

District Representative Stephen Kulik's 2015 wildlife management bill:

HD1546: An Act conserving our natural resources

Co-sponsor deadline date: January 30, 2015

Soliciting co-sponsor support for HD1546 to effectively address Coyote, Beaver and other wildlife species prone to conflicts with people, landowners, towns and municipalities

1. **Provides reasonable modifications to the existing trapping law, making it effective for proactive wildlife population management, while being responsive to conflicts with people and animal welfare.** Current law limits capture methods to cage style traps during the proactive regulated trapping season. **This proposed legislation will allow for existing, effective and efficient traps that are currently used under 10-day reactive emergency permits, to be used during the established regulated, proactive trapping season.** Language in the bill also allows for the regulation of advanced modern restraints that are not addressed in the current trapping law.
2. **Does not repeal the current trapping law.** The existing trapping law enacted in 1996 and amended in 2000 remains intact for hazardous health and safety situations that are *outside* the established regulated trapping season. *During* the established trapping season determined by the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MADFW) between the months of November and April, regulations derived by the DFW take precedent to carry out their constitutional mission and the intent of the law.
3. **Establishes the MA DFW as the lead State division responsible for creating effective, proactive regulation and management strategies** for furbearing wildlife that include (but not limited to) beaver, muskrat and coyote. **The existing trapping law restricts trapping to a point where the DFW cannot effectively fulfill their constitutional responsibilities.**
4. **Establishes a "partnership of responsibility".** Ensures the DFW and the Department of Public Health (DPH) will work together, to proactively manage wildlife populations and efficiently address problem animal conflicts before the situation becomes dire. This legislation provides a unique opportunity where two state departments share the responsibility to manage wildlife and conflicts effectively year round.
5. **Establishes the MADFW as the 'go to' experts on animal restraints and body gripping traps.** Identifies the DFW as the primary experts and knowledge base on the regulated use of specific, currently banned or extremely restricted traps. All body gripping traps or restraint devices allowed by law must first have regulations designed and approved by the DFW Board of Directors for their appropriate deployment. The DPH would defer to the DFW for guidance in this area. Subsequently, **no device is made immediately available merely because it is written into the trapping law.** As with all laws, regulation and enforcement determine their effectiveness.
6. **DFW determines the established trapping season length during the autumn and winter months annually.** Trapping is a highly regulated activity above and beyond simply what types of devices are made available for use. Typically, trapping seasons in Massachusetts fall within the months of November and April. With the exception of beaver and muskrat, all trapping activity is currently confined within the single month of November. This legislation relies on our DFW wildlife biologists and managers to determine season lengths and the general number of animals taken based on collected data and information.
7. **Has the welfare of the animal as a top priority.** No matter what one's own background or knowledge on wildlife issues are, no one with an ounce of compassion has a desire to see another living thing suffer needlessly. This includes trappers, wildlife managers, conservationists and wildlife biologists. The desire to partake in proactive wildlife management and participate in the actual act of taking an animal's life does not make these people inherently bad or immoral. In fact, the lengths and efforts taken by these groups to minimize or eliminate potential suffering are substantial. A tremendous amount of emphasis is placed on animal welfare. Trapping "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) by species have been developed nationally and international standards are followed to ensure the welfare of the animal remains a top priority in state wildlife management plans. This legislation ensures this high ethical standard remains embedded into the trapping law by maintaining the DFW in the regulatory process to a high degree.