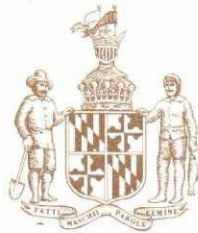


DANA M. STEIN  
Legislative District 11  
Baltimore County

Vice Chair  
Environment and Transportation  
Committee

Subcommittees  
Chair, Environment  
Natural Resources,  
Agriculture and Open Space



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 251  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3527 · 301-858-3527  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3527  
Fax 410-841-3509 · 301-858-3509  
Dana.Stein@house.state.md.us

## The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### Testimony of Delegate Dana Stein in Support of House Bill 863

Chairman Barve and Committee members:

We spend a lot of time discussing bills that concern hunting. This is hunting that is regulated by DNR, has limits on when, where and how you can hunt, and how many animals you can kill.

This bill deals with unregulated wildlife killing contests whose goal is to kill as many animals as possible, by whatever means possible. They are conducted for prizes or monetary awards. Hundreds of animals may be killed. Most contests involve fox, coyotes or raccoons. Many times, their bodies are dumped as trash.

The contests are not to provide food for anyone, nor to protect the environment, nor as part of a responsible species management program.

This bill is crafted to ban *only* these gruesome killing contests of particular animals for prizes and monetary rewards. By amendment, the bill would be limited to foxes, coyotes and raccoons. It would not affect the continued lawful, regulated hunting of these animals in Maryland.

HB 863 also does not prevent people from killing these animals on their own property. The amendment also takes out all of DNR's responsibilities under the bill.

The bill's purpose is similar to the moratorium on the killings of cownose rays that we've passed. We passed these laws to prohibit the slaughter of animals done only for the sake of winning prizes for killing the most.

Wildlife killing contests do not align with Maryland's hunting traditions of sportsmanship and fair chase. You may hear from opponents that these contests

are done for predator management. But science-based wildlife management says otherwise. Many wildlife management professionals and hunting groups criticize these contests because they're not based in science, in addition to being cruel. Attached to my testimony is three pages of statements from a variety of officials.

Five states have already banned these events: California, Vermont, New Mexico, Arizona and Massachusetts. Maryland should join them.

One final item about the amendment: it clarifies that the penalty is a fine of \$25 for each coyote, fox or raccoon killed in violation of the law.

## Statements from wildlife management professionals and hunting groups on wildlife killing contests and predator control:

- **Mike Finley, chair of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission:** “Killing large numbers of predators as part of an organized contest or competition is inconsistent with sound, science-based wildlife management and antithetical to the concepts of sportsmanship and fair chase.”<sup>39</sup>
- **Michael Sutton, former president of the California Fish and Game Commission:** “Awarding prizes for wildlife killing contests is both unethical and inconsistent with our current understanding of natural systems. Such contests are an anachronism and have no place in modern wildlife management.”<sup>40</sup>
- **Ray Powell, former New Mexico Commissioner of State Lands:** “The non-specific, indiscriminate killing methods used in this commercial and unrestricted coyote killing contest are not about hunting or sound land management. These contests are about personal profit, animal cruelty. ... It is time to outlaw this highly destructive activity.”<sup>41</sup>
- **Ted Chu, former wildlife manager with Idaho Fish and Game:** “Hunting is not a contest and it should never be a competitive activity about who can kill the most or the biggest animals.”<sup>42</sup>
- **Jim Posewitz, retired biologist with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and author of *Beyond Fair Chase: The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting* and *Inherit the Hunt: A Journey into American Hunting*:** “Competitive killing seems to lack the appreciation of and the respect for wildlife fundamental to any current definition of an ethical hunter.”<sup>43</sup>
- **Eric Nuse, former executive director of the International Hunter Education Association:** “We don’t like anything that smacks of commercialization with money or prizes. Anything that doesn’t honor the animals grates on us and seems inherently wrong. These contests create very poor PR for hunters.”<sup>44</sup>
- **The Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners:** “[T]he wildlife management profession does not generally recognize the use of contests as a tool with substantial wildlife management effect.”<sup>45</sup>
- **New Mexico Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard:** “These are not hunting contests. They are animal cruelty contests. It is an inexcusable practice, and today I used my authority to ban organized killing contests of unprotected species on any of the nine million acres of State Trust Land that I am charged with overseeing.”<sup>46</sup>
- **Vermont Fish & Wildlife:** “Coyote hunting contests are not only ineffective at controlling coyote populations, but these kinds of competitive coyote hunts are raising concerns on the part of the public and could possibly jeopardize the future of hunting and affect access to private lands for all hunters.”<sup>47</sup>

