



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

February 6, 2024

To Chairman Bennett and members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Re: BHA Support for RI - 2024 – H7358 – Wildlife Colliding with Vehicles

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting. BHA actively supports policies and projects that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, although we recognize that eliminating them entirely is impossible. When wildlife dies because of vehicular collisions BHA's New England Chapter prefers that the public be afforded the opportunity to utilize the resource to the extent practicable, rather than requiring wildlife be discarded by rule.

With this in mind, **The New England Chapter of BHA urges the Committee to support H7358**, which seeks to eliminate statutory restrictions on the utilization of wildlife involved in vehicular collisions, and assigns the Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) authority to promulgate regulations governing the possession of carcasses.

Under current RI General Law, ownership of deer killed in vehicular collisions can only be transferred to the person involved in the collision, following an investigation by a conservation officer. In many cases individuals involved in deer collisions may not be interested in consuming wild game meat or may not be capable of processing a carcass into food. As a result, RI DEM ends up tasked with moving and disposing of numerous carcasses each year. During the 2022-23 hunting season over 1,500 vehicular collisions involving deer were reported to RI-DEM. The current law is also silent on other species commonly involved in vehicular collisions, like wild turkeys.

Notwithstanding the current law, a large proportion of wildlife involved in vehicular collisions, especially during colder months, *could* be processed into useable products if a legal pathway existed for those who might do so. If enacted, the bill would not immediately or broadly legalize the utilization of wildlife involved in vehicular collisions. Rather, it would authorize RI DEM to promulgate regulations controlling what species can be utilized, when and how, and requirements for tagging and reporting. As the State's lead agency on wildlife management and the enforcement of wildlife laws and regulations we are confident that RI DEM has the expertise to promulgate regulations that facilitate, to the extent practicable, the utilization of wildlife involved in vehicular collisions and to update them periodically in response to changing conditions and best available science. Additionally, RI DEM already has the infrastructure necessary to handle tagging and reporting, and to enforce whatever regulations are eventually promulgated.

With all these things in mind, the New England Chapter of BHA **urges the Committee, and ultimately the RI General Assembly, to support H7358.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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