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## **Most Vermonters Want to Ban Trapping and Eliminate the Wasteful Killing of Wildlife**

Stowe, VT - A new survey reveals that 75% of Vermonters polled believe the use of leghold traps, body gripping traps, and drowning traps should be outlawed. The 2017 Vermonter Poll conducted by the University of Vermont's Center for Rural Studies included questions addressing the opinions of state residents on wildlife management policy.

Seventy percent of Vermonters are also opposed to the killing of wildlife without intent to consume or use the remains, or unless the targeted wildlife is causing damage to property.

"When people learn that Vermont still allows the use of such antiquated and agony-inducing traps, such as legholds, they are eager to learn how they can help stop it," said Brenna Galdenzi, President of Protect Our Wildlife, a group that has been working to reform wildlife management policies in the state.

"Traps are indiscriminate," adds Holly Tippet, Secretary of Protect Our Wildlife. "Every year, dogs and cats, endangered and other protected species like American Marten, as well as hawks, ravens, and owls are caught in traps set for other animals."

Only 0.15% Vermont residents, trap. This translates to about three out of every 2,000 people. Meanwhile, a significant majority of Vermonters enjoy simply watching wildlife. A

2015 survey sponsored by the State of Vermont found that 81% of residents had participated in wildlife viewing within a mile of home in the previous year, and 74% had traveled farther than that to view wildlife. Wildlife advocates argue that the interests of a small minority of residents dominate state wildlife policy, to the detriment of the majority who are most interested in seeing wildlife and knowing they are diverse, plentiful and healthy.

“The Department and the Board do a great injustice to the residents of the state as well as future generations, when they manage most wildlife in terms of sustainable “harvest” levels, rather than for abundant populations that contribute to dynamic, vigorous, resilient ecosystems, and which may be enjoyed by all residents of the state,” Mollie Matteson, a senior scientist, with the Center for Biological Diversity, based in Richmond, Vermont.

In response to a petition submitted last year by a trapper, the Fish and Wildlife Board has been considering extending trapping seasons. The trapper’s petition initially sought to extend trapping seasons on muskrats, bobcats and otters; extend trap check times on underwater and off-the-ground Conibear traps set for fishers and bobcats; and extend land trapping through January. Due to advocacy by wildlife protection groups, the only active petition items still remaining are the extended trap check times on underwater traps, and an extended otter trapping season, which Protect Our Wildlife has been aggressively opposing since last fall.

“Vermont law says that ‘The State, through the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife, shall safeguard the fish, wildlife, and fur-bearing animals of the State for the people of the State, and the State shall fulfill this duty with a constant and continual vigilance,’” says Galdenzi. “The people of the state clearly want trapping and the wanton waste of wildlife—such as open season on coyotes, opossums, and other animals—to end. But it remains to be seen whether the Fish & Wildlife Department and Board will embrace a changed culture that seeks more humane wildlife management, and greater focus on biological diversity, conservation, and abundant populations of watchable wildlife.”

To learn more about POW’s effort’s to stop the extension to otter trapping, visit their website at [www.ProtectOurWildlifeVT.org](http://www.ProtectOurWildlifeVT.org)

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