



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – March 6, 2012
Committee on Children

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Daniel Esty
Presented by Deputy Commissioner Susan Frechette

Raised House Bill No. 5324 – AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD SAFETY BY RESTRICTING THE PLACEMENT OF LEGHOLD TRAPS

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Raised House Bill No. 5324 - AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD SAFETY BY RESTRICTING THE PLACEMENT OF LEGHOLD TRAPS.

As written, the proposed bill would effectively prohibit the regulated use of foothold traps, the most – and in some cases only – effective tool for reducing human-wildlife conflicts. Specifically, the proposed bill would eliminate the use of the only practical devices to control and prevent damage caused by foxes, raccoons and to a lesser extent, beavers. These are all abundant species that can threaten the health, safety and property of Connecticut residents. Foothold traps are also the only practical live capture device for coyotes, a species that is abundant in the state and increasingly the source of citizen complaints about coyotes killing livestock and pets, and displaying bold behavior towards humans. For these reasons DEEP opposes Raised House Bill No. 5324.

Foothold traps deployed according to existing law do not pose a threat to children, and DEEP has found no reported instance of a child being injured by a legally set trap.

In DEEP's experience, many public concerns associated with problem wildlife which must be removed occur in close proximity to public areas, recreational sites, businesses, and roadways. The Department believes that the restrictions imposed by this bill would in fact increase threats to the health and safety of children by removing tools essential to the control of wildlife populations where these tools are most needed.

Connecticut laws and regulations, which are among the strictest in the nation, restrict the use of foothold traps by specifying how, when and where such traps may be set and by establishing requirements for mandatory trapper education, mandatory landowner permission, and mandatory trap check intervals.

The current use of foothold traps in Connecticut conforms to the Best Management Practices (BMPs) established by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The recent BMP research conducted in the United States and Canada represents the most extensive scientific evaluation of animal traps ever conducted. This effort was undertaken over a 15 year period pursuant to an International treaty to establish humane standards for traps. After spending tens of millions of dollars to evaluate all traps,

many have been discontinued and replaced with new humane traps. Traps were evaluated on five criteria: animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, practicality, and safety.

Foothold traps used in accordance with the BMPs are versatile and selective for capturing free ranging wildlife and restraining them unharmed. In fact, such traps are routinely used by wildlife researchers to capture birds and mammals alive and unharmed for study, including rare species such as bald eagles and Canada lynx.

Despite the fact that Connecticut is a densely populated state, many species of wild animals occur at artificially high densities due to our land use practices. We cannot overlook the fact that the balance of nature has been severely disrupted by man's activities. Regulated trapping, including the judicious use of foothold traps, serves a very important role in reducing human/wildlife conflicts in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact DEEP's legislative liaison, Robert LaFrance at 424-3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov