Further, in 2007, a survey by the U.S. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies found that a “[d]aily or 24 hour trap check is required for traps set on land in most states: foothold traps (69%), bodygrip traps (67%) and snares (60%).”¹³ Today, based on a review of every state’s trapping regulations, at least 36 states have adopted 24-hour or daily trap-check requirements for at least some trapping situations. Indeed, “[d]aily (i.e., once each 24 hour period) inspection appears to be a minimum accepted world-wide standard to reduce trapping injury”¹⁴

In fact, in a cooperative management agreement between FWP and USDA Wildlife Services, both agencies have agreed that traps or snares set for wolves between March and November must be checked every 24 hours.¹⁵ Some FWP biologists even check their research traps twice each day in the summer when captured animals are at risk of overheating. Yet FWP and the Commission have not applied these same sensible provisions to recreational trappers.

In response to a petition submitted last year by NRDC requesting 24-hour or daily trap checks, FWP stated that “[a] 24-hour trap check would be extremely difficult to virtually impossible for

¹² American Veterinary Medical Association, Leghold Trap Use in Conservation and Research (April 30, 2008), p. 3.

¹³ Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group, Summary of Trapping Regulations for Fur Harvesting in the United States (2007), p. 17.

¹⁴ Review of Welfare Outcomes in Victoria, p. 76.

¹⁵ Memorandum of Understanding Between Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services Regarding the Cooperative Wildlife Damage Management Program for Grizzly Bear, Gray Wolves, Black Bears, and Mountain Lion in the State of Montana (2014) (“2014 MOU”) Art. V, ¶ E.

Montana trappers” due to our state’s “vast trapping landscape.”¹⁶ That does not make sense. Montana’s size, rural nature, and extensive public land should make it that much easier to find places close enough to one’s home to lawfully set traps and monitor them at least once a day.

FWP also stated that a 24-hour trap check requirement might reduce trapping opportunity. But that should not prevent the adoption of reasonable and much-needed regulations. Numerous existing regulations have the effect of reducing hunting, angling, and trapping opportunities. These include a wide range of limits on when, where, what type of, how many, and by what method wildlife may be caught or killed. Such regulations have been adopted because FWP has a statutory obligation to protect, preserve, manage, and propagate Montana’s wildlife.¹⁷ Harvest opportunity must be balanced against this responsibility. FWP should propose a 24-hour or daily trap inspection requirement because it would continue to allow harvest opportunity while reducing the severity of injuries to target and non-target animals and increasing the likelihood that non-target animals could be released alive—thus enhancing the protection, preservation, and management of Montana’s wildlife.

III. Legal Authority

FWP and the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission have the legal authority to establish visual inspection requirements not only for traps set for wolves and furbearers, but also for predators and nongame species. While the Montana Department of Agriculture has the authority to control some predatory animals (see § 81-7-102, M.C.A.), this authority does “not interfere with or impair the power and duties of the department of fish, wildlife, and parks in the control of predatory animals by the department of fish, wildlife, and parks as authorized by law . . .” (§ 81-7-102(4), M.C.A.). Indeed, FWP has a duty to “supervise all the wildlife, fish, game, game and nongame birds, waterfowl, and the game and fur-bearing animals of the state . . .” and “possesses all powers necessary to fulfill the duties prescribed by law . . .” § 87-1-201(1), M.C.A. (emphases added).

Montana law broadly defines “wildlife” as “a wild mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, mollusk, crustacean, or other wild animal or any part, product, egg, or offspring or the dead body or parts of the animal.” § 87-5-102(9). Thus, under this broad definition, and according to the plain meaning of “wildlife,” FWP has the authority to protect, preserve, and manage all wildlife within Montana.

Similarly, the Commission has a responsibility to “set the policies for the protection, preservation, management, and propagation of the wildlife . . . of the state and for the fulfillment of all other responsibilities of the department related to fish and wildlife as provided by law.” § 87-1-301(a) (emphasis added). These policies include “the hunting, fishing, and trapping rules of

¹⁶ Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks’ Evaluation of the Natural Resources Defense Council Rulemaking Petition to the F&W Commission in the matter of adoption and amendment of rules pertaining to the incidental snaring, trapping, and poisoning of grizzly bears and other wildlife in Montana (“FWP Evaluation”) (April 28, 2016), p. 2.

¹⁷ See, e.g., § 87-1-201(2)-(3), M.C.A.

the department.” § 87-1-301(1)(b), M.C.A. (emphases added). Thus, it is clear that FWP and the Commission have the authority to set trapping regulations for all wildlife in Montana.

In fact, FWP and the Commission recently exercised such authority by establishing trail setbacks for traps set for furbearers, predators, and non-game species: “Setbacks now apply to all public federal and state lands for the trapping of **predators and non-game wildlife** as well as **furbearers at any time.**”¹⁸ FWP and the Commission should exercise the same authority to establish visual inspection requirements for traps and snares set for all wildlife in Montana, including wolves, furbearers, predators, and nongame species.

IV. Conclusion

In its response to NRDC’s 2016 petition, FWP explained that it “has been working with the trapping community to address a trap check time for all species,” and that “[t]he trapping community has not been receptive to a 24-hr trap check time.”¹⁹ Of course, FWP must manage wildlife on behalf of—and work with, and consider the views of—all Montanans, not just a select few.

FWP also stated that “[t]he appropriate venue for addressing trap check times is to openly discuss it with stakeholders and bring a proposal to the commission during the regular season-setting process.”²⁰ This letter requests that FWP do both.

Given the potential for traps and snares to capture non-target species—and the many studies showing that less time spent in traps means less injury and death—frequent, visual inspection requirements in Montana make sense. Further, it does not make sense that such requirements apply to only two species (wolves and, in some places, bobcats). Fishers, eagles, bears, beavers, mountain lions, wolverines, deer, antelope, and other species—target and non-target alike—should also be released or killed as quickly as possible, to avoid unnecessary suffering, injury, and death.

In order to minimize stress, struggling, exertion, injury, and unnecessary mortality to target and non-target species, we respectfully request that FWP propose that all restraining traps and snares set for all species in Montana be visually inspected at least once each day or every 24 hours.

Sincerely,



Zack Strong

¹⁸ Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 2016 Furbearer Hunting and Trapping Regulations, p. 2 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹ FWP Evaluation, p. 2.

²⁰ *Id.*

Staff Attorney
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zstrong@nrdc.org

CC: Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission; fwpcomm@mt.gov

Scientific Literature Cited

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From: Bruce Olson
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 10:22 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: My comments for 2017-18 wolf hunting and trapping season in Montana

Dear Director Williams, Chairmen Vermillion, and Commissioners.

Wolves are being killed at an alarming rate in Montana. Many in Montana and elsewhere want and appreciate wolves on the landscape. Wolves provide many unintended positive actions. From helping with Chronic Wasting Disease to controlling other predator population numbers. Changing elk and other ungulate behavior helps forage for other wildlife. Depredation continues to fall while elk population numbers are increasing. Because wolf population numbers in Montana continue to fall we strongly encourage you to stop trapping wolves or at least implement a 24-hour trap check. Lower SB 200 to 25 wolves per year. Place quotas in areas that we feel have been over hunted or trapped 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 and 400. Please direct more energy towards solving wolf poaching in Montana. End hunting and trapping seas at the end of February. It's particularly disturbing killing pregnant wolves.

Thank you for considering my comments,
Bruce Olson

From: Debbie Pierce
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 10:19 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: My comments for 2017-18 wolf hunting and trapping season in Montana

Dear Director Williams, Chairmen Vermillion, and Commissioners.

Wolves are being killed at an alarming rate in Montana. Many in Montana and elsewhere want and appreciate wolves on the landscape. Wolves provide many unintended positive actions. From helping with Chronic Wasting Disease to controlling other predator population numbers. Changing elk and other ungulate behavior helps forage for other wildlife. Depredation continues to fall while elk population numbers are increasing. Because wolf population numbers in Montana continue to fall we strongly encourage you to stop trapping wolves or at least implement a 24-hour trap check. Lower SB 200 to 25 wolves per year. Place quotas in areas that we feel have been over hunted or trapped 100, 101, 121, 210, 250, 290, 310, 390 and 400. Please direct more energy towards solving wolf poaching in Montana. End hunting and trapping seas at the end of February. It's particularly disturbing killing pregnant wolves.

Thank you for considering my comments,
Debbie Pierce

From: Carol Reisner
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 10:42 AM
To: FWP Commission; FWP Wildlife
Subject: Yellowstone wolves

Please do not allow wolf trophy hunting or trapping near Yellowstone National Park. Park wolves are being killed. These animals mean so much to me and to millions of other people. Do not undercut the reputation of Montana and its wildlife management program. Wolves have proven to be an asset to the park and the lands around the park by naturally culling herds of deer and elk. It has been beneficial to these herds because the wolves tend to take the weak and diseased animals, leaving a fewer number in the herd but a healthier herd.

Thank you

Carol Reisner

From: Carole Menninger
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 4:00 PM
To: FWP Commission; FWP Wildlife
Subject: Yellowstone Park's Wolves!

Please do NOT allow trophy hunting or cruel trapping near Yellowstone National Park. Park wolves mean so much to me and to millions of other people. Along with Americans from every state, tourists come from other countries to view and photograph these animals, along with other wildlife. There was a wonderful film made a few years back entitled "How Wolves Change Rivers". It highlights the effects of re-introducing wolves to the park, how they impacted not only other wildlife, but the forest and the rivers. It can be seen on Utube. And it is not just that these animals deserve the right to live here with their families, wolves are critical in our ecosystem. To think many would be slaughtered and for what? There is no valid reason. Having a safety zone bordering the park would help any wolves who stray.....

And I hope that after hearing from so many Americans, you will reconsider allowing this to happen.

Carole Menninger

Katy, TX 77450

From: Darlene
Sent: Sunday, July 16, 2017 5:49 PM
To: FWPCComm@mt.gov
Cc: Darlene
Subject: Upcoming Trapping Season in MT

Good evening,

I'm writing to share my comments with you for the upcoming trapping season 2017 in MT.

Although I'm not a resident of this beautiful state, I do frequent Yellowstone and surrounding areas often. My family also owns a ranch near Douglas WY.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important issue.

My personal feelings towards trapping are that it's a cruel and outdated method and can lead to great suffering before death. Even if trapping were to successfully target only the specific wildlife intended – the reality is – that doesn't happen. Many non-targeted wildlife end up in these traps – even pets and potentially people. For anyone trying to "take" an animal – it gives them an unfair advantage and is unsportsmanlike and unethical. I'm of the mind set that if you can't "hump" your way tracking to your prey the way any predatory animal does in the wild then you should be out of luck. Instead, we humans resort to what essentially would be shortcuts and timesavers – using means that cause excruciating pain and suffering.

