Montana State Legislature

Exhibit Number: 15

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EXHIBIT 15
DATE 2.17.05
HB 603

Members of FWP Committee
2005 Legislature
Capitol Building
Rm. 152
Helena MT, 59601

Feb. 17, 2005

In Favor of HB 603

As a past member of FWP's Trapping Advisory Committee, these changes to MCA seem way past due.
Mandatory trapper's education was overwhelmingly endorsed by public comment to FWP Commissioners in 1998 and 1999.
In 1995 "A Survey of Montanans' Beliefs about Hunting, Viewing & Trapping" by FWP found 87% agreement to the statement, "All licensed trappers in Montana should complete a trapper education program.
Whenever trapper's get bad press, a Montana Trappers Association representative gets interviewed again: "The Trapper's Association workshops have been offered more than 20 years," -Missoulian 2-9-05-
"The association conducts classes every year to teach trappers the right way to go about their business." -Bozeman Daily Chronicle 1-8-05-
"MTA's education program addresses removing non-target species, like dogs, from traps," -Ravalli Republic 12-30-04-
And again: "Before we go making a lot of new rules, let's get some money for trapper education"
"Hebbe said,most people, once educated,will trap in an ethical manner." -Missoulian 3-22-98-
In every public meeting that I have attended, which concerned trapping, education has been offered as the remedy by MTA and FWP. I humbly submit that it is way past time to mandate trapper's education in order to get a license to kill wildlife entrusted to the people of Montana.

Also strongly endorsed, by public comment to the FWP Commission, was a required period of time to check traps.
Committee members, you have in HB 603, language that might remind the FWP Commission to adopt "best management practices", which include required trap checks. "The most important information that increases public support for trapping are laws requiring trap checks, limiting trap sizes, and prohibiting certain types of traps help to ensure that trapping is as humane as possible given current technology,....." This is a quote from Response Management, a recreation/wildlife surveying company, that FWP has relied on in the past. My main concern is to lessen pain and suffering.

I believe the trapping community has proven that it needs more guidance and oversight. Please, endorse HB 603.

Thank you for your consideration, and efforts here in Helena.
Respectfully,

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Kalispell, MT 59904

2 Attachments

Warden Survey
Incidental Take-Case History
Comments

Requested 1999
by TAC

REGION 1

- The lion was down on the valley floor along the river where lions are not typically found.
- Exposed deer carcass in waterway and leg hold traps set with in 30' of carcass. Eagle suffered broken leg and most definitely died in the near future.
- Bald Eagle trapped in leg-hold, eagle was released by trapper before Warden could look at its condition.
- Fisher season was closed at time of trapping. Fisher was released unharmed by warden and trapper.
- Fisher season was closed at time of trapping. Fisher was killed by trapper and turned over to warden.

REGION 2

- Dog was caught in leg hold trap along gated logging road. Dog owner complained traps were in a heavily used area.
- Responsible commercial trappers appear to check their traps on a regular basis - because they know how to get best $ for their furs.
- Recreational, new, or young trappers seem to make more mistakes.
- Large golden eagle caught and killed in a coyote snare which was set in bushy area.
- Female lion and one kitten caught and killed in a 3 snare coyote set.
- Large male lion 157lbs caught and killed in 3 snare coyote set.
- Trapper snared 3 mountain lions in 2 years in same location. Two were dead - darted and released one.
- Moose caught around head - had to dart to release snare.
- In this area marten trapping is the most common. I regularly find Clark Nut Crackers, Gray & Stellars Jays and squirrels/rabbits caught in these traps. Occasionally we have had things like mountain lions in bobcat sets and moose caught in snares. We need mandatory checking times to save some of these animals and we can more tightly regulate how traps are set to

reduce these problems. Ex: require marten sets to be covered on in a box. Require instead of suggesting (use the word must instead of should). I have trappers that set out so many traps that it takes a whole week or more just to run the lines. They often forget where some of their traps are.

- Cross country skier - dog caught in trap.

- Moose calf caught in beaver snare.

- Trapper had numerous snares on both private & public ground. The trapper had quit checking snares and left them out. 3 cows were snared and killed as a result. Trapper was fined and paid restitution to rancher and lost privileges for 5 years.

