



December 21, 2016
Verbal Testimony
Fish & Wildlife Board
Brenna Galdenzi

The Fish & Wildlife Department and Board has received numerous emails from Vermont residents over the last year opposing the petition to expand otter trapping season. Some of these emails included alternatives to expanding otter trapping such as, employing Best Management Practices from other states on how to best avoid taking otter during beaver season. These changes include change location of trap (certain travel ways are preferred by otters that should be avoided), change type of lure used etc.... These are measures that should be required if the real issue is incidental take. Cheryl Sullivan mentioned at a previous Board meeting that she was very concerned with incidental take and wanted to learn more how to avoid it – well here we are. Why aren't these BMP measures being required during the month of March if we really want to do everything we can to avoid incidental take of otters.

Another alternative to expanding otter trapping season is to shorten beaver season to close at the end of February as it did back in 2007 --- I even offered POW's assistance, financial assistance included, with respect to potential nuisance beaver issues outside of trapping season. I heard from NO ONE regarding any of my suggestions.

The Department has acknowledged that they are missing vital data to complete their otter analysis – let me read an email I have from the Department from July of this year with respect to the missing trapper surveys: *“Without some measure of effort (ie: number of licensed trappers, number of traps deployed, number of days trapped etc...) harvest data alone is of limited*

value for tracking population abundance.” SO WHY ARE WE EVEN CONSIDERING AN EXPANDED TRAPPING SEASON ON AN ANIMAL WHO IS CLEARLY NOT OVERPOPULATED?

Also, in the recommendation details from this evening, the Department states the following: *“The result of an expanded otter trapping season will be predictably few additional otters being harvested.”* This is a specious comment and not rooted in any fact. Trappers will now be targeting otters in March, so the actual harvest, since there are no bag limits, can be MANY MORE otters killed.

So I ask why are we taking such an aggressive position on this by expanding a season on an animal who’s faced with new threats to their population without first exhausting all other measures?