If trapping can't be outlawed at this time, then at a minimum, the most stringent of restrictions should be placed upon the practice. The following are such suggestions:

1. Mandatory 24-hour trap checks. This should be standard and absolutely adhered to. It also helps in releasing family pets and incidental capture more successfully. However many will still die.
2. As requested by Montana Governor Bullock radio-collared wolves be released. It's very costly to continually radio collar wolves.
3. No to Trapper Education Program instructed by members past or present of Montana Trappers Association (bias here)
4. No to a curriculum designed by only Montana Trappers Association & MtFWP. Wildlife belongs to all Montanas under the Public Trust Doctrine (again, bias)
5. Don't allow any method of organizational recruitment in Trappers Education Courses (bias)
6. More law enforcement commitment to check and monitor trapping.
7. Reestablish a balanced new Montana Trappers Advisory Committee that represents all interested organizations in Montana (this also seems absolutely critical) everyone should be at the table – all have important view points (everyone thinks their viewpoints are important – just as I think are mine).

In the end, trapping is a horrendous practice that really should have no place in modern times. But, until a time when it becomes taboo, then the above standards should be required.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment and thanks for the consideration of my perspective.

Darlene Handley
Glendale, AZ

From: Shannon Gant
Sent: Sunday, July 16, 2017 9:07 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping

I cant imagine what these poor animals go through, when they are trapped. Many leave behind babies, mates, etc. The pain and fear is something, that I couldn't imagine. Please consider this. Thank u.
Shannon Gant.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

From: Judy McMullen
Sent: Saturday, July 15, 2017 7:00 PM
To: FWPComm@mt.gov,
Subject: Upcoming 2017- 18 Furbearer and Trapping season

Dear Sirs,

While there is nothing "Humane " about trapping, and I would love to see it banned altogether, there are some suggestions I would like to make:

1. Put in place mandatory 24-hour trap checks. This is as close to" humane" as you can get. It also helps in releasing family pets and incidental capture more successfully. However many will still die.
2. As requested by Montana Governor Bullock radio-collared wolves be released. It's very costly to continually radio collar wolves.
3. Say no to Trapper Education Program instructed by members past or present of Montana Trappers Association.
4. Say no to a curriculum designed by only Montana Trappers Association & MtFWP. Wildlife belongs to all Montanas under the Public Trust Doctrine.
5. Do not allow any method of organizational recruitment in Trappers Education Courses.
6. More law enforcement commitment to check and monitor trapping.
7. Reestablish a balanced new Montana Trappers Advisory Committee that represents all interested organizations in Montana.

I would also like to suggest much harsher punishment for poachers. A slap on the wrist does nothing to stop this ongoing problem.

Thank you for taking these into consideration,

Judy McMullen

From: Dorothy Filson
Sent: Friday, July 14, 2017 9:13 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping Proposals Comments

Trapping of wild animals on public lands in Montana continues to reduce fragile populations of some species and continues to pose a safety hazard for those who use public lands for recreation as well as their pets. Trapping maims and kills endangered species and continued trapping practices could lead to the extinction of lynx, wolverine, fisher, marten and otter in Montana.

Currently no trap check requirements exist in Montana. A 24 hour trap check should be implemented immediately.

One \$28.00 furbearer license covers unlimited traps and trappers do not have to post signs in areas where they trap. Trapping is torture, leaving the animal to suffer, sometimes for days. Trapped animals are often attacked by other animals or die of dehydration or hyperthermia. Animals that are still alive when the trapper returns are clubbed or stomped to death in order not to blemish the pelt. The trapper can then sell the pelts or animal parts and profit personally from Montana's wildlife, giving nothing back. Most pelts are sold to China, Russia and eastern European countries, due to the steep decline in the market for pelts in the United States.

Many non-target animals are killed in traps, including eagles, and their offspring die as a result. It is generally healthy animals, not sick ones, that get lured into traps and it has been documented that for every target animal caught, two are discarded. Tens of thousands of traps are concealed around Montana—along roadways and in popular hiking areas. Traps for some species can be set anywhere, anytime with no regulation.

Trapping rare and reclusive animals also negatively impacts Montana's economy. Currently, trapping licenses generate around \$96,000 in revenue compared to hunting which brings in an estimated \$311 million and fishing, \$226 million. Wildlife watching brings in an estimated \$500 million.

Trapping causes brutal suffering and poses a significant danger to people and their pets. If a dog is caught in a Conibear trap, it would take at least two strong people to retrieve the animal, and time is of the essence. Those traps are designed to kill. Many hikers have watched in horror as their dog dies, unable to do anything to help.

Please keep an open mind and consider the down side to trapping. It provides a small amount of income for a limited group, but leaves behind a wake of destruction and devastation.

Montana is one of the rare places where we still have wildlife to enjoy and benefit from. Let's do all we can to preserve and protect it now and for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dorothy Filson

Bozeman, Montana

From: Strong, Zack
Sent: Friday, July 14, 2017 1:17 PM
To: FWP General; fwpcomm@mt.gov
Subject: NRDC Comment Letter re Proposed Trapping Regulations
Attachments: NRDC sign-on letter re 24-hour trap checks in MT 7-14-17.pdf

Dear Director Williams and Montana Fish and Wildlife Commissioners,

Attached is a brief comment letter that NRDC, along with more than a dozen other organizations, and more than 180 individuals—primarily Montana residents—submitted in regards to the proposed 2017-18 furbearer and trapping regulations.

The letter demonstrates two important points. First, there is widespread support for a 24-hour or daily trap-check requirement in Montana. For the reasons stated in the letter, we urge the Department and the Commission to consider and adopt such a regulation.

Second, there is widespread interest in Montana's management of furbearers and other wildlife. In the future, to the extent the Department consults with the public in developing proposals for the furbearer and trapping seasons, it should involve not just the trapping community, but the broader public as well, including the many organizations and individuals represented in our letter.

Thank you for your consideration, and please let me know if I can provide any additional information or answer any questions.

Respectfully,

Zack

ZACK STRONG
Staff Attorney
Wildlife Conservation Project

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July 14, 2017

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Wildlife Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
fwpwld@mt.gov

Re: 2017-18 Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas - Proposed

Dear Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

The undersigned organizations and individuals submit these comments in support of a 24-hour or daily trap inspection requirement for all restraining traps (including foothold traps, Conibear traps, and snares) set for all species in the state of Montana. Such a requirement is needed for several reasons.

First, Montana is one of only three states in the country with no general trap check requirement. The other two are North Dakota and Alaska.¹ Every other state that allows recreational trapping, as well as all three Canadian provinces that border Montana, require that traps and snares be regularly inspected.

Second, daily trap check requirements are common. Thirty-six states have adopted 24-hour or daily trap inspection requirements for at least some types of traps or trapping situations.² These include western states like Washington, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado.

Third, numerous scientific studies indicate that 24-hour or daily trap inspections would help reduce the severity of injuries inflicted on captured animals.³ Long restraint time is associated with increased exertion, struggling, injury, dehydration, starvation, effects of exposure (such as hypothermia), and capture myopathy (physiological imbalances following extreme struggle and stress).

¹ See Appendix.

² Id.

³ See, e.g., Andelt, W. F., R. L. Phillips, R. H. Schmidt, and R. B. Gill. 1999. Trapping furbearers: an overview of the biological and social issues surrounding a public policy controversy. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 27(1):53-64; Cattet, M., J. Boulanger, G. Stenhouse, R. A. Powell, and M. J. Reynolds-Hogland, An Evaluation of Long-term Capture Effects in Ursids: Implication for Wildlife Welfare and Research, *Journal of Mammalogy*, 89(4):973-990 (2008); Halstead, T. D., K. S. Gruver, R. L. Phillips, and R. E. Johnson. 1995. Using telemetry equipment for monitoring traps and snares. *Proceedings of the Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop* 12:121-123.

Fourth, requiring that traps be checked each day would also reduce injury to, and unintentional mortality of, “non-target” species. Between 2010 and 2014, traps and snares in Montana unintentionally captured, injured, or killed at least 89 mountain lions, 12 black bears, three grizzly bears,* four wolves, 21 bobcats, 31 river otters, four wolverines,* three lynx,* three fishers,* nine deer, one elk, one pronghorn antelope, 5 raptors,* and ten badgers, among other species.⁴⁻⁵ These are just the reported incidents. Requiring traps to be checked frequently would increase the chances that these species would be able to be released alive and less seriously injured.

Fifth, wildlife professionals support daily trap inspections. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Trapper Education Manual urges trappers to “make a commitment to check your traps at least once every day” in order to reduce suffering, more quickly release non-target animals, and actually improve success (by, for example, reducing the chance of predation on an animal caught in a trap).⁶ Likewise, in its online trapping course, AFWA treats daily trap checks as a cornerstone of ethical trapping practice, and consistently instructs trappers to perform them.⁷

Further, in its guidelines for the use of wild animals in research, the American Society of Mammalogists states that most traps should be checked at least once a day,⁸ and restraining traps like snares and foothold traps must be checked “twice daily or more often depending upon target species and potential for capture of non-target species.”⁹ The American Veterinary Medical Association has also expressed concern with animals being subjected to fear and injury caused by limb restraint in leghold traps for even as long as 24 hours, not to mention days or weeks.¹⁰

Finally, FWP has said that implementing a 24-hour or daily trap check requirement would be difficult due to Montana’s large size.¹¹ That does not make sense. Montana’s size, rural nature, and extensive public land should make it that much easier to find places close enough to one’s home to lawfully set traps and monitor them at least once a day. Moreover, larger states than Montana have already adopted frequent trap inspection requirements. California requires that traps be checked daily, and Texas requires that traps be checked every 36 hours.¹²

⁴ See https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/sa_reports/sa_pdrs (last visited July 14, 2017); Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Incidental Captures in Montana 2009-2014 License Years (provided Jan. 2016).

⁵ Those species with an asterisk (*) following their name are currently designated as “species of concern” in Montana. From records provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, it is not clear which raptors were captured; multiple raptor species are designated as species of concern in the state.

⁶ See Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Trapper Education Manual, p. 97 (2005).

⁷ See Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, North American Basic Trapper Course, Introduction, available at <https://conservationlearning.org/> (last visited July 14, 2017).

⁸ See Sikes, R.S., W. L. Gannon, and the Animal Care and Use Committee of the American Society of Mammalogists. 2011. Guidelines of the American Society of Mammalogists for the use of wild mammals in research, *Journal of Mammalogy*, 92(1):235-253, 244.

⁹ *Id.* at 242.

¹⁰ American Veterinary Medical Association, Leghold Trap Use in Conservation and Research (April 30, 2008), p. 3.

¹¹ Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks’ Evaluation of the Natural Resources Defense Council Rulemaking Petition to the F&W Commission in the matter of adoption and amendment of rules pertaining to the incidental snaring, trapping, and poisoning of grizzly bears and other wildlife in Montana (“FWP Evaluation”) (April 28, 2016), p. 2.

¹² See Appendix.