- Trapper turned in catch of wolf. Wolf was released unharmed.

- Dog was caught in trap for over 24 hours. Owner found trap was baited with elk bones.

REGION 3

- In situations where live animals are left in traps for long periods, several things can occur; trapped foot freezes and is gnawed off, other predators kill and eat trapped animal, animals dies and carrion eaters eat it. The exception to this is drowning sets used rats & beaver. If set correctly with a slide wire they take the animal to the bottom in deep water where they drown. They can stay there for a long time and still be retrieved in good shape.

- Trapping non-target species is a problem for inexperienced trappers. Good trappers do not have this problem very often.

- I would like to suggest that the department design a "how to" book on trapping or locate an existing book that covers the subject and make it available where trapping licenses are sold.

- Trapper had marten sets out before season.

- No identification on snare.

- Trapper set a lot of snares in gulch on trails. Caught deer by leg.

- Trapper set snares at the bottom of a gulch a lot of snare in small area. Caught and killed 1 female lion and 1 kitten. The other kitten got away.

- Trapper set snares on trail - caught 2 lions and killed them. Trapper then gave lions to a friend who tried to trophy as taken legally. Wardens prosecuted both trapper and friend for illegally possessing and false statement as means of taking.

- Trapper set trap on property with no permission, also caught the landowners dogs.

- Neighboring landowner found dead lion by his fence. Lion was snared sometime during winter months. Snare pole and snare was cut and left near lion.

- Darted lion and removed it from trap.

- Large male lion caught around neck and was dead in snare. Snare had not been checked for two weeks and snare was untagged. 1 NTA - fail to tag snares. Need better wording in regulations to charge for not checking snares.

- Moose caught by back leg in snare. Unable to get up. 1 NTA to trapper - fail to check snares in a reasonable manner. Trapper hadn't checked snares in 10 days.

- Small dog killed in conibear trap in front of 3 kids.

- My own dog got caught in snare while duck hunting. Luckily I was right there to release him.

- Bird hunter dog got caught in snare, nearly died.

- 2 dogs got caught in bobcat set. Owner was letting dogs run.

- The problems we had was with a trapper and his illegal snares etc. in the 1980's. Since he was busted by FWP, the incidences of traps and snares out or not checked have really died to nothing (funny how that happens!). Good work on the questionnaire. I appreciated your work in this.

- Trapper did not have permit for area - moose in trap for 5 days.

- Inexperienced trappers - many snares in sagebrush around a carcass.

- Trap was legally set, except for no trap tag. Had permission, license, during season, etc. 3 month old pup got caught in trap causing hard feelings. No fault kind of deal, however, trapper was a novice and just learning to trap which probably contributed to catching dog.

- Inexperienced trapper - many snares in sagebrush around a carcass.

- Sets made on island in river bottom near populated area. Trapper was cited for trespass.

- Longline trapper using cyanide coyote getters untagged traps and trespassing.

- Beaver trapper snared and adult bull moose with beaver snare. Attempts to save moose

failed and moose died as a result of snare. Activity was legal if trapper had permit to trap in area. M. A. Anderson, J. Miller, M. Glines all worked on - may get duplicate reports on this incident.

- Incidental catch. I left a card and removed Jay. Trapper didn't call me for 5 days.

- Dogs body not recovered, but untagged trap-line pulled and trapper cited. Trap-line on public ground, but within 1/4 mile of Dewey townsite.

- Could not confirm. Landowner unwilling to cause conflict with neighbor/trapper.

- Asked trapper to relocate sets that were within inappropriate distance of Wise River school playground. Traps were on public ground and tagged.

- Lion caught in leg hold - broke anchor cable to trap and ran off. Trapper is also houndsman. Ran lion and had a hunter kill it since lion season was open.

- Trapping of non-target species is better now with exposed bait law.

- Lion caught in trap.

- ADC trapper doing preventive coyote trapping caught bobcat. We were able to release.

- Trapper caught two dogs of landowner - trapper was cited for no tags on traps - dogs died because trapper didn't check traps for several days.

- Trap was stuck on deer's nose. Warden tried to dart but couldn't catch up to it or get close enough. Warden received numerous calls due to proximity to Helena. Never did get trap off.

