

Originating Committee: Big Game, Turkey, and Furbearers Committee

Author: Tom Westhoff

Intended Recipient: Missouri Department of Conservation

Rescind Certain Regulations Governing the Hunting and Trapping of Furbearers

WHEREAS, the Conservation Commission of Missouri (Commission) is concerned about the downward trend in wild turkey populations as compared to historic numbers, and believes predators are a significant contributing factor to that decline; and

WHEREAS, the Commission passed regulation changes in 2022 establishing and extending the harvest of furbearer species; and

WHEREAS, these regulation changes were presented and justified as a means of 1) providing additional harvest opportunity, and 2) an effort to protect wild turkey and other ground nesting birds; and

WHEREAS, scientifically supported predator control for conservation purposes, disease management, or population management is acceptable; and

WHEREAS, these regulation changes focused primarily on allowing private landowners to control predators on their land as a means of protecting nesting turkeys and broods; and

WHEREAS, justifying predator control on private lands as a means of addressing turkey population numbers without a similar response on public lands feeds a popular opinion that predators are a prime contributor to turkey population decline without significant and commensurate scientific support; and

WHEREAS, the Missouri Trappers Association (MTA) formally opposed the regulation changes stating that trappers and hunters already have ample opportunity to harvest these animals; and

WHEREAS, the MTA generally considers it unethical to harvest animals when the females are giving birth or while young are dependent on the female for survival; and

WHEREAS, the affected furbearer species will be wasted as the fur of these species will not be prime and have no monetary value; and

WHEREAS, these regulations can be damaging to the image of conservation and legitimate harvest of furbearers, when considering the ethics of hunting and trapping; and

WHEREAS, these regulation changes will have no large-scale effect on turkey populations due to limited participation, and are ineffective in providing meaningful opportunity, hunter/trapper recruitment, or wildlife population management; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of any specific relevant scientific support, designed research, or deliberately stated purpose for predator control, we consider these regulations to be unnecessary, unethical, and likely ineffective; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled in Osage Beach, Missouri, this 25th day of February, 2023, urges the Conservation Commission of Missouri to immediately rescind the 2022 regulation changes establishing and extending the harvest of furbearer species.

Searchable Keywords: trapping, furbearers, predator control, hunting, turkeys

Expires: February 25, 2028