In sum, in order to minimize stress, struggling, exertion, injury, and unnecessary mortality to target and non-target species, we respectfully request that FWP adopt a regulation requiring that all restraining traps and snares set for all species in Montana be visually inspected at least once each day or every 24 hours.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



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Appendix A: Trap Check Requirements in the United States

Table 1: General Trap Check Intervals by State for Live Sets*

	INTERVAL:	BY STATUTE/REGULATION:
ALABAMA	24 hours ¹	ALA. CODE § 9-11-266
ALASKA	None	N/A
ARIZONA	Daily	ARIZ. ADMIN. CODE § 12-4-307(G)(1)
ARKANSAS	Daily	002-00-001 ARK. CODE R. §17.02
CALIFORNIA	Daily	CAL. CODE REGS. tit. 14, § 465.5(g)(2)
COLORADO	Daily ²	COLO. CODE REGS. § 406-3 #302(B)(2)
CONNECTICUT	24 hours	CONN. GEN. STAT. § 26-72
DELAWARE	24 hours ³	DEL. CODE tit. 7, § 705
FLORIDA	24 hours	FLA. ADMIN. CODE r. 68A-24.002(1)
GEORGIA	24 hours	GA. CODE § 27-3-63
HAWAII	No furbearer trapping	HAW. ADMIN. CODE § 13-123-22
IDAHO	72 hours ⁴	IDAHO ADMIN. CODE § 13.01.16.200.01
ILLINOIS	Daily	520 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/2.33a
INDIANA	24 hours	IND. CODE § 14-22-6-4
IOWA	24 hours	IOWA CODE § 481A.92
KANSAS	Daily	KAN. ADMIN. REGS. § 115-6-5
KENTUCKY	24 hours	KY. REV. STAT. § 150.410(2)
LOUISIANA	Daily	LA. REV. STAT. § 56:260
MAINE	Daily	ME. REV. STAT. tit. 12, § 12255(1)
MARYLAND	Daily ⁵	MD. CODE REGS. 08.03.06.03(E)
MASSACHUSETTS	Daily	321 MASS. CODE REGS. 3.02(e)(11)
MICHIGAN	Daily ⁶	Mich. Wildlife Conservation Order § 3.600(12)
MINNESOTA	Daily	MINN. R. 6234.2200
MISSISSIPPI	36 hours	MISS. CODE ANN. § 49-7-13(4)(d)
MISSOURI	Daily	MO. CODE REGS. tit. 3, § 10-8.510(2)
MONTANA	None	N/A
NEBRASKA	Daily	163 NEB. ADMIN. CODE § 4-001.03A1
NEVADA	96 hours ⁷	NEV. ADMIN. CODE § 503.152
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Daily	N.H. REV. STAT. § 210:13
NEW JERSEY	24 hours	N.J. ADMIN. CODE § 7:25-5.12(i)
NEW MEXICO	Daily	N.M. CODE R. § 19.32.2.11(A)
NEW YORK	24 hours ⁸	N.Y. COMP. CODES R. & REGS. tit. 6, § 6.3(a)(3)
NORTH CAROLINA	Daily	15A N.C. ADMIN. CODE 10B.0110
NORTH DAKOTA	None	N/A
OHIO	Daily	OHIO ADMIN. CODE 1501:31-15-09(G)
OKLAHOMA	24 hours	OKLA. STAT. tit. 29, §5-502(C)
OREGON	48 hours ⁹	OR. REV. STAT. § 498.172
PENNSYLVANIA	36 hours	34 PA. CONS. STAT. § 2361(a)(10)

RHODE ISLAND	24 hours	20 R.I. GEN. LAWS § 20-16-9
SOUTH CAROLINA	Daily	S.C. Code § 50-11-2440
SOUTH DAKOTA	72 hours ¹⁰	S.D. Admin. R. 41:08:02:03
TENNESSEE	36 hours ¹⁸	TENN. CODE § 70-4-120(a)(1)(C)
TEXAS	36 hours	31 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 65.375(c)(2)(E)
UTAH	48 hours	UTAH ADMIN. CODE r. 657-11-9(12)
VERMONT	Daily	VT. STAT. tit. 10A, § 44(4.1)
VIRGINIA	Daily	4 VA. ADMIN. CODE § 15-40-195
WASHINGTON	24 hours	WASH. ADMIN. CODE § 220-417-030(4)(c)
WEST VIRGINIA	Daily	W. VA. CODE R. § 58-53-3.3
WISCONSIN	Daily	WIS. ADMIN. CODE NR § 10.13(3)(a)
WYOMING	72 hours ¹¹	040-0001-4 WYO. CODE R. § 9(a)

* "Live sets" are traps or snares intended to capture the animal alive.

Table 2: General Trap Check Intervals by State for Kill Sets**

	INTERVAL:	BY STATUTE/REGULATION:
ALABAMA	24 hours ¹	ALA. CODE § 9-11-266
ALASKA	None	N/A
ARIZONA	Daily	ARIZ. ADMIN. CODE § 12-4-307(G)(1)
ARKANSAS	72 hours	002-00-001 ARK. CODE R. §17.02
CALIFORNIA	Daily	CAL. CODE REGS. tit. 14, § 465.5(g)(2)
COLORADO	Daily ²	COLO. CODE REGS. § 406-3 #302(B)(2)
CONNECTICUT	24 hours	CONN. GEN. STAT. § 26-72
DELAWARE	24 hours ³	DEL. CODE tit. 7, § 705
FLORIDA	24 hours ¹²	FLA. ADMIN. CODE r. 68A-24.002(1)
GEORGIA	24 hours	GA. CODE § 27-3-63
HAWAII	No furbearer trapping	HAW. ADMIN. CODE § 13-123-22
IDAHO	72 hours ⁴	IDAHO ADMIN. CODE § 13.01.16.200.01
ILLINOIS	Daily	520 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/2.33a
INDIANA	24 hours	IND. CODE § 14-22-6-4
IOWA	24 hours ¹³	IOWA CODE § 481A.92
KANSAS	Daily	KAN. ADMIN. REGS. § 115-6-5
KENTUCKY	24 hours	KY. REV. STAT. § 150.410(2)
LOUISIANA	Daily	LA. REV. STAT. § 56:260
MAINE	Daily ¹⁴	ME. REV. STAT. tit. 12, § 12255(1)
MARYLAND	Daily ⁵	MD. CODE REGS. 08.03.06.03(E)
MASSACHUSETTS	Daily	321 MASS. CODE REGS. 3.02(e)(11)
MICHIGAN	None	Mich. Wildlife Conservation Order § 3.600
MINNESOTA	Every three days	MINN. R. 6234.2200
MISSISSIPPI	36 hours	MISS. CODE ANN. § 49-7-13(4)(d)
MISSOURI	48 hours	MO. CODE REGS. tit. 3, § 10-8.510(2)
MONTANA	None	N/A
NEBRASKA	Every two days	163 NEB. ADMIN. CODE § 4-001.03A 1
NEVADA	96 hours ⁷	NEV. ADMIN. CODE § 503.152
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Daily ¹⁵	N.H. REV. STAT. § 210:13
NEW JERSEY	24 hours	N.J. ADMIN. CODE § 7:25-5.12(i)
NEW MEXICO	Daily	N.M. CODE R. § 19.32.2.11(A)
NEW YORK	24 hours ⁸	N.Y. COMP. CODES R. & REGS. tit. 6, § 6.3(a)(3)
NORTH CAROLINA	Daily ¹⁶	15A N.C. ADMIN. CODE 10B.0110
NORTH DAKOTA	None	N/A
OHIO	Daily	OHIO ADMIN. CODE 1501:31-15-09(G)
OKLAHOMA	24 hours	OKLA. STAT. tit. 29, §5-502(C)
OREGON	48 hours ⁹	OR. REV. STAT. § 498.172
PENNSYLVANIA	36 hours	34 PA. CONS. STAT. § 2361(a)(10)
RHODE ISLAND	24 hours	20 R.I. GEN. LAWS § 20-16-9

SOUTH CAROLINA	Daily ¹⁷	S.C. Code § 50-11-2440
SOUTH DAKOTA	72 hours ¹⁰	S.D. Admin. R. 41:08:02:03
TENNESSEE	36 hours ¹⁸	TENN. CODE § 70-4-120(a)(1)(C)
TEXAS	36 hours	31 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 65.375(c)(2)(E)
UTAH	96 hours ¹⁹	UTAH ADMIN. CODE r. 657-11-9(12)(a)-(c)
VERMONT	Daily ¹³	VT. STAT. tit. 10A, § 44(4.1)
VIRGINIA	Daily ²⁰	4 VA. ADMIN. CODE § 15-40-195
WASHINGTON	72 hours	WASH. ADMIN. CODE § 220-417-030(4)(c)
WEST VIRGINIA	Daily	W. VA. CODE R. § 58-53-3.3
WISCONSIN	Daily	WIS. ADMIN. CODE NR § 10.13(3)(a)
WYOMING	Weekly ¹¹	040-0001-4 WYO. CODE R. § 9(a)

** "Kill sets" are traps or snares intended to kill the animal instantly or by asphyxiation or drowning.

Table 3: Survey of Trap Check Requirements in the United States

The number of states which have adopted:

24-hour or daily check requirements for at least some traps	36
48-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for at least some traps	44
72-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for at least some traps	47
24-hour or daily check requirements for <i>all</i> traps	16
48-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for <i>all</i> traps	25
72-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for <i>all</i> traps	30
check requirements for <i>all</i> traps	33
<i>no</i> general check requirements	3

¹ 72 hours for water sets.

² Most sets are constitutionally prohibited in Colorado. See COLO. CONST. art. XVIII, § 12b. An exemption from the constitutional prohibition and the normal trap check requirements is granted to persons on their own land primarily used for commercial agriculture, to protect that agriculture. See *id.*; COLO. REV. STAT. § 33-6-207.

³ Muskrat traps exempted.

⁴ “Unprotected rodents” exempted; in effect, all rodents except for beavers. Compare IDAHO ADMIN. CODE § 13.01.16.010.01 with *id.* § 13.01.16.010.03 (definitions of “furbearing animals” and “unprotected wildlife”).

⁵ Every two days for water sets.

⁶ Except: 1) in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula (“Zone 1”), where the interval is 48 hours; and 2) for licensed trappers using multi-animal cage sets, for whom there is no requirement. See Mich. Wildlife Conservation Order § 1.2(21) – (23) for the definitions of Zones 1, 2, and 3.

⁷ Generally, some units require an interval of every other day for some sets.

⁸ 48 hours for some wildlife management units (“WMU”), 48 hours for some sets in other WMUs.

⁹ Predator trapping exempted, though must still be checked “on a regular basis.”

¹⁰ 96 hours if west of the Missouri River.

¹¹ Snares and quick-kill body traps exempted. These must be checked once each calendar week except for the first week in which the trap was set.

¹² Only snares allowed.

¹³ Drowning sets exempted.

¹⁴ Drowning sets every three days, or every five days in unincorporated/unorganized areas; sets under ice set for beaver or muskrat exempted.

¹⁵ Except sets for beaver under ice, then every three days.

¹⁶ Except for drowning set Conibears, then 72 hours.

¹⁷ 48 hours for drowning sets.

¹⁸ This statute is repealed as of July 1, 2017. Trap check times will be set by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and included in the hunting and trapping season guidebook. The guidebook for 2017-18 has not yet been published.

¹⁹ Except for lethal snares without a relaxing lock or stop set to an immovable object, which have a 96 hour requirement.

²⁰ Drowning set Conibears exempted.

From: zach buck
Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 10:32 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Proposed trap modification requirements

To fwp commissioners.

