



HARRIS CENTER FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION RESOLUTION

Opposing Any Proposal to Open a Bobcat Hunting or Trapping Season in New Hampshire

May 18, 2015 (Updated January 27, 2016)

New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHFG) Commissioners by State Statute 206 4-a are “citizen representatives,” and NHFG’s mission includes serving as guardian for all of the state’s native wildlife. In 1989, NHFG wisely ended bobcat hunting and trapping in New Hampshire due to the decline of the state’s bobcat population and a high demand for bobcat fur.

Recently NHFG and the University of New Hampshire (UNH) jointly conducted a study – funded by federal sportsman-generated dollars, but soliciting support from the general public, including the Harris Center – that encouraged submission of bobcat sightings and photographs and requested permission to live-trap bobcats on private land. Neither NHFG nor UNH disclosed that results from this study could lead to the end of full protection for the bobcat in New Hampshire.

The proposal under consideration for a bobcat hunting and trapping season is based on study results which have high margins for error (due in large part to the small number of adult radio-collared bobcat females [3] on which population estimates are based) and which do not take into account severe winter conditions (cold with deep snow, as occurred in the winter of 2014-2015) known to be detrimental to bobcat survival, particularly the young of the year. In addition, there is a significant risk that there could be accidental "by catch" of endangered Canada lynx in the Northern part of the state.

Although the current proposal is to issue 50 kill permits, we are concerned that this could open the door to increased catch limits in future years, as has happened with both fisher and moose in New Hampshire. Catch limit increases typically garner far less public attention than the current proposal has generated, so this proposal could in future years lead to a much more aggressive bobcat hunting and trapping effort, with less public input.

We do not believe that this proposal for a bobcat hunting or trapping season is supported by ecologically or economically sound arguments or data. In addition, the proposal has generated many letters and editorials voicing strong public opposition. This at a time when NHFG is seeking public support for a much-needed general fund allocation, as occurs in most or all other states.

Therefore, for the well-being of the New Hampshire bobcat population and for the sake of the public's support for NHFG, the Harris Center for Conservation Education Staff and Trustees oppose any effort to open any bobcat hunting or trapping season for the foreseeable future.