

Currently, the *Committee for Responsible Wildlife Management* is supporting an extremely important House Bill sponsored and submitted by Representatives [Anne M. Gobi](#) and [George N. Peterson](#) titled "*Safeguarding our Natural Resources*". There are seven additional co-sponsors on this bill, which include: Senator [Stephen Brewer](#), Representative [Denis E. Guyer](#) (NR. & Ag Committee House vice chair), Representative [Todd Smola](#), Representative [Stephen Kulik](#), Senator [Benjamin Downing](#), Representative [Robert Rice](#) and Representative [Cleon H. Turner](#).

House Bill # 736 - SAFEGUARDING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES (2009 – 2010)

General Description

The 2009 -'10 House Bill #736 sponsored by Representatives Anne Gobi and George N. Peterson, titled "*Safeguarding our Natural Resources*" protects and conserves our natural environment and wildlife, while at the same time recognizes our furbearers as a valuable and sustainable resource. This bill would create and maintain healthy furbearer populations through a proactive, regulated harvest using the most effective, internationally tested and best researched tools available. Over time, the implementation of this law will significantly reduce human-animal conflicts and the extensive damage that we are experiencing with beavers today across the entire state. When enacted, this bill will allow the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW) to regulate and allow for use during the established furbearer harvest seasons certain live restraint and "quick kill" devices that adhere to internationally developed "Best Management Practices (BMPs)". These BMPs have been developed through a scientific process involving years of field and laboratory testing under the auspices of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA).

A High Degree of Restriction

The wording in this bill significantly addresses animal welfare. A limit to the size of the live restraint "foothold" style devices that would be permitted is restricted to a maximum of 5 3/8" in diameter on land, comparable to the size of a compact disk or CD. In addition, the restraint surface area material must *not* be steel. Typically, an acceptable material consists of rubber or a similar compound. The bill also allows for 'quick-kill' underwater devices and a newer land use device called the "foot encapsulation restraint" that shields the entire foot inside a plastic or metal shell.

Additional Requirements

In addition to the limits placed on the approved devices themselves, requirements have been incorporated into the law to further address animal welfare and other concerns. For example, a shock absorbing spring must be attached between the device itself and the anchor point which reduces the chance of injury to the captured animal. The distance between the device and the fixed anchor point must not exceed 2 feet, leaving little distance for the animal to travel. Also, a "*pan tension device*" must be used on foothold restraints set on land, to reduce the potential of capturing smaller and lighter, non-target animals.

Significantly Reduces Need for Municipal Permitting Approval Process

After this bill passes, local Board of Health (BOH) permits will not be required to trap beavers or other furbearers using the approved devices during the regulated season. Outside of MDFW designated seasons, local permits will need to be obtained. Citizens who have attended and passed the AFWA & MDFW approved trapper education course and have obtained a Massachusetts trappers' license can use these approved devices. Licensed trappers must still adhere to and abide by all regulations defined and enforced by the DFW. The beaver season goes from Nov 1 to April 15th. Other furbearer harvest seasons are much shorter, e.g.: Coyote & Fox Nov 1 – 30; Fisher Nov 1 - 22nd; as well as Raccoon, Muskrat, Opossum & Skunk Nov 1 - Feb 27/28.

Responsible Management

This bill allows responsible public participation in the proactive, highly regulated management of furbearers in Massachusetts. It provides for the use of the most well-researched and tested tools available that address (a) animal welfare, (b) efficiency, (c) selectivity, (d) safety to people and (e) their practical application in the field.