I am strongly opposed to the proposal for mandatory trap modifications for trappers. I feel that trappers should be able to decide how to best set up their own equipment for their target species, we as trappers have been stewards of the land and resources it produces for hundreds of years and I do not feel we need more regulations. Another reason I am opposed to this proposal is the cost burden it will put on trappers who are already faced with low profit margins, adding more expense to make traps legal may be too much for some. Also if modifications become mandatory, the kits will undoubtedly increase in price with the rise in demand. If this proposal goes through, I would think it would only lead to more ridiculous regulation for other outdoor activities as well. What's next, hook size requirements for fishing our rivers, shot size requirements for birds, where does it stop and when do we stop letting environmental groups pump money into our government just so they can push their agenda. We as trappers, hunters, and outdoorsmen and women know how to best take care of our resources, not outside interest groups.

Thank You.. Zach Buck

Sent from my Verizon 4G LTE smartphone

From: Adrienne Neff
Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 5:36 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping on public lands

I am sickened to learn that trapping on public lands is legal. Barbaric and inhumane. Should be banned across the state in my opinion. Thank you.

A J Neff

Sent from my iPhone



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Defending the West www.westernlaw.org

Western Environmental Law Center

July 11, 2017

Sent via e-mail

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fwcomm@mt.gov

Re: Ensuring continued compliance with the stipulated agreement reached in *Friends of the Wild Swan et al. v. Vermillion et al.*, 13-cv-00066-DLC (D. Mont. 2015) when setting the 2017-2018 furbearer regulations.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment on the proposed 2017-2018 furbearer season regulations. These comments are submitted by the Western Environmental Law Center on behalf of the Plaintiffs in *Friends of the Wild Swan et al. v. Vermillion et al.*, 13-cv-00066-DLC (D. Mont. 2015).

As you know, in *Friends of the Wild Swan*, the Plaintiffs and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks ("Department") and the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission ("Commission") reached a stipulated agreement that resulted in reasonable changes being made to Montana's trapping regulations in a newly created "lynx protection zone." The changes, which are based on the best available science, are designed to keep threatened Canada lynx ("lynx") from being caught in traps set for other species. In exchange for making these changes, Plaintiffs agreed to dismiss their case with prejudice.

The intervenors in *Friends of the Wild Swan*, the Montana Trappers Association *et al.* ("trappers"), have objected to the stipulated agreement and are currently pursuing an appeal of the agreement to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The appeal is now fully briefed and has been submitted on the papers. We expect a decision this summer.

Notably, the trappers are asking the Ninth Circuit to vacate the order approving the agreement and seeking to dissolve the agreement in its entirety. While the trappers are certainly entitled to voice and pursue their objections, which they have done to the Court, the Department,

the Commission, and to Plaintiffs, we continue to believe that the reasonable terms and conditions placed on trapping in the lynx protection zone by the stipulated agreement are not onerous and a small price to pay to protect a threatened species.

With these comments, therefore, Plaintiffs in *Friends of the Wild Swan* respectfully request the Commission not make any changes to the trapping regulations – as may be requested by trappers or other members of the public – that would violate the terms and conditions of the stipulated agreement. In support of this request, Plaintiffs state as follows:

1. *The stipulated agreement represents a good-faith, reasonable compromise.*

First, although the agreement is not perfect, it represents a reasonable compromise between the Parties – one that helps protect threatened lynx while simultaneously allowing trapping to continue, subject to certain restrictions designed to limit the risks of take.

Plaintiffs, for example, wanted more, including a larger geographic area included in the lynx protection zone, prohibitions on certain types of traps in the lynx protection zone, smaller traps, restrictions that applied to all foothold trapping (not just bobcat sets), and a 24 trap check (especially when temperatures drop to certain levels). I suspect the Department wanted less, including no restrictions on trap size or baits used. In the end, however, the Parties met in the middle in order to resolve the dispute. A key provision of the stipulated agreement (and selling point for Plaintiffs) is the paragraph pertaining to future monitoring and reporting. If the terms and conditions of the agreement are not working, i.e., lynx keep getting caught in traps set for other species, then the Parties have agreed to meet and confer and make the necessary changes to fix the problem.

2. *The stipulated agreement appears to be working.*

Second, the stipulated agreement reached in *Friends of the Wild Swan* appears to be working. During the 2015-2016 trapping season, for example, there were *no reported* incidents of lynx take (no lynx captured, injured, or killed in traps set for other species) and the bobcat quotas in the lynx protection zone – where the trapping restrictions apply – were largely met or exceeded. In trapping district one, for example, where the majority of occupied lynx habitat exists in Montana and where the trapping restrictions in the stipulated agreement apply, the 275 quota for bobcats was met without a single incident of lynx take.

During the 2016-2017 trapping season, the bobcat quotas were once again largely met even with the additional restrictions designed to protect lynx. In trapping district one, the 275 quota for bobcats was nearly met (268 bobcats reported taken) without a single incident of accidental lynx take.

A single lynx, however, was incidentally taken in a bobcat set near Park Lake, just west of Helena (and south of Highway 12) on January 4, 2017. This incident occurred outside the boundaries of the lynx protection zone where the special restrictions apply. This incident suggests a need for the Plaintiffs and the Department to meet and confer and carefully consider whether there's a need to expand the boundaries of the lynx protection zone south of Highway 12 to

include National Forest lands on the Helena Lewis and Clark and Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forests. The best available science reveals this area, including the Telegraph Creek drainage and Inventoried Roadless Areas (south of Highway 12), is occupied lynx habitat and should be included. Plaintiffs intend to initiate discussions with the Department after receiving a final decision from the Ninth Circuit on the trappers' appeal. In addition, as per the stipulated agreement, an additional lynx take this calendar year would automatically trigger the need for the Parties to meet and confer and make specific changes to the agreement.

3. *The stipulated agreement is based on the best available science.*

Third, the majority of the terms and conditions of the stipulated agreement emerged from a guidance document entitled *How to Avoid Incidental Take of Lynx While Trapping or Hunting Bobcats and other Furbearers* (hereinafter "lynx guidance"). This document was produced with input from the Department, National Trappers Association, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other experts and is considered the best available science on how to avoid incidental take of lynx from otherwise legal trapping.

In accordance with the lynx guidance, the stipulated agreement includes a number of provisions regarding the type of lures and baits used. Rabbit or hare parts, for instance, may not be used within 30 feet of a trap and the use of "natural flagging such as bird wings, feathers, or pieces of fur" may not be used within 30 feet of a trap in the lynx protection zone. The use of fresh meat baits is also not allowed in the lynx protection zone.

The stipulated agreement's restrictions pertaining to the use of snares and leaning pole sets in the lynx protection zone also emerged from the lynx guidance. The lynx guidance does not address appropriate trap check times (the document is more focused on avoiding take in the first place), but most states require that traps be checked anywhere from every 24 to 72 hours. Lynx researchers seeking to trap and track lynx in the Seeley-Swan region reported checking their traps every 24 hours when temperatures were above freezing and every 12 hours when sub-freezing temperatures were predicted in order to reduce the risk of injury and foot freezing. In the stipulated agreement, bobcat sets in the lynx protection zone must visually check their traps at least once every 48 hours.

In accordance with the lynx guidance, the settlement also includes a restriction of the size of foothold traps used in the lynx protection zone when targeting bobcats. For bobcat sets, foothold traps cannot have an inside jaw spread of more than 5 3/8 inches. This provision is based on the general recognition amongst the experts that smaller trap-jaw spreads help avoid lynx captures. The trappers' own expert – Robert Sheppard – provided sworn testimony during the *Friends of the Wild Swan* case reiterating this very point: "Trap size is another issue. Trappers after bobcat in lynx habitat should use a smaller trap as it tends to lessen the chance of catching a bigger footed lynx."¹

¹ Mr. Sheppard also noted that lynx generally frequent a different type of habitat and terrain than bobcats and "trappers targeting bobcat should not set traps in the type of terrain and habitat where lynx are most commonly found." This is one of the restrictions the Plaintiffs in *Friends of the Wild Swan* sought (but were unable to obtain) during settlement.

The 5 3/8 inches size agreed on was designed to allow bobcat trappers to still trap and catch bobcats while hopefully limiting the risks to lynx. The 5 3/8 inches size restriction is also consistent with the approach adopted by the State of Maine when developing similar protective regulations for lynx. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's 2013-2014 trapping regulations includes a specific restriction for all foothold traps used in lynx habitat: "no foothold trap (also known as a leghold trap) may be used that has an inside jaw spread of more than 5 3/8 inches [unless it is placed in the water]."

The lynx guidance does not provide a specific recommended size for inside jaw spreads, referring more generally to using a #2 coil spring or #1.75 coil spring foothold traps in lynx habitat or a #3 padded coil spring trap (presumably the padding would lower the inside jaw measurement). These size numbers are not entirely helpful, however, as they vary from manufacturer to manufacturer.

A Victor #1.75 coil spring foothold trap, for example, has an inside jaw spread of 5 3/8" but a Bridger #1.75 coil spring foothold trap has an inside jaw spread of 4 3/4" and Duke #1.75 coil spring foothold trap has an inside jaw spread of 5 1/4". The number references, however, do suggest that as a general rule most #2 foothold traps have an inside jaw spread of approximately 5 1/2" (or larger) and that most #1.75 foothold traps have an inside jaw spread of approximately 5 3/8" (or smaller).

Notably, the various manufacturers of foothold traps repeatedly note that both a #1.75 foothold and a #2 foothold trap are appropriate for capturing bobcats *and lynx*, suggesting that a foothold trap with an inside jaw spread less than 5 1/4 inches may be necessary in order to protect the species from bobcat sets (this is something that the Plaintiffs pushed for but were unable to obtain during settlement). This is consistent with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA's) guidance on best management practices for trapping lynx in the United States. The AFWA notes that traps with an inside jaw spread of a 5 1/4 inches are considered a "best management practices" trap that will increase a "trappers' efficiency and selectivity." This suggests that traps with an inside jaw spread of *less than* 5 1/4 inches is likely necessary to protect lynx.

The 5 3/8 inches size eventually agreed on and incorporated into the stipulated agreement was therefore a compromise. Plaintiffs wanted something smaller, less than 5 1/4 inches (as well as no trapping in specific areas where lynx occupancy was high) and the Department presumably wanted something larger than 5 3/8 inches (or no restrictions on trap size at all). The agreed upon number was something both parties agreed to live with and give a try. As noted above, if the size restriction proves to be inadequate, i.e., lynx continued to be caught in foothold traps with an inside jaw spread of 5 3/8 inches, the Department has agreed to review and fix the problem, including the option of lowering the size restriction, if necessary, to protect lynx. To date, no reported lynx takes have occurred inside the lynx protection zone since the 5 3/8 inches restriction on foothold traps was implemented. Hopefully this trend will continue.

4. The stipulated agreement was approved by the Court.

Fourth, it is important to emphasize that the stipulated agreement reached in this matter is not a side-deal or separate contract made between the Plaintiffs and the Department and Commission. Instead, the stipulated agreement was incorporated into a court order dismissing this case with prejudice.

After carefully reviewing the terms and conditions of the agreement and reviewing and considering objections to the agreement from the trappers, the Court approved the stipulated agreement in its entirety. The Court also incorporated the terms and conditions of the stipulated agreement into its final order dismissing the case and retained limited jurisdiction to enforce its terms. Violating the terms and conditions of the stipulated agreement is therefore the equivalent of violating a court order. This is significant. Any decision by the Department and/or Commission to take action that would violate the terms and conditions of the stipulated agreement would thus re-ignite the litigation and place Plaintiffs in the difficult position of having to file a motion seeking to enforce its terms (and for other relief) with the Court. This is a path that neither party wants to pursue.