REGION 4

- Trapper was catching deer in snares and setting snares around carcass to catch furbearers. 3 incidences over 3 years.

- Deer was strangled and stayed in snare for a over a week. Deer had snare on leg, leg got infected and deer had to be shot. Other incidents involve ranch work dog and horse caught in untagged snare, infected leg.

- Trapper was targeting coyote and trapped. 2 bobcats - turned self in, cats confiscated and citations issued for honesty considering proximity to legal bobcat season.

- Game bird farm - had traps on each corner post supposedly for skunks but traps were placed were placed where raptors perched. This bird farm is now out of business owner denied targeting raptors.

- Christmas tree hunters with their dogs got into a trap.

- Trapper was trying to catch a skunk for a person and killed neighbors dog in a conibear.

REGION 5

- This is where the owners allowed the 3 labs to run at large during the night. The landowner didn't want the trapper to pull the sets.

- Deer crossing fences got caught in snare.

- Owl showed at the house with leg hold trap on leg. Took trap off and owl flew away with a broken leg.

- Snare was set at hole in a fence to catch predators. Dog was wondering away from home and caught and killed in snare. Snare set was by Indians on crow reservation - out of my jurisdiction.

- Concerned citizens like to walk their dogs at Arapooish FAS north of Hardin. Complaints called in about traps in the area. Department does give a local trapper permission to trap in the area. So far have just received complaints, no domestic non-target animals reported to be trapped.

- Animal caught was golden eagle, the eagle had broke the wire fastening the trap to the stake or drag and had flown into field. No tag was found on trap-no case was made.

- Traps were located on private land near subdivision, dogs are allowed to run free in this area even though there is a leash law county wide. Trapper was present on property by landowner request due to large #'s of fox eating upland game and chickens.

- Rancher found calf after it had lost front left leg, he assured it was from a snare. After investigating no snare or evidence was located. Rancher wanted state to pay for calf. Landowner conveniently blamed trapper he believed state would pay for livestock just as if it were shot by a hunter.

- Regulations need to be required for all trappers whether furbearers or not. Should read trapping regulations. Better language needed for new reg "ground set" as my situation had box set 220 conibear in 2"-3" of water - therefore they felt they were in compliance. Definition of ground set on regs as apposed to complete submerged.

- Sets made on island in river bottom near populated area. Trapper was cited for trespass.

REGION 6

- Snares catching raptors over beaver or exposed bait.

- This incident occurred on Beaver Creek County Park where dogs are not allowed off of leashes. The dog stuck its head into a covey set for coons. The animal was killed (Husky dog).

- This dog was not injured the trapper released it with no problems.

- My dad caught a dog at a location where he had trapped for years. The dog was on property he shouldn't have been on.

- Snares were untagged to allow trapper to trap without permission or except any responsibility to livestock. Snares were set indiscriminately in a 100 mile radius - eagles, owls, deer and cattle were all caught in these snares. I personally pulled over 200 snares. When trapper was confronted he denied any ownership or responsibility of the snares.

- Non-resident trapper - put out numerous traps on huge trap-line, didn't tag any traps so he didn't have to worry about trespass. Open baits attracted raptors. I pulled traps - left business card and trapper contacted me to pickup his traps and paid a $50 ticket for no tags.

REGION 7

- Eagle reported in snare. I never found the eagle and the trapper never admitted to killing one. Problem: the snare may have been to close to a carcass.

- Longline trapper using cyanide coyote getters untagged traps and trespassing.

- This was my personal accidental catch (Jack Austin). I also caught 1 owl in same set. I believe another animal (pack rat) pulled a piece of fur out of my trap hole (dirt hole set) which probably attracted the owl. This was reported to my supervisor. Owl released alive with one broken leg.

- I have very few trappers in my district. Less than 10 recreational trappers +3 professional trappers (2 fed + 1 county). Nobody reports accidental catches other than the lion and my own personal accidental catches and 1 dog.

- Dog was not hurt. Trapper contacted landowner after I checked situation out and told trapper what happened. Trapper (a professional) was targeting a problem coyote on neighbors ranch. Complainants deed land was fenced into neighbors to take advantage of terrain no charges.