- **The Arizona Game and Fish Commission:** “Extensive public controversy exists about predator/fur-bearing contests that award prizes to participants who kill the largest number or variety of predator/fur-bearing animals or the contest is based on the combined weight of animals a participant kills. To the extent these contests reflect on the overall hunting community, public outrage with these events has the potential to threaten hunting as a legitimate wildlife management function.”<sup>48</sup>
- **The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife):** “Further, recognizing that public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting and undermine public support for hunting in general, MassWildlife recommended the following regulatory changes:
  - Prohibit hunting contests for predators and furbearers.
  - Prohibit “wanton waste” of game animals taken during regulated hunting and trapping seasons.
  - Change harvest reporting requirements for fox and coyote to be reported within 48 hours, consistent with current reporting requirements for deer, turkey, and bear.”<sup>49</sup>
- **The Pennsylvania Game Commission:** “After decades of using predator control (such as paying bounties) with no effect, and the emergence of wildlife management as a science, the agency finally accepted the reality that predator control does not work.”<sup>50</sup>
- **The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources:** “Predator control of coyotes because of wildlife predation is unwarranted and unnecessary. Predator control of coyotes preying on livestock should be restricted to targeted animals.”<sup>51</sup>
- **The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation** has pointed out that the random removal of coyotes “...will not: (a) control or reduce coyote populations; (b) reduce or eliminate predation on livestock; or (c) result in an increase in deer densities.”<sup>52</sup>
- **The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife):** “The contest is being offered by a private business, it has nothing to do with managing wildlife...I do want to make it clear, coyote contests are not a management tool by any stretch of the imagination.”<sup>53</sup>
- **The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission’s** new coyote management plan found that bounties and harvest incentive programs are prone to corruption, expensive, do not increase harvest, and do not target problem animals, and that ample evidence from case studies supports the conclusion that these methods are ineffective at reducing conflicts with coyotes or impacting coyote populations. It concludes, “While coyote population reduction (“coyote control”) is often the first and only management approach that people suggest, it has proven ineffective.”<sup>54</sup>
- **The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission:** “[r]emoving coyotes for the purpose of eradication is an inefficient and ineffective method to control populations . . . hunting and trapping place pressure on coyote populations, and the species responds by reproducing at a younger age and producing more pups per litter.”<sup>55</sup>

- **Charlie Killmaster, deer and feral hog biologist for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources:** “A number of states have shown that government-sponsored programs to eradicate coyote populations are huge money pits that result in failure.”<sup>56</sup>
- **Dr. Scott Henke, researcher at Texas A&M University-Kingsville:** “There’s a belief that coyote control is necessary to help deer and quail populations. But it could actually do more harm than good.”...“That same fawn taken by a coyote was likely to die from something else.”<sup>57</sup>
- In a 2014 deer harvest report, the **South Carolina Department of Natural Resources** concluded that trying to control coyotes to manage predation of deer was ineffective.<sup>58</sup>
- In a new study, **North Carolina researchers** evaluated deer harvest numbers in South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, New Jersey, and New York and found that coyotes are not limiting deer numbers in those states, and that coyote removal programs will do little to increase regional deer numbers.<sup>59</sup>
- **The Wildlife Society:** “6. Recognize that there is little evidence to support the use of killing contests for controlling predator populations. 7. Recognize that while species killed in contests can be legally killed in most states, making a contest of it may undermine the public’s view of ethical hunting.”<sup>60</sup>
- **The Izaak Walton League of America:** “The League recognizes the intrinsic value of predatory species and their important ecological roles. ... There is no justification for widespread destruction of animals classified as predators ... The League opposes payment of bounties on predators or varmints.”<sup>61</sup>
- **Ducks Unlimited:** “Predator control cannot result in meaningful increases in duck numbers or birds in the bag and threatens to undermine the broad coalition of public support on which modern waterfowl conservation depends.”<sup>62</sup>
- **The Mississippi Flyway Council:** “The Mississippi Flyway Council (MFC) does not support the practice of predator removal as a viable management practice to improve waterfowl recruitment over the long term or over large geographic areas. The MFC believes that the highest conservation priorities for improving waterfowl recruitment are the landscape-level wetland and grassland habitat restoration strategies advocated by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP).”<sup>63</sup>
- **The National Wild Turkey Federation:** “Removing a random predator from the landscape has no impact whatsoever on widespread turkey populations...Without good nesting habitat, eggs and poults are simply more vulnerable. Turkeys evolved to cope with predators. As long as they have a place to hide their nests and raise their young, they’ll do just fine without predator control.”<sup>64</sup>