As per the agreement's own terms, once it was signed by the Department and approved by the Commission, the stipulated agreement remains in place until lynx are de-listed and no longer protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or until the Department applies for and obtains an incidental take permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, whichever comes first. As such, the stipulated agreement reached between the Parties was not a one year deal or obligation that expired after the 2015-2016 or 2016-2017 trapping seasons. While the stipulated agreement is a living document that can be updated and modified each year in response to lynx takes, such updates and modifications are limited to those enumerated in the agreement. No other changes to the agreement are allowed in the absence of the Parties' consent.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider these comments. If you have any questions, wish to see any of the documents referenced in this letter (including the stipulated agreement), or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the phone number or email address below.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Matthew Bishop
Matthew Bishop
Western Environmental Law Center
103 Reeder's Alley
Helena, Montana 59601
(406) 324-8011
bishop@westernlaw.org

On behalf of:

Arlene Montgomery
Friends of the Wild Swan
P.O. Box 103
Bigfork, MT 59911
(406) 886-2011
arlene@wildswan.org

Bethany Cotton
WildEarth Guardians
P.O. Box 7516
Missoula, MT 59807

Mike Garrity
Alliance for the Wild Rockies
P.O. Box 505
Helena, MT 59624

cc:

Rebecca Dockter, Chief legal counsel
Aimee Fausser, Agency legal counsel
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
rdockter@mt.gov
afausser@mt.gov

RECEIVED

JUL 10 2017

FISH, WILDLIFE PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

7/4/17

To Director Williams

As a representative to the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Department I would like to comment on the Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas that are proposed. I have reviewed the results of the Montana Trappers Advisory Committee and agree with their stance on the proposal.

The fact that these proposals do **not** require the trapper by regulation is the correct way to deal with these proposals. Recommendations will reduce hardship imposed on the trapper and with the mandatory education process will instill the proper ethics and techniques to achieve a result that all sportsmen will be satisfied with.

As we saw with the ballot initiative that was soundly defeated in November the majority of Montanan's support trapping as a management tool, a tool that we must be upheld to keep Montana's wildlife healthy and abundant. The supporters of this initiative will keep chipping away at trapping with unnecessary regulations and additional restrictions that if they succeed will render trapping ineffective as a wildlife management tool.

I would also like to comment on the wolf seasons and regulations for most areas in region 1 and 2. After several wolf hunting and trapping seasons the deer and elk populations have not recovered. The wolf population has remained nearly the same although I have noticed pack sizes have decreased. If we are to base our wildlife regulations on science (which has been ignored in some instances around the parks) these factors point to more liberal seasons, additional tools and aggressive actions by the department to bring these areas back to a balance. I look to the west at Idaho's seasons and actions to see a better approach to wolf management.

Thank you for taking my comments under consideration.
Paul Rossignol

Lolo Mt. 59847

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Rossignol". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

From: Angela James
Sent: Sunday, July 09, 2017 11:24 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Comments for Montana 2017 trapping proposals

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Montana 2017 trapping proposals.

I support safe public land usage for all MT residents, including wildlife management, without needless suffering. Please regulate trapping activities and equipment to support that. 24 hour trap checks are a step in the right direction to that end. Any regulation that reduces the amount trapping on public land would be appreciated.

Angela James
Great Falls, MT

From: ruby Fritschen
Sent: Sunday, July 09, 2017 3:45 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: 2017-18 Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas

Dear Commissioners

My comments for the 2017 trapping regulation changes are noted below:

1. MANDATORY TRAP MODIFICATIONS: YES

2. 24 HOUR TRAP CHECKS: YES!!!!

I and Trap Free Montana Public Lands have for the last two years asked for this and not one is listening.

3. MANDATORY TRAPPER EDUCATION: NO

This is just so they can say they are doing something

4. INCREASE OTTER PER TRAPPER REGIONS 1 & 2: NO, There is not science behind this request.

5. REQUIRE TAGGING OF BEAVER AND SET A QUOTA: Quota is desperately needed. Beavers are a keystone species. Where is the "science" if we do not even know how many are killed each year?

Ruby Fritschen
Great Falls, Montana

From: Andy Fritschen
Sent: Sunday, July 09, 2017 3:33 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: 2017-18 Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas

Dear Commissioners

My comments for the 2017 trapping regulation changes are noted below:

1. MANDATORY TRAP MODIFICATIONS: YES

2. 24 HOUR TRAP CHECKS: YES!!!!

I and Trap Free Montana Public Lands have for the last two years asked for this and not one is listening.

3. MANDATORY TRAPPER EDUCATION: NO

This is just so they can say they are doing something

4. INCREASE OTTER PER TRAPPER REGIONS 1 & 2: NO, There is not science behind this request.

5. REQUIRE TAGGING OF BEAVER AND SET A QUOTA: Quota is desperately needed. How can one say there is sound science. Beavers are a keystone species. The forests are on fire. Use the beavers for fire breaks too.

Andy Fritschen
Great Falls, Montana

From: Keith Kubista
Sent: Wednesday, July 05, 2017 2:58 PM
To: FWP Commission
Cc: marthawilliams@mt.gov; FWP Wildlife
Subject: 2017 Trapping Regulations

Dear FWP Commissioners:

I am submitting the following comments on behalf of Montana Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife (MTSFW) concerning **FWP's 2017 Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas-Proposed.**

A significant number of MTSFW's members regularly engage in trapping, many of whom are members of the Montana Trapping Association (MTA) and several of our Board of Directors and members participated on the Montana Trappers Advisory Committee (MTAC).

We fully support the establishment of a Trapper Education Program (TEP) and the Mandatory Trapper Education requirement in the proposal.

We do not support requiring mandatory trap modifications and instead we ask that trap modifications be made as recommendations and incorporated into the TEP where hands-on explanations, on-the-ground applications, retrofits, and BMP's are better demonstrated. We believe a better approach is to revisit this issue after implementation of the TEP which will likely generate more details, features and cost saving options for trap modifications.

We oppose mandatory trap check times and strongly support trap check times continue as recommendations only, as was recommended by the MTAC, MTA, and supported by the Department.

We also agree with and support increasing the otter per-person take and possession limits in Regions 1 & 2.

When making your final decision on this proposal it is necessary to recognize that no amount of education, trap modifications, or any other regulatory change would generate support for trapping from animal rights groups or individuals who have a strong mutualism orientation and hold non-traditional views concerning wildlife management.

Recent intervention by these interests to ban trapping using the wildlife ballot initiative process for I-177 was soundly defeated by Montanans in 2016.

Be very careful not to reverse that election result by over-regulating trapping to the potential point of impossible compliance, rendering it out of existence.

Thank you for your consideration, and please contact me at 406-360-7462 or return email concerning any of the above.

Keith Kubista
Director
Montana Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife

From: debbiemallard90
Sent: Thursday, July 06, 2017 12:14 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trap Free Montana

Stop all trapping. Simple isn't it

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

From: Thomasgilpin
Sent: Friday, June 30, 2017 8:26 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping

Trappers are not interested is preserving OUR wildlife in OUR National Parks.

Just who do you think you are? You are pubic STEWARDS...not profit mongering morons...or are you.

Thoughts of trapping bribe-taking public officials sounds much more appealing to me.

You game?

How do you like your malfeasance; raw or well done?

Please chew on this while deliberating...and remember, we are watching. We do not forget. We do not forgive. We are many.

Aribus teneo lupum.

tg

From: Barbara Booher
Sent: Thursday, June 29, 2017 1:54 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: District 1: Tim Aldrich: -PUBLIC COMMENT

Dear Commissioner, Aldrich,

I am writing to you under this general email address as I could not find a personal email address for you. I am writing to you to register my comments re the proposed trapping regulations. My wife and I share an email address and the FWP system does not allow two comments from one address.

1. MANDATORY TRAP MODIFICATIONS: **YES**
2. 24 HOUR TRAP CHECKS: **YES**, this is a high priority for me to safely use public land.
3. MANDATORY TRAPPER EDUCATION: **NO**
4. INCREASE OTTER PER TRAPPER REGIONS 1 & 2: **NO**, This proposed increase is NOT scientifically based.
5. REQUIRE TAGGING OF BEAVER AND SET A QUOTA: This is also a priority for me as beaver trapping is unlimited and this species is an important keystone species. Beaver-created ponds and riparian habitat are critical to the success of healthy watersheds. Many species benefit ranging from moose to songbirds, as well as the creation of natural firebreaks and overall healthy watersheds. Ideally, beaver should be protected on public land not trapped without any regulations at all.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment.

Ted Saurman
Troy, MT.

From: mary shabbott
Sent: Thursday, June 29, 2017 5:15 AM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping proposals

1. I support mandatory trap modifications and anything that may ease the pain and suffering of these animals.
2. **I support 24 hour trap checks even though these animals can be left to suffer for weeks.**
I do not support mandatory trapper education. This only helps those who want to trap these animals!
3. I do not support an increase otter per trapper regions one and two. This is nothing but greed!
4. I do support tagging of beaver and set a quota of these keystone species!

Thank you,

Mary Shabbott

From: Bob Detmers
Sent: Thursday, June 29, 2017 12:52 PM
To: FWP Commission
Subject: Trapping & Hunting.

Trapping & Hunting needs to be Highly Regulated right out of existence. What has happened to Sense & Sensibility?

Sincerely,

BLDG Images;

Stop Dreaming About it and Start Working for it!

The Mind is Like A Parachute, It Only Works If It is Open.

Life is not Always about the Destination. More Important are the Learning Curves Associated with the Journey.

Our Web Site showing our Everyday Life.

<http://bldgimages.photoshelter.com>

From: Nathan Albertson
Sent: Sunday, June 18, 2017 12:50 AM
To: FWP Wildlife
Subject: Public Review and Comment Regarding "Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas – Proposed"

June 17, 2017

Dear Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (MT FWP),

Please permit this letter to serve as my submission for public review and comment regarding "Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas – Proposed".

Trapper Education Program and Mandatory Trapper Education:

In regards to MT FWP's proposal to "establish a Trapper Education Program and Mandatory Trapper Education" requirement taking effect in 2018, I support and urge the passing of this proposal, with one qualifier. The instructors of said course should be active trappers, having successfully participated in trapping seasons in recent, prior years. The substitution of Hunter Education Instructors as Trapper Education Instructors should not be considered. If the purpose of this Trapper Education Program is to urge the use of modern techniques and provide education in regards to trapping, the instructors must be required to have trapped in recent, prior trapping seasons.

Modifications:

In regards to MT FWP's proposal to require "Modifications" to ground-set foothold traps, (specifically: center swivels, an additional chain swivel, and jaws with minimum offset and thickness) I DO NOT support this measure at all. There are several reasons why and they follow this paragraph. Please be aware, all of the information I quote or list in the remainder of this correspondence is gleaned from either the MT FWP "Hunting Season/Quota Change Supporting Information" (<http://fwp.mt.gov/fwpDoc.html?id=81755>) or the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA) "Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States" (http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/Introduction_BMPs.pdf) documents. All bold type is done by me to bring special attention to the words stated and has been added by myself as emphasis.

Candid and Truthful Facts regarding MT FWP "Hunting Season/Quota Change Supporting Information" and the AFWA "Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States":

The AFWA "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) are not clear-cut, one size fits all, blanket concepts or ideas to be enacted as a state law to force trappers into one method or piece of equipment. This is clearly stated on page four, in paragraphs three and four:

"Trapping BMPs are intended to be a practical tool for trappers, wildlife biologists, wildlife agencies and anyone interested in improved traps and trapping systems. BMPs include technical recommendations from expert trappers and biologists and a list of specifications of traps that meet or exceed BMP criteria. BMPs provide options, allowing for discretion and decision making in the field when trapping furbearers in various regions of the United States. **They do not present a single choice that can or must be applied in all cases.**"

"Trapping BMPs are **recommendations to be implemented in a voluntary and educational approach.**"

The MT FWP document referenced above was clearly written to favor and influence the reader to support the proposed changes. However, that same MT FWP document is at best misleading and at worst an outright falsehood. On page six of the MT FWP document it clearly states in the first paragraph under “Trap Modifications”:

“Montana currently has few regulations mandating the use of certain trap features that have been **scientifically demonstrated to reduce injury while maintain the trap’s ability to effectively restrain an animal. Recognizing that these modern features maintain trap efficiency and improve animal comfort after capture,** many trappers voluntarily update or replace older traps.”

This sounds fine and yet that is not quite what the AFWA material states. The “efficiency” criteria is outlined on page five of the AFWA document and it clearly states that their recommended BMPs were only required to attain an “efficiency” of greater than sixty percent of the target animals held! If my traps only hold sixty percent of my target animal, I would no longer own those traps and just about any other trapper in Montana would feel very similarly.

In reference to being “scientifically demonstrated to reduce injury” and improving “animal comfort after capture,” this is an outright falsehood if MT FWP is applying this concept to all proposed trap modifications. The AFWA requirements for evaluating a trap were based on a minimum of twenty of the target specimens for each trap evaluated. This is a woefully small sample size and even with such a small sample size, with regards to the proposed modifications of swivels, jaw thickness (or laminations) and offset jaws, the AFWA stated the following:

Swivels – (page nine)

from the “Proper swiveling is the key to preventing the chain or cable of an anchoring system binding at the stake, drag or grapple. This is important **because it minimizes injury to the captured animal,** reduces fur damage and may prevent cable breakage.”

Jaw Thickness (Laminations) – (page ten)

will both “Expanding the trap jaw thickness with lamination or the addition of rubber pads increase the surface area of the jaw on a trapped animal’s foot and **may influence animal injury and capture efficiency.**”

Offset Jaws – (page ten)

longspring animal raised “Offset jaw models allow spring levers on coil-spring traps and spring eyes on traps to close higher upon capture, thereby reducing the chance that the captured animal will escape. In addition, clamping pressure is slightly reduced when levers are fully raised which **may improve animal welfare under some conditions.**”

At best, the AFWA recommendations regarding “proper swiveling” states this “minimizes injury to the captured animal”. The “scientific demonstration” was on an extremely small sample size and it is the ONLY place in which the AFWA emphatically states that it will do so. With regards to jaw thickness (laminations) the AFWA states this “may influence both animal injury and capture efficiency” yet it does not say in which way it would be influenced. Additionally, with regards to offset jaws, the AFWA states these “may improve animal welfare under some conditions”, but it goes nowhere near the standard of saying it will across the entire spectrum of animals captured.

In essence, there is a concerted effort by the drafters of the MT FWP “Hunting Season/Quota Change Supporting Information” to skew the facts with regards to the information contained within the AFWA BMPs.

A Blanket Approach Does Not Work

As quoted above, the AFWA clearly states that BMPs “do not present a single choice that can or must be applied in all cases”. The proposed changes with regards to swivels, jaw thickness, and offsets with regards to some species is ludicrous. Requiring these modifications to traps regarding weasels, mink, marten, and raccoon is foolish at best. If one increases the jaw thickness (weight and surface area of the trap jaws) one will also be required to increase the spring leverage/pressure as well. And an offset jaw for weasels and raccoon, while it might occasionally hold some of these

species, will often result in an empty, sprung trap! These proposed modifications cannot and should not be applied to all land sets!

MT FWP Statistics Do Not Add Up

Throughout pages seven and eight of the MT FWP document, the low/high costs of these proposed modifications to trappers are estimated. Swivels (\$0.35 - \$1.50), jaw thickness (\$1.00 - \$3.00), and offset jaws with rounded edges (\$5.00 - \$35.00). In addition, MT FWP used a sample size of 5,000 licensed Montana trappers with an average of 20 traps (I know many trappers in Montana, I do not know very many who only have 20 traps for their line) to configure their economic impact cost estimations to trappers.

MT FWP estimated the economic impact to trappers to be between \$350,000 and \$2,300,000 dollars, and that would include 57,000 hours of time modifying or replacing traps. Taking these figures alone, that would mean an average investment by each licensed Montana trapper of between \$70 - \$460. This is presupposing the trapper does not have to hire the work out and pay for the hourly wage of those working on his or her traps (and this does not include the 11.4 hours, average, each trapper would dedicate to making these changes).

Yet, in calculating MT FWP's own numbers, without counting the compensation for time spent making modifications, this mathematical analysis does not add up! If 5,000 licensed Montana trappers had to modify 20 traps (as per the parameters presented by MT FWP) to meet the modification criteria outlined in their proposal, that would be a cost (again, by the parameters estimated and presented by MT FWP) of \$6.35 - \$39.50 per trap. By MT FWP's own numbers, this would actually result in an economic impact to Montana trappers of between \$635,000 - \$3,950,000! That is a far cry from the estimated numbers presented by MT FWP and still does not include the time invested in making modifications.

Trying to Satisfy Those Who Refuse to Be Satisfied With Trapping

The most outlandish portion of these proposed modification requirements can be found in the MT FWP "Interested Persons" letter, under "Furbearer and Trapping Regulations, Seasons and Quotas – Proposed", the number two point, which states in part:

"Persons trapping for purposes of livestock or property protection would be exempt from these requirements".

In other words, by my interpretation, this is simply a nuanced way of saying those trapping on private land will essentially be exempted from being required to make these proposed trap modifications were they to become required. The Montana Wilderness Association claims that roughly seventy-one percent of Montana is privately owned. Those of us who trap the remaining twenty-nine percent of public land will be required to make these modifications if these proposals are adopted.

So, if those who are trapping for purposes of livestock and property protection are exempted from these trap modifications, how in the world would this meet the number two objective of the Summary of Approach on page nine of MT FWP "Hunting Season/Quota Change Supporting Information" which states:

"The objective of this proposal is to improve Montana's trapping program, reduce non-target captures, improved animal welfare, and increased involvement in and support for trapping in Montana, by requiring mandatory trapper education and improving traps by using the latest scientific information from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' trapping Best Management Practices. A side benefit will be to better articulate and incorporate into regulation Montana's ethical standards and practices associated with trapping."

Are we expected to believe MT FWP is so overwhelmingly concerned with an animal's welfare in a trap that essentially only those of us trapping on roughly twenty-nine percent of Montana lands must follow these BMPs, which were

originally conceived (as referenced earlier in this letter) to be implemented on a voluntary basis! Where is MT FWP's concern for those animals in traps on roughly the other seventy-one percent of Montana lands?

Additionally, reading on in the "Summary of Approach" in measuring success, these trap modifications are expected to reduce non-target captures, improve animal welfare, and increase involvement in and support for trapping in Montana. Trapping is supported in Montana and that proof is in the fact that we have had multiple ballot initiatives in the past ten years outlawing trapping and Montana voters have consistently voted no on those measures. In addition, recent legislative sessions have tried on several fronts to improve protections for Montana trappers and the biggest obstacle has been Governor Bullock refusing to sign bills into law, which have come across his desk with a majority support from the Montana Congress! Individual trappers know best how to help improve the welfare of trapped animals and they do so under their own ethical and moral guidelines, something you cannot possibly legislate. And, the majority of non-target captures most Montana trappers contend with are domestic dogs which have escaped the control of irresponsible owners, something trap modifications cannot remedy! The proposed measure of success is simply an unreasonable expectation waiting to disappoint.

The bottom line is that regardless of what trap modifications MT FWP tries to forcefully implement on Montana trappers, no trap modification in the world will win over the opinion of anti-trappers to favor or support trapping in Montana. That is a losing proposition in which we as trappers pay the price!

In addition, two years ago, MT FWP made concessions to lynx supporters in an effort to appease their concerns with regards to lynx capture. That lawsuit settlement was made possible by the fact that MT FWP had failed to secure the required permits from United States Fish Wildlife Services in case of an accidental take of a lynx and MT FWP had no other recourse than to concede or risk losing bobcat trapping in portions of Montana. Many trappers in the "Lynx Protection Zone" (incidentally, also only applicable to public land trappers, not private land trappers) were required to modify and acquire new traps to meet the stipulations of those lawsuits (2015). Now, after recently surviving a recent attempt to stop trapping by a ballot initiative (2016), MT FWP decides it is a good time to require Montana Trappers to again modify and acquire new traps by 2019, in an effort to win over the hearts and minds of anti-trappers who will not accept our chosen sport?

Summary

In reading between the lines on this trap modification proposal, it is quite clear that factions within MT FWP have gone to great lengths to misrepresent the facts of the AFWA BMPs and their purpose. In addition, MT FWP is trying to implement the BMPs in a way in which they were never meant to function, as a blanket approach to all land sets. Doing so would negatively impact the number of animals taken by trappers every year and it would not always be best for the animal being trapped. In compiling the economic impact numbers of this proposal, there has been a serious error made as to how much these proposed trap modifications would negatively impact Montana trappers. Last but not least, the reasoning behind these proposed trap modifications, which supposes to be in the interest of animal welfare, would only be applicable to a limited minority of Montana lands being trapped. Instead, if one is to read between the lines of the proposal, it appears to be intended to hamper and severely limit the ability of Montana trappers to approach each trap and scenario individually and to leverage their experience and knowledge to trap their chosen quarry in the most efficient way possible (to include limiting injury to the trapped animal). This all appears to be in an attempt to gain favor with the anti-trapping crowd who are an especially vocal minority in the State of Montana!

These proposed trap modifications can easily be presented in Trapper Education Programs and the individual trappers can choose for themselves what is best for their trapline. I wholly and fully support such a Trapper Education Program and look forward to enrolling in the first local program in the Eureka area.

I cannot and do not wish to see, nor can I recommend for adoption, the proposed trap modifications presented by the MT FWP. Not only are they not needed, these are decisions that should be made by the individual trappers involved in the individual scenarios in which they are trapping on a consistent basis. These need to be decisions left for the individual trapper to make, not the MT FWP!

