

# COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the Select Committee on Children

## IN OPPOSITION to RAISED BILL H.B. No. 5324 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD SAFETY BY RESTRICTING THE PLACEMENT OF LEGHOLD TRAPS

by Robert T. Crook, Director

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Ban the Leghold (Foothold) Trap bills/amendments have been submitted repeatedly since 1927 (80+ years). Why hasn't it passed? I've only been opposing this bill about 15 times since 1978 based upon sound wildlife management principles and the negative impact on Landowner Rights. During this period the Animal Rights activists have actually done trappers and the DEEP a favor by their constant submission of this bill by mandating the DEEP development of a significant scientific database and educating new legislators. You either believe in Science conducted by DEEP wildlife biologists using the best tools available to harvest a renewable natural resource maintaining balanced populations, preclude disease "boom & bust cycles", and lessen property damage and health concern; OR you take the Emotional approach, contrary to science "leave the animals alone, let nature take its course," and promote there are/will be no problems concerning the biological health of the wildlife population or public safety/public health/property damage societal concerns. Anti-trapping groups have always Opposed any beneficial trap improvement or procedures (Mandatory education, Padded Jaw traps, Special Coyote control, etc.) regardless of the benefit to wildlife and society. Conversely, DEEP & Trappers promote common-sense wildlife management – use the best tools available.

**The issue at hand is Child Safety and Leghold Traps.** What documentation does the sponsor have that trapping is a problem concerning children? Has there ever been an instance in CT of a child caught in any trap? Has any event been reported to authorities or are they anecdotal? What action was taken? We think you'll find these questions are unanswered.

Few states have banned specific traps or trapping and those that have backtracked when wildlife over-populations posed significant threats to citizens, health or property, such as we are having with Deer. Most Legislators have recognized the principles and requirements of scientific wildlife management.

Regulated Trapping in CT is among the strictest in the nation. The DEEP regulations concerning use of both foothold and Conibear traps address limited seasons, how, when, & where the traps can be set, names on traps, Mandatory education requirements, Mandatory landowner permission, and a Mandatory 24 hour trap check. In order to harvest, a tool or tools are needed. Use of footholds and Conibears conforms to the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Best Management Practices (BMP), a 20 year, multi-million dollar scientific study of traps. [http://jjcdev.com/~fishwild/?section=best\\_management\\_practices](http://jjcdev.com/~fishwild/?section=best_management_practices) which was requested by the European Union and affected the export of wild fur from the US and Canada. All traps, current and new, were evaluated as to damage to the animals and evaluated by veterinary professionals. All furbearer species and associated traps have been completed and results implemented by

wildlife agencies. **We urge you to believe the experts, not emotional dialog with no basis in fact.**

Banning the foothold is to prohibit the most effective management tools. Foothold traps are those most used by wildlife biologists to trap target animals alive and unharmed (Bald Eagles, Canada Lynx, River Otter) in the conduct of studies. Opening greater than 5 3/4" is prohibited a size about the size of your hand), except that traps with an opening of up to 7 1/2" may be set for beaver in waters frequented by beaver. Animal rightists offer NO viable trap substitutes, based upon their position that Any harvest of wildlife including hunting, and fishing is an anathema.

**Other problems with the bill are:** (1) What is a non-target specie? Those knowledgeable will know that trapping for Raccoons, one will get Opossum, Skunks and Fox. For Beaver, a catch of Otter is probable. For Coyote, Fox are taken. Should we waste DEP time, notoriously underfunded, for no good purpose reporting these catches?

**(2) If no documented evidence of children affected by trapping is submitted, how did the arbitrary 1500 feet from locations be developed?** How many children that could step into a trap with opening less than 5 3/4" (a size about the size of your hand)? (except that traps with an opening of up to 7 1/2" may be set for beaver in waters frequented by beaver). How many children are in the woods or walking in the waters from early Nov. to the end of March and why? Parental responsibility? Many of the areas listed [http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2700&q=491358&depNav\\_GID=1633](http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2700&q=491358&depNav_GID=1633) are open to trapping and permits for trapping on selected state-owned land can be purchased for \$120.00 per unit. Municipal governments/schools/private establishments can clearly post their land if they deem appropriate. None to our knowledge has done so. There appears to be no trapping problem on any level.

Today we'll also hear emotional personal opinion or anecdotal reports, of "various reports of CT cats, dogs and an occasional kid are caught in the traps" and "there are many other devices more humane that trappers could use." We suggest when you hear these reports/opinions you ask for documentation of the type and number of reported incidents-otherwise reject them as fantasy. Consult the DEP ENCON Police for their Annual Report and citizen TIP reports to determine the incidence of trapping violations and alleged non-target catch reports. As with many bills, emotional input sometimes rules over fact. We urge you to address THE FACTS and reject this trapping proposal as been done in the past.

We also suggest you review the OFA report issued on the last Trapping bill debated: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/SFN/2009SB-00994-R00-COR.htm> This analysis has fiscal impact on DEEP, \$482,000; increased costs to municipalities; imposes on Landowner Rights; constitutes a diminution of wildlife management policy and effect; and seriously impacts CT Trappers management activities.

We urge rejection. In fact, we would promote a BOX (on this bill to insure it isn't addressed again during this busy session. (**BOX:** A motion for final action to defeat a bill in committee. The term derives from the fact that defeated bills are returned to the committee's bill box until the end of the session.) This action has been accomplished on previous trapping bills.

Thank you.