Sincerely,

Nathan Albertson
Eureka, MT 59917

From: Barbara Booher
Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2017 9:14 AM
To: FWP Wildlife
Subject: Furbearer trapping regulations

My name is Barbara Booher, a native Montanan, and my comment is that I want FWP to join the rest of the nation in adopting a 24 hour trap check regulation. This regulation should be in place in any and all youth trapping education. In 2005, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies published a Trapper Education Manual that urges trappers to "make a commitment to check your traps at least once every day" in order to reduce suffering, more quickly release non-target animals, and actually improve success (by, for example, reducing the chance of predation on an animal caught in a trap). It is imperative that teaching have some generally accepted standard on which to base education. Unfortunately, Montana remains one of the last states in the country that does not require traps to be checked with any regularity (except those set for wolves and, in some places, bobcats). This is a problem because studies have shown that the longer an animal spends alive in a trap, the more severe its injuries can become, and the lower the likelihood that "non-target" animals will be able to be released alive. As a non-consumptive consumer of our public lands, I am disappointed that the FWP cares only about trappers and not the rest of the tax paying public. Wildlife and the public land on which it resides belongs to us ALL not just to trappers. Where are our needs and opinions represented on the FWP commission? NO WHERE! No representation of the non-consumptive public land user by the FWP commission is not an acceptable or sustainable condition.

Submitted by,

Barbara E. Booher

Troy, MT 59935

From: Claudia Lippincott
Sent: Monday, July 03, 2017 5:40 PM
To: FWP Wildlife
Subject:

Please pose a limit on time regarding checking "live-Traps". Less than 12 hours would be appropriate. thank you.

From: Claudia Lippincott
Sent: Monday, July 03, 2017 5:29 PM
To: FWP Wildlife
Subject:

Please check traps before 24 hours...

From: Connie Poten
Sent: Sunday, July 16, 2017 12:33 PM
To: FWP Wildlife
Subject: Comments re trapping regs and otter quota

Dear Commissioners, Director Williams and FWP Staff,

Please find comments below from Footloose Montana regarding the trapping proposals and increase in otter quota. I've sent this through the FWP website as well, but please use this copy because the links are live, and don't seem to be through the website.

Also, can you let me know how people can see all comments? Will they be posted somewhere on the FWP website? Many thanks.

Sincerely,
Connie Poten

TO: Fish, Wildlife and Parks

RE: Quota Change Supporting Information, 2017

Date: July 16, 2017

FROM: FOOTLOOSE MONTANA

Footloose Montana, representing anglers, hunters, recreationalists, wildlife watchers and concerned citizens, appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed change in regulations. Our comments refer strictly to recreational and commercial trapping, not trapping for health and safety, or for the protection of property and livestock, or for science and conservation.

Footloose Montana welcomes any effort to make the practice of trapping more humane. However, candidly, we submit that the effort to make an antiquated and brutal practice “more humane” is a difficult undertaking at best.—

Addressing FWP’s Introductory Material

1. Page 2: The trap modification will impact trappers “on the order of \$350,000 - \$2.3 million” and “approximately 57,000 hours of time modifying or replacing traps.”

This statement is repeated many times, but there seems to be no reliable basis for these numbers. The total number of trappers is unknown because there is no license requirement for trapping predators and non-game animals. Wolf trappers were not included in cost/time estimates either.

According to national statistics (<http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/AFWA-FINAL-TRAPPING-Report.pdf>), the average trapper owns approximately 200 traps, of which 112 are footholds. That adds up to 560,000 licensed foothold traps. If you add half as many traps to include wolf trappers and a guesstimate of non-licensed trappers, it adds up to 840,000 traps. This changes time spent modifying traps to about 4 minutes per trap—hardly a big impact. Also, it is stated that many trappers already have these modifications, throwing the numbers off again.

As for the cost—spanning \$350,000 to \$2.3 million—there is no data to support this “impact.” The number of trappers is unknown and many trappers already have made modifications. FWP would better simply acknowledge that the information necessary to accurately estimate impacts does not exist.

2. Page 2: ... “trapping is integral to managing many Montana wildlife populations.”

This statement is simply not true of recreational and commercial trapping, the main focus of these proposed regulations. In fact, trapping is managed solely as recreation, not wildlife management, according to retired FWP furbearer coordinator Brian Giddings. Trapping is indiscriminate and unreliable as a management tool. It has been found ineffective for disease control because only healthy animals are lured to bait. The collateral damage—the death by starvation of offspring of trapped lactating females—is a significant yet immeasurable consequence of recreational and commercial trapping, undermining any possible management benefit. For controlling coyotes, trapping actually causes increased populations. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/08/coyote-america-dan-flores-history-science/>

3. Page 2: “It is also a valued economic and recreational activity...”

Actually, in direct contrast to this assertion, trapping does not contribute significantly to Montana’s economy. Instead, it is a drain. Trappers say they lose money or are lucky to cover their gas costs; they do it out of ‘passion.’ Recent numbers prove this true. The 2016-17 Montana Fur Auction results brought in less than \$75,000 gross profit to the trappers. Costs of vehicles, gas, MTA Auction fees, traps and gear make trapping an expensive hobby; trap lines can be hundreds of miles long, covering many drainages. Trapping brings the state about \$61,000 in license fees, far less than the cost of one employee. Wildlife watching, by contrast, is a significant part of Montana’s economy. But recreational trapping vastly reduces the chances of seeing and hearing wildlife. Instead, people head for the national parks. Four major timber projects have been shut down in three Montana National Forests because these forests contain habitat for the endangered lynx. Trapping is one of the main reasons lynx are on the endangered species list. This impact on the timber industry is a big loss to Montana’s economy in jobs and revenue. <http://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2015/06/17/13-35624.pdf>

Trapping is a “valued recreational activity” for the mere 0.005% of Montanans who are licensed trappers, but for the vast majority of people who labor and recreate on Montana’s landscape, traps cast a dangerous pall, turning outings into nightmares when pets or livestock including horses are trapped. People have been severely injured due to traps as well.

4. Page 2: “...Public support is ... rooted...in the belief that regulations are science-based with broad compliance.”

There is no proof that these regulations are science-based. In fact, to illustrate the state’s non-scientific decision-making regarding trapping, Chief Federal District Judge Dana Christensen read a statement for the record that Montana withdrew its support for listing the wolverine as endangered “so that trapping could continue.”

The rate of compliance with FWP’s regulations is unknowable. It is logistically impossible to monitor the tens of thousands of hidden traps on Montana’s landscape. Only one-third of licensed trappers return surveys to FWP. The indiscriminate, data-thin nature of trapping undermines any claims of a scientific basis. It’s impossible to know how many animals are trapped, but government trapper Dick Randall has submitted testimony to Congress that for every target animal kept, two non-targets are discarded:

“The leg-hold trap ... is probably the most cruel device ever invented by man and is a direct cause of inexcusable destruction and waste of our wildlife,” wrote Dick Randall, a former federal trapper, in a statement to Congress in 1975.

“Even though I was an experienced, professional trapper, my trap victims often included non-target species such as bald and golden eagles, a variety of hawks and other birds, rabbits, sage grouse, pet dogs, deer and antelope, badger, porcupine, sheep and calves....”

“My trapping records show that for each target animal I trapped, about two unwanted individuals were caught,” Randall wrote. “Because of trap injuries, these non-target species usually had to be destroyed.”

--Excerpted from *"Long struggles in leg-hold device make for gruesome deaths,"* by Tom Knudson, McClatchy Newspapers, May 16, 2012.

Addressing Montana’s Proposed Trapper Education Course

Regarding recreational and commercial trapping, ethical and humane trapping is nothing more than an oxymoron. In past wolf trapping classes, “ethics” consisted in part of teaching people how to treat the pelts so as not to damage them. In reality, we and hundreds of thousands of Montanans fail to see anything humane or ethical about trapping today, especially with no mandatory trap-check time limit. Animals in traps struggle in pain and panic; they are subjected to predators, dehydration, freezing temperatures with no escape but to chew off their feet or wring off entire limbs, resulting in a miserable, slow death. Those who are found alive are stomped to crush their lungs or beaten to death with clubs so as not to damage their fur. Trappers who photograph or take potshots at terrified trapped animals are advised against that practice because of its negative impact on trapping’s image, not because it is wrong or unethical.

Pope and Young’s first rule is: “The term ‘Fair Chase’ shall not include the taking of animals under the follow conditions: Helpless in a trap, deep snow or water, or on ice.” <https://pope-young.org/fairchase/>

Fair chase means knowing one's target, having respect for wildlife, not using technology that would give unfair advantage, not causing waste, and quick dispatch of the animal. <https://legendarchery.com/blogs/archery-bowhunting-blog/15596096-is-bowhunting-ethical>.

Trapping adheres to none of these essential ethics. There are no words or illusions that can change this truth.

It is stated that field experience is the most valuable part of teaching. Allowing children older than the age of 13 to be instructors after taking an online course negates this claim, adding to the cynical appearance of this education effort.

Addressing Trap Modifications

These modifications do not reduce non-target captures, nor do they stop animals from suffering to the point of chewing off their feet or wringing off entire limbs. The swivels may reduce the number of animals who drag the trap away with them, but this helps the trapper, not the trapped. The laminated, offset jaws help reduce damage to the fur and may reduce impacts on blood flow. But the animal will still be beaten or crushed to death when the trapper arrives, at his or her convenience. This does not stop self-mutilation and/or a slow, terrifying death in any case.

“The leg-hold trap ... is probably the most cruel device ever invented by man and is a direct cause of inexcusable destruction and waste of our wildlife.”

--Dick Randall, former federal trapper, statement to Congress, 1975.

None of these modifications change the facts of Randall's experience and statement.

Addressing Quota Increase for Trapping Otter

“The proposal to increase the Regions 1 and 2 otter per-person take and possession limit from 2 to 3 is a better match opportunity with the distribution of trapping.”

River otters were trapped to extirpation and were reintroduced in Montana and 20 other states. The Montana population is further hindered by habitat destruction. Darin Newton leads his University of Montana 2012 PhD thesis, *Northern River Otter Population Assessment and Connectivity in Western Montana*, with this first sentence: **“Northern river otters (*Lontra canadensis*) are elusive and difficult to monitor, and little is known about their movement patterns or how populations are structured on the landscape.”**

<http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1728&context=etd>

In Ana E. Dronket-Egnew's University of Montana 1991 Masters Thesis, *River otter population status and habitat use in Northwestern Montana*, she notes the rare occurrence of otters in Region 1. Her recommendations include:

1. Mandatory carcass collection within 48 hours of capture;
2. The requirement that trappers carry a shield board to release otters captured over the 1 otter limit;
3. No trapping on sloughs and ponds in the Flathead River Valley;
4. All furbearer trapping seasons closed after 1 March or live-trapping only for beaver to avoid trapping lactating female otters;
5. Implementing a measure initiated in Britain where “owners of riparian areas have voluntarily agreed to manage their lands as “havens” for river otters interspersed with legally protected nature reserves.

<http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5697&context=etd>

These research papers make it clear that little is known about otters except for the fact that they have not reached a minimum population level that justifies raising the quota. Rather, these theses make a case for severely restricting or ending recreational trapping of otters.

FWP’s quota increase proposal focuses on opportunities for the trapper without sufficient knowledge of the species. The lack of scientific data coupled with the reduction of suitable habitat for otters makes a quota increase an injurious step backwards in otter recovery. We urge you to consider Ms. Dronket-Egnew’s recommendations and to not increase the quota.

Conclusion

While we appreciate all efforts to reduce the cruelty of trapping and make our landscape safe from these devices for people, stock, pets and wildlife, we find that these proposals have deleterious effects on these issues.

Footloose Montana encourages a more intensive review of Montana’s trapping regulations with input from a wide variety of interest groups. Leaving trapping reform to trappers ignores the vast segments of Montana’s population who view trapping as an outdated, barbarous and cruel vestige of our past. It also leaves out independent wildlife biologists and others who study and experience Montana’s wildlife and landscape. Without a broad base, trapping reform efforts are destined to produce superficial results.

Again, thank you very much for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Poten

Footloose Montana

Missoula, MT 59807

--

Constance J. Poten

Missoula, MT 59802

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From: Leonard Stastny
Sent: Tuesday, July 04, 2017 8:57 PM
To: FWP Wildlife
Subject: Re 2017-18 Furbearing and Trapping REgulations

I support the trapping initiative supporting that trappers check their trap lines every day to alleviate the suffering animals endure when caught in cruel steel traps.

Further more, I wish to point out something which so many of you humans don't seem to understand—and that is:

All animals enjoy their lives and want to continue living their lives just as you and I. They are harming now no one. And the cruelty of trapping them for their fur is barbaric.

Suppose you were walking along and have a giant steel trap snap on you leg breaking it—the shock would no doubt make you pass out in shock. Then reduce you a whimpering panic totally afraid of everything. After hours of pain—realizing the only way to free yourself is to check your leg off—you begin chewing you leg off before the barbarian who set the trap comes to club you to death.

Trappers are not only cruel barbarians they are insensitive brutes who ought not be counted as human.

In this age of manufacturing textiles resembling fur there is no good reason to torment animals in this most human fashion anymore. Humans suck—really suck and trapping ought be banned from the face of this planet.

Regards:
Leonard Stastny

Missoula, Montana 59808

July 12, 2017

Deer Lodge, MT 59722

RE: Proposal For Mandatory Trapper Education, Trap Modifications and Trap Check

Dear FWP Commissioners,

I have been looking over the trapping draft proposal and I would like to comment on them.

Trapper Education Program

I am in favor of trappers education. The Montana Trappers Association has been ahead of all trapper education. We have had an education program going for over 20 years. I am an instructor in the MTA Education Program and I believe our program is A-Number 1 First Class. We also put on a fur handling class every January here in Deer Lodge. It doesn't do you a bit of good to trap a furbearer and not know how to put up the fur.

Mandatory Trap Check Time

When I trap coyotes you want to stay out of the trapping line for 3 to 4 days because coyotes are one not liking you in their areas and when they smell your presence, they just leave and the more time you spend walking around there, the more scent you leave and that's not good.

Back years ago the Director Pat Graham put together a Trapper Advisory Committee and I did attend 7 or 8 of the meetings and I remember one man from Billings was a Veterinarian. He said he was all for a 24 hour trap check. There were people from all walks of life, ranchers, vets, humane society and trappers. I remember the veterinarian one time toward the end of the meeting say, quote, "I was all for a 24 hour trap check. But now I'm not. A dead beaver, is a dead beaver."

I have places on my trap line that I can leave a beaver in the trap for 3 to 4 days during the winter. Then there are some places that I trap beaver and muskrats are warm springs, and you'd better get them out of the water in 24 hours or the fur starts to slip. Some of these places are 300 yards apart - warm springs and ice water.

Trap Modification

Some things are good and some are bad. Good things to double swivels and center anchor points on trap frames and a small off set on jaws. Mine are 3/16-inch maximum, but I don't like lamination. In wet or snow covered ground the trap is slowed down enough as to miss a coyote, then you have one smart coyote on your line. The reason to set traps is to catch coyotes and not make them smarter than they already are.

Thank you for your time,



Edward J Hebbe III

Ms. Patricia Helvey

GREAT FALLS MT 594

Helena, MT 59602-9758

JUN 13 2017 PM 2



MT. FWP

WILDLIFE DIVISION

P.O. BOX 200701

HELENA MT 59620

Re:
Proposed Trapper

recycled
© 2015 USPS

Regs

June 13 '17

MT FWP Wildlife Division:

I am not sure how a program in-trapper education can affect the ethical mindset of people whose ethics regarding sportsmanship and respect for game was formed in the family at an early age. I appreciate your effort to make the practice more humane.

Trapping is lucrative and will be vigorously defended by its participants but it is not a clean, quick way to take wildlife.

— [Signature]

Dear MT FWP,

July 13, 2017

I am writing this letter to encourage Montana to support a 24-hour or daily trap inspection requirement for all traps set for all species in our state of Montana. There are many reasons that this requirement is important.

- 1.) To be a hunter, fisher, or trapper is a great responsibility. It is not a game nor should it be a casual hobby. With great responsibility comes great sacrifice. Fishermen need to follow rules about what to keep + what to throw back. Hunters need to follow rules about tracking wounded game. Trappers need to follow a similar ethical rule.
- 2.) Montana is one of only three states w/ no general trap check requirements. Our neighbors ID & WY have adopted a 24-hour rule. These are two states that have similar hunting, fishing, trapping culture as Montana.
- 3.) Scientific studies indicate that 24-hour or daily trap inspections would help reduce extreme injuries on said trapped animals: Dehydration, starvation, effects of exposure. Also,

Females are prevented from returning to their babies, who then starve to death.

4.) If traps are required to be checked every 24-hour or daily it would also reduce the risk of injuring or killing of "non-target" animals, especially those on the endangered list and protected list. Traps can not tell the difference between a coyote + an endangered wolverine.

5.) Wildlife professionals support the much needed 24-hour or daily trap inspection. The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies manual for Trapper Education urges trappers to commit to checking their traps every day for multiple ethical + financial reasons. AFWA also encourages daily trap checks, stating this ritual as a cornerstone of ethical trapping practice.

Please understand how important having a 24-hour or daily trap inspection is for Montana. The importance is for our economy + our wildlife. Both of these make Montana a wonderful place to live.

Sincerely, Rebecca A. Murray
Bozeman

✓ MT 59715

postmarked
7/13/17
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RECEIVED

JUL 17 2017

FISH, WILDLIFE PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Dear Director

My name is Tim McKenrick.

I am writing to you in regards to the proposed Trapping Regulation Changes.

I believe that Mandatory Trapper Education is an excellent idea. This would help people realize the best methods for targeting and harvesting specific animals. The ethics taught will help establish a moral boundary for years to come, this in turn will be passed on to future generations.

Trap Modification is an issue that needs much discussion to determine the validity and need. The idea to change all footholds used for land sets is not necessarily a good one.

I have many modified traps and prefer them in certain applications, but there are times they will not catch certain animals due to the modification. The additional weight and size can also cause foot damage to smaller animals and non targets. This issue should be dealt with in education not by trying to change rules that no one knows the best way to go. We are all learning as we go, hopefully sharing that information with others.

Mandatory Trap Check Times:

This is a poor idea. No good trapper wants any animal to spend a minute longer in a trap than necessary. Trap check times can be addressed in education in the ethics portion.

There are always a few bad apples in every barrel as we all know, but we don't want to punish all the good people for the few bad ones, this is true in all aspects of life.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Tim McKenrick

MTA Member

P.S. If I can be of any assistance feel free to call me

Blakes fwp letter

DEAR FWP Director

My name is Blake, I like the idea for mandatory trappers education, so that young trappers are ethical, wiser and, knowledgeable.

I disagree with the 24hr mandatory trap check, because of too much scent.

I also disagree with mandatory trap modification, because of the chance of losing the animal with the trap still attached.

thank you for your time.

signed

Blake

postmarked

7/13/17

CJ

RECEIVED

JUL 17 2017

FISH, WILDLIFE PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

postmarked
7/13/17
c3

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JUL 17 2017

FISH, WILDLIFE PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Dear FWP Director,

My name is Patrick McKenrick, and I am writing to you to share my thoughts on the following agendas:

1: The mandatory trap modification.

Disagree.

2: The mandatory trap check

Disagree. This will only make it more difficult to check traps because you never know what the weather may do or where your health may go.

3: The mandatory trapper education.

Agree. This is just what we need to get for everyone who wants to become a trapper.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter,

Sincerely,

Patrick McKenrick

postmarked
7/13/17
dj

RECEIVED

JUL 17 2017

FISH, WILDLIFE PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Michael's FWP letter

Dear Director,

My name is Michael Mckenrick

I am writing to you about the issues of: Mandatory Trapper Education, Mandatory Trap Check, Mandatory Trap Modification.

I think Mandatory Trapper Education is a great idea. Especially for new trappers. They can learn to be wiser. Please vote, Yes, on this issue.

Mandatory Trap check is pretty much impossible. If we had Trap check every 24hrs, we wouldn't catch anything. You would leave too much scent. and if we just caught a cold or the flu, we can't drive. Then you still have traps unattended. So on that note please vote, No (do not let this pass), on this issue.

Mandatory Trap modification. It would take a lot of time to get nowhere. The adding of two swivels does nothing because you could lose your trap due to pulling from the animal so in other words The animal you just caught might have gotten away, with the trap, because of this modification. Please vote, No, on this issue.

I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Michael

Mckenrick.

Postmarked
7/13/17
CS

RECEIVED

JUL 17 2017

FISH, WILDLIFE PARKS
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Dear FWP Director,

My name is Aaron McKenrick.

I am writing to you in regards to the proposed Trapping Regulation Changes.

I support Mandatory Trapper Education and think it's a good idea. This will help people realize the reasons why trapping is important.

Trap Modification needs to be talked over.

I do not modify traps, I repair them.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Aaron McKenrick

MTA Member

110 Bonnie St.
Glasgow, Mt. 59230
July 7, 2017

Bob Inman;

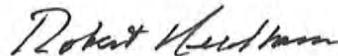
I think the new proposal for trapping regs is needed to help mollify public opinion. Some of this is timely, since it seems FWP has treated trapping and furbearer mgmt. like an "ugly sister"

- 1) unsure about who is required to take the trapper education course. P.1 and p.3 list 4 conditions that would require a person to take the course. None of these apply to me. However, p.3 last para. is confusing and indicates I do need to take the course. This seems to need clarification.
- 2) P.7: Minimum of two Swivels. I feel mid-chain double swivels and stake-end swivels should be adequate rather than requiring a swivel (should be a double swivel) at the base plate. This appears to be suitable re the language at the bottom of page 1 and I see no need to require a swivel at the base plate.
- 3) Can jaw laminate w/rod be used or does it have to be flat metal. I feel rod should be acceptable since it also provides a desirable rounded edge.
- 4) Are both offset jaws plus lamination required or is it either. I didn't see this clearly stated, maybe implied. I don't think requiring both will placate anyone but merely sounds better.
- 5) I feel the length of trap chain should be addressed but was not covered.

I think this proposal is a good start but needs some clarification in areas as the public will certainly use loopholes and interpretation to avoid compliance. On the lighter side, I think you have under estimated and simplified the effort and cost for trap modification.

Finally, with issues like Initiative 177 again looming in the future I feel FWP should place more trapping/snaring closures on public land adjacent to larger cities with high recreation use.

Robert Needham



cc: John Vore
Mark